

EVANGELIZATION OF WHOLE FAMILIES REPORT

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The participants in this group coming from some twenty nations, represented the church in all major geographic areas of the world. At the first meeting as participants expressed why they were attending this particular strategy group it became obvious that the Holy Spirit is burdening the church worldwide with the importance of the family and the imperative of reaching the *whole* family for Christ.

This is interesting because in many areas of the non-Christian world, the family continues to disintegrate while in the Christian community the family is coming into clearer focus.

Of course in this group we were dealing with many different cultural backgrounds so the questions, comments and contributions reflected a whole spectrum of orientations. However, this was a cross-cultural fellowship within the body of Christ and brothers and sisters were learning how one another live.

After Dr. Chua briefly reviewed his paper on the subject, there was a brief period of response to its content. A typical example which pointed up the essential nature of this subject to the missionary effort came from a participant from Latin America. It was pointed out that tradition in Latin American countries calls for nine days for prayer and consolation after the death of a family member. Evangelical missionaries have developed a reputation in some areas of going right to the tomb and then on with life without reflection on this life and death. These sensitive family experiences must be reconsidered if the whole family is to play an important part in evangelization within the frame of reference of its culture.

The chairman suggested four questions which were to become the focal points of our discussions. These were:

1. How can the *extended* family be reached for Christ?
2. How can church programs be adapted to meet family needs, instead of merely the needs of various age groups?
3. What methods and programs have been effective in whole family evangelization in your area?
4. How can the *fractured* family be reached and united in Christ?

This report will summarize the discussion in both small groups and the entire group relative to these questions.

Extended family evangelization —

Definition: Extended family means slightly different things in different cultures. However, in general, it means the extension of the family relations from the parent-child relationship (Nuclear Family).

Goal: The goal of Christian evangelization is to unite families *in Christ*, not split them. Splitting was a tactic of the colonialist to weaken and gain control of people.

Procedure: It is essential to identify the head (leader) of the family (the one who makes religious decisions for the family), and reach that one first.

Where a woman is the cultural head of the family, e.g., the Philippines, there is a conflict with the normal biblical position of the male headship (cf., I Cor. 11:3). A possible answer is to deal with the cultural head first. When decisions for Christ are made, deal with the biblical issue as a part of discipleship.

In some cultures decisions are made by consensus, e.g., Ethiopia. This, too, must be respected even though the initial thrust is to the cultural head.

Status in relationships based on age, education, wealth, etc., may determine who will be received as the messenger. For example, those who are parents may listen only to those who are parents.

Bible studies: If one member of a family becomes a Christian, ask to have Bible studies with the entire family. If the husband is not willing, don't go.

Try not to offend, be sensitive to the cultural issues.

Practical ministries of love: Be quick to help the family in need. If the mother is sick, clean the apartment and look after the children.

Literature: Get literature into the family. Use the Bible plus helpful titles. Suggest they be read in family gatherings and offer to give help in understanding.

Church programs and family needs —

Identify needs: It will be necessary to identify *family* needs, e.g., recreational, educational, social, spiritual, etc.

Scheduling: A more flexible time schedule for meetings may be necessary. The church is to serve and in serving it is necessary to consider the needs of those whom it is serving.

Program: Specific family fellowship nights have proven successful. A demonstration of effective family devotions could be presented.

Family church dinners where family units plus "adopted" singles eat together and share and pray together have been successful.

An interesting change in program reported was to dispense with the Sunday evening service once a month and help families work out their own family worship and celebrate it together at home.

Responsibilities: Give *families* responsibilities for church life, e.g., present service as a family, bring flowers, clean church, visit other families, etc.

Pastors or other church leaders could go to new Christian families to teach them how to have family Bible studies.

Methodology in whole family evangelization

Neighborhood evangelism: Several Christian families could move into the same neighborhood to work cooperatively in rearing their own children as a witness to non-Christian neighbors.

Visitation: Christian husbands and wives have gone as teams to visit non-Christian couples. Husbands with husbands, wives with wives.

Home Bible Studies: Look for openings through normal contacts with friends and relatives. In some home Bible studies there are special readings for children from a book such as *Pilgrim's Progress*. Bible studies should be geared to adults. If children are present, they could be included by having them read from a children's edition of the Bible. Family Bible studies should be with one family only.

A limited study of four to six periods was suggested as an initial effort.

Family social events: In some areas, family picnics are popular where non-Christian families are invited for recreation, fellowship and discussion of spiritual issues. Another suggestion was to have family dinners in a Christian home and invite non-Christian families to share a film or family devotions.

Weddings: In some areas a new form of weddings is being used. These involve the Christian bridal party and Christian parents verbalizing their faith and values regarding the marriage relationship with their friends and guests.

Fractured family evangelization

Preventative: Christians should be counseled regarding the biblical teaching concerning marrying only Christians (cf. II Cor. 6:14-18; I Cor. 7:39). In some countries, such as India, a Christian who marries a non-Christian is excommunicated. However, the biblical authority for this was not stated and it was pointed out that this would only drive the believer farther away.

Education: The church has an educational responsibility to teach new Christians how to relate to non-Christian members of their family.

Counseling: Christian husbands or wives who have or have had non-Christian mates can counsel the new Christian regarding the biblical teaching on reaching their mate for Christ (cf. I Peter 3:1-7; I Cor. 7:12-16).

These statements reflect the current practices of various churches around the world. Also included are some yet untried suggested by group participants.

The group did not see a need for an organization for this purpose, but did stress that whole family evangelization should be a high priority item in the total field of evangelization.

REPORT ON WOMEN'S SESSIONS

Several strategy groups were arranged spontaneously by participants at the Congress. This report is from one of those groups.

In terms of numbers, women were very much in the minority at the International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne '74, but the challenge which was given to them was great. The sessions were organized and chaired by Mrs. Nell Maxwell of Barrie, Ontario, Canada, the Director of Women Alive. The underlying theme of the three consecutive sessions was "Relevancy and Effectiveness in Our Witness Where God Has Placed Us."

The first session was directed primarily to pastors' wives since most of the women at the Congress fit in this category. Mrs. Jill Briscoe, wife of Rev. Stuart Briscoe, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, addressed herself to some of the basic problems which confront a pastor's wife if she purposes to have an effective ministry.

Mrs. Briscoe presented some startling questions when she asked, "Does God consider women second grade material?" "Has a woman the right to teach or speak?" The answer would seem obvious she said, but "unfortunately, the answer lies greatly in the cultural and denominational background." These factors somehow are often influenced by misguided people and yet are so important in a particular dimension of women's lives. The fact that they are misguided very often produces a negative situation without any regard to the biblical position. She went on to say that many men firmly state that because a woman must be submissive it is neither her right nor privilege to speak in or on behalf of the church. She further observed that contrary to this concept if a woman is indeed invited by the ruling body of the church or organization to exercise her gift of speaking, under their headship, she is not usurping authority but is rather being submissive and obedient.

A woman must not repress gifts given to her because of someone else's opinion, but must search and find God's will for her life. When a woman finds her true spiritual gift and exercises it, it is charming. She noted that no one can resist a ministry truly expressed in obedience to the Lord.

Mrs. Briscoe challenged the women to examine their lives and see if they had deliberately buried gifts which God had given to them for specific service. She then noted that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to cut us down to size and not build us up. It is at that point that true liberation is found in Jesus Christ and real peace when one is obedient to the will of God for her life.

The importance and relevance of sharing Jesus Christ with people where they are was heavily stressed throughout this presentation with the interspersing of stories from personal experiences.

The diversification of ministries was evident as women from different cultures attempted to interject questions to stimulate discussion on ordination of women, formulation of worldwide women's evangelical organizations and other such topics.