

Excerpt from THE EVANGELIST IN ALL FORMS

by Raphael Anzenberger

Chapter 7

WHAT DO I DO WITH MY EVANGELIST?

Training the budding evangelist

Hello,

We've got someone in our church who seems to be gifted in evangelism. How should we go about training him? Do you have any advice?

Thanks for your help,

Pastor Clueless

I often receive letters from local church leaders who don't know what to do with up-and-coming evangelists in their churches. How can they tell if someone really has the gift of evangelism? What kind of training should these people receive? How should they go about developing their ministry? The questions are endless, but we'll try to answer some of them in this chapter.

FROM RECOGNITION TO TRAINING...THE WEAKEST LINK!

An evangelist's gift must be recognized by the local church (ch. 6) before any kind of ministry training can begin. His ministry cannot be developed on a local level without this type of support. Once a local body recognizes the gift of evangelism in one of its members, it will be more likely to want to invest in his or her training and provide the room they need to exercise their ministry.

Research on our R2E program with France Evangelization shows that most of the applicants who come to us without any kind of theological training hope to prove to their local church that they do indeed have the gift of evangelist. Their thinking runs along these lines: "If I can successfully complete this program, maybe my church will realize that God is calling me to be an evangelist *afterwards*."

This is backwards thinking.

On the other hand, all those who have joined R2E while actively pursuing theological studies at the same time have expressed the fact that their local church had *already* recognized them as an evangelist. This begs the question: why do we jump at the chance to validate the call of an evangelist who is getting ready to head off to a Bible institute, but hesitate to recognize the call of another? Is a degree in theology a necessary prerequisite to being recognized as an evangelist? If so, what about the call that God may have given the person?

Missiologist David Bosch is a staunch defender of the idea that theological training should go hand in hand with practical ministry:

"The universal claim of the hermeneutic of language has to be challenged by a hermeneutic of the deed, since doing is more important than knowing or speaking. There is, in fact, no

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knowledge except in action itself, in the process of transforming the world through participation in history. . . . The relationship between theory and praxis is not one of subject to object, but one of intersubjectivity".

In other words, an evangelist doesn't necessarily need to have completed his or her theological studies before being recognized as such by the local church, nor before putting his or her gift into practice. Training and application go hand in hand. If an evangelist's theological training is to have any sense, it must be clearly recognized and lived out in the local church, and validated by tangible results.

THE SIX ELEMENTS OF TRAINING

If you take a quick look at what's being said about the training of evangelists (cf. Bibliography), you'll find six different elements which need to be taken into consideration in any program:

1. TEACHING BY EXAMPLE

We see this modeled in the life of Christ, the greatest evangelist who ever lived.

During his three year ministry, Jesus showed us what it means to cultivate relationships with others, to sow the Word of God in peoples' hearts, and to pray for an abundant harvest of souls.

The art of relationships

Jesus constantly sought to be in contact with unbelievers. He developed quality relationships with people. He didn't see them as "contacts" or evangelistic projects, but as lost sheep in search of a shepherd. He helped them to realize their worth in God's eyes. He accepted them for who they were, and not for what they could do for Him.

Spending time with non-Christians can wreak havoc on one's reputation. Jesus knew this, and He was willing to be misunderstood by His close friends and family, as well as by the religious leaders of His day. Simon the Pharisee spoke regarding Jesus, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). It is extremely unfortunate to observe that those who tend to put a damper on evangelism are often church leaders themselves. Are we willing to welcome sinners into our midst? It's easy to say that we are, but it's another thing altogether to actually do it.

The art of sowing

Jesus took advantage of every possible occasion He had to sow the Word of God. He shared as He walked on the road to Emmaus, as He taught in the temple in Jerusalem. Morning, noon and night He spoke God's Word to the crowds who pressed around Him, and with a lonely woman at a well. Jesus knew how to ask questions, the right questions. He always had the appropriate word for the occasion. "And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, 'Is not this Joseph's son?'" (Luke 4:22). He also knew how to listen and discern peoples' needs.

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“When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” (John 5:6). He didn’t shy away from spiritual subjects, even though His listeners didn’t always understand what He was talking about. How long do we wait to bring conversations around to spiritual things? Unfortunately, by the time we decide to do so, the occasion may be long past!

The art of harvesting

Jesus’ passion was to see people saved: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” (Matt. 23:37). He took advantage of all of His natural spheres of influence, whether through friends and family (Martha, Mary and Lazarus in Bethany), or through professional and social circles (by virtue of His position as rabbi). Jesus saw beyond the simple aspect of friendship; He knew when someone was ready to make a decision. Where the disciples saw a jar left at the side of a well, Jesus saw fields which were white unto harvest. “Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest” (Jn. 4:35). What do I see when I lift up my eyes?

If we want to train evangelists like Jesus did, our own example is the most important element. Is it radical? Yes, but it’s also effective!

2. INVESTING WITH AUTHORITY

If we want our evangelists-in-training to go out and change the world, we need to share with them all of the resources that are available to us, but also to invest them with the authority that accompanies their ministry.

This book was originally written in French. As I wrote it I realized that the French language doesn’t have an equivalent for the English word “empower”. When we empower someone that we are training, we communicate our *power* to them. In other words, we don’t just give them the necessary resources to fulfill their ministry, but also the authority and legitimacy. While investing someone with a responsibility communicates the idea of authority, it doesn’t necessarily communicate the sharing of resources.

This gap in the semantic field is due to the tendency towards autocratic leadership in French-speaking countries. Sébastien Fath identifies three different roots of this leadership *à la française*.

- The general heritage of an ordered society: the honor mentality
- The Catholic heritage of a vertical authority: the clerical mentality
- The heritage of a Protestant minority: the elitist mentality

These three mentalities can be found in our evangelical churches, and can be summarized by three slogans:

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- “Everyone has his place”: a well-defined distribution of roles
- “I make the decisions, you do the work”: a failure to transmit skills and competencies to others
- “Make it or break it”: a tendency towards stubbornness which is conducive to breakdowns in communication

As we look at the history of France, we understand why her church leaders have such a hard time fully grasping the concept of “empowerment” in the practical sense.

Jesus’ disciples found themselves in the same boat. The Hebrew society was familiar with the idea of apprenticeship. Oftentimes, the apprentice would leave his home in order to learn a trade with a relative. This was the case with Lot and Abraham. Apprenticeship is a training method which dates back to the beginning of time. However, it was usually understood that the master would retain his position as master, and the apprentice would continue on in the subordinate position of apprentice. In other words, there has always been a distance between the teacher and the learner, so that the apprentice would never assume the position of his master. The latter guarded the essence of his expertise like a precious treasure, which in turn gave him a certain prestige. He was careful not to transmit this expertise to his apprentice.

The disciples must have been shocked when Jesus, their rabbi, their Master, said to them “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father” (Jn. 14:12)! Greater works than these! When Jesus sent His disciples into the world, He clothed them with the power of the Holy Spirit and gave them authority *in His name*. The whole package! The disciples were *empowered*! This was absolutely necessary in order for them to transform the known world, to the extent that some jealous Jews said “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also [...] and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” (Acts 17:6).

If Jesus was eager for His disciples to do greater works than His, we shouldn’t be afraid to put all of our resources at our disciples’ fingertips so that they can do greater things than we do, once and for all.

3. TEACHING DOCTRINE

An evangelist must be capable to communicate the message of the Gospel faithfully according to the Scriptures. Evangelists are often looked down on when they adventure into the field of theology. We wish they would have taken the time to get a degree from a Bible institute like everyone else, and observe that they are prone to handle biblical texts lightly, sometimes going so far as to deform the meaning.

We need to take this criticism seriously. Otherwise, we run the risk of completely discrediting the wonderful ministry of the evangelist.

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An evangelist dare not fear biblical doctrine. On the contrary! Theology, or *theo-logos*, is the language of God. We need to be speaking His language, no less and no more. If the evangelist wants to communicate the Gospel from the Scriptures, he must learn to understand the meaning of the text. This is what we call hermeneutics (the science of interpretation). Nothing complicated, just a healthy dose of practice to help him acquire a correct methodology which will allow him to study a passage in its context. This way, the text will become the basis for the message that he is burning to share.

It is imperative that the evangelist be grounded in his biblical theology if he wants to effectively share the Gospel. In other words, he needs to know how to correctly place the passage in its book, the book in with the other writings of the author, the author's writing in the whole of Scripture. Isaiah developed his theology in a certain way, as did John and especially Paul. We need to beware of the temptation to jump around from verse to verse with a concordance and think that we have acquired a solid systematic theology! Evangelists the world over need to confess this sin!

Hermeneutics, biblical theology...and dogma. In other words, we need to grasp the great theological topics of the Scriptures like soteriology (the study of salvation) or Christology (the study of the person of Christ). These subjects must be a part of the evangelist's doctrinal toolbox. Once these subjects are mastered, the evangelist will be able to effectively communicate the Gospel... the whole Gospel.

4. TEACHING ETHICS

The message proclaimed by an evangelist is revolutionary, prophetic, radical (ch. 5). His message is deep and powerful. But how many times has an evangelist's message been reduced to ashes as he himself is disqualified because of an ethical problem! As Ulrich Parzany reminded us in chapter 3, "an evangelist without character is a criminal!"

There are two subjects which are particularly sensitive and must be approached during an evangelist's training period: financial integrity and sexual integrity.

Financial integrity

The evangelist is often called upon to organize evangelistic projects which must be financed somehow. Sooner or later, an evangelist will have to deal with money. This is not a problem in and of itself. Jesus' evangelistic ministry was financed by the generosity of others through a common fund which provided for His needs. But when the woman anointed Jesus with expensive oil, the disciples were angry (Matt. 26:6-13). This shows how our enemy Satan can use finances to trip us up in our evangelism. Werner Burklin insists on the fact that financial integrity in one's personal life precedes financial integrity in the ministry. It is of the utmost importance. In other words, if the evangelist does not practice integrity in the way he manages his own finances, how can we expect him to manage the finances of others in an honorable fashion? During my evangelistic studies, I had to take an accounting class. Two columns: credit and debit... some simple math, and you have your result. The evangelist doesn't need to have a degree in accounting, but he does need to have an idea of how to manage finances. Otherwise, this part of the ministry should be turned over to someone else who can take care of it. In our mission, France

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Evangelization, we have the privilege of having a full-time accountant who keeps us on our toes financially. Thank God for Nathalie! But in the end, each one is responsible for his or her own finances.

When working on an evangelistic project where you'll be dealing with amounts that reach more than 10,000 dollars, it's a good idea to have an auditor look at the financial side of things. His services come at a price, but it is also a guarantee of the project leader's financial irreproachability. Including the auditor's fees in the final cost of the project will save you from headaches down the road.

Sexual integrity

This is a subject that we French don't like to talk about. "My private life is none of your business" we say. But the Bible teaches that a person's private life reveals more about his or her true nature than their public façade, for "... out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery [*moicheiai*], sexual immorality [*porneiai*], theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone." (Matt. 15:19-20).

Anyone who partakes of sexual relations outside of his or her marriage, or who seduces a married person is an adulterer (*moicheia*). In either case, the Bible is clear: STOP! Jesus takes it even farther: "But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matt. 5:28). He sets the bar high! Adulterous thoughts precede adulterous acts. It is absolutely crucial that we know how to bring every adulterous thought "captive to obey Christ" (2 Co. 10:5). For married evangelists: the sexual health of your marriage will be a determining factor in your ministry. If you refuse to carefully consider this aspect of your life, you are taking risks that the enemy of your soul will not hesitate to exploit.

Immorality (*porneia*) is mentioned twenty-four times in the New Testament. Needless to say, God considers it an important subject. The root word conveys the idea of prostitution, but was used in ancient times as well as in Scripture to encompass all sorts of wanton sexuality. *Pornography*, for example, would fall under this category, and we don't need to be reminded of how this societal phenomenon has exploded since the introduction of the Internet. We must keep in mind that pornography is a top risk for any evangelist, male or female. The careful evangelist will be sure to be in an accountability relationship with someone he or she trusts. The prayer of the psalmist will ring true in his heart:

I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will you come to me? I will walk with integrity of heart within my house; I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil. (Ps. 101:2-4)

5. TEACHING BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP

Evangelists often find themselves pushed to the front of the stage, figuratively speaking or literally. They're the ones who carry the torch for evangelism, who mobilize the saints so that the witness of the

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church can continue to increase. The evangelist is a passionate person. As we listen to him tell stories about the different people he's led to the Lord, we think to ourselves "It sounds so easy! Why doesn't that happen to me?"

This is why it's so important that the evangelist fulfill his ministry in all humility, making sure that all of the glory goes to Jesus Christ. In order to do that, the evangelist needs to have a clear vision of what biblical leadership looks like.

Leighton Ford consecrated the majority of his adult life to training young evangelists. In his book, *Transforming Leadership*, he particularly emphasizes the transformational aspect of leadership in the life of the evangelist. All biblical leadership, he says, must find its source in an intimate relationship with the Father. The evangelist remembers that his heavenly Father is holy and sovereign, that He provides for his needs, forgives him and delivers him from evil (Matt. 6:9-13). Biblical leadership flows from a relationship with the Father, is anchored in the identity of the Son and walks in the power of the Spirit. From there, the transformational process of leadership can occur naturally, "from the inside out" as our young leaders like to remind us. When defined in this way, the biblical leader is not confined to a static role which delimits his identity and his ministry. On the contrary, since his identity is based on the person of God Himself, his leadership role becomes flexible. On certain occasions he will act as a leader, while on another he may act as a follower, and neither of these will have any effect on his identity. Take, for example, my working relationship with fellow evangelist Alain Stamp. Our leadership is functional. Sometimes he takes the lead in a project and I follow him (as is the case in my role as secretary-general of France Evangelization). At other times, I'm up front and he's in the background (in my role as president of the Evangelists' Forum). Our roles are interchangeable.

This freedom to exchange leadership roles is only possible when we are convinced that our identity as a leader does not depend on our position or our responsibilities at any given moment. When we are willing to pay this price, we are ready to invest in the lives of young evangelists who will pattern their style of leadership after Jesus, for Jesus, in order to bring people to Jesus!

6. URGING TOWARD MULTIPLICATION

Multiplication is the last element of training for your evangelist. We already spoke briefly on the subject in chapter 4. It is the unequivocal condition for a visible and victorious ministry in evangelism.

Christian Schwarz has done vast amounts of research on missiology and is the author of *Natural Church Development*. He insists on the fact that growth in any structure is the result of six factors which he deems as "organic", one of which is reproduction or multiplication:

The principle of multiplication applies to all areas of church life: Just as the true fruit of an apple tree is not an apple, but another tree; the true fruit of a small group is not a new Christian, but another group; the true fruit of a church is not a new group, but a new church; the true fruit of a leader is not a follower, but a new leader; the true fruit of an evangelist is not a convert, but new evangelists.

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Leighton Ford describes two types of leaders, comparing them to a banyan tree and an aspen.¹

- The banyan tree is majestic. So majestic that its leaves do not permit the slightest ray of sun to reach the earth below it. Nothing grows under a banyan tree. The banyan leader takes up all of the space around him; no one exists but him.
- The aspen's roots reach deep into the earth below him, where no one sees them. The largest aspen tree is in Colorado and has over 44,000 offshoots which spring up from its roots. Aspens are nowhere near as majestic as banyans, but what an amazing root system! The aspen leader is the one who works discreetly to multiply himself.

Whenever a local church asks me how they can revive the ministry of evangelism in their midst, I always tell them "Be aspen leaders! Figure out who the evangelists are in your church, recognize them as such and pour your life into them so that they, in turn, can reproduce their ministry in others. With an abundance of evangelists comes an abundance of evangelistic programs!" Be careful, it works every time!

IN CONCLUSION

The six elements of training (teaching by example, investing with authority, teaching doctrine, ethics and biblical leadership, and urging toward multiplication) have proven their worth over the years. These elements were the basis of Jesus' curriculum, so why would we want to do anything differently? No one is greater than his Master!

¹www.faithandleadership.com/multimedia/leighton-ford-leadership-the-aspen-tree

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DIGGING DEEPER

*The following is taken from an interview of **Raphael Anzenberger**, evangelist and director of R2E, an evangelistic training program in France. The interview was conducted by Alain Stamp.*

What training strategy have you decided to follow at France Evangelization?

Historically speaking, France Evangelization (FE) has always required that any candidate for an evangelistic ministry complete three years of Bible institute. We have recently changed our recruitment strategy. Now we would consider God's call on an individual's life, his or her recognition by the local church, and the emergence of specific skills which are conducive to the proclamation of the Gospel as being more important. For example, our last two recruits joined FE without any prior theological training. They will be trained through an academic tutoring program for the first five years of their ministry. Keep in mind that the first two years of any candidate's ministry are "probationary". This allows us to observe and evaluate them in the areas we deem important (academics, character and competency). Although we don't require prior theological training, we certainly don't underestimate the importance of an excellent education. Our goal is that all of our evangelists earn at least a bachelor's degree in theology.

This program is innovative in that it associates mentoring with academic tutoring in order to cover all the bases of the training process. In the mentoring relationship, the emphasis is placed on the candidate's character (teaching by example, investing with authority) and the transmission of different competencies (teaching biblical leadership, urging toward multiplication). The academic tutoring side of the program focuses on helping the young evangelist obtain a solid theological foundation so that the message of the Gospel can be clearly communicated (teaching doctrine, teaching ethics). In this way the triad of "character, competency and knowledge" is developed at the same time through the mentoring relationship and the tutoring program.

In order to improve the quality of recruitment at FE, we have developed a "network of associates". We encourage anyone who wants to work with FE to join up with this group of budding evangelists for at least two years before coming to us. This way, they can become more familiar with the culture of our organization, and we can start getting to know them a little bit. Some of these associates have come out of our R2E program, which is the starting block for emerging evangelists. From R2E to the network of associates, then on to a full-time evangelist ministry with FE... that's our winning formula!

Is support-raising included in your training program?

When I decided to quit my job at Michelin to become a full-time evangelist, I was having a hard time finding financial support for my ministry. Alain Stamp told me "Don't try to avoid the support-raising side of things. This is part of the evangelist's ministry too." We need to be sure that our candidates understand this aspect of ministry as well.

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We encourage them right off the bat to put together a team of supporters who can carry the vision for their ministry. We don't demand that our young evangelists have 100% of their support before they start with us. It usually takes about two years to grow a group of financial supporters to the point where someone can have a full-time salary. This is why we encourage our new evangelists to keep their secular jobs, at least on a part-time basis, so that the financial burden doesn't become too overwhelming. As their support increases, they can begin to carve out more time for their ministry.

We also give them tools to help them get the word out on what's going on in their ministry: web sites, newsletters, prayer bulletins. The more widely their ministry is known, the quicker they can put together a team of supporters.

How can I go about developing a training program for budding evangelists in my local church?

The first step is to put together a pool of evangelists in your church (cf. chapter 6). Rubbing shoulders with one's peers is an excellent learning tool. It is the responsibility of the local church to recognize those who have the gift of evangelism and to confer them with authority so that they can begin to fulfill their ministry among the saints.

The second step is to put these evangelists in contact with movements or organizations who specialize in evangelistic ministry. The National Council of French Evangelists recommends sending budding evangelists to the European Evangelist's Forum every year. This provides them with a much needed time of spiritual reflection and encouragement:

- Training to develop the evangelist's skill set
- Networking which encourages the young evangelist to take advantage of available resources in the French-speaking evangelical world

You might also think about entrusting your budding evangelist to a group which will invest in his ministry without removing him from the local sphere. This is the case with FE, as we encourage involvement with the "network of associates" to develop the ministry of preaching evangelists.

How can we especially encourage the women in our churches who are gifted in evangelism?

You've touched upon a delicate subject which, in my opinion, has not been handled correctly in our local churches! So many female evangelists are not recognized as such because of the confusion between office and function. It is unfair and we regret this sad state of affairs. Where are the French Becky Pipperts and the modern-day Jeanne Saillens?

But even as we recognize this inequality in our churches, we need not despair! At FE we've trained more than fifteen women in evangelistic ministry in the past five years. Women need to be, even more so than men, reassured as to the legitimacy of their ministry and taught how to practice it in a world that is often hostile to their efforts. Men, we need to give them a little room!

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Martin Sanders, who wrote *The Power of Mentoring*, has consecrated a great amount of time and energy to training women in evangelism. His next book is dedicated to developing women leaders and will be an extremely useful tool for local churches.

The Evangelist's Toolbox

The Evangelist's Forum: a platform for reflection, training and facilitation for French-speaking evangelists, in association with biblical training institutes, church fellowships, missions and other Christian organizations which promote evangelism. URL: www.forumdesevangelistes.org.

Network of Emerging Evangelists: our vision at R2E is to create a network of young leaders who are known for their passion and dedication to worldwide evangelism. Our goal is to reaffirm their call as evangelists, accompany them in their academic journey, and encourage them in their spiritual growth and character development. This network also allows them to be in a close relationship with other leaders-in-training, so that they can function as a unified group, holding each other up in prayer. URL: www.france-evangelisation.com/r2e.