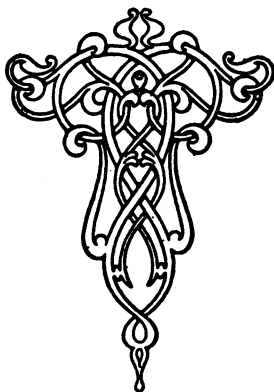


EVANGELISTIC SERMONS



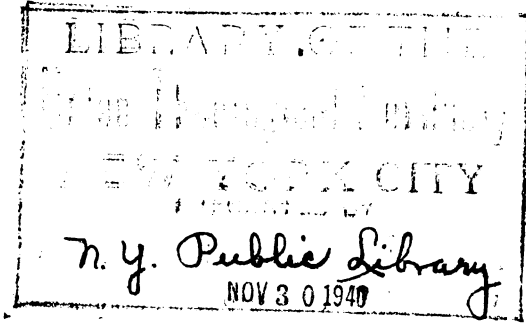
TOGETHER WITH PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS
FOR THE CONDUCT OF THE AFTER-MEETING



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XIX
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THE AFTER-MEETING

THERE is no part of our work in which more care should be exercised than the after-service. If it becomes formal, this at once lessens its effectiveness; and, if it is too mechanical, it immediately impresses as insincere those who may be somewhat interested. It is most difficult to suggest any rules by which the after-meetings should be conducted; but the experiences of others may be helpful, and it is only with this thought in mind that this chapter is written.

While it is true that sometimes it becomes necessary to appoint an after-service unexpectedly because the impression made by the preacher is so deep, yet the rule is that the after-service must be planned carefully, must be made a subject of constant prayer, and those things must be done to bring people to decision which may be suggested to us by the Holy Spirit, for if we are in a receptive frame of mind He will most assuredly lead us. Those who are trained evangelists, or those who are especially gifted as pastors in the winning of men to Christ, will understand what is meant when we suggest that it is almost better to have no method to which we are wedded, in order that the Holy Spirit may suggest to us some new plan for each meeting we hold.

I ask the people of God to pray for me.

Name

Residence

Church or Pastor Preferred.....

Usher's Name

DECISION CARD.

Turning from all past sins, and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, I do hereby decide, God helping me, henceforth to lead a Christian life. This I do, freely, fully and forever.

Name.....

Date.....

(Please hand or send this card to the pastor.)

Provide the worker with a few of these cards, and it might be well to supply lead pencils, which may be fastened to the cards with a little rubber band. When the sermon has been preached and you are sure there may be an impression, ask the workers to rise and turn quickly to all those who may be sitting near them, offering to them the card which may be in their possession. Explain this card thoroughly to the people before the distribution begins; sometimes it is wise to sing a hymn softly while the work is being done, and sometimes the pastor may continue to urge upon his hearers the necessity of immediate decision, while

the work is going on. In some cases it is well to distribute the cards to every one before an explanation is made and then after each one has a card in his hand, tell them just what you would like to have them do. The Christians in the congregation might take the card which they have received and use it either in the service, or out of it, with those who may not be Christians; those who are not members of the church should be urged to at least take this stand.

When all the cards have been collected, they may be turned over to the minister, and he will have before him a number of names of people who may be approached easily, and, in many cases, quite as easily won to Christ.

There are two things to remember about the Inquirer's Card:

First, that it may, or may not, be a record of a decision, but in any case it is as valuable as if one should sit down in his home and write the minister a letter, saying: "I have an earnest desire to live a Christian life. I am willing to follow any light if God will give it to me, and I ask the people of God to pray for me." If fifty such letters should be written to a pastor in a day, he would think that certainly a great awakening had come to his church.

Second, the inquirer's card is valuable in proportion as it is carefully followed up. It is a rare thing for one who has signed this card to seek out the minister for himself.

Following such a service as this, it would be very

easy to have an after-meeting, and concerning this after-meeting the following suggestions may be made:—

As a rule it is not considered wise to have the after-meeting in the same place as the preaching service. However, if this should be necessary, it is a good plan to ask the people to rise and then state that you expect to hold an after-service, that those are invited who have not yet taken a stand for Christ, that all Christians are expected to stay who may feel the need of a deeper work of grace in their hearts, and that those especially are asked to tarry who may be interested in the conversion of some friend or loved one.

Then state that, if it is necessary for any one to pass out, they may have the privilege of doing so during the singing of this hymn. After the audience has been changed, if the auditorium is large, it is well to draw the people nearer together and then by the singing of a hymn, the offering of brief prayers, and the statements again of the thought of the sermon which has produced conviction, you are ready for the after-meeting work. If it is possible to change the place of meeting, then it is ordinarily wise to ask the people to rise and sing, and then state that during the singing of a hymn the persons above indicated, that is, those not members of the church, Christians desiring a deeper work of grace, and those interested in the conversion of their friends, or loved ones, may pass into the other room during the singing of the hymn, asking all the others to wait until the benediction is

pronounced. The advantage in this plan—rather than to close the meeting and let any one come into the after-service who will—is twofold :

First, if one moves out of a congregation for an after-meeting, he has taken a long step toward Christ.

Second, if he waits until the audience passes out of the church, is slightly impressed, or even has a deep sense of conviction, this may be dispelled and he be swept along with the crowd, and before he realizes it, is out of the church and on his way home. If the change in the place of meeting is thus made, again we are ready for the after-service. The following principles always hold :

In the conduct of a successful after-meeting, the invitation to those who may take their stand for Christ must be given with a kind of holy boldness. The least action of timidity or fear on the part of the leader will defeat his plan. When there is not the very deepest impression, then ask the people to do the easiest thing first ; that is, call upon the Christians for some decision, suggest that those who desire to be remembered in prayer for their own growth in grace, or in behalf of their friends, should rise or lift their hands. If the impression is deep, and you know it by intuition, then you may ask those present to do the most difficult thing, and sometimes the more you ask them to do the more willingly do they follow your suggestions.

There are four methods which have usually been adopted in after-meetings :

First, those interested are asked to lift their hands, sometimes while all heads are bowed (but this is not necessary). After the hands have been lifted they are dealt with personally.

Second, they are asked to stand and speak out boldly their determination to come to Christ.

Third, they may be asked to come to the front and kneel at an altar, or one which may be improvised by the placing of chairs in the chapel or church.

Fourth, they may be asked to come to the front and take the minister's hand if they are ready to profess allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. The minister, if he has had any experience at all, will very soon know which one of these plans he may follow; or he may feel that it is not wise to adopt any of them, for there may be suggested to him something very much better.

After the first step has been taken, then we are ready for our dealing with the inquirer. This work may be both general and particular. If the leader of the meeting holds the service in his own hands, humanly speaking, it is well for him to state fully the plan of salvation. One cannot be too particular about this. Sometimes we err in the fact that we imagine the story is so well known that we need not repeat it, but frequently this is a fatal mistake. It is well to make frequent use of good illustrations which aptly illustrate the truth you are presenting. Sometimes the audience may be appealed to for the sake of securing emphasis upon some principle which you have stated, although this is not infrequently dangerous,

for injudicious people may sometimes undo the whole effect of the sermon and the appeal. If the congregation should be appealed to, then let it be stated explicitly that the remarks are to be brief and entirely to the point.

I once heard the late Dr. Maltbie Babcock relate an illustration in which he was telling how easy it was to be a Christian if we would but follow God's plan. He said that Harry Moorehouse, the distinguished evangelist, was a guest in his father's house and that one evening while he was waiting to preach his sermon a child of the household came to the door and opened it. As the evangelist heard the door open he turned to look and the door closed again and no one appeared. Then he heard the sound once more, and without turning, said, "Come in." The child came into his presence and said: "Mr. Moorehouse, I want to be a Christian." "Well," said he, "you may be, for it is very easy," and he asked her to turn to the fifty-third chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah and read the fourth and fifth verses, only he told her to make them personal, and she read them in this way: "Surely he hath borne *my* griefs, and carried *my* sorrows, yet *I* did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for *my* transgressions, he was bruised for *my* iniquities, the chastisement of *my* peace was upon him and with his stripes"—and as she came to this part she suddenly stopped; her eyes filled up with tears, and the minister said, "Read on," and she read, "*I* am healed." "It is just

as easy as this," said Mr. Moorehouse, and the child went away believing. If the dealing is particular and individuals deal with individuals, then make a free use of the Word of God, although, of course, this is not to be neglected in the general work. Such verses as John v. 24, should be frequently used—"Verily, verily-I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." And note especially in this verse Jesus states that, if we believe on him, we shall not come into judgment, and we have the immediate possession of eternal life.

The sixth chapter of John and the forty-seventh verse is also most useful: "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." But perhaps there is nothing better than John iii. 16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

A distinguished minister told me that he lived, when a child, in a home, every member of the household being, as he expressed it, a perfect battery of emotion. They insisted that he could be saved only in their way, and he tried, again and again, without success, to find Christ. At last he gave up in despair. One afternoon, when a student, he was sitting under a tree on the campus, and he began to read this verse, John iii. 16, which Luther has called the gospel in a nutshell, and he said: "Why this seems plain; 'for

God so loved the world,' then He must have loved me, for I am part of it; 'that whosoever believeth,' that is a plain statement, and certainly does not pass me by for I am one of that company. If, therefore, this is His word, and I accept it, then, according to His word, I am saved." "And suddenly," he said, "I rose to my feet, clasped my Bible, and said, as I looked up: 'Lord God, I expect to stand upon this promise, I will hold on to it through time, and I will take it with me into Thy very presence at the judgment, and then I must be saved, or it will go hard with the Book'; and almost immediately," he said, "there came a perfect rush of joy, and I have had the consciousness ever since that I was accepted of Him."

No after-meeting should close without all being urged to take a definite stand for Christ, not only in the meeting, but to take immediate steps towards being identified with some church, for it is literally true that it is impossible to find a joyous, successful, fruitful Christian in one who willingly neglects church membership.