

**Gospel Meetings and Evangelism Campaigns—
we tried it in the past and it didn't work!
By Bob Young**

Roberto Bottrel, author of the book, *Multiplication—the challenge before every Christian, every Leader, and the Church*, describes an “aha” experience. At a conference, Bottrel and his wife spoke about the multiplication that is possible through cell groups. Afterward, one listener commented, “All of this you are teaching is common ground for us. No debate about it. We lived this vision in the past and we experienced the results. What I want to know is why did it die out?”

As Bottrel tells the story, while he was searching for an answer, his wife took the microphone. “I am the one that has a question for you: if you agree with the principles, if you were experiencing the results, how did you let it die?”

Bottrel says that her question still rings in his ears. The question rings in my ears. I can think of many successful and productive church activities that we have let die. “How did we let them die? Why did we let them die?” Can we talk about the gospel meeting or evangelistic campaign!

For many years, preaching the gospel was the central purpose and goal of the church. Vacation Bible School, gospel meetings, radio, television, campaigns, the printed page. Preaching the gospel was the “business” of the church. During my years in local church ministry, gospel meetings and campaigns were times when the harvest was reaped after months of diligent efforts in sowing the seed. Members invited family, friends, and neighbors. Dozens of unbelievers attended. The churches I worked with doubled and tripled in 8 to 10 years as people were won for the Lord.

When I taught in the university, I developed a Personal Evangelism class. The first day of class, the students asked what we were going to do in the class. I responded, “We are going to evangelize.” At the end of the semester, the students, with little or no previous experience, had brought almost a dozen people to Christ.

In mission work, gospel campaigns attract dozens of unbelievers. Why would we not do what we know will bring people to Jesus? Of equal importance, as I look back across 50+ years of preaching, gospel meetings and campaigns serve to remind the church members of the primary purpose and work of the church.

I realize that “the times, they are a-changing.” We do not want to offend anyone. We do not like conflict. We do not want to be accused of intolerance. We are afraid of being rejected. Nonetheless, I can assure you that preaching the gospel is the lifeblood of the local church.

Yes, attendance at gospel meetings waned. (In my experience, the members quit attending even while many unbelievers continued being interested and attending.) My question, “How did we let it die?” I am encouraged to raise the question because many responded positively to pictures that I recently posted of a gospel campaign in the Dominican Republic.

How is it that numerous churches across Latin America are growing incredibly? How can newly planted churches explode to 30 or 50 members in the first year? How can small, fledgling, struggling churches baptize 30, 40, or 50 persons in a year? The answer? They are committed to sharing the gospel!

How is it that missionaries spend years in the mission field and produce very little fruit for the kingdom? The answer is found in how aggressively and consistently the gospel is shared!

Thankfully, as 2020 unfolds, some U.S. churches are developing a renewed 20/20 vision. The gospel is being preached; the harvest is being reaped. Churches are growing, new churches are being planted. How many other churches could be living the same reality? Let us not give up! Let us not let “gospel preaching” die!

Look around you. Evaluate the situation, assess the opportunities, see the opportunities we are missing. Preachers, preach the gospel – in season and out of season. Never quit reminding the members that the gospel is God’s power to salvation.

The gospel meeting or campaign is one proven method for sharing that Good News! Why did we let it die? Was it lack of faith? Fear? Comfort zones? Distractions? Satisfaction? The first step is to admit that we lost our way, confess and repent, and with confidence in God’s patience and power to begin anew. Preach the gospel! It is God’s power to salvation for everyone everywhere!