

Open Air Preaching

By John Duncan (www.gospeljohn.com)

Biblical Evangelism

Open-air preaching is the most used method for Biblical Evangelism. Jesus was an open-air preacher (Sermon on the *Mount*), John the Baptist was an open-air preacher (he preached in the *wilderness*), Paul was an open-air preacher (*Mars Hill*), Stephen (Acts 7), and many more such as Peter, Jeremiah, Amos, Jotham, Jonah, Isaiah, etc.

We believe that the Gospel is a confrontational message, a call to forsake *all* known sin, and a committing of the soul and the whole being to Jesus Christ. We fervently oppose the message that one can continue in sin while in a relationship with God.

Beginning at around noon, with no amplification, Ellen and I approach the free speech area in the secular universities and lift up our voices, crying aloud and sparing not against sin, as the Bible says to do in Isaiah (Is 58:1).

I believe that one of the greatest needs in America today is aggressive evangelism in the open-air. Many of our modern methods only reach those that *want* to hear it, read it or tune in. Open-air preaching reaches those who would not come to a traditional evangelistic meeting otherwise.

I have tried it all: pizza suppers, musical outreaches, door-to-door witnessing, literature distribution, book tables, etc. All these have been effective to a degree, but open-air preaching is by far the most effective (as well as the most controversial).

Is Open-Air Preaching Biblical?

In Bible times life was much simpler than it is today. From the written page to communication in cyberspace, today's transfer of information is radically different than that of Biblical times. Why then should you consider or emphasize the description of PREACHING found with Scripture? The most obvious answer, as we will fully document, is GOD'S examples found within His Word. This chapter will show the weakness found in contemporary approaches vs. the strength and power found in the Scriptures.

Satan's work to eliminate the Biblical method of preaching has shown much fruit.

Today's understanding of the word "PREACH" has only been assigned to a select few: Pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc. In addition to this, the actual idea of PREACHING has been re-defined as conversing, witnessing, sharing, or the like. This deception has, for all practical purposes, virtually eliminated the actual practice found in Scripture.

Additionally these two contemporary "definitions" work very effectively to quench those who would read, see and attempt to follow the men of the Bible. The high tech world of books, radio, TV, and stadium venues has become our day's way of getting the Word out. While looking like the most effective way, their substitution for Open-Air Preaching has left most of the world unreached. All of these approaches share a common ingredient:

For the most part they only communicate to those who want to hear or are already believers.

With the "meeting" format the vast percentage of the audience is hearing information they already possess. Literature is useful, but only to those who take the time to read it. Witnessing is good, and should be the mainstay in a believer's life, but again it is very hard to reach more than a few. While God uses these methods to reap some of those who are ready, the rest of the world goes without. In addition, the methods of today are very expensive: a poor use of God's money and the church's time.

PUBLIC PREACHING IS THE NUMBER ONE METHOD OF OUTREACH USED IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT...is the most effective way to get the Gospel to the most people, in the shortest time and at the least expense!

Definitions

What then is PREACHING? According to Noah Webster, "Preach" come from a Latin word meaning to "proclaim publicly... a sermon urging acceptance or abandonment of an idea or course of action , specifically in an earnestly tiresome and officious manner."

"Officious" it seems is the key word in much of what is BIBLICAL preaching. The Prophets through Christ and the New Testament church told it like it was and paid the price for their boldness and "officious" manner; as it continues to be defined:

"volunteering one's services where they are not asked for or wanted; meddlesome" and "high-handed."

As we have outlined, PREACHING today is narrowly defined and misunderstood to the exclusion of the above definition. It typically refers to invited people, invited speakers, and scheduled services. BIBLICAL PREACHING, however, conforms to the above definition, and is often to hostile crowds outside "religious" services...to those who would seek to even kill the messenger.

The Old Testament

The Old Testament is rich with accounts of PUBLIC PREACHING.

"Wisdom CRIETH WITHOUT; she uttereth her voice IN THE STREETS: SHE CRIETH IN THE CHIEF PLACE OF CONCOURSE, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words..." (Proverbs 1:20-21).

"CRIETH" means shouting out loud. "WITHOUT" means outside. "CHIEF PLACE OF CONCOURSE" means where the biggest crowds are.

"Doth not wisdom CRY? And understanding PUT FORTH HER VOICE? She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors." (Proverbs 8:1-3).

Old testament prophets often PREACHED at the GATES of the city. The gates were the busiest place in town. The cities in Bible times were surrounded by walls for protection, and all traffic in and out of the city went through the gate. It was the place to be to get a message to all visitors (Genesis 19:1) as well as the citizens (going in and out to work in the fields), and the king and all dignitaries. All kinds of activity took place at the gates:

- Business transactions (Genesis 23:10ff; II Kings 7:1)
- Community meetings/ "city hall" (Genesis 34:20ff; II Samuel 19:8; Proverbs 31:23; Lam. 5:14)
- Legal decisions/court (Deut. 22:15ff; 25:7; Ruth 4:1; II Sam. 15:2; Amos 5:15; Zech 8:16)
- Public executions (Deuteronomy 22:24)
- Public mourning (II Samuel 18:33)
- Daily chores (II Samuel 23:15; I Kings 17:10)
- Religious meetings/idolatry (I Kings 22:10; II Kings 23:8; II Chronicles 18:9; Acts 14:13)
- The poor (Psa. 69:12; Proverbs 22:22; Amos 5:12)

These then are some of the things that took place at the gates. A man PREACHING at the gate would not only reach large crowds, but also have an IMPACT on and a direct outreach to such varied arenas as: the business community, court decisions, idolatrous meetings, soldiers, government, etc., etc.

AMOS WAS A STREET PREACHER!

"They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly. (Amos 5:10)

ISAIAH WAS A STREET PREACHER!

They "lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate..." (Isaiah 29:21)

JEREMIAH WAS A STREET PREACHER!

"Thus said the Lord unto me, Go and stand in the GATE of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the GATES of Jerusalem; and say unto them, Hear ye the word of the Lord, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem that enter in by these gates: Thus saith the Lord..." (Jeremiah 17:19-20)

"The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Stand in the GATE of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord. (Jeremiah 7:1-2)

An interesting point about these men is that most of them spent most of their time not reaching those in other countries, or the most reprobate sinners, but God's "chosen people," who had the Bible, as they entered the house of God to worship the LORD!

"Thus saith the Lord; Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah...and thy people that enter in by these GATES." (Jeremiah 22:1-2)

"Then read Baruch in the book of the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord...at the entry of the new GATE of the Lord's house, in the ears of all the people." (Jeremiah 36:10)

The PROPHETS of GOD in the Old Testament did not use "low-key," "subtle" (see Genesis 3:1) approaches, such as literature tables, passing out tracts, invitations to religious meetings, traveling Gospel singing teams, etc., etc. These methods have some limited value, but again, what is the MAIN method of outreach in the BIBLE? What is the most effective way to reach the most people at the least expense? What is the method that most ACCURATELY REFLECTS THE REAL CHARACTER OF GOD? What is the method that is most consistent with the message of Heaven or HELL? What is the one method that receives the least amount of teaching, encouragement and promotion?

STREET PREACHING!!

"Then the Lord said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the STREETS of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them." (Jeremiah 11:6)

"The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord..." (Jeremiah 2:1-2)

"CRY ALOUD; SPARE NOT; LIFT UP THY VOICE LIKE A TRUMPET, AND

SHOW MY PEOPLE THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS AND THE HOUSE OF JACOB THEIR SINS." (Isaiah 58:1)

In JUDGES 9:7 when Jotham had a message to get to a crowd of people in Shechem (who wanted to kill him), how did he do it? Not with literature, or invitations to religious services, or any other "subtle" methods.

"Jotham went and stood in the top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and CRIED, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you." (Judges 9:7)

Jotham found a safe place from which they could all hear him, and LIFTED UP HIS VOICE. Jotham was an open air preacher (ca. 1300 B.C.)

JONAH - REACHING THE UNCHURCHED

The best example in the OLD TESTAMENT of a foreign missionary is JONAH. GOD sent him to warn Nineveh. Did he rent a hall and invite people to come to a scheduled meeting, enticing them with "special music" and Gospel entertainment? No. Jonah was charged to preach to Nineveh (as we are to the world!), not only to those who would attend his meeting, but to the whole city. The BIBLE says Nineveh was "an exceeding great city of three days journey" (Jonah 3:3); i.e., it took 3 days just to walk around it. Diodorus confirms that Nineveh was 60 miles in circumference (Herodotus records that a day's journey was 20 miles). Jonah 3:4 says "Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he CRIED, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Jonah went "a day's journey" into Nineveh, a city of 3 day's journey, and CRIED. He was PREACHING as he was walking, i.e. OUTDOORS. Jonah was a STREET PREACHER, walking the streets as he preached his message of judgment and truth..

What About the New Testament?

With the subject firmly established within the largely Hebrew mission in the Old Testament, and it's mostly limited focus in the Middle East, we now turn our attention to the New Testament. Beginning with John and moving to our commission to the whole world we are instructed in Mark 16:15,

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel TO EVERY CREATURE."

Our job is to PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE IN THE WORLD. Simple logic will show the best way to accomplish this is to find where the most "creatures" are in one place at one time and proclaim the message loud enough for them all to hear.

"Whom we preach, WARNING EVERY MAN and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in CHRIST JESUS." (Colossians 1:28)

The first PREACHER in the NEW TESTAMENT was JOHN THE BAPTIST. Once again, his preaching was lacking comfortable buildings, music, entertainment, etc. John was an OPEN AIR PREACHER:

"In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, REPENT YE, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:1-2; see also Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3)

Matthew says Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan came out to hear John preaching (Matthew 3:5-6). John was baptizing in the river Jordan. Jews who traveled back and forth to Galilee refused to take the direct route through Samaria (John 4:9), but rather went to the Jordan River and followed it up to and from Galilee, so John picked out a place to preach repentance and baptize at a place of heavy traffic, with large crowds.

"Witnessing?"

With the Biblical emphasis of PREACHING TO CROWDS, there is not much "one-on-one witnessing" talked about in Scripture. In today's Church however, there is a lot of training and promotion of witnessing. In Sunday School, Bible colleges, seminaries, workshops and books there is heavy emphasis on this approach.

The personal witnessing experiences of JESUS CHRIST get a lot of attention, as well they should, but in the 4 Gospels, covering 2-3 years of CHRIST'S ministry, we find only about THREE cases of personal witnessing: Nicodemus, the woman at the well, and Zaccheus. The Gospels spend much more time pointing out CHRIST'S dealings with "MULTITUDES:" Matthew 4:25; 5:1; 8:1; 18; 12:15; 13:2,34; 14:14; 15:10,30-35,39; 17:14; 19:2; 21:8,11. (Also notable is that Jesus' one-on-one situations usually came out of these "multitude" situations).

Jesus was with a large crowd when He looked up and saw Zaccheus, and invited him to come down (Luke 19:1-5). And He was in Jerusalem, crowded with Jews from all over the world for the Passover, where He drove the moneychangers out of the temple and preached, "Make not my Father's house an house of merchandise," and after causing that little stir, Nicodemus came to Him by night (John 2:13-3:1). En route back to His home in Galilee after that incident He stopped and exposed the secret sins of the woman at the well (John 4).

JESUS' most famous sermons were delivered OUTDOORS. For example, the sermon ON THE MOUNT (Matthew 5,6,7). In Luke 6:17 he preached to a "great multitude" in "the plain" (outdoors). The "Olivet discourse" (Matthew 24) was delivered on the Mount of Olives (outdoors). In Matthew 13 His well known parables were preached to "great multitudes" by "the sea side" (JESUS was a "beach preacher"). He sat in a boat and taught the multitude on the shore.

Just to be clear, we are not saying to stop the work of witnessing : we do it and we encourage it! Again, our interest is given to the MAIN method of outreach found in the Scriptures: open air preaching.

The four Gospels are often described as John and the " three synoptic Gospels," meaning Matthew, Mark, and Luke are similar to each other, yet not much information in John is found in the "synoptics." The reason for this is simple: Matthew, Mark, and Luke devote most of their attention to Jesus' ministry in Galilee, where He lived most of the time. But several times a year, all the Jews in the world would go to Jerusalem for the Feasts (see Exodus 23:14,17). Christ would go to Jerusalem and PREACH to these large crowds gathered there. Everything in JOHN is concerned with these trips of Jesus to Jerusalem during these feasts. The PASSOVER is mentioned in John 2:13; 6:4; and 12:1. The feast of TABERNACLES is mentioned in John 7:2. Another feast is mentioned in John 5:1. HANUKKAH is mentioned in John 10:22. JESUS CHRIST came to Jerusalem to cleanse the Temple (at least twice, John 2; Matthew 21, Mark 11 and Luke 19), and PREACH TO THE MULTITUDES.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and CRIED, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." (John 7:37).

JESUS commanded His apostles:

"What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light, and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." (Matthew 10:27)

His apostles carried this out in the book of Acts. On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), we find one of the greatest examples of STREET PREACHING of all time. The charismatic read Acts 2, see tongues, and say: We need to speak in tongues like they did in Acts 2. Some fundamentalists read Acts 2 and see 3000 added to the church in one day, and they say: We need to have large church growth like they did in Acts 2. What is missing is the recognition of the delivery and method of STREET PREACHING found in Acts 2., TONGUES drew a crowd, Peter preached REPENTANCE (Acts 2:38), and the church grew.

It is notable that preaching repentance involves the whole counsel of GOD. In addition to the Gospel, CHRIST preached "THE Kingdom of GOD." This involves the whole of GOD's character and all instruction on all subjects found in SCRIPTURE.

"Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore DISPUTED he in the ...market daily...(Acts 17:17)

Yes, the apostles' evangelism often involved "DISPUTING" and judgment, not just preaching GOD's love (see Acts 6:9; 9:22,29; 11:2; 15:2,7; 17:2; 18:19,28; 19:8,9; 28:23; see also Neh. 13:11; 17,25; Proverbs 28:4; Ephesians 5:11; I Thessalonians 2:2; Jude 3,9; see also examples in Matthew 22; John 7,8).

Why the market? Crowds! The apostles wanted to get the Gospel to the most people at one time, so they went to the markets where crowds gathered, and disputed, preaching the kingdom and wisdom of GOD in the open air.

In Conclusion We See:

MODERN methods are:

- Expensive!
- Limited to reaching a few of the many who we are commanded to reach
- Inefficient
- Time and labor intensive
- Bureaucratic
- Deceiving, in that they have a great show of power, when in fact they are weak.

BIBLICAL methods are:

- Inexpensive
- Unbureaucratic
- Strong and in line with the power and content of the message (Heaven and Hell!)
- Able to provide place for the defense and explanation of all BIBLICAL matters (see Paul at Mars' hill; Acts 17)
- Able to provide for rebuke, exhortation and warning to all people and situations as required, Ezek. 3:15-21 (Watchmen!)
- Time and labor efficient
- Wise with the wisdom of GOD

Public, open air preaching of the Gospel and the Kingdom of GOD is imperative for the fulfillment of the GREAT COMMISSION. With the help of GOD available, this is an attainable goal within each of your groups, fellowships, and Churches. It is not unreasonable to think that of every 50 or so believers, ONE could do this work. When you add them up, a city the size of Los Angeles would net at least 500 to 600 men to shoulder the plow in this untouched field. The impact of such a group would be immediate and powerful: from the simple Gospel to the public rebuke of evil, GOD's mind and will would be shown to all.

"He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." (2 Corinthians 9:6)

A Short History of Open-Air Preaching

There are those who say that preaching in the streets was good for Biblical times, but not for today. Here we will do a historical study of open air preaching and its effectiveness throughout Church history. The subject of preaching is to be differentiated from that of "witnessing." The preaching spoken of throughout this history is best defined by Christ himself in Matthew 10:27: things heard and proclaimed from the housetops.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon: "It would be very easy to prove that revivals of religion have usually been accompanied, if not caused, by a considerable amount of preaching out of doors, or in unusual places."

STREET PREACHING has spawned major movements and Protestant denominations in the last 2000 years. Time and space will not permit us to give more than a few highlights in this format, but hopefully this information will enlighten those with eyes to see, the power and effectiveness of this bold Biblical, and "consistent with the message" approach (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18).

The **Apostles** spread Christianity throughout the Roman Empire through street preaching, but soon the early church began to see persecution by the Roman Empire. Since public expression of faith in Jesus resulted in death, the Church went underground. When Constantine became emperor Christianity became the official state religion, and there was a decrease in zeal to spread the faith. Then the absolute power that corrupts absolutely corrupted the Church, and it became more of a political organization, losing sight of the self-sacrificing discipleship of the New Testament.

Some attempted to stay on the pure path and questioned the new directions of the "Church," challenging papal authority, infant baptism, and other unbiblical doctrines. These groups however were suppressed by those in authority, and were persecuted by the Bishop of Rome and his followers through the centuries. This faithful line, known by various names (**Paulicans, Bogomiles, Cathari, Montanists, Donatists and Albigenses**. See "Trail of Blood" by J. M. Carroll.) is traced back to Apostolic times, and are no doubt responsible for a continuation of the narrow path.

Because of intense persecution, public proclamation of the Word of God was virtually non-existent, but as time went on some became very vocal about their displeasure with the papacy. This came from groups within the Catholic Church upset at its growing worldliness, which became "heretics" whose exhortations got them excommunicated.

Below are just a few of the history-changing STREET PREACHERS of the last 20 centuries.

Pre-Cursors to the Protestants

CATHOLIC ORDERS: FRANCISCANS, DOMINICANS.

Though we as Protestants now carry the true form of Biblical faith and understanding concerning GOD and His kingdom, it is noteworthy to see that even within the Catholic church public proclamation of faith took place and is remembered.

The Franciscan Order in the Catholic Church was founded by **Francis of Assisi** (1182-1226). Francis was son of a wealthy cloth merchant, and spent his youth in pleasure and frolicking until an illness while he was a prisoner of war caused him to reflect on eternity. He later took seriously the commands of Christ to His disciples to sell all and give to the poor, which Francis and his followers did, and received permission from the Pope for their order and "to preach repentance everywhere." According to the Catholic Encyclopedia (1909) Francis "usually preached out of doors, in the market-places, from church steps, from the walls of castle courtyards." **FRANCIS OF ASSISI WAS A STREET PREACHER!**

Many of the early Franciscan preachers were so popular that the churches were not big enough to hold the throngs that came to hear them, so they were forced to preach outside the church in the open air to accommodate the crowds. Some of such popular preachers were **Berthold of Regensburg** (1220-1272), **Anthony of Padua** (1195-1231), and **Bernardino of Siena** (1380-1444). The fearlessness of these Franciscan friars can be seen in this account of some early Franciscan missionaries to Spain:

"Six brothers were sent to Arab Spain. At first they were politely received, but in Seville they entered a mosque and preached against the Koran.... They were hauled out, beaten, and dragged before the emir. They defied him and reviled Mohammed, that wicked slave of the devil. They were then taken to the top of a tower, whence they shouted down that Mohammed was an imposter. Jailed, they tried to convert the jailer and the other prisoners. Since the authorities could do nothing with them, the missioners were sent to Morocco, where, being still defiant, they were tortured and beheaded...."

Another shining light from the followers of Francis was **Raymund Lully** (or Ramon Lull, or Raymundus Lullus, 1232-1315). He had a burden to preach to Muslims on their own turf: he wanted to travel to North Africa and evangelize in the streets of a Mohammedan town. His dream came true when he was in his sixties, when he traveled to Bugia in North Africa and "found his way to a public place, stood up boldly, and proclaimed in the Arabic language that Christianity was the only true faith." He was promptly arrested and deported. He returned, however, when he was in his eighties, and "came forth into the open market and presented himself to the people as the same man whom they had once expelled from their town. ... Lull stood before them and threatened them with divine wrath if they still persisted in their errors." This time Raymund Lullus was stoned to death by the mob. He died a martyr, preaching in the streets of a Muslim town, in 1315. **FRANCISCANS WERE STREET PREACHERS!**

The Dominicans were founded by **Dominic** (1170-1221), who traveled with Diego and journeyed from town to town conducting open air debates. Some Dominican preachers were again so popular that they had to preach outside the church to accommodate the crowds that came to hear them. Such a Dominican preacher was Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419). DOMINICANS WERE STREET PREACHERS!

Early Protestants

Before Luther and the Protestant Reformation came along, the groundwork for their success was laid by several groups that rose within the Catholic Church and questioned papal authority to the point of getting excommunicated. Three such groups arose in France in the 12th century and were started by STREET PREACHERS.

The Henricians were started by **Henry of Lausanne** (died 1148), the Petrobrussians by **Peter de Bruys** (died 1126). They worked together denouncing romanist doctrines like infant baptism and transubstantiation (both were eventually condemned as heretics and martyred.). They also rejected Church buildings, and "preached on the streets and in the open places." THE HENRICIANS AND PETROBRUSIANS WERE STREET PREACHERS!"

WALDENSES

The Waldenses were started by **Peter Waldo**, a wealthy merchant in Lyons, France in the 12th century. One day he asked a theologian what he should do to gain eternal life. He was answered with the words of Jesus to the rich young ruler, to sell his possessions, give the money to the poor, and follow Christ. Waldo took this literally, selling his business, giving away his wealth. Together with his followers, they traveled by twos, preaching in the streets, reading passages of Scripture which they translated themselves into the common language. According to Foxe's Book of Martyrs the Inquisition was originally launched against the Waldenses. THE WALDENSES WERE STREET PREACHERS!

The LOLLARDS

Now we come to **John Wycliffe** (1330-1384), "the morningstar of the Reformation". Wycliffe was the first to translate the Bible into the English language (from the Vulgate), and the Wycliffe Bible Translators take their name from him. His followers were called Lollards, and traveled throughout England preaching in the streets and marketplaces against the errors of Popery. THE LOLLARDS WERE STREET PREACHERS!

THE PROTESTANT REFORMERS

The early Protestant reformers necessarily had to be outdoor preachers, since, as Spurgeon points out, the churches were in the hands of the papacy. **William Farel** (1489-1565), who paved the way for John Calvin to come to Switzerland, and has been called "the pioneer of Protestantism in Western Switzerland," was a STREET PREACHER. "He turned every stump and stone into a pulpit, every house, every street, and market-place into a church."

The Presbyterian Church was founded in Scotland by **John Knox** (1513-1572), who started out as a bodyguard for a STREET PREACHER named **George Wishart**. After Wishart was martyred in 1546, Knox took over as leader of the reformation. Wishart was not allowed to preach in the churches and so preached in the market-places and fields. John Knox accompanied him on his preaching tours, sword in hand, to protect him from violence." Later, when the Church of England was established in Scotland, Protestant preachers were banned from their pulpits and became field preachers, proclaiming their message in the open air. Some of these Scottish Presbyterian field preachers included **Richard Cameron** (1648-1680) and **Donald Cargill** (1619-1681). THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH WAS STARTED BY STREET PREACHERS!

POST-REFORMATION PREACHERS

After the Reformation other great movements were started by STREET PREACHERS.

The Methodist Church, co-founded by **George Whitefield** (1714-1770) and **John Wesley** (1703-1791) is an example of this period. These two were Anglicans, but being banned from speaking in churches since they were not "licensed," they took to FIELD PREACHING, boldly proclaiming GOD'S WORD to large crowds in streets and markets. Whitefield spoke to estimated crowds of up to 20,000 people in the open air. They traveled throughout England and the American colonies, and were instrumental in the GREAT AWAKENING, a mighty revival that swept the colonies in the eighteenth century. THE METHODIST CHURCH WAS STARTED BY STREET PREACHERS!

George Whitefield stated: "I believe I never was more acceptable to my Master than when I was standing to teach those hearers in the open fields." ... "I now preach to ten times more people than I should, if had been confined to the Churches."

Also from **John Wesley**: "I am well assured that I did far more good to my Lincolnshire parishioners by preaching three days on my father's tomb than I did by preaching three years in his pulpit." ... "To this day field preaching is a cross to me, but I know my commission and see no other way of preaching the gospel to every creature".

A friend of Whitefield and Wesley's started a great revival in Wales called the Welsh Revival. His name was **Howell Harris**, and is another example of a man known to be a

FIELD PREACHER.

Another great Methodist outdoor preacher at this time was **Gideon Ouseley** (1762-1839). He traveled on horseback and preached several times a day, without dismounting, in streets, fairs and markets throughout Ireland. Methodists were also instrumental in America's second Great Awakening, typified by outdoor Camp Meetings, started in 1800 by **James Mcready**, and also featuring the preaching of **Peter Cartwright** (1785-1872) and **Lorenzo Dow** (1777-1834).

A great Baptist revival in Scotland was the result of the FIELD PREACHING of **Robert** (1764-1842) and **James** (1768-1851) **Haldane** and **Rowland Hill** (one of the founders of the Religious Tract Society, and an early advocate of vaccination). They were Anglicans, but converted to Baptists when the established Church forbade their field preaching. Robert and James left their business and sold their estate to devote their time to preaching the Gospel.

MODERN MISSIONS MOVEMENT

The first modern Protestant missionary society was started by **William Carey** (1761-1834), the first missionary to India. Carey had little education, but taught himself science and languages. He translated the Bible into 11 languages. He went to India and started by preaching to large crowds that gathered in the streets of the brothel district. One of his converts was a young British sailor named **Robert Flockhart** (1778-1857), who went back to the British Isles and preached in the streets of Edinburgh for 43 years until his death. One of Carey's associates, **Mr. Chamberlain** would go to the Ganges river where Hindus gathered, and start an argument with one of the Brahmins. When the argument drew a crowd, he would preach to the assembled Hindus. THE MODERN MISSIONS MOVEMENT WAS STARTED BY STREET PREACHERS!

Other famous preachers started their ministries by preaching in the streets, such as **C.H. Spurgeon**, **D.L. Moody**, and **Billy Graham**. Spurgeon began preaching in the streets of London at the age of 16, which he continued until he became pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle at 19.

Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899) was a well known preacher in the Chicago area. The Moody Bible Institute bears his name. "One of his regular practices in the late sixties was to exhort the passersby in the evenings from the steps of the court house. Often these impromptu gathering drew as many hecklers as supporters." MOODY WAS A STREET PREACHER!

It is well known that **The Salvation Army** started out doing a lot of STREET PREACHING!

Coming to Modern Times there is a remnant today of those who still carry on the mission of STREET PREACHING. A particular aspect of open air preaching is utilization of the Free Speech Platforms on College and University Campuses. Cal State Berkeley was

ablaze with Bible preaching in the 1960s by **Hubert Lindsey** (also known as "Holy Hubert" to those turbulent times). Today others follow in his footsteps.

In addition to those we have mentioned, we are sure GOD's judgment will reveal many untold stories of men who have been faithful to this most obvious work. Though little recognition and support has been historically given to such men, the Father will accord them their true glory and reward.

We have only scratched the surface concerning the impact that STREET PREACHERS have had on the world. As this information is neglected in today's churches, it is our hope that by remembering and publicizing this history, hearts and minds will be inspired to see the timelessness and power of this simple approach. STREET PREACHING is the most powerful tool for reaching the world, not only throughout Biblical times, but also in every age of history. We believe that in today's critical times the Church of Jesus Christ needs more than ever to revive this proven ministry.

As **Charles Spurgeon** testified:

"No sort of defense is needed for preaching out of doors, but it would need very potent arguments to prove that a man had done his duty who has never preached beyond the walls of his meeting-house. A defense is required for services within buildings than for worship outside of them."

Bibliography: New Catholic Encyclopedia; Poinset, Saint Dominic; Brady, Saint Dominic; The Catholic Encyclopedia; Butler's Lives of the Saints; The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia; Huber, St. Anthony of Padua; Bishop, St. Francis of Assisi; Zwemer, Raymond Lull; Peers, Ramon Lull; Howell, S. Bernardino of Siena; Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity; Schaff, History of the Christian Church; Collier's Encyclopedia; Farnum, St. Anthony of Padua; Allies, Three Catholic Reformers of the Fifteenth Century; Latourette, A History of the Expansion of Christianity; McClintock & Strong, Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature; The Encyclopedia of World Methodism; New Columbia Encyclopedia; The Westminster Dictionary of Church History; Christian, A History of The Baptists of The United States; Torbet, A History of The Baptists; Moyer, Who Was Who In Church History; The Encyclopedia of The Lutheran Church; Findlay, Dwight L. Moody; The Journal of John Wesley; The Journals of George Whitefield; Miller, William Carey; Spurgeon, Lectures To My Students; The Autobiography of Robert Flockhart; Harrison, Giants of The Missionary Trail; Newman, A Manual of Church History. (Emphasis has been added to quotations)

(Source: article by Cornerstone Ministries)

The Motive for Open-Air Preaching

No other message has been as life changing and inspirational as "Ten Shekels and a Shirt" by Paris Reidhead. This message has been instrumental in helping us to keep the right motive and do all things "for the glory of God."

When pragmatism (if it "works," it must be right) becomes one's philosophy in evangelism, the message is compromised to attain "successful results." But are we successful if we seek "decisions for Christ" and dilute the gospel in the process so we can gain more "conversions"? We think not.

Go Here to listen to that wonderful message for yourself:

<http://www.pinpointevangelism.com/Paris Reidhead- Ten Shekels And A Shirt.mp3>

The Message

As we begin to preach and people gather, we usually begin with the fear of the Lord. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Prov 9:10)

If one is to see his need of a Savior, the cross, and forgiveness, he must first be exposed to the light of his personal guilt before a loving God. We must work with the Holy Spirit, who has come to reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).

When our hearers begin to become aware of their moral crimes against God, then we share about forgiveness, the cross, and the Savior Jesus. Jesus warns us to "give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine." (Matt 7:6).

Preaching the law to precede the Gospel has been, throughout church history, one doctrine that has been agreed upon by both Calvinists and Armenians until recent years, when we adopted the sloppy-agape, sin-excusing- greasy-grace.

Our new modern methods yield a 80% - 90% fall away rate within the first year. If the law precedes the gospel, we may have less responding to a call of salvation, but of the ones who do, as in Finney's day, 80% remain faithful and full of zeal to the Lord.

David said that the law (not love, not grace) is perfect in converting the soul (Ps 19:7). Paul said that the law was our schoolmaster and brought the knowledge of sin (Gal 3:24, Rom 3:20). In our fears of legalism we have fallen into the perils of Antinomianism.

When going to a (good) doctor, one always receives a diagnosis and a prognosis before he receives the antidote. Yet, many times today, we simply want to shove the antidote

down peoples' throat who don't understand their need for Jesus. The result is a generation of spiritual miscarriages and premature spiritual babies, who left the womb of conviction too soon.

What the law does is show the standard of God and how the individual has fallen short. His conscience affirms his guilt, shame, and remorse for his sin; he sees his prognosis if he doesn't repent and entrust his life to Christ: Eternal hell fire.

See, when people have a great understanding of their need for something, they are more likely to hold on to it for dear life. Yet, when we offer Jesus as a means to happiness and the new convert finds persecutions, trials and temptations (which are promised), he feels cheated and deceived.

Ray Comfort wrote two great books expounding on this: *Hell's Best Kept Secret* and *The Ultimate Deception*, which I would highly recommend to all interested in leading someone to Christ.

Open-Air Preaching: The Audience

Typically, 30 to 150 students will gather around to listen and ask questions for several hours during that day. This exchange of ideas, preaching, reproving, rebuking, and exhorting (2 Tim 4:2-3), will go on for as long as we stay on campus.

The crowd we evangelize consists of atheists, professing Christians, homosexuals, liars, blasphemers, fornicators, drunkards, and the like. These are our nation's future teachers, doctors, lawyers, governors, senators, and leaders...!

Open-Air Preaching

Open-air preaching is primarily a sowing ministry, even though we have had several repent and be saved.

We refer to this method of preaching as being in the "stump-blasting" business, for it can provoke literally hundreds and even thousands to think about the Bible and eternal things.

In the college towns we visit, we see people reading their Bibles in the local restaurants, student union, grass areas, etc. They talk about the open-air preaching, God, the Bible, Jesus, Heaven, Hell, Sin, etc, in the stores, classrooms, etc. Praise the Lord, they are thinking and inquiring about God!!!

Testimonies

Read a few of the many testimonies that we have collected through the years from people who have been blessed.

www.gospeljohn.com/testimonies.htm