

Reclaiming the Lost Priority of Evangelism

You may have never heard of Scott Hinkle, but he is one of my heroes. He doesn't pastor a megachurch or host a daily TV program. He's not the most popular Christian conference speaker. He makes most churchgoers squirm in their seats because he's an evangelist, and he is not called to preach nice messages to the choir. He spends most of his time in the streets—and he challenges Christians to join him.

For decades while many charismatics and Pentecostals were selfishly chasing goose bumps, gold dust, angel feathers and overnight prosperity, Scott was a lonely voice in the wilderness calling the Spirit-filled community to embrace the responsibility of reaching lost people.

During four decades of the charismatic movement, through all the ups and downs and embarrassing scandals, Scott was winning sinners to Jesus. He was a heroin addict from New Jersey when he found Christ in 1970. He has never deviated from his calling as a soul-winner, even when many churches softened their approach and backed away from things like street preaching and aggressive personal evangelism.

Scott took a radical position: He believes the primary reason we are baptized in the Holy Spirit is not just to speak in tongues or to experience an emotional rush but to find the power to share Christ with others.

I first heard about Scott's ministry in the 1990s when he was taking teams of young people to New Orleans to share Jesus with crowds of partygoers during Mardi Gras. He still leads that bold outreach today. But fewer and fewer Christians seem interested in invading the darkness. Evangelism has become an option, not a mandate, for many of us. Statistics show that

most Christians have never led another person to Jesus, and only about 5 percent of believers regularly share their faith with others.

Scott Hinkle has decided to take a courageous step to change this. He believes the best way to reclaim evangelism in the United States is to train an army of young evangelists. Working in partnership with Christ for the Nations Institute in Dallas, one of the most respected charismatic ministry schools in the country, Scott will be launching a School of Evangelism later this year.

“At this critical hour,” Scott says, “God has opened an amazing door to help unleash a much-needed infusion of the gospel around the world through a new generation of students at CFNI.”

An anonymous donor recently gave \$200,000 so this program can begin in August at CFNI. Hinkle will be the lead instructor, and the courses during the first term will include Communication to the Unreached, the Local Church and Evangelism, Principles of Disciple-Making, Contemporary Urban Ministry and the Role of the Holy Spirit in Evangelism.

This new thrust at CFNI is an encouraging sign that God is on the move to spark revival in our nation—and I hope other Bible colleges and seminaries will quickly follow suit by inaugurating similar programs to train evangelists.

Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us that God gave the five-fold ministry of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher to the church so that we could fulfill our mission. Yet today, most professional ministry training focuses exclusively on pastoral and teaching duties—and we act as if evangelists are optional. Could this be one key reason why U.S. church growth is stagnant and most believers are passive about sharing their faith?

We need anointed evangelists today more than ever. We need

holy firebrands like Charles Finney, John Wesley, David Brainerd, T.L. Osborn, Catherine Booth, Bill Bright, Billy Graham and Reinhard Bonnke who will poke and prod the church to care about the lost. We need men and women who have peered over the abyss of hell and seen the millions of unconverted souls who are about to slip into eternity without God.

In the 1800s, British Pastor Charles Spurgeon called his converts to care about the lost. He said: "Oh, my brothers and sisters in Christ, if sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies; and if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay, and not madly to destroy themselves. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for."

May God ignite that same aggressive concern for the lost in our hearts. Please pray for Christ for the Nations and Scott Hinkle as they launch this ambitious plan—and let's agree that God will use this and similar efforts to birth a new movement of evangelism in our nation.

If you are interested in enrolling in CFNI's School of Evangelism, you can find more information online at www.cfni.org or by calling 214-302-6438. You can learn more about Scott Hinkle Outreach ministries at www.southwestmission.com.

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