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President's Line

WHY A CODE?

This question has been asked recently in regard to the *Code of Ethics* adopted in June, 1993 by the Fellowship of Canadian Evangelists. Four primary reasons can be stated why the Code was seen as necessary.

First, the Code serves to restore public respect and regard for the evangelist. In light of moral failure and opulent lifestyle of some high-profile evangelists in recent years, the evangelist suffers an image problem. There has been increased suspicion and loss of credibility in the world and within the church. The Code will assist to remove the tarnish and increase the lustre of the evangelist.

Secondly, the Code serves as a reminder of the standards they know evangelists must maintain. It is common in Scripture to have reminders of how one needs to live (cf. Romans 15:15; Philippians 3:1; 2 Peter 1:12; Jude 5; 1 John 2:21). While the Bible remains the standard of all Christian conduct the Code is a concise restatement of biblical principles particularly focused on the attitudes, lives and responsibilities of those involved in evangelistic ministry. Evangelists are particularly subject to certain temptations inimical to their own spiritual welfare, their family life and their worthy ministry to others.

Thirdly, the Code serves as an additional instrument for calling evangelists to ministry accountability. Evangelists have often not been as accountable to a local assembly or to ecclesiastical overseers as others in full-time ministry. The evangelist usually has greater independence and is inclined to be the most pragmatic among those in ministry.

Finally, it is a common practice for professional organisations, religious or otherwise to develop codes of ethics to capulize the lifestyle their representatives are expected to adhere to. If codes of ethics contribute to the welfare and effectiveness of such bodies, how much more for FOCE, a fellowship of those specially called of God to win the spiritually lost to Him. The effectiveness of evangelists is enhanced or hindered more by the kind of life they live than that of almost any other professionals.

T.V. Thomas

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THE EVANGELISTS RELATIONSHIP TO THE LOCAL CHURCH

by Bruce Redding

One day I was on my way to preach in another city. In the outskirts of the city my car broke down. After having it towed to the nearest garage, I decided to take the bus into the city.

Suddenly, as the bus lurched and rolled through the uneven streets, a man across the aisle from me grew sick and emptied the contents of his stomach in my direction. I stared straight ahead, afraid that if I looked down to where the mess had obviously hit my pants and shoes, I would repeat his performance.

As I sat there as some not-so-pleasant-thoughts went through my mind. One thought lingered the longest. As I realized that these shoes and these pants were all I had to wear as I preached that night, I thought, "Why am I doing this, Lord?"

That question is helpful when we think about our purpose as evangelists in relation to the church. This purpose occurs in Ephesians 4:11-12, where Paul describes the gifts Christ gives to the church. After listing the gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) he says they were given for the purpose of preparing God's people for works of service, with the goal of building up the Body of Christ.

Paul says that each of these gifts – including that of the evangelist – has this same purpose and goal. So God does not intend us to be “lone rangers” as we exercise our gifts. Along with pastors, we too are to prepare God’s people for works of service.

We often deal with confusion about our role in the church. I remember looking for my name among the ministers of my denomination in the annual list the year after I left the pastorate and went into full-time evangelism. They had rightly removed my name from the section listing pastors, but had placed it in the section headed, "Not currently in pastoral ministry." This made me feel odd.

What really made me wonder how my denomination felt about my calling as an evangelist were the other names on this list with me. One was a pastor who was in psychotherapy. The marriage of another had broken up. A third was a pastor who had been voted out of his church.

Evangelists will always experience a certain fuzziness when it comes to describing their role in the church. Because of this, we need to be prepared to work at this relationship.

1. INITIATING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHURCHES

For most practical purposes, the key to our ministry in the church is the pastor. Therefore, in offering your ministry to churches, start with pastors who are friends and acquaintances in your area. Try seminary friends and others in your denomination who are supportive and sympathetic. You will also need to try some networking. Drop in on a pastor "cold turkey." Perhaps a pastor would get a group together. Ministerial groups are often open to a presentation from an outsider.

Solicit the help of another person to represent your ministry. This will multiply opportunities while lending you more credibility.

As the relationship with a church begins, there are two strategies that are essential.

The first is, be a listener. Find out from the pastor how things are going in his church before you explain your ministry. The second is, be prepared to communicate yourself and your ministry clearly, simply and concisely. Explain your philosophy, your methods, and your policies in a sentence or two.

2. MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHURCHES

After you have been invited to a church, there is one rule that will eliminate many disappointments -and misunderstandings on both sides: BE CLEAR. Who is responsible for what? When are they to do it? Be clear in the church's expectations of you as to times and places you will preach. Be clear on the financial expectations. Be clear about arrangements for housing and meals.

I have found it invaluable to make notes when I am talking on the phone or sitting in a meeting. One source of discouragement to a church is an evangelist who promises to send photos, materials or answers to questions, and does not do it, or does it late. Continue to encourage the pastor and church. Let them know you are praying for them.

3. COMPLETING THE RELATIONSHIP WITH CHURCHES

You will want to leave with a good feeling about yourself, your ministry and what God has done through you.

(a) Agree on tile observable results in terms of attendance and decisions. Go over tile statistics with the pastor.

(b) Settle-up financially before you leave. Check with the pastor a few days before the last meeting that the treasurer will be available to write a cheque before you leave. It is almost impossible for ministries like ours to handle receivables.

(c) Tell the pastor the amounts of any love offerings which were given directly to you and your ministry for which you will be giving receipts apart from tile church.

(d) Are you taking names with you for your future use as prayer partners or donors? Make sure the pastor understands how these will be used.

(e) Minister to the pastor and his family. Encourage him and compliment him honestly. Affirm his wife by your kindness and respect. One visiting evangelist at our church only referred to my wife as "Mrs. Pastor" and never by her name, Lynn.

(t) If you find you become discouraged during a mission, be honest about it. Yet convey your feelings in a constructive way which shows the pastor your attempts to deal with it.

Overall, in your relationship with tile church, exalt Jesus Christ in your life as well as in your message. As you go to each church, determine that the cause of evangelism and the truth of the Gospel will be lifted up, so that the pleasure of the Lord will be theirs and yours.

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