

Gospel Meetings

by Connie W. Adams

In spite of the claim of some that “the days of gospel meetings are over”, congregations continue to have them. Reports in bulletins and other periodicals indicate that some meetings are productive of much good while others seem to have little good effect. It seems that in the last few years there has been an upswing in the number of people obeying the gospel in meetings. I do not claim to be an expert on the subject, nor to have had the amount of experience in meeting work that others have had. Over the past twenty years I have been privileged to work in a good many meetings in various sections of the country. Within the last four years, I have preached in sixty meetings. From these experiences some observations have been made, and some judgments formed which I wish to pass along to the reader.

Why The Difference?

You can go to a place for a meeting and preach your heart out to empty seats, with half or less of the members making any attempt to attend, and very few visitors and be chilled to the bone from the indifference. You spend a week trying to revive an almost dead church, while in your heart you wonder if you would not

have done more good at home. Then you close there, and the next nights begin somewhere else and right away you sense the difference. Here the meeting house is clean; the tract rack is neat and filled with a good selection. There is warmth and friendliness about the people, the house is comfortably filled the first night and the crowds, interest and enthusiasm mount throughout the week. You preach along the same general lines as in the last meeting and several people obey the gospel. You close and go home with a feeling of accomplishment. What makes the difference?

1) **Some brethren have a meeting as a matter of tradition.** They have always had a meeting every year, whether they needed it or not! They get a preacher lined up to come, run his picture, in the paper, have some handbills printed (and usually wind up with half of them left over), and think they are ready for a meeting. The members of some of these congregations act like they have just enough religion to make them miserable.

2) **Successful meetings are the result of much planning, prayer and effort.** They do not just “happen.” A congregation

with a lively program of personal evangelism will nearly always have a few people about ready to obey the gospel when the meeting time comes. The members talk the meeting up. There is an air of expectancy and enthusiasm. I used to hear older preachers talk about a meeting having a good “tone” and did not know what they meant. Now I do. You see the members come in all smiles as they introduce you to their neighbor, or a relative, or a co-worker from the office or factory. You see them with the same person when the service is over looking over the tracts and trying to steer their friend into selecting two or three that would be a big help to him in learning the truth. Often zealous members make arrangements for you to come and talk with their friends. In short, the congregations which have good meetings have done their homework.

3) **The preacher’s responsibility in a meeting is serious.** If he is a sour apple by nature, this will be reflected both in and out of the pulpit and will cause some whom he could help to feel that he is unapproachable. He must come fully prepared to preach the truth without fear or favor of man, yet with a genuine warmth and spirit of kindness. He must resolve to preach what is

needed. This will not always be appreciated. There may be serious problems in the congregation which require teaching. There may be pressures in a given area which afflict the church. Sometimes the church may be in a battle with institutionalism or the social gospel movement, and need some help. There may be prospects almost ready to obey the truth that need to be taught on certain subjects and persuaded to become Christians. Nearly every congregation has a problem with members being afflicted with the spirit of the world. There are devout saints who need encouragement. There are mature and advanced Bible students who need meat, as well as babes who need milk.

I cannot speak for other preachers, but I cannot spend all day long socializing, or on a golf course, or making an endless round of calls on people who are not really prospects at all, calls that are more social than anything else, then rush to a big meal somewhere, and finally get to the meeting house worn out, get up to preach and do my best work. Regardless of how many times a man has spoken on a subject, he ought to have some time to ponder his lesson, refresh his

mind on the passages to be used and recheck the sequence of points he plans to make. Before all the golfers descend on my head, let me add that I have nothing against a man getting a little exercise during a meeting, and if he can find time for a round or two, then that is fine with me. But I have worked with preachers in meetings who played every day and have seen some of them get up and make a flop in the pulpit when I knew they were capable of much better.

The preacher's private conduct in a meeting can help or hinder not only the meeting but the work in general at that place after he is gone. Some fall into the trap of hearing one side of a dispute and then attempt to grind someone's axe for him. It is not uncommon for members to ask questions of visiting preachers and this often affords opportunity to do much good teaching. Sometimes this may involve close study and even argumentation. Some delight in asking loaded questions, or in trying to see if a difference can be discovered between the visiting and local preacher. I have known of preachers bringing up questions in private homes that raised more doubt than anything else, so that

the local preacher would have his hands full for several months putting out the brush fires so carelessly caused. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6).

Being a faithful preacher who practices what he preaches, together with a zealous congregation which has made adequate preparation, and you will have a good meeting. The truth will be preached, sinners will be instructed in the way of righteousness, and the saints will be edified. Whether they are "visible" or not there will be good results from such an effort.

*Truth Magazine XIV: 2, pp. 23-24
November 13, 1969*

GOSPEL MEETING THIS WEEK!

We are privileged to have brother Connie W. Adams with us this week to preach Christ. Plan to be with us at 2:30 this afternoon for a congregational singing with preaching following immediately at 3:00, as well as Monday thru Friday nightly at 7:00, if God permit. This is a week that can change your life!

The Terre Haute **SPEAKER** is published weekly by the church of Christ at Terre Haute, Indiana.

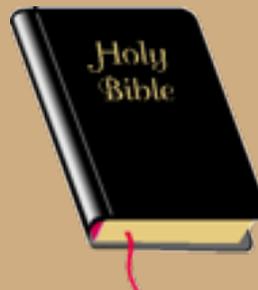
Assembling At:

4017 E Margaret DR
Terre Haute, IN 47803
[Exit 11 (I-70) W on HWY 46,
W on Margaret DR approx. 1 mile]

Assembling Times:

Sunday @ 10:00 a.m. & 3:00 p.m.
Wednesday @ 7:00 p.m.

Come be with us!



***We Speak Where the
Bible Speaks.***

***We Are Silent Where the
Bible Is Silent.***

***We Do Bible Things in
Bible Ways.***

www.churchofchristatterrehaute.com