"There is a sense of relief in remembering that I'm not God."
--Steve Brown

Contemporary Comments

"Releasing Into Ministry" | June 2, 2012 | Order Info


Have you ever watched a Billy Graham Crusade on TV? It may seem an ordinary task for Dr. Graham to step up to the pulpit and preach the Gospel. But several years ago New York Times reporter, Andy Newman, went behind the scenes of a crusade in Queens. And he found out just how many people it takes to pull off a crusade.¹

The crusade’s 30 paid staff members worked hard from a New York office. The prep, according to Newman, “is a decidedly more complex undertaking, requiring, oh, several million painstakingly assembled ingredients.” For instance, there was a five-tier usher organization chart. It’s vital in helping the throngs of people find seats. Then there were the local churches—1,424 of them—that worked for months to invite people around the city to attend. And there were also 6,000 volunteer counselors. These women and men were available at the altar to meet and pray with those who would give their lives to God.

Preparations for a Billy Graham Crusade begin months in advance. As Kent Withington, the crusade’s assistant communications director said, it’s not just “Put it on your calendar and show up.” It begins with what the organization calls a foundation of prayer. Art Bailey, the director of the New York crusade, said that without this foundation, “We’d only get what man can produce.”

To encourage involvement from local churches, the Graham organization reached out to every Protestant church within 50 miles of New York City. Of the 12,000 contacted, over 1,400 agreed to participate. These represented 80 denominations from Adventist to Vineyard, and included Mennonite, Messianic, and Hebrew Pentecostal. And those involved weren’t just the pastors. Both pastors and members attended 43 seminars on every aspect of the crusade. The benefits were felt not only at the crusade, but also within the local churches that were involved. One pastor reported: “I feel that it strengthens our active members who want to serve Christ just to be involved. This is a chance to participate in what we feel confident in supporting as a service to God.”

Those involved in a Billy Graham Crusade have learned what this week’s lesson teaches: getting members involved in ministry develops church harmony, spiritual growth among members, and numerical growth.

It seems that as a church we do well at training people to witness and evangelize. We write books about it, conduct seminars, and even devote an entire Quarterly to the subject. But are we doing more than training? Are we actively sending the trained members out to be used by God?

Sometimes pastors are reluctant to let “non-professionals” go out and evangelize. And sometimes members may think of every excuse in the book as to why they can’t evangelize, even when the pastor does ask for help. But as a church we need to work together. Everyone needs to find a way to serve. No task is small. No job unimportant. Jesus needs us all. Jesus needs you.

~ nc

For inspiration: You Tube

¹ NY Times
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