

Woman to Woman Evangelism

by Beryl Amos

Beryl Amos emphasizes the vital role of women in evangelism and encourages a proactive approach to sharing the Gospel within communities.

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, Luke 1:30, Luke 10:42, 1 Corinthians 9:16

Topics: "Evangelism", "Discipleship"

Description

Beryl Amos shares the story of 'Woman to Woman Evangelism,' a spiritual venture initiated by the Christian Women's Fellowship in Victoria and Tasmania. The movement began with a call to discuss God's Word openly and evolved into a mission to evangelize women in the local churches. The focus is on the importance of women sharing the Gospel with others, both those who do not know Jesus and those who need a fresh encounter with Him, emphasizing the ongoing nature of evangelism as a vital part of the Christian faith.

Transcript

This is the story of a great spiritual venture which is being shared with the women of the Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania. It is called "Woman to Woman Evangelism." All the way through the preliminary planning we have been very conscious of the leading of God the Father. Let it be said right at the outset that there is no desire to make Woman to Woman Evangelism simply a project of the Christian Women's Fellowship, but rather that it might be an on-going movement within that Fellowship, for evangelism amongst women wherever the need might be found.

How It Began.

Some years ago three women, representing the United Church Women of America, made a goodwill tour of the world, including Australia. Wherever they went they held meetings--conducting a Bible study, followed by a "buzz session." This was something quite new to me, as it was also to the representatives of other churches. It set me thinking. I asked myself, "Why do we women hesitate to discuss God's Word in public, or with our friends? Could it be that we are afraid of letting others know what our convictions are, or is it just a case of not knowing what we are talking about? We do not hesitate, for one moment, to talk about other things that interest us. As members of Churches of Christ we have been proud to quote the watchword "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent we are silent." Are there many of us who are really qualified, honestly, to make this statement today?" And those questions demanded an answer!

Incidentally, one outcome of this visit was that a Bible Study group was formed in Sydney, especially for women to come together and search the Scriptures.

At the first camp run by the Missionary Committee of the Christian Women's Fellowship of Victoria and Tasmania there was some discussion on the place of women in the programme of Evangelism. As a result "a mission for women by women" was one of the recommendations made to the Executive. After consideration it was decided not to do anything positive at that moment, so the idea was put on one side but not forgotten. (Although it was known that this type of programme could be effective, as the church at Georgetown, Newcastle, N.S.W. has successfully conducted such a campaign twenty years before, it was felt that the time was not yet quite ready for a large scale launching of a mission).

After the Billy Graham Crusade closed in Melbourne (and other places, too) many folk were aflame with enthusiasm to do more for the Master. The Victorian Executive of Christian Women's Fellowship, under the leadership of Mrs. Doreen Strack, was awake to the responsibility which it had in the field of evangelism. So, in 1959, "Crusading On" was the theme set before a special meeting of all Presidents, Secretaries, and wives of Ministers. The following year, 1960, saw Mrs. Dorothy Sterling leading us further in "Crusading On in a Glorious Christian Adventure:" In this event sixteen women went out, either singly or in pairs, to talk about the Christian Women's Fellowship, and how it functions. Every church in Victoria was invited to receive a visitor. Some of the meetings were small, some were large. The smallest attendance was four, and the largest was seventy-five. Altogether two thousand eight hundred women heard the story.

Although these three incidents did not have any apparent relationship to each other, at the time, nevertheless

- 4 -

each one dovetailed into a pattern which has had a dynamic effect upon our thinking, proving to us once again, "God does move in mysterious ways His wonders to perform."

How It Continued.

Then came 1961, and the question was, "Where do we go from here?" The Executive of Christian Women's Fellowship in Victoria and Tasmania set up a special sub-committee to work out what has now become known as "Woman to Woman Evangelism."

After much prayer, planning, and discussion it was decided to launch this movement at a special inaugural service, and the newly opened worship centre of the Church of Christ, Blackburn, was chosen as the location. Truly God blessed this service with His presence. Women came with a spirit of expectancy and anticipation and, we believe, were not disappointed.

The challenge was given that through the Christian Women's Fellowship we need to be more positive in our approach to women, especially in telling them of Jesus Christ. Realising that the Great Commission, as given by Jesus Christ, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15) has never been altered, amended, or annulled, it was felt that we were being led to do the work of Evangelism amongst the women who live round about us.

Remembering that we are first of all "disciples", that means members of the Christian Women's Fellowship do form part of the "ye" in that Commission. It then became apparent that in our Fellowship we had a

ready-made opportunity for winning others to Christ. Here we have the machinery ready, which--with prayer and determination and a desire to do the Master's will--can quite effectively be used in the task of Evangelism. Admittedly we have always tried to introduce women to the Church and the Master through our programmes. But have we, as yet, fully exerted ourselves in a positive, all-out evangelistic effort?

Perhaps we have rather emphasised "good works." Now, these are important. We still need to do them, for Jesus Christ never belittled the value of service. But He also did say, "Mary hath chosen the good part, and it shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:42).

It would be a good thing if we women would only realise that people come to Church because they expect something more than that which they will get at a Club (however good and philanthropic it may be). We acknowledge gladly that much good is done by these organisations, but the Church has something to offer which no other society can give. Similarly, when we over-emphasise the social aspect of the work, to get people interested (as the argument is often given), we are in danger of underestimating the intelligence of the very women whom we are trying to win. When people come to a Church gathering they are expecting something more than they can get elsewhere, for deep down in the human heart is a desire for God, Who is the Giver of Life. It is strange how we can overlook this, for remember man was made in the image of God, and there is a divine spark in every soul, and it's up to us to find it, and nurture it, so that it catches on fire for Him.

Women Look at Evangelism

The women who were present at the inaugural service of Woman to Woman Evangelism, in 1961, were challenged along the following lines. Evangelism is definitely in the air. Church leaders of many communions are talking about the matter in a very positive manner. On every side we hear the word "Evangelism." so that one might think, that this is a new form of disease, or fashionable topic for discussion.

Far from being a modern innovation, it is as old as the Christian

- 5 -

Church. In fact, it was one of the first things that the Christian Church was told to do.

The Case for Evangelism.

The great command of Jesus Christ, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:19-20) is still vital.

Well, then, why all this sudden interest? Let us see if we can find out.

If every person who claimed Church affiliation, in the last official Census, decided to come to the House of God, at the one and same time, there wouldn't be enough room for them, even including all the buildings, chapels, halls and rooms put together.

It is true that we have practised Evangelism, but I'm afraid that too often we have only had a limited conception as our ideal. We have limited ourselves to human resources, instead of claiming the reserves

of God. Too often we have put Evangelism into a compact compartment in the Church, to be brought out periodically as a highlight event, with a special (and usually outstanding) speaker bearing the greater burden of the responsibility. The fact that there has been a real measure of success, from time to time, speaks highly of the diligence and faithfulness of these "specialists", and we sincerely thank God for them. Nevertheless Evangelism is not meant to be just a special event, but the natural outflow of our faith. The reason and passion of Evangelism is that a wonderful change has come into our lives, in the love of God, through Jesus Christ, and we can find no rest until we tell the world what has happened. Evangelism is telling someone--one or many--about Jesus Christ, and the opening out of the mind and will of God, for our lives.

So, you see, the real meaning of Evangelism is something far greater than that which we have dreamed about. Instead of being a tool of the Church, the Church is the agent of Evangelism.

"We are part of the Church, and if we belong to Jesus Christ we are inescapably Evangelists," said Leighton Ford. As Daniel T. Niles has said, "Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread."

Edwin Orr was, some time ago, on vacation in Atlantic City when a hurricane blew up. Away out to sea a South American freighter was on a reef. A crowd gathered on shore and watched the distress signals going up. There was an old Scandinavian sailor in their midst. Holding up his gnarled hands; he cried, "I'm going out there, who's going with me?" Twelve volunteered, and they set out on the rough and hazardous trip, as the crowd on the shore prayed. Often the lifeboat was out of sight as the waves rose above it, and crashed down upon it. Then the crowd on the shore saw that the lifeboat had reached the wreck. The crew were taken off, and after a hazardous trip the little boat got back to land. The people gathered around and spontaneously joined in singing the doxology.

Do you see Jesus Christ, standing on the shores of Eternity, looking out at our world that sin has shipwrecked? He has decided to save that world. He points with hands, pierced with the Calvary nails, and says, "I'm going out there--who's going with Me?" When we volunteer to go with Him--THAT'S EVANGELISM!! Are we women willing to enlist? We meet women, all around us, who are in a sadder plight than those shipwrecked sailors, so that brings me to the place where I want to mention the place of WOMEN IN EVANGELISM. In my husband's library there are many books on Evangelism; but not one of them specifically suggests that women, as women, have a contribution to make. None mention

- 6 -

women as Evangelists, or as taking the initiative in any evangelistic venture. Which makes it appear as if, in the past, we have not made the most of our resources; for I believe that women can play a vital part in Evangelism, and especially in Evangelism amongst women.

It is interesting to note that it was to Mary that the Angel appeared, and told her that she was to bear the Messiah (Luke 1:30-33). The very first person to know of the Resurrection was a woman, and she was bidden to "go tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead." (Matt. 28:7). And I wouldn't be a bit surprised if she told others, in fact, I'd be surprised if she didn't.

So you see, women today are not pioneers in this work, they are simply following the example given so long ago. We do not have the complete answer to every question that may arise, but of this one thing we are certain, and that is that this venture is of God's leading, and, therefore, we dare not ignore it. I think

that we need to make this very clear--we are not trying to get across to you the fact that we are going to organise campaigns (or missions) throughout the churches. What we are trying to do is to give you the inspiration, that this is something the women of the churches not only want to do, but as Christians feel they ought to be doing. There has been, and still is, being done a magnificent work amongst our women, especially through the Christian Women's Fellowship, and this must be maintained. We are grateful to God that He has blessed us with so many workers. We still feel, however, that there is a greater work we can do, and to this end already twenty-three women have undertaken special training, to help lead in campaigns which the local churches will organise.

One thing we do wish to emphasise, and re-emphasise, is that any venture entered into must essentially be in close collaboration with your minister. He is so often the human "expert", and our teams will need all the help, and guidance, he can offer in the event of a mission being conducted. The Ministers are very keen. We approached them, at their annual Seminar in 1961, with the idea, and obtained their approval. Since then they have also received a letter dealing with the matter. In addition each group of Christian Women's Fellowship has also received correspondence dealing with "Woman to Woman Evangelism." Added to this the official board of each church has received an urgent letter about all these plans. So, from these three very vital groups of people action will be inevitable.

I have been reading a thrilling book. It is called "That They Might Have Life", and it was written by Daniel T. Niles. It is a magnificent treatment on Evangelism. He says that in the Diocese of Dornakal, in South India, it is part of the service of baptism for every convert to place his hand upon his head, and to say solemnly, "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:16). The Gospel IS the Gospel because it is meant for all mankind, and unless we partake in its outreach we do not partake in it at all. Evangelism is not just something we do, it is something God does. The Evangelist is not merely one who proclaims, but rather the means by which the Gospel becomes dynamic.

One of the first things which Constantine had to do after he became Emperor was to send ministers to a tribe of Goths on the north shore of the Black Sea. The chief of the tribe sent a deputation to him explaining that a Christian slave girl, whom they had captured in a raid, had converted them. A slave girl! There could be no better symbol of human helplessness, but because she was a Christian she belonged to that area of life whose boundaries are set by the operation of the Gospel. There the same power that raised Jesus from the dead was at work, and by her witness that power

- 7 -

had leaped out in dynamic activity. Evangelism is not optional for a Christian. We are not just servants of the Lord--we are slaves. We belong now to the Divine Economy. Our life is not our own.

Well then, if life as a whole belongs to God, then the Christian Gospel has relevance not only to the inner life of the Christian, but also to his outer work. A Christian is called upon not only to be a Christian who is a doctor, or a nurse, or a teacher, or a mother, or a business woman, but to be a Christian as a doctor, or a nurse, or a teacher, or a mother, or a business woman. The Christian faith must impinge on the world and its affairs, and it is where the Christian people are that this process must take place. The Christian life is a whole life. It is not a section of life. For instance we need education--Christian education. This opens up a big subject, and all I can do just now is to pass on the observation of an African chief who is said to have defined the problem of Christian education as similar to that of ivory hunting. "You go hunting for ivory," he said, "and you find there is always an elephant attached." That precisely is the problem of the Christian

frontier. You start out to educate people in the Christian faith, and you discover that you must educate them for the whole of life. This is closely related to true Evangelism. As we grow in faith and knowledge we find that FAITH THROUGH EVANGELISM develops, and strengthens, the more we witness. Remember, when the Greeks came to Philip they said, "Sir, we would see Jesus." It is that same desire that brings people to our churches today; although many who come may not be conscious of this; yet deep down they are expecting something better than that provided by a secular club, however good that may be.

Dare we withhold the Gospel? It is for that purpose we are in business. The world needs every form of Christian activity--but no amount of Christian activity can take the place of Jesus Christ Himself. He alone can meet the needs of the people.

"Our fathers were impressed," says the report of the World Missionary Conference at Jerusalem "with the horror that men should die without Christ. We are also impressed with the horror that men should live without Him." Are we? A South Indian pastor was visiting some poor Christians. He found that, owing to heavy rain the previous day, most of the huts were in ruins, and the place itself just one big stretch of slush. What could he tell people in such a condition? It seemed mockery to speak of a God who cares. But then there appeared in the doorway of one of the huts an old woman, and the preacher said to her, "Ammal! You all seem to be in much trouble here." And she replied, "Yes, Ayya! and but for Yesu Swamy (the Lord Jesus) we should not be able to bear it." It is not cant, this talk of Christ as the need of the world. It is desperately true. Him alone circumstances cannot change, nor the world take away: and for Him the world awaits, and "Yesu Swamy" it murmurs with a wistful longing. Can we do anything to meet that yearning? YES, WE CAN! Woman to Woman Evangelism will be a tremendous step in the right direction, but only as we are moved to step out in faith. First of all we must have a humble spirit, if we would be used by God. Then, we must lose sight of ourselves, and see Jesus only. Finally, we must be prepared to commit our lives to the Master. If we could only stop at this point it would be comparatively easy, but inspiration should be turned into action if it is to be of any use, and so we must try to earth our statements by working out the challenge as we see it, with the help of God's indwelling Spirit.

Woman to Woman Evangelism in the Local Church.

Here we must come to grips with practical issues, and face reality.

- 8 -

As much as some very good and sincere folk dislike the word "organisation", it is necessary to make plans properly. Remember that Paul said we must work so that "all things should be done decently and in order." This does NOT close out the operation of the Holy Spirit. In fact, very often He works better in such a setting. The Holy Spirit is likely to be much more evident in a well thought out, carefully prepared programme, than in something we have left casually (even carelessly) to prepare at the last moment.

How to Set Up the Organisation.

Here are some of the things we would like to see done whenever a crusade of this kind is contemplated. There will be some variety, of course, for each church will plan with its own district in mind. We feel, however, the following eight points are very important.

1. A Special Committee Set Up in the Local Church.

The members of this Committee would include the Minister, representatives of the Christian Women's Fellowship, representatives from the Girls' Clubs, and other selected personnel, if desired. In churches which operate on a "functional" basis, there would be a very close liaison with the Evangelism Committee.

2. The Campaign Leader.

This person (who would in many cases not be a member of the local congregation, but one invited to share in the task) would need to meet with the Committee, and share in discussion as far as this is possible. The leader, and all the team members, would need to know just what is being expected from them.

3. Prayer Groups.

This is the most important aspect, for any victory can only come through prayer. This cannot be over emphasised, for it undergirds all our planning. This prayer must be vital, direct, and powerful. Don't be afraid to be personal and specific in praying. Too often we are inclined to be too general, and out of this world in our language, when we pray.

4. Visitation.

If we want people to come, we must be prepared to do something about it. The personal approach, and invitation, often do far more to influence others, than any other method. Special printing, letters, and other forms of announcement all help, but nothing takes the place of a personal word.

5. Counselling.

This may be new to some. The idea is to have trained, selected folk ready to deal with any enquirers who come forward during our meetings. Done properly this is a tower of strength. The proper training of counsellors might best be handled by your Minister. Those who are counselled can be helped in wonderful ways. Guidance for planned Bible reading, and the like, can be of inestimable value.

6. Follow-up.

This follows on directly from counselling, for the Counsellor will also have the task for regular, and adequate, follow-up. We ought never to divorce counselling and follow up work. This is a continuing thing, and will help to consolidate the new Christian in the best possible way.

7. Advertising.

Good advertising will help greatly. If printing is used, it should be well done. Anything is not good enough for the Lord's work. Be imaginative. You can sell an idea, or kill it straight out, in the way you advertise.

8. Music.

This must be carefully, and prayerfully, planned. Music is a strategic tool in any kind of meeting. Choose all the soloists, accompanists, hymns, and music with great care, making sure that each fits into the over-all plan. Let all be done to the glory of God.

- 9 -

The Place of the Minister.

He has a vital place. His wisdom, knowledge, and experience will be of great value. In fact, he is in many places the human "pivot" around which the organisation of the local church moves. This happens because of the situation in which we find ourselves. As members of Christian Women's Fellowship we must be careful to keep a proper balance on our enthusiasm, for after all, ours is but one facet of the church's work. In all of this the Minister can be a valued counsellor and guide. In a very real way his aid in counselling and follow-up will be essential. The Minister is vitally concerned with any and every evangelistic movement within the congregation.

What Woman to Woman Evangelism Is Not.

This may seem a negative approach to what is a very positive movement. Nevertheless it is necessary to be warned lest we fall into a common trap of thinking that Woman to Woman Evangelism is an event that has happened. Our prayer is that we will never be able to refer to it in the past tense. The great inaugural meeting when over eight hundred women were present was NOT the final word on Woman to Woman Evangelism. One special meeting, or a series of meetings, in the local church will NOT exhaust Woman to Woman Evangelism. No! Woman to Woman Evangelism is an on-going movement, within the framework of the Christian Women's Fellowship. It can only be effectively put into action by a campaign initiated in the local church. This can be done by the women of the Church, aided by visiting women, in whatever way the local Church chooses to express its programme.

What Woman to Woman Evangelism Seeks to Do.

There are just two things we are striving to do through this medium.

1. Present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to women who do not know Him.

In other words it is simply one woman telling another woman (or a number of women) that God so loves her, that He has given His only begotten Son to die for her, so that if she believes on Him, she shall not perish, but that she shall have eternal life. It is just as simple as that.

2. Present the claims of Jesus Christ afresh to women who have already accepted Him as Saviour.

This is probably one of the hardest things to do. When the first glow of "being saved" has faded, and we settle back into everyday life, unless one starts immediately to develop one's prayer life, and Bible study, there comes a sense of frustration, and being let down. Unfortunately, there are far too many of our church women who have not learned to live a fully committed, disciplined, Christian life, and who try, therefore, to work out their salvation simply through "good works." These we want to challenge again.

Types of Programme.

There is not one cut and dried method of Evangelism, and whilst there are probably as many and varied methods as there are people to be won, there are some methods that have proved to be most effective. Here we suggest a few different ideas, in the hope that they will stimulate thought.

(a) When you are conducting a campaign always remember the aim for which Woman to Woman Evangelism came into being. After that work out the kind of meeting most likely to achieve success. These could be,

1. Evangelistic meetings,

2. Meetings for commitment,
3. Family services, and the like, as desired.

(b) The next matter we have to face is that of location. Where will we hold the meetings? Several places are readily evident, namely,

1. The chapel,
2. The home,
3. The public hall.

- 10 -

(c) Then we must ask ourselves this question. What methods are open to us? The answer to this can be greatly varied. Let me suggest just a few--luncheons, day and evening meetings, teas (as for business girls), Mother and Daughter gatherings, meetings with selected groups of people, discussion groups, meetings with particular auxiliaries, sharing in the regular Sunday services, and the like. These are just some of the ways of presenting Christ to women.

(d) Our final item concerns those taking part. Who will take the lead? Will we use just one woman or a team of women? If we decide to use a team, a bigger programme could probably be planned. In the event of a team being used the following folk would be required (within moderation).

1. A speaker or evangelist.
2. A personal worker and/or counsellor.
3. A youth worker.
4. A song leader and/or soloist.
5. A musician.
6. Any others thought desirable.

Undergird this with prayer, and still more prayer. Towards the end, or immediately after the close of the campaign the leader (or whole team, if desired) should meet with the executive of the Christian Women's Fellowship in the local Church, to advise regarding follow-up. In this way the local group will be encouraged to carry on with the work. So we may help to fulfil our part of the Great Commission.

A Continuing Method of Evangelism.

Because the Great Commission is holy orders we dare not go into this in our own strength. This is the King's business, and we must rely on God's Holy Spirit all the way through, so that whatever we do, we will lose sight of ourselves, and give thanks to God, for the privilege He offers us, to serve Him in the name of Jesus Christ. To Him be all glory! Praise His Holy Name!

Are we scared of the implications? You are? Fine! Are you willing to trust Him? You will? Good! Then you are eligible to join the ranks of all the women who are praying "Lord make me usable to do Thy work."

Hold on to these words of Jesus--"Things which are impossible with men are possible with God." (Luke 18:27).

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