Articles by Kenneth Baird

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Camping for Christ (Part 1) (Jun 1960)

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This article, and a complimentary one to appear next month, was written out of the much experience of brother Kenneth Baird as Director of the children's camp at the Rocky Mountain Summer Conference, Estes Park, Colorado, U.S.A.

Within the range of the memory of many Christians there was a time when tent meetings were the most effective way of reaching the unsaved, especially in new areas.

Certainly one of the factors that marked the decline of tent work was the insistent noise of some groups who continued meetings far into the night until city fathers became reluctant to grant authority for tent meetings. The writer was frankly told on one occasion that as far as he was personally concerned permission for tent services could be granted, but in order to be fair and consistent and in order to eliminate certain noisy demonstrations, no group was permitted to have tent meetings in that city.

Before World War II, and for a few years following when the scarcity of materials hindered the building of television stations and receivers, extended series of gospel meetings in halls and chapels were often successful in the numbers attending and in the souls won for the Lord.

Eventually, as television facilities increased, a corresponding decrease in public response to any kind of meetings became sadly apparent. The general attitude is, why should people be expected to leave the warmth and the comfort of their own living rooms to go to a gospel meeting to which they are already indifferent when by staying at home they may enjoy the best acting and professional talent that money can purchase?

Perhaps television should not be blamed for all the spiritual lapse of our day of material prosperity, but it is our considered opinion that it is the greatest single factor in the declension.

The foregoing is not to infer that tent meetings or gospel campaigns in assembly quarters cannot still be relatively successful under certain circumstances, but successful efforts along these lines seem to be the exceptions and not the rules. One could hope that the recent television scandals under investigation would cause the pendulum to swing the other way and turn the public interest against the obvious sham and deceit to that which would profit for Eternity.

Present Collective Efforts

One of the cardinal rules of the good fisherman is to change his methods and lures when the fish are not biting. Since the Lord referred to His own as fishermen, we do well to adjust our methods to the situation at hand, and to consider, for example, the opportunities that await us in Bible Camps.

A Confederate general, Nathan Bedford Forrest, who served in the cavalry during the war between the States, when asked the secret of victory is said to have made his

famous reply, “To git thar the fustest with the mostest men.” No more important application could possibly be made of such strategy than in the reaching of children with the gospel.

The story is told of a servant of the Lord who came home from meetings with a good report. “Four and a half persons were saved “ he said. “What do you mean?” He was asked by his friends. “Did four adults and a child get saved?” “No,” was his reply, “four children and one adult!” The mature person’s life was already half spent, but the lives of the children were still before them, lives that could be yielded to the service of the Lord Jesus.

It has been well said that when a child is saved, both a soul and a life are saved; however, when an elderly person is saved the soul is saved, but most of the life is lost. The salvation of an elderly person is a rightful cause for much rejoicing for he is indeed a “brand plucked out of the fire” (Zech. 3:2), but how much better are the olive plants (Psa. 128:3) whose lives of fruitfulness are still before them! There come to mind the examples of rejoicing over the salvation of an elderly person when only slight attention was paid to the salvation of a child whose life with its vast potentialities for good had been announced.

Above the recognition of the significance of the salvation of a child in the terms of glory brought to the Lord comes the realization that, if the child is not reached when young, he may never be reached at all! In Ecclesiastes 12:1, we read, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” Although this verse may also quite

properly apply to our ability to serve the Lord in the vigour of our youth as compared with old age, the gospel application which is frequently given is not without good foundation.

Experience and statistics show that the overwhelming majority of those saved are saved a considerable time before they reach the age of twenty.

In the present, the fields “white already to harvest” have their counterpart surely in the lovely harvests of boys and girls awaiting to be gathered through the efforts of Bible Camps. Of all the collective efforts within the range of our memory this is the most fruitful and the most important. The Lord help us to make the most of this golden opportunity.

With a little reflection the reasons for much of the blessing in summer camp work becomes apparent, but with the much blessing there is a grave danger. We know that wherever the Lord is pleased to work we can be sure the devil will do his best to hinder that work. In another article we shall discuss further details of camp work among children, and some of the dangers which we must face.

Camping for Christ (Part 2) (July 1960)

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The high ratio of conversions to the number of unsaved present at a Bible camp frequently generates both joy and concern. Before considering the possibility of false professions, let us examine some reasons for expecting special blessing in Bible camps as compared with other efforts, everything else being equal. It goes without saying that all collective gospel efforts will be preceded by exercise, prayer, and preparation.

Children Are Receptive

In the first place children are open to the gospel. Their tender and receptive hearts are remarkably free from the preconceived opinions and philosophies that must be torn down in adults before they are willing to come to the Lord. It is easier for the child to move from his dependence upon his parents to dependence upon the Lord than for the adult to forsake his citadel of self-sufficiency. The loving care extended to children by parents, teachers, police officers, or any charged with their safety or wellbeing develops faith within a child; whereas the experiences of later years in a world of competition produce the cynicism which even questions the motives of a preacher of the gospel. Satan’s assistance will further lead to distrust of the very God of love who gave His Son to die for our sins. For the most part the distrust resident in the heart of a child has been placed there by older ones who know something of the evils that can come upon the unwary. When the child

comes to camp he finds an atmosphere of love that is not only concerned for his physical wellbeing, but most of all for his eternal welfare. He then moves onward to that greatest Source of love that planned and purchased his salvation at such awful cost. Response to the love of the Saviour by faith is the frequent result, and faith "worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6).

Natural Surroundings

Another influence which we cannot measure, and seldom even consider, is that which God's handiwork in nature has upon the mind of the child at camp. In Psalm 19:1-3 we read, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." Who would want to say that English-speaking people are excluded from this passage? We adults have lived in our subjective thought-world so long that we have largely forgotten the appeal the Lord's creation makes to the heart. Certainly the warm atmosphere of love and the communion of nature combine to make a deep impression upon the heart and mind of the child.

Cumulative Effect

Another factor figuring in the blessing at camp is the frequency with which the child hears the Scriptures. The seed sown by the wayside (Luke 8:12) produced no fruit because the birds found and devoured it. Satan is quick to take away thoughts of the Saviour and our need of Him by substituting his distractions. Apart from Satan, should the child even try to put the thought of God from

his mind, he is continually brought back to the subject of his soul's need. The cumulative effect of the Word of God makes itself felt.

Systematic Teaching

A well co-ordinated camp program will present the subject matter in a consecutive order with the subsequent lessons in the home Sunday school emphasizing and reinforcing the lessons taught by individual counselors; or with the counselors clinching the lesson taught in the assembly, if that plan is followed. Systematic teaching will provide the repetition so necessary to learning without the subject matter seeming to be repetitious. We need not think that sound principles of learning are a denial of the sovereignty of the Spirit. The rhythmic motion of the sower's arm could be said to be repetitious, but it is entirely necessary in the sowing of the seed. The life-giving Spirit of God acts upon the seed after it is sown. We may plant, and we may water, but God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:7).

Individual Testimony

The impact of the testimony of saved children upon the sensitive spirits of the unsaved may well be one of the best reasons for blessing at camps. Children expect adults to have sober thoughts of the future and of things spiritual, but the fact that salvation is something that happens to real live boys and girls fastens upon the heart and mind of the unsaved child his responsibility to the Saviour. Some of the best camps the writer has been privileged to attend have been those in which the children themselves have been deeply exercised about the salvation of their friends. How lovely is the sight of a

child bringing his companion to a counselor to be dealt with concerning salvation! And how the Lord does seem to honour the faith of His lambs!

Spiritual Counselors

Thus far we have touched upon the attitudes of children, their receptiveness, and the influence of children upon children. Let us think a little of that counselor to whom an anxious child may be brought. Certainly the success of the camp bears directly upon the counselors.

No one would wish to say that the Lord is obligated to bless a Bible camp because of the sacrifice the counselors make in being there, but it has been our observation in the service of the Lord that blessing is often in keeping with the amount of sacrifice made to bring it. In most instances these unselfish people work an entire year in their secular occupation, but instead of using their vacation for a well-deserved rest, they give that time to the Lord. We would expect blessing from the collective efforts of Christians of this calibre!

Counselor Training

An indirect benefit of Bible camps is gained in that it is a training ground for earnest young counselors. Under the guidance of older and more experienced camp personnel, they learn something of their privileges and responsibilities in pointing souls to Christ, and also of the dangers to be avoided. Their helplessness in dealing with some cases (and who does not feel it?) casts them upon the Lord for His leading and help. When the Lord does give that help and they see the light and joy of Heaven flood into a human soul, a desire is born that

finds its only satisfaction in winning other souls for the Lord.