

YESTERDAY'S TOMORROW  
Session Four  
Class Leadership Instructions

Introduction Notes

A. The Evangelical Mennonites were fervent in their desire to share the message of Christ.

1. They had neither complicated plans nor detailed methodology because they were concerned to reach people for their Lord.
2. The first leaders of our church were farmers by day but fiery preachers by night and on Sunday.

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Evangelism, telling the good news of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is the task of every child of God.

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B. To understand the story of their evangelistic efforts, you must get to know the men who were involved.

1. William Gehman was trained as a miller but became a farmer.
  - a. He was described as a dignified preacher.
  - b. He spoke whenever and wherever opportunity was given him.
  - c. He helped to start several of our churches.
2. Jonas Musselman, another farmer, left a double legacy before he died at age 46.
  - a. He began as many as 5 churches of which 3 are still in active ministry.
  - b. His three sons were preachers.
    - i. Two of them, William B. and Harvey B., were significant leaders.
    - ii. The third, Allen, died young but even today, David Thomann, a descendent of Allen, is ministering in the Bible Fellowship Church.
3. Perhaps most interesting is Eusebius Hershey.
  - a. He was our first foreign missionary.
  - b. He was a fiery preacher and determined evangelist.
    - i. He joined himself to the Evangelical Mennonites at an early time recognizing that they were kindred spirits.
    - ii. He traveled almost constantly preaching wherever he could find an audience.
    - iii. He traveled through northwestern Pennsylvania, Ohio and even Canada.

C. The Evangelical Mennonites recorded their views on evangelism at an early time.

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1. Hershey issued a call for preachers in 1863.

"The Chairman (Eusebius Hershey) laid upon the hearts of every servant the urgent need at the present time for more traveling preachers, and that God would expect more from our small society since we have a reason to believe that souls are being lost, which otherwise could be saved with the help of God and more willing itinerant preachers" (Verhandlungen, p. 32- June, 1863).

2. In November, 1864, a mission constitution was drawn up which was published in 1866.

"Missionary Cause of the Evangelical Mennonite Society"

The Preachers, Deacons, and all the members shall be considered to take an active part in the Missionary cause, and, as circumstances will allow, to establish missions here and there; hence it shall be the duty of each Conference to assign each Missionary his field of labor; and every commissioned Missionary from time to time shall present to the Conference an accurate report of his work, his travels, and also of his receipts and expenditures, as the constitution of our Missionary Society prescribes" (1866- What Mean These Stones?, p. 37).

3. Hershey commented on the work among Germanic peoples in northwestern Pennsylvania.

"Brother Hershey followed with a short but moving message about the necessity of mission work. He mentioned, among other things, that in the northwestern part of this state, there are settlers, mostly Europeans, who have not heard the Word of God for two years. Some did not know anything about salvation in Christ; many were unbelievers and atheists who persecute the servants of the Lord. But then there are also many who hunger and thirst after the Bread and Water of Life" (Verhandlungen, p. 48- November, 1866).

D. Our current statement in the Articles of Faith shows that evangelism is central to the ministry of the Bible Fellowship Church.

Article XIX- The Evangelistic Mission of the Church.

The Church has been commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to all nations. Each particular church and every believer bear responsibility to this commission.

In the Gospel God has clearly revealed the only way of salvation which is sufficient for and applicable to the whole lost race of mankind. Based on His infinite and perfect love and His expressed desire that all men be saved, he bids the Church that with urgency, compassion and persuasion it proclaim the gospel to all people and invite them to believe.

It is the duty and privilege of everyone who hears the gospel to repent and receive its merciful provisions. Those who do are saved, and those who continue in

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impenitence and unbelief incur aggravated guilt and perish by their own fault.

#### Question Notes

2. While America's mainstream culture was more Christianized, there is no reason to think that people were any more saved or that the need of the gospel was any less. The idea of a glorious Christian past in our history is probably a myth.

5. These comments are intended to represent contemporary views about the nature of truth. These views represent truth as an individualized matter. In other words, there is no such thing as absolute truth which is true for everyone everywhere. The first comment says that what is true is what "works for me." It is important to find out what "works for me" means. The second comment reflects the contemporary emphasis on toleration. According to contemporary truth, every one's views must be tolerated. The only view which we must not tolerate, according to contemporary thinking, is the view that believes that truth is absolute. Look up some of Jesus statements about truth.

6. You can find more verses about God's call to share the message of Christ with others. I have only listed two because I suspect you won't have more time.

7. Be sure to allow time to talk about what people are doing today to carry out the task of evangelism.

## YESTERDAY'S TOMORROW SESSION FOUR

### EVANGELISM

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## Questions

1. What do the early statements of the Evangelical Mennonites tell you about their view of evangelism?
2. Do you think that America of the 1860's was more or less Christianized than America of the 1990's? On what do you base your opinion?
3. Do you believe America is a mission field? Explain?
4. Do you think it is important to bring others to trust Christ as savior? Explain.
5. How would you respond to the following comments:  
- "I am glad your faith works for you. My faith is different than yours but it works for me."  
- "I resent it when you try to tell me what to believe. It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you believe."  
6. What do the following verses teach about evangelism?  
- 2 Corinthians 5:18-20  
- 1 Peter 3:15
7. What are some constructive ways to share the message of Christ with other people?