

The Oak Grove Oracle

(Family News & Views of the Oak Grove Church of Christ)

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Great Gospel Meetings - Are They Just a Relic of the Past?

If you "grew up in the church" like me, you likely have fond memories of the great **Gospel Meetings** of yesteryear! I certainly remember some inspirational gatherings. Chairs were often placed in the aisles to accommodate the crowds. Inspiring Gospel singing, which "shook the rafters" and "raised the roof" would set the tone for great Gospel preaching. It was more than just one or two songs sung in a ho-hum fashion, because spirited singing softens hard hearts almost as much as masterful preaching. The heartfelt fervent prayers of the righteous reminded us God was in our midst and paying close attention to His people's corporate worship and praise. Finally, the life-changing preaching was so vivid, if the lesson was on "Hell," you could smell the smoke and hear the gnashing of teeth.

I remember sitting at the feet of some of the most powerful preachers in the brotherhood at my home congregation in Memphis, Tennessee. Men like **Marshall Keeble** (the great black evangelist), **Otis Gatewood** (the missionary to Germany) and **Charles R. Brewer** (the renowned Gospel preacher and Director of the *Nashville School of Preaching*) not only preached the Gospel to us, but often visited with me and my two brothers in my parents' home. You see, my parents were hospitable and would always invite the visiting evangelist to lunch, or to supper before or after the worship service. Why, I even remember **Otis Gatewood** getting down on his knees on the living room carpet, and doing sleight-of-hands tricks for us to keep us occupied, while momma was putting the finishing touches on dinner.

My most vivid memories of a great **Gospel Meeting** came on the last night of a 10-day evangelistic series known as "*the Great Coliseum Meeting*," a cooperative effort of the Lord's people in the Memphis area, in 1965. During the course of the nightly preaching over **250 souls** "obeyed the Gospel." It all culminated the final evening, a Sunday night as I remember it, as over 15,000 people sang multiple verses of what I consider to be the greatest "invitation song" ever written, *Just As I Am*. Imagine the impact it was on me when my 11-year-old eyes watched over 800 Christians "walk the aisles" to confess sin and ask for prayers. The pinnacle event, though, was witnessing the "new birth" in baptism, of 113 penitent, confessing believers on that night alone. In fact, it was then and there that the desire to be a Gospel preacher was emblazoned on my heart, to the point where I determined to devote my life to preaching the Gospel.

Some people say the days of great **Gospel Meetings** are just a relic of the past. Maybe I'm a dreamer, but I don't think so! The reason we don't have many **GREAT Gospel Meetings** in the Lord's church anymore is we simply don't **PREPARE** to have a **GREAT** meeting. Sadly, **monumental meetings** don't just fall out of the sky like "manna" in the wilderness many years ago (Ex. 16:1-15). It takes planning and hard work to host a memorable meeting. Here are some things **we can do**, which will help us accomplish great things for God!

Great Gospel Meetings...

It seems to me there are several things we can do to make our **Gospel Meeting** successful. Lord willing, we will flesh these suggestions out more in next week's *Oracle*. For now just think about how the following techniques might be used to improve the impact and outcome of our **Gospel Meeting**.

Promote & Pray
Alert with Advertising
Invite & Encourage
Give for the Gospel
Plan to be Present

David A. McCain
(To be Continued)