

Called and Empowered



*For a good harvest
in Christian publishing,
heed Jesus.*

by David Mehlis

David Alexander, co-founder of Lion Publishing in the United Kingdom, died last November. His was a unique vision: to publish books for people outside the Christian faith. He succeeded. Lion is the best-known publisher of pre-evangelistic books worldwide.

What did it mean to David Alexander to be a disciple? He was steadfast. He led by example, working to obey Jesus' command to make disciples. How do we follow suit?

Call

In the chapter before Jesus' appointment of the twelve disciples, He said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few" (Matt. 9:38a).

When a publisher lacks staff, he or she hires extra help. Yet Jesus did not do this. In fact, He had just rejected two volunteers (Matt. 8:18-22). He rebuked those who did not understand the enormity of His call to discipleship.

Jesus spent time healing the sick, casting out demons, and raising the dead, to teach His disciples by example. He prepared his followers, telling them, "Ask the Lord of the harvest... to send out workers into his harvest field" (9:38b). Jesus wanted them to ask. He knew the harvest was there. He knew the owner of the field. Jesus had the power and authority of the Father.

Next, Jesus called the Twelve. There was no ceremony, no robe, no tassel, no stack of books to read. Jesus had spent the past months leading by example, and He sent His followers to do as He had done, to be followers, to be disciples.

Gifts

When Jesus called His disciples, He gave them two things: power and authority. Those same gifts are available to us today.

How often do we work and get exhausted? How often are we relying on our own power and authority, instead of looking to Jesus?

Publishing is an ever-changing business. There have been economic downturns, changes in delivery systems, discount structures, and turmoil since Sept. 11, but Jesus has not changed. If we do not see a harvest, we are working without His power and authority.

Responsibility

On commissioning the Twelve, Jesus tells them, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8b). As we receive God's grace, so we are responsible to share it with others.

Cook publishes perhaps 100,000 words per day. How do we judge the books we produce? In addition, Cook testifies in other ways. How do we speak to authors? To distributors? To customers? To partners? Do our words ring true, or are they like resounding gongs and clanging cymbals?

Two years ago, I visited Ahmadabad in India just before the earthquake that levelled the state of Gujarat. I was impressed by one Bible school's method of training pastors. Candidates study for three days each week, then devote three days to church planting. When they have a church, they became pastors. Those who want to teach disciples are themselves disciples. There is no distinction. Are we like those pastors?

Whatever we need to do, God gives us the provision to do it. Pray for God's power and authority in your publishing ministry in the next 30 days. See the difference that Christ makes from a business standpoint. ❖

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