Title: Lifestyle evangelism for reaching Hindus

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Date completed: March 1992

Granting Institution: Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS)

Description: Unpublished Thesis (DPTh): 234 pages

Abstract:

Converting Hindus is one of the major problems of the Indian Church. The tradition-oriented Hindus almost always challenge the Christian concept of conversion. The case chosen for this research alludes to this fact. This study attempts to offer lifestyle evangelism as an alternative method to evangelize Hindus in India. The study includes four component parts: description, analysis, interpretation, and pastoral action.

Part I: Description

The case portrays the difficult condition of Kumar, a new convert from South India, after his baptism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA). The family members of Kumar had a great resentment against his new found faith and even challenged the truthfulness of Christianity by referring to the non-representative lifestyle of Christians. The case reveals the prevailing notion of Hindus against Christianity; and raises the pastoral-theological question of reaching the Hindus without triggering possible opposition.

Part II: Analysis

The study investigated the socio-cultural, political, economical and religious dynamics affecting the case. The following factors might have caused Kumar’s family members to reject Christianity. (a) A fear of family disunity and excommunication from the caste they belong; (b) The unfavorable attitude of the government against Christians due to the Western influence on
Christianity; and (c) the Hindu belief that Hinduism is an eternal religion and salvation is attained by individual efforts, which is incompatible with the Christian view of salvation in Jesus alone.

Part III: Interpretation

The study investigated various dimensions of lifestyle evangelism as expressed in the epistles of Paul. The writings of Paul were chosen because they are basically written for church situations. Lifestyle evangelism includes silent witnessing and active involvement in witnessing. Silent witnessing involves Christians living a consistent life and practicing Christian morality. According to Paul, Christian service and verbalization of the gospel are essential parts of lifestyle evangelism which requires active involvement of the believers.

The SDA Church has emphasized and practiced lifestyle evangelism, particularly through healthful living since its inception. Daily growth in Christ has been stressed as a basis for lifestyle witnessing. The SDA Church in India in harmony with its teachings, serves the needy Indians through medical missionary work, Health and Temperance Department, Community Services, and ADRA. These services enhance witnessing.

Part IV: Pastoral Action

Pastoral strategies applicable to Kumar are to be implemented in various phases, which involves equipping and practicing lifestyle evangelism.

A theological basis for lifestyle evangelism is to be provided by the biblical teaching on evangelism, consistent life and Christian service. A pilot training program and practice are done for chosen members for the three months. This practical knowledge focuses on medical missionary work, effective witnessing, and Hindu culture. After a period of six month training the pilot group will train all the other church members for effective witnessing among Hindus.
Some recommendations on cultural adoption and Christian service are outlined for the Indian church in general.