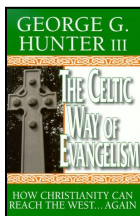


Library News

By Dan Benson



The Celtic Way of Evangelism
by George G. Hunter III

To most evangelicals, Patrick of Ireland is to St. Patrick's Day what the Easter Bunny is to Easter. That's unfortunate because, properly understood, Patrick is one of the great evangelists of all time. There's a lot that modern evangelicals can learn from his story.

In less than 30 years, Patrick and his followers reached all of Ireland with the Gospel and created a missionary movement that eventually reached the rest of the British Isles and the continent of Europe. How they did that is the subject of *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West...Again* by George G. Hunter III, which was first published about 10 years ago.

Patrick was less "Catholic" than we are usually led to believe. In the late 4th and early 5th century, the reach of the Rome-based church was considerably less than it is today. There is little evidence that Patrick ever communicated with the papacy in Rome. In fact, Hunter writes that the Celtic Christian movement years later came into conflict with the Roman authority and was subsequently suppressed by it.

Patrick was born in Britain as the Roman Empire was collapsing. The son of a priest (they married back then), he was kidnapped by Irish pirates and was sold into slavery. There he came to know the Lord. He wrote in his autobiography, *The Confession of St. Patrick*: "And there the Lord opened my mind to an awareness of my unbelief, in order that, even so late, I might remember my transgressions and turn with all my heart to the Lord my God, who had regard for my insignificance and pitied my youth and ignorance. And he watched over me before I knew him, and before I learned sense or even distinguished between good and evil, and he protected me and consoled me as a father would his son."

Some time later, he ran away to Britain. Back home, he was called back to Ireland; in a dream, a group of Irish called to him: "'We beg you, holy youth, that you shall come and shall walk again among us.' And I was stung intensely in my heart," he wrote.

Patrick loved the Irish people and saw the Irish "as imprinted with the image of God, full of potential and opportunity, longing for completion and perfection," Hunter writes. "Helping the Irish to imagine what they could become may have been Patrick's most profound rhetorical achievement."

He spoke their language, unlike the Roman Catholics who insisted Latin was the language of faith, and he valued their culture and penchant for song and poetry.

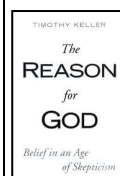
In addition, "Celtic Christians usually evangelized as a team - by relating to the people of a settlement; identifying with the people; engaging in friendship, conversation, ministry and witness - with the goal of raising up a church in measurable time," Hunter writes.

They placed heavy emphasis on hospitality and kindness, demonstrating for non-Christians what it meant to live like a Christian. In short, discipleship began before conversion. They also used small groups to teach spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible study, relationship building and mutual investment in mission. Believers were assigned a "soul friend" - a spiritual companion to whom they could be accountable and offer support.

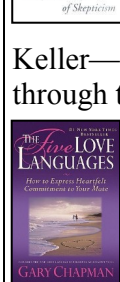
Loving our neighbors, gathering in small groups, spiritual companionship, being united on mission. Sounds like something worth emulating.

"The Celtic Way of Evangelism" is available in the Friedens church library.

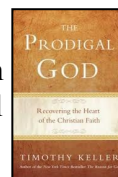
New Books in Friedens' Library



The Reason for God by Tim Keller—Provides Gospel-centered answers for those who doubt the existence of God.



The Prodigal God by Tim Keller—Captures the heart of the Gospel through the story of the "prodigal son."



The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman—An insightful, practical guide for strengthening marriages by intentionally learning how each person receives love.

How to Really Parent Your Child by Ross Campbell—Teaches parents how to proactively meet their children's needs and fill their "love tank."

