

Book Review

Telling the Story: Evangelism for the Next Generation

Luis Palau and Timothy L. Robnett

(Ventura, CA: Regal, 2006) 192 pages

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In their book, *Telling the Story*, Luis Palau and Timothy L. Robnett partner to provide strategic insights into the world of evangelistic ministry—sharing thought-provoking possibilities on where the gift of the evangelist complements the Church at large. Luis Palau, born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and mentored by Billy Graham, has been involved in evangelistic ministry around the world for over fifty-five years. Expressing his concern over the Church's lack of involvement with evangelistic ministries today, Palau asks how twenty-first century evangelists can have credibility without interaction with the Church: "In what ways is the Church actively identifying, training, affirming, utilizing, and supporting gifted evangelists?"¹ Palau gives an honest appraisal of today's situation, revealing how most young evangelists are left to make it on their own.

Alternating the authorship of the book's chapters, Palau and Robnett reveal their individual strengths and add character to the material. Palau excels at encouraging those desiring evangelistic ministry, but his encouragement goes far beyond evangelists. Communicating personal ministry insights that will benefit any minister of the gospel, Palau's real life illustrations help "flesh out" the foundational principles he has built upon

over the years and add to the inspirational facet of the book. Robnett's strength is to approach evangelistic ministry from an academic viewpoint. He does not seem to have the same experiences on the road as typical itinerant ministers today but has studied extensively.

Robnett, director of Palau's Next Generation Institute, skillfully highlights the diverse ministry roles of the evangelist, which can vary widely throughout the Church. He points out that in an era of rapidly changing cultures and diverse demographics, evangelists can easily embrace missions, apologetics, church planting, pastoring, teaching, administration, writing, and the Internet. Regarding the issue of specialty ministries in the evangelistic role, Palau says that to whatever degree ministers allow the Spirit to use them to bring in the harvest, they are part of the evangelistic work.²

Palau and Robnett both emphasize the need for formal education and spiritual development. If evangelists neglect the activities that make for spiritual maturity, they put their ministry at risk. As Robnett notes, "I have seen too many evangelists find security in their performance for Jesus Christ, not their position in Christ."³

On a practical side, the book includes numerous ministry positions available to evangelists for special needs and situations but lacks specifics on actually beginning an evangelistic ministry prior to incorporation. It does, however, challenge the reader and provides some excellent insights into personal growth and development of an evangelistic ministry and team. Palau and Robnett advocate the team approach for ministry and provide timely advice for anyone considering event-type evangelism within a community.

Palau deliberately challenges every minister to “dream big dreams” for God. He says: “If your dreams aren’t greater than finishing your education, paying your bills, or raising your children, then your vision isn’t divine.”⁴ The book is replete with similar challenges and pushes the reader to think outside the box. It also provides definitions and insights to help young ministers determine an evangelistic calling, as well as how the church might incorporate evangelistically gifted individuals into their church model.

Many wonderful evangelists serve the church today; however, leading a ministry organization involves far more than eloquent preaching or business savvy. As Robnett states, “Organizational growth and expansion come as the evangelist learns to be a leader of a ministry, not just a communicator of the good news.”⁵ Leading any ministry organization involves anointed leadership skills, which require a life-long learning mindset guided by the Holy Spirit.

Palau and Robnett share insights into evangelistic messages, the need for accountability, distractions to avoid, and the importance of refocusing priorities. Palau advocates ensuring that evangelism remain the Church’s number one priority. “In today’s Church,” he says, “part of the reason why there’s no urgency to evangelize is because we don’t deeply believe that the lost are really lost.”⁶ Assuredly, if we expect people to hear, see, and feel the love of Jesus Christ in our communities, we must raise evangelism as a major theme in our preaching, teaching, and daily living. Major events and outreaches within our communities are wonderful, but people will remember the character of every-day living long after events are over. Character still speaks loudly—especially today.

Telling the Story’s strengths far outweigh the slight weakness of a promotional tone concerning Palau’s Next Generation Alliance and its graduates. Palau’s transparency inspires and challenges the reader to new levels of commitment to God and ministry, providing opportunity for reflection and refocusing our own ministries. Robnett’s academic excellence adds validity to education’s anvil of knowledge, where all encounter a keener edge with which to minister. These authors have crafted a timely resource for generations of evangelism-minded ministers to come—sharing wisdom and guidance from a lifetime of service, and providing huge possibilities for evangelist and pastor partnerships within the Emerging Church today.

¹Luis Palau and Timothy Robnett, *Telling the Story: Evangelism for the Next Generation* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2006), 19.

²Ibid., 17.

³Ibid., 44.

⁴Ibid., 49.

⁵Ibid., 126.

⁶Ibid., 112.