

II. L.E.A.D. in Biblical Perspective
Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship
“Everyone Evangelizing Everybody Everywhere Everyday”
I Thessalonians 1:2–10
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This is our second study on the ministry theme on the Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship. In the next study in this series we will talk about how you build bridges to life and there are five bridge builders we will look at in that study. This passage in I Thessalonians which is our text for this study is one of the many prayers the Apostle Paul recorded for us. I Thessalonians 1:2–10 says [2] *We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, [3] remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. [4] For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, [5] because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. [6] And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, [7] so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. [8] For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. [9] For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, [10] and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

Today is a very appropriate day for this study in our ministry theme of the lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship because it gives me the opportunity to speak about a great challenge for every Christian and every church that wants to be faithful to Christ. This is not our only challenge but it is a great challenge. As we live for Christ there are multiple responsibilities and challenges in life. We live in a broken world and the brokenness of this world is constantly being brought to us that we need to respond to it and it’s right that we respond to it but we always have to be careful to keep the main thing the main thing. There are many necessary and good things that we need to respond to and do but we can never lose keeping the main thing the main thing.

For instance, we are right in the middle of it today. There is a significant issue we need to deal with as the people of God. Our culture has embraced death. The culture itself is in a death spiral because it is a culture of death. That’s why we take the time to deal with the sanctity of life and bring attention to it on a Lord’s Day but yet throughout the year. The sanctity of life has multiple issues. There are women in crisis pregnancy that are being told a lie instead of the answer – children made in the image of God in the most defenseless place of all, the womb, a gift of life. There are fathers who need to be challenged. There are children that need to be adopted. There are medical communities that need to be confronted with embracing something that is in opposition to everything that a doctor is. We have a government who has invested themselves in it. There is the culture elite who promote it and how they are to be met head on, with humility yet courage, truth and love.

Yet the church of Jesus Christ does not exist for the sanctity of life. It certainly addresses it and responds to it. The church of Jesus Christ and every Christian who has been redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ will always be faced with many, varied and multiple challenges that we are to respond to when the culture brings it. We are the ones that know to deal with the issues you have to deal with the main thing and the heart of the problem is the problem with the heart. The only thing that deals with the heart ultimately is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whether it's the adoption ministry, the physicians' ministry, the women's crisis pregnancy ministry or the abortion recovery ministry, one of the reasons we love working with them is not only do they become an instrument to go into that particular area but they are keeping the main thing the main thing. The main thing is the heart, the souls, and the eternity of everyone that we are dealing with. The real problem as to why we have to deal with this is the heart issue. It is the heart and soul of a nation which is the heart and soul of the people.

That is why we have to stay on mission and good and necessary ministries cannot become the mission. You have to stay on mission to stay on message to stay in ministry. It is absolutely crucial to do that. There are multiple things that we do and one of the reasons why this is important is ultimately whatever a church or a Christian sees as its mission, will ultimately affect its message. Ultimately it will control the message.

For instance, if we rightly see some of the issues in our age which right now are the sanctity of life, the sanctity of marriage, the sanctity of the family, the sanctity of sexuality, the sanctity of gender, the sanctity of the issue of racism (we're actually made of one race – Adam and Eve, with celebrating multiple ethnicities and all these things, the church cannot make social issues and social justice its mission. If it does it will soon embrace a social gospel. It doesn't mean we don't address these issues but we don't exist for the issues of social justice. We exist for the sake of the Gospel which speaks to those issues because when you disciple people those issues have to be and must be dealt with but they are dealt with from the focus of the Gospel in evangelism and discipleship.

I want you to know the joy of achievement and success as defined in the Word of God. If I make the mission of my ministry and the mission of Briarwood your success it's not long until we have a prosperity gospel instead of a Biblical Gospel. I want you to see yourself appropriately made in the image of God but if we make self-esteem the focus of our ministry and our mission it's not long until our message becomes a therapy gospel. I believe the issues of a nation must be addressed from a Biblical world and life view but if we see that as the mission of the church it becomes a political pawn and political player and it's not long after the gospel gets wrapped up in the flag of the nation where that church exists, instead of speaking to it. We must always maintain the mission because if the mission creeps the message will become adulterated. Please know that I am not saying the issues are not addressed for they must but they must be addressed from our message which is embracing our mission.

In the last study we covered our mission. It is that we have a God-given mandate to speak our God-given message to fulfill our God-given mission which is to make disciple. This mandate is given to us throughout the Scripture. Matthew 28:18–20 says [18] *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* Acts 1:8 says [8] *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.* Go and make disciples.

These Scriptures are some of the reason what this is our ministry theme this year. We going to be on mission to be on message and in ministry, in ministry with those that have already been mentioned but those are ministries from mission. The mission is to take the message of the Gospel with a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. Our lifestyle doesn't evangelize. It can open or close the door for evangelism. Our lifestyle can undercut or enhance our evangelism but no one is going to heaven because they admire the way you live. They go to heaven when they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior by faith. Romans 10:17 says *[17] So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.* The lifestyle doesn't evangelizing but the lifestyle is that we are evangelizing and discipling. We are being disciplined. We are disciples, followers and learners of Christ, for we are teaching and we are learning and we are discipling others. It is a lifestyle.

I have summed it up by saying the lifestyle is E to the 5th power where Everyone Evangelizing Everybody Everywhere Everyday. I have tried to substantiate this with Scripture but every one of us is called to share the Gospel if you know Jesus Christ. If you don't know Christ you're a mission field. If you do know Christ you are now a missionary. Having said that some of you are unbelievable gifted evangelists and I praise the Lord for it but every one of us are to evangelize. That is true with so many things in the Scripture. Some people are gifted to worship and they help us but we're all supposed to worship. Some people are gifted to pray or gifted disciplers but we all pray and disciple. We are all to evangelize a verbal communication of the Gospel to everybody no matter who they are. All the sons of Adam need to hear the message.

Jesus Christ loves you, died for your sins and has paid the penalty for your sins. If you come to Him saying 'Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling' He receives you just as you are. He never leaves you just as you are. He forgives you and clothes you with His righteousness. His Spirit is poured out within you and you become a new creation in Jesus Christ. Everybody needs to hear that. The 'up and inners' realize it doesn't really make my life and the 'down and outers' need to be warned. It is not the life of the up and inner that will make your life but it is Jesus Christ who is your life.

Evangelism is not something we just do on church on a Sunday. It is not something we just do when we scatter or when we gather but it's something we do personally. It is Everyone Evangelizing Everybody Everywhere Everyday for eternity. We do it on a team, in a classroom, the office, the neighborhood. So how do we do that? We will actually cover more specifically in our next study how to do bridge building to bring people to the Bridge to Life and personal evangelism.

This is something we do every day and when I say that I don't mean that when you lie down and at night and realize you haven't shared the Gospel with someone that day that you get up and hunt someone down to do that with. I'm talking about every day being always sensitive and ready for one of those Divine appointments or opportunities to start building the bridge or build a bridge, plant the seed, water the seed, to cultivate the seed or to weed around the seed. We should be always looking every day as 'God, who are You going to bring and at what moment can I talk to them about the most important decision they'll ever make in their life.' What will they do with Jesus?

Then there is a lifestyle of discipleship of getting our life on a life – life on life, life to life and life to lives. The most productive way to disciple is in a small group because they get the benefits of each other horizontally as well as the one on one. There is time for one on one for a

season or a reason but you'll notice in Scripture that Jesus gave most of His time to 3, 12, and 70.

In the last study we started to unfold this. Less than 25 years after the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His ascension, the Gospel in Acts 1 through 8 had gone to Jerusalem, in Acts 9 through 12 it had gone to Judea and Samaria and then in Acts 13 it goes to the world. The 13 words I'd love to hear again happen in Acts 17:6 when it says *[6] And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also."* This was not a paid for celebrity endorsement of Christianity. Where was this said? It was said in Europe at Thessalonica and it was the utterance of a pagan adversary who was referring this to what the Apostle Paul was doing.

So what happened in Acts 17 is followed up six months after that where Paul is down in Corinth. It's unbelievable what is happening there in Thessalonica. They are under persecution and the Gospel is spreading. They write to Paul asking for help. The year is 50 A.D. and he writes a letter back to them which is I Thessalonians, what are text is for this study. Like almost all Paul's other epistles it starts off with a prayer of thanksgiving.

I have about five books on prayer and one of those that has made the most impact on my life is by a Baptist preacher named A.W. Pink. The title of his book is Gleanings From Paul. There are 17 prayers of the Apostle Paul that were recorded under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and this one in I Thessalonians is one of them. In this text Paul gives us three reasons to why he is giving thanks for those in Thessalonica.

I want to give you the third reason first and it is because of the Gospel came to you in Word and power it has had such an impact in your lives that you have turned from your idols to serve the living God that everywhere Paul goes in Macedonia and Acacia he doesn't even have to set up the ministry for the people come asking about Jesus because they heard about what happened to you (those in Thessalonica). Paul gives thanks to them because they are making job of spreading the Gospel a lot easier.

The first thing he gives thanks for he does all the time in the epistles and that is the triad of Christian virtues. You will find these virtues in I Corinthians 13 and they are faith, hope and love. Paul constantly in his prayers refers back to these virtues. We see this in I Thessalonians 1:3 which says *[3] remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*. He is grateful for their changed lives that has shown up in faith, hope and love that is at work in their lives.

The second reason he gives thanks is because he knows that God has elected them. What? The Doctrine of election is a triune God has sovereignly elected His people from all eternity. So how can you know who the elect are? I Thessalonians 1:4 says *[4] For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen (elected) you*. This word 'chosen' in the original is in noun form but for readability it is used in verb form. The concept for this word 'elect' is all over the Bible. The word itself shows up 5 times, one here and 4 times in the book of Romans. So if Paul wasn't there in the counsels of the Trinity when the establishment of the covenant of grace was made, before the foundations of the world then how does Paul know they are God's elect?

Paul knows they are God's elect because the marks of God's electing grace are on them and he gives three of them. He says in I Thessalonians 1:4-5 *[4] For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, [5] because our gospel came to you not only in **word**, but also in **power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction***. In came in Word but not in Word only so don't read that as diminishing the fact that it came in Word for it did come in Word. It has to

come in Word because faith comes by hearing but it also came in power by the Holy Spirit with full conviction. That's why Paul knows.

When God's electing grace is in place His Son goes to the cross to pay for all the sins of all of His people for all of eternity. Romans 8:33–34 says [33] *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.* [34] *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.* All whom the Father has given Christ, He will lose not one (John 6:37) and all the elect are searched out by the power of Holy Spirit with the Gospel.

One Baptist preacher put it this way; 'Jesus went to the cross and with His blood He redeemed all of His people and will lose none, then He ascended to heaven and from the throne He sent the bloodhound of heaven to go track them all down.' The Holy Spirit has sniffed you out with the Gospel, has come to you with power and full conviction so the Gospel wasn't only a word enterprise but it went to your heart and the heart was changed. That's the evidence of God's electing grace.

So Paul not only had a lifestyle of evangelism but he also had a lifestyle of discipleship because when they responded Paul started discipling them and they became imitators of Paul. That is what discipleship is – you model, mentor, and motivate. Paul set an example. He mentored them and was there to encourage them to motivate them in the Lord. This is what Paul did. He had a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. Lord, willing I'm going to dig deep into this matter of a lifestyle of discipleship through building bridges and bringing people to the Bridge to Life verbally by giving you a discipling definition of evangelism which will be in our takeaway. I love what the founder of the Salvation Army, General Booth, said about evangelism. He said 'Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread.

Here is the takeaway, the discipling definition of evangelism. Evangelism is a Divinely authorized, verbal communication of the Gospel calling (or summoning) any and all to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior with Spirit-filled power, persuasion and purpose. There are a lot of things that describe us as evangelists like servants, stewards, and all kinds of word-pictures but I love this one from II Corinthians 5 which says you are ambassadors for Christ. Jesus said in the Great Commission from Matthew 28:18–19a, [18] *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* [19a] *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...*

You are a Divinely authorized communicator of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Triune God has authorized it, He is with you by the Spirit sent by Jesus because the love of the Father that sinners might be right with God. Notice that it is a verbal commitment. Now sometimes you are planting the Seed, watering the Seed, and cultivating the Seed. I have never yet prayed with someone to come to Jesus where it was the first time anyone had ever talked with them about the Gospel. Somebody had gone before me but we are to be engaged in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ (the Gospel) and calling them to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior by telling them that on the cross Jesus took your place, paid for all of your sins and has risen victorious therefore you can have the gift, not because this is free but because it is paid for now come freely just as you are. But you never stay just as you are because as you come to Him you come to follow Him.

We think when we lead people to come to Christ with the Gospel message of evangelism and later on we try and talk them into following Jesus. Jesus always put the two together – come follow Me. The Bible puts it together. Romans 6:23 says [23] *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Lord, we surrender. Savior, you put

all your trust in that He is the Redeemer of all of your sins. Any and all come to the Savior and you come with the power of the Spirit.

You have three power packs at work in your life as an evangelists. This past Christmas I got one of those carry around power packs for my phone and my kids and grandkids went crazy over it but I have some really great power packs. There is the power of prevailing prayer. Romans 1:16 says [16] *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* You have the Holy Spirit who empowers you so that you speak and they hear with full conviction. The power of the Holy Spirit causes you to be passionate, compassionate, humble and bold. Only He can do that in your life with power.

To conclude, I'm not talking about preaching evangelism but personal evangelism. Personal evangelism is personal and there are three persons involved. There is the person you are talking to, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. So who are you in all this? You are just the instrument. It's not about us. We deal with people as people, not targets. There are people with hurts and that's why we ask a lot of questions to find out where they are hurting. We don't step in giving answers but questions that will point them to Christ not to us. The Holy Spirit is the One who allows us to bring them to the personal relationship with Christ. So in personal evangelism be personal. That is what God has called us to do in a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship.

The effectiveness of the strength, power, persuasion and integrity of your words conversationally to someone with the Gospel is usually directly related and proportionate to the strength, power, persuasion, and the integrity of your relationship with them. When the power of the Holy Spirit gives you His fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, they are going to experience that and that's what God uses to make you effective in communicating with them. We're not going to have powerful words without powerful relationships of personal evangelism unless you're in certain circumstances.

For instance, if you're on a plane that is going down and you want to share Christ you don't have time to develop a personal relationship but going down in that airplane will make my words pretty significant when we're talking. So sometimes the situation will give the importance to your words but most of the time in personal evangelism you can't have personal evangelism until you deal with people personally, with integrity, power, carefulness and courageous compassion. Oh how I long to see abortionists stop aborting babies and get converted. Oh how I long to see staff that fill abortuaries get converted. To see women find the hope of Christ to deal with the hopelessness of crisis, to see homes that are lighthouses of the Gospel for children to be adopted, to see fathers who can be a man because of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is why we need to keep the main thing the main thing.

So go to that fraternity, that team, that classroom, that business, that neighborhood, personally to people by the Person of the Spirit to introduce them to the Lover of their soul, the Person of Jesus Christ who died on the cross for their sins.

When we were at a church in Charlotte, North Carolina there was a man who was one of the sidewalk advocates in front of abortion clinics. His name was Frank. We had the privilege to close down two abortions clinics in Charlotte in the 1990s. Frank was a part of this and he was only an insurance salesman but he also played an instrument in the orchestra at the church and he loved Jesus. I had the privilege to speak to his insurance company and snuck in the backdoor to move them from insurance to assurance which is where Frank became a Christian.

As Frank was going to church he became concerned about the sanctity of life but he kept the main thing the main thing so that when a young lady came up beside him on the sidewalk she said to him, 'You don't understand.' He said 'I probably don't but I would love to, would you talk with me?' She did and he heard from her what made it a crisis. Much of it was ostracism and financial and with his wife by his side, Frank said to her, 'Would you come live with us? There is a doctor at our church I want to introduce you to. He'll take care of you. When we go to the hospital I don't want you to worry for I'll take care of that.' Not only was a baby saved but that young lady became a believer and she was saved for all eternity.

Keep the main thing the main thing—Everyone Evangelizing Everybody Everywhere Everyday. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You so much for those who have labored so diligently in this matter of the sanctity of life. Thank You God that as we deal with this we can talk about what is life that Jesus Christ is our life, Lord and Savior. He is not just an add-on or someone we just talk about every once in a while or in church every once in a while. He is our Lord and our Savior. For us to live is Christ and to die is gain but here we have many challenges and many opportunities. Help us to embrace them and never shrink back from them nor be silent yet help us stay on mission on message and in ministry. Perhaps after reading this you may be thinking 'I need to talk to someone about that abortion recovery' or about these other ministries and maybe you just need to pray with someone. If you do need to pray with someone please call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 and we will pray with you personally and confidentially. This day you have heard that there is a Savior who loves you, who gave Himself for you, do not walk away from Him today. We would love to tell you more about Him and do that personally that you might have everlasting life. Father, Your people have gathered to worship you and as we scatter I ask that every one of us will evangelize everyday everybody everywhere all because we love You and we love these people. People need the Lord. Help us to go with words but not words only but words in the power of the Holy Spirit with full conviction, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

Our God-given Mandate is to speak our God-given Message to fulfill our God-given Mission – Make Disciples – L.E.A.D. – Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship

Evangelism

Everyone Evangelizing Everybody Everywhere Everyday

Discipleship

Life on Life–Life to Life–Life on Lives

EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP EXAMINED AT THESSALONIA

LIFE TAKEAWAY

A Divinely authorized verbal communication of the Gospel calling any and all to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior with Spirit-filled power, persuasion and purpose.

- Personal Evangelism is verbal

- Personal Evangelism is personal
- Personal Evangelism is a process
- Personal Evangelism is patient
- Personal Evangelism is passionate