

IV. L.E.A.D. in Biblical Perspective
Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship
“The Evangellion of Evangelism – the Gospel”
Galatians 1:6–12
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
January 21, 2018 • Morning Sermon

We will be looking at Galatians 1 and this is our 4th study in our ministry theme of lifestyle evangelism and discipleship. This is God’s Word and God’s Word is the truth. Galatians 1:6–9 says [6] *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— [7] not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. [8] But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. [9] As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.*

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

There are some devotional guides that allow you to read through the Bible in a year and about every five years I just take the journey of reading through the Bible. If you consider the Bible as the tree of life, in my quiet time, I love to dig down and look at the leaves, so to speak, but sometimes it’s good to step back and look at the whole forest. That’s kind of what reading through the Bible helps you do and in this past week I am now arriving toward the end of the book of Genesis. That means pretty soon I’ll get to Numbers and that seems to be the book where reading through the Bible dies every year.

As I got toward the end of Genesis I came to the account that sounds like almost a replication of what happened between Jacob and Esau but this time it involves Joseph as he brings his two son, Manasseh and Ephraim, to be blessed by his father Jacob. Joseph very carefully arranges his sons in front of Jacob so that the first born would get the right hand of blessing and power and the second born would get the left hand. Joseph knows his father’s eyes are dim, very much like Isaac’s eyes were dim when Jacob sought the blessing from Esau. Lo and behold when he brings his sons in front of Jacob where the first born is in front of Jacob’s right and the second born is in front of his left Jacob crosses his hands as he lays them upon Joseph’s sons. ‘Crosses his hands’ is translated ‘exchanges his hands.’ The Bible then says that Joseph is displeased and takes his father’s hands to move them. And Jacob says ‘No’ twice.

That account is given in such detail and it is so captivating the way it unfolds. A lot of verses are given to this account and so my question is why is that there? The Bible commentators have a field day with that account. Are you interested in knowing why that is there? I will tell you at the end of this study why that is there in the Bible.

Our theme this year is lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. We say this like this because your lifestyle doesn’t evangelize but it can open or close a door to it. Evangelism is actually a verbal activity of sharing the Gospel. So we are asking God to building us a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. We don’t want to separate the two. When we evangelize we evangelize to discipleship and when we disciple it is to produce more people who are sharing the Gospel.

We picked this theme for three reasons. One of them was because last year’s ministry theme was revival and in our understanding of revival that is heaven-sent, not man worked up,

there is always two marks. Many times you won't even know there is a revival until the evidences of revival show up later. Many think it is an extraordinary thing in some meeting and it can and does happen but in revivals in church history and the Bible you know when it happened because of what it produced. It always produces two things – a vertical which is gathered worship to the praise of God. Even an unbeliever like Benjamin Franklin said 'It looks like the whole world is going to church.' The other evidence is what Franklin didn't know which was the reason it looked that way was because the whole church was going out into the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is a Gospel awakening that is an evidence of revival. So if God allows us to see the blessings of revival it will also show up in lifestyles of evangelism and discipleship.

The second reason we picked this theme is that I know for those who know Him we want Him to come back soon. Jesus will not come back until two things happen – the Gospel goes to all the nations and all of His people are brought to Himself. The Bible says in II Peter 3:9, *[9] The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.* Therefore He won't come until all of those whom He has secured in His electing grace are brought to Jesus. That means somewhere, someday someone will share the Gospel and that person will come to Christ and will be the last one to come to Christ. Then the door will shut, the day will be over, the trumpet sounds and Jesus comes. So we want as Peter has said in II Peter 3:12 to 'hasten the coming of the Lord.' How do you hasten? You keep sharing the Gospel as we are bringing in that harvest that Jesus secured at the cross.

The third reason we are focusing in on a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship is because this country is in desperate need of it. We are in need of a powerful movement of the Gospel in this country. We are in need of the power of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel, His Word and the power of prayer. We need lifestyles of evangelism and discipleship where God's people not only bring people to hear the Gospel when they gather but also when they scatter so others can see their lifestyle personally of evangelism and intentional disciple making. We need the power of God to do that. God gives us this power through the power of prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. 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.*

I found out the power of the Gospel early on in my life when I was an unbeliever. I had not gone public yet with my life of ungodliness because I was still living at home and my daddy would have whipped me so I had a secret life of ungodliness. My dad was not aware of 'time outs' or 'I'm going to take this away from you,' he would just say 'get the belt son.' I'm not necessarily recommending everything about this way but I'm just telling you for me that's the way it was. I went to the Christian Missionary Alliance church and the youth fellowship ministry said they were going to have a one day retreat in Asheboro, North Carolina. I conveniently forgot to tell my dad and mom about that but they still found a way to let my mom and dad know that had been planned. My dad asked me why I hadn't told him about it and of course I told him I forgot but then he said 'Well, you're going.' I was 16 years old and had just got my driver's license and I tried to get out of going. He wouldn't budge and said again, 'you're going.'

I have tried to think back in my life to see if I could imagine a time my dad might have gotten up one Sunday morning to say to us 'where would you all like to go to church today' but I can't because he always picked where we would go and we all went regardless. So I knew I was going to this youth retreat. I rode with someone up there and when I got there I did not know

that this was actually a youth training seminar on how to share the Gospel. Students from an area Bible college were there to teach us this and by the afternoon we were going to go door to door to share the Gospel. I thought 'What in the world am I doing here? I'm not even a Christian and they're training me to share the Gospel.' Sure enough that afternoon we all had ten people assigned to us and we went into the neighborhood in pairs going door to door.

That is the day I settled a theological issue long before I was a Christian and that was the issue of God hearing the prayers of unbelievers. I can assure you He does. He heard mine because as I was walking up to that first house I said 'O God, please don't let anyone be in this house.' We rang the doorbell and nobody came to the door. God answered my prayer that day. I did not want to get into this matter of sharing the Gospel. God not only sometimes answers with 'yes' but He also answers with 'no.' This time I said 'God, please don't let anyone be at this house either!' He answered 'no' on that prayer for someone answered the door and we were asked to come in. The college student that was with us started sharing the Gospel and then halfway through he told them 'Ike (my nickname) is going to finish this.' I thought 'are you kidding me' and I had to quickly remember what I had just learned.

So I finished sharing the Gospel through what I had learned and had a powerful 'come back tonight' bridge when I ended by saying 'You don't want to be a Christian do you?' It wasn't exactly a closer but the man looked at me and said 'Yeah, I need this.' The college Bible student had enough sense at that point to step back in and I thank the Lord he did. When I left that place I realized that the power is not in the person sharing but the power is in the Gospel and the Spirit that is at work. God can use anything or anyone, in fact in the Old Testament He used a donkey to speak. It is amazing what He can use so the power is in the Gospel. That is what we are looking at this year and that is a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. Our nation is in need of this and the world is in need of this and this Gospel is something we are called to share.

In the last study we took some time in II Thessalonians which is the second epistle Paul wrote in 50 A.D. where these people had said 'These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also' and this was less than 25 years after the ascension of Jesus. The power of the Gospel was shaking the world at this time in Europe that was being shared by the people of God. Paul was run out of town and goes to Corinth. They write him a letter and he writes back I Thessalonians in which in it is where we get our theme which we get from I Thessalonians 1.

I Thessalonians 1:5-7 says [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 (discipleship) 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.

Notice it did not come in Word only but it did come in Word. You can't evangelize without words but also came in the power of the Spirit and with full conviction. Evangelism and discipleship is not an a la carte menu, where we'll bring you to Jesus and maybe later on we'll sneak up on you to try and get you into discipleship. Jesus puts them both together when He says "Come, follow Me." Lord Savior, He puts it both together and just as Paul said, you have to bring the Gospel to the lost for they are not going to look for it. There is none who seek, no not one. We are the seekers, for we seek to save the lost.

So we bring the Word in the Spirit and with full conviction and when they come to Christ then we disciple. Paul said 'when you followed us (imitated us) God did such a glorious work that now when I go to other places I don't have to set up my evangelism. People start asking me

about the Gospel because they heard what happened to you and they want to know that Gospel of Jesus Christ.’ Some are gifted in evangelism but we’re all responsible. It is everyone evangelizing everybody everywhere every day. People want us to keep quiet about our faith but not us for we’ll take it with us everywhere we go sharing with whoever will listen.

We will share thoughtfully, knowing how to build bridges, we’ll do it compassionately, passionately, persuasively, persistently, and intentionally and I’m ready each day to do it. When the Divine appointment comes pray that God will give you the ability to show up right then. That leads to discipleship which is life on life, life to life and life (discipler) on lives (small group). Small groups are where you are modeling, mentoring and motivating others as an instrument of God’s grace to disciple them.

That then led us to a working definition in our last study on evangelism which is 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. The Gospel calls men and women to faith in Christ by the power of the Spirit with persuasion and purpose. It is a communication of the Gospel!

Thessalonians was the second epistle Paul wrote and Galatians was his first. His number one issue with the Galatians was the Gospel. He had heard that some people had come to the church in Galatia and turned the Gospel from the Gospel of grace to a gospel of self-righteous works. He was amazed that those who had come to Christ were so quickly deserting that Gospel of grace for another gospel and yet there is not another gospel. The gospel they were hearing was a distortion of the Gospel. You have to be faithful to *the* Gospel. He even told them if an angel from heaven somehow shows up in their pulpit and gives you another gospel, as one of my friends put it, ‘you grab him by his glowing ethereal pants and you throw him out the door.’ That Gospel is crucial so be a steward of it for it is *the* Gospel.

What is that Gospel? The Bible gives us the Gospel which is basically this; that God who is holy, who will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, has found a way to save sinners when there was no way and that was through His Son Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life for no man can come to the Father but through Him. God’s Son is the Savior of sinners. He has saved us, is saving us and He will save us from sin’s penalty, power, position, practice and one day its very presence and that’s the Gospel message. The Gospel message is not, Jesus went to the cross to make you healthy, wealthy, and wise or that you could get a miracle every day. The Gospel is that Jesus went to the cross to save you from your sins.

The writers of the New Testament found ways to communicate that in the thinking of the era, the first century. Sometimes they pictured the Gospel as an issue of how criminals can be made right. Sometimes, the sinner, who is apart from Christ, is helpless and hopeless and viewed as a criminal rightly, under God’s condemnation but the Judge who stands with His condemning wrath upon them, won’t love their sin but will love them, and that Judge will send His Son to bear the penalty for the sinners capital crimes so that they will no longer be under condemnation with no charge against them. Everything is done and paid for and now He is taking you home where He sent His Son from to be with Him forever and ever. No condemnation, now justification – no guilt, now innocence.

Sometimes the picture is that sinners are under the dominion and power of sin. They are captive by it but God pays the ransom and buys them back. He redeems them. Sometimes it’s a familial picture, where the lost sinner is the orphan of sin but God sends His Son to save them and bring them home so they are no longer orphans of sin but adopted into the family of God. Sometimes the picture is one of slavery where you are slaves to your sin but God sends His Son

who defeats those who would enslave you, wins the victory and He liberates you from the power of sin from that which is greater, the power of His grace. He speaks of these patterns in various ways.

Perhaps my favorite is the one found in II Corinthians 5 where He speaks of sins work of alienation. Your life is alienated and you're alienated from God but the Gospel comes so that your alienation is erased because the Gospel is a message and evangelism is a ministry of reconciliation. There is this glorious picture of our redemption in II Corinthians 5. Sin alienates you. You can be surrounded by thousands of people but be lonely. The reason is that you get alienated from God. Is alienation in our society today? They can't even reconcile a budget. There is racial alienation and a need for reconciliation. There are political alienations and no reconciliations. There are marital alienations needing reconciliation. Sometimes it's family alienation, parents and children in need of reconciliation. All of these need to be addressed but they can never be effectively addressed until our alienation from God is dealt with. These alienations are the fruit of our alienation from God. I have good news. God's Son has reconciled sinners to His Father and His Father to sinners. Evangelism is the ministry of reconciliation. The Gospel is the message of reconciliation.

I was preparing for a radio program just the other day and I was looking through the newspaper to see about things that needed to be looked at through a Biblical world and life view. As I was doing that I found out the Prime Minister of England, Theresa May, just this past week created a new cabinet position called Minister of Loneliness. They commissioned a study and found out that almost 40 percent of the people identify themselves as alienated and lonely. Where do you think the biggest groups of alienated and lonely fall under? They are teenagers and the elderly. I think there are a lot of contributing factors to that from a Biblical world and life view not the least of which, you can't destroy the marriage and family and not create alienation. Our culture is destroying marriage and family and this creates alienation.

You cannot have an embracing of a death culture and not create alienation. Social media? You don't really believe all those people are your friends, do you? Social media has redefined everything so that we now spend all our time in technological interplay when in reality we don't really know what it means to have a friend. Then we get alienated. The answer to all those alienations is not the government providing a minister to loneliness and alienation. The answer is the ministry and message of reconciliation where you can be right with God and God can be right within you. That is what Paul begins to look at when he writes to Corinth.

II Corinthians 5:11–15 says [11] *Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.* [12] *We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.* [13] *For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.* (In other words, in Biblical ethics we're ready to build any bridges we can to get you're your life, even if you call me a fool, I'll do it. I want to get into your life so you can know the Lord who gives life.) [14] *For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;* [15] *and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves (this is what creates alienation) but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*

We know where you are headed and it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Hebrews 9:27 says [27] *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.* And we know that is forever. Knowing there is a heaven and hell, and the

majesty of God we embrace His calling message and we come to persuade you. I know that only the Lord can convert you but I will come to persuade and I've known the love of Christ so therefore I love you. The love of Christ compels me to love any and all of you. The God of glory has given His Son and He died for all the sins of all of His people for all of eternity and was raised. You can be right with God and God can be right within you. His righteousness goes to you and every time God sees you He sees the righteousness of His Son. Let's look further in II Corinthians 5.

II Corinthians 5:16–21 says *[16] From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. [17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. [18] All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. [21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Your sin record has been erased by His Son who paid for it all. There is no condemnation, no charges. Then He makes you a new creation as He gives you a new heart. You get a new record, a new heart and a new life. Bye-bye alienation. Hello reconciliation. The old has passed away and behold the new has come. The love of Christ compels me to bring it to you. The fear of the Lord sends me to persuade you. All of this is from God – the message and ministry of reconciliation. The Reconciler, Jesus, was sent from God and He is God. When it says He doesn't count their trespasses it means He doesn't count your trespasses against you. He counts them but they were put against Christ who paid for them so that we might be reconciled to God.

The ministry of reconciliation is that we are ambassadors for Christ. I recently found out that our current administration has an unbelievable number of ambassadorships that haven't been appointed yet. So what if you happen to get a phone call where they said 'The president has some open ambassadorships and he wants you to go be an ambassador.' Here is how you could respond. 'Sorry I already am one for the King has made me an ambassador and as His ambassador I have a mission and a message. That is, I implore you be right with God through Jesus Christ.' Ambassadors have power and authority of the King to accomplish their mission and they can't play around with the message, can't edit it. They have the authority and credentials of the King but they have a mission and message from the King.

Our mission is to go around to the lost and make disciples. Our message is the Gospel of reconciliation that God in Christ has reconciled sinners to Himself. They who were alienated are no longer alienated because Christ has removed our alienation in our sins so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

Here is the takeaway. The Gospel message announces that we who are alienated from God by our sins will be reconciled to God by Christ, if we receive Him who received the judgement of our sins on our behalf and who gives us all the blessings of His righteousness. The message is that Christ received the judgment of our sins on our behalf and if you receive Him by faith and repentance He not only has removed the guilt and shame of your sins at the cross, giving you a new record and a new heart for a new life but He gives you the blessings of His righteousness. This is all from God. Our God reigns! So go get up on a mountain and announce it. Go build a bridge and share it.

Good news, for He had defeated all of His and our enemies and we who were enemies, He has reconciled us. We are no longer alienated. We are now His and He is now ours. If you have never done this I ask you to call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 and we would be happy to pray with you this day. The emptiness in this world and your alienations are only addressed by the Gospel message that brings you to a relationship with this God who is yours and you are His.

You may be thinking ‘you have no idea what kind of person I am’ and you’re right I don’t but I know you’re a sinner because I am one. I am told in the Bible that we are all sinners. I don’t know how big your sins are but I know He can save you. Go read your Bible. The person who wrote the first five books by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was Moses. The person who wrote all those Psalms was David. Paul wrote 13 epistles in the New Testament. All three of these men were murderers but God reigns and I know He can save you. I know what God did for all those men and I know what God did for me. I know that His grace is greater than your sins and He will reconcile you to Himself.

Oh that glorious moment I share with you at the beginning with Joseph, his sons and Jacob. It displeased Joseph that Jacob switched hands – ‘how dare you take the hand of blessing from the first born and give it to the second. I had this thing set up. How dare you change this Jacob!’ Joseph tried to move the hands back he was so displeased about it. Jacob said ‘no’ twice. Some commentators say that Isaac was dim in his eye sight and now Jacob is dim in his eye sight and Joseph is afraid he is doing the same thing to him so he crossed his hands. With all due respect, ‘hogwash.’ I’m sure people know this and it may have had some lingering though but this was very purposeful on Jacob regardless of his eye sight and of what he had done in the past.

This was done on purpose with no deceit. Jacob exchanged the hand of blessing from the first born and gave it to the other and placed the hand on the other. Jacob is simply showing us what God did at the cross. The hand of blessing that should have been on His Son was placed on you. The hand of judgment that should have been on you and me was placed on Jesus. He changed hands for the Divine exchange that we might be saved. Our God reigns! Jesus saves and it’s all from God. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for these moments we could be together in Your Word. I pray that if there are any reading this that have not known that hand of blessing from Jesus, from the God of glory, will You this day cause them to flee to the Savior so that the hand of judgment would not be upon them? Thank You that You have reconciled us and our alienation is dismissed and that we in Christ are right with God. We are no longer alienated for we have a Minister to our alienation and He is Jesus. We look not to the ministers of this world, governmental or otherwise, we look to Jesus. We have a message of reconciliation to bring to the world and we have a ministry of reconciliation to share that message to the world. Father, send us to get up on the mountain and say ‘Jesus saves!’ for I pray this 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

Model – Mentor – Motivate

A Working Definition of Evangelism

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.

The Gospel Message

A Message of Reconciliation

LIFE TAKEAWAY

The Gospel Message announces that we who are alienated from God by our sins will be reconciled to God by Christ, if we receive Him who received the judgment of our sins on our behalf and who gives us all the blessings of His righteousness.

Right with God – God right within us.