

VII. L.E.A.D. in Biblical Perspective  
*Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship*  
“Building Bridges—#2: Event Evangelism”

Mark 2:13–17

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January 28, 2018 • Evening Sermon

In this study we will be looking at Mark 2. In light of our theme where we are seeking to develop a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship, if I had you in a small group this is what I would do. I will lead you through what I think is helpful for you in terms of your Christian life in general, your joy in the Lord, your effectiveness and therefore as a church our effectiveness in making evangelism a way of life for all of us individually as we learn to establish this bridge to life whereby we can bring people on the Bridge of Life. We teach Evangelism Explosion here at Briarwood and something we call ‘one verse evangelism’ or Bridge to Life. We would love for everyone to get this ‘one verse evangelism’ and I have found it to be extremely helpful. This one verse evangelism leads me to wages – gift, sin – God, death – life, and the way to get from wages, sin, and death to gift, God and life is through the Bridge, Jesus Christ. The cross is what bridges this so that you can have everlasting life when you receive Him as Lord and Savior.

One of the things I use for that is the bridge we have already talked about and that’s the conversational bridge. How can I build a bridge to that person’s life whereby I can bring them to the Bridge of life? We need to remember the importance of questions where you don’t immediately go to telling and selling but you go to asking and listening. That either opens up a door for your testimony or to further the conversation with very pointed questions that allows you share the Gospel with people as the Lord would open that door through our other-oriented conversations. Ephesians 4:29 says [29] *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.* Then there is Colossians 4:6 that says [6] *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.* That is redemptive conversation.

In this study we will go to a second bridge called event evangelism. I have to confess I struggled on this because in the next study I want to go to one called hospitality evangelism. My struggle is while conversational evangelism can stand on its own but it’s wonderful if you can associate it with an event and hospitality evangelism is a marvelous way to follow up on conversational and event evangelism. For instance we have a sportsman’s blast event coming up where the speaker will use that event to eventually give them the Gospel and we’ll have an opportunity to people to respond to the Gospel right then but most responses are best done through follow up. What better follow up than to have someone in your home or go get a cup of coffee to sit and talk with them through hospitality so the dilemma is that I think all three of these go together but in this study I couldn’t initially figure out whether to do hospitality first or event first but I decided to do event first. The reason for that is hospitality is not only a way we can share the Gospel conversationally and then invite them to an event but it’s also a great way to follow up on event evangelism.

So what are we talking about in event evangelism? I want to give you five things for an event to be effective as a bridge for evangelism but before I do that I want to mention two things to you. One, is that we as a church will be and are committed, besides the Lord’s Day morning and evening, to having events that are specifically put together focused on evangelism. The

Lord's Day morning services are focused on worship that evangelizes but sometimes we'll have events that are evangelistic where some worship will break out during it but the events are focused on evangelism. For the Lord's Day morning evangelizing one who is lost and equipping the believer are a consequence of worship but an evangelistic event is specifically designed with five marks that make it effective to use as a bridge in someone's life.

Not only can you see event evangelism as a bridge but you can also see it as a tool in your tool box of evangelism. As you are sharing the Gospel with someone you can ask them to come with you to an event. Now they can hear from someone else or just even see the beauty of it. Recently we had a ballet presentation and in at least two places I was overwhelmed at the clarity of the Gospel message not only in the performance but in what could be said as well. The picture it gave also opens something up for us in a moment like that. From there you can invite someone to your home or out for coffee to continue the conversation by asking them what they thought of it.

Before I get to the five marks, not only as church will we do these things as we ask God to make us effective as a tool in your tool box that you can use as a bridge to someone's life, but another thing we will do is challenge you to come up with your own events. In fact, I will show you from the Bible an event that Paul took advantage of to do evangelism and I will show you another event that was created by an individual who was converted and because of their conversion they created an event whereby their friends could be evangelized. First, I will give you these five marks before we go to those two events in the Bible.

The first mark is event evangelism takes advantage of common interests. I have some friends that to me would be absolutely useless to invite them to the Sportsman's Blast event. I can invite them but they will not be interested in what that event is about, likely, but those who are sportsmen will most likely be attracted to that event because it's a place where there is common interest.

The second mark about an evangelistic event that we might make use of with personal development or developed as a church is it needs to be done with excellence. That is absolutely important that we learn how to do it with excellence.

The third mark is that the evangelistic event needs to be accessible. The fourth mark is that it is used thoughtfully and that it is followed up thoughtfully as well. The fifth mark is that it has to communicate the Gospel not only by sight but also by Word and deed. You need to be able to actually hear the Gospel in an evangelistic event. Those are the five marks that need to be a part of an evangelistic event.

I want to share an event with you from when I was pastoring a church in Charlotte, North Carolina. We had just moved into our new building and we had been groping around as to how the Lord was going to use our music ministry. There was a lot of discussion about it. I realized that there are many out there that have music abilities with instruments etc. but if their vocation is not in music then that ability has been kind of set aside because they don't really see that they can use it. So we decided to put together a brass section and we found three guys that could play the trumpet advisably. Two had not played the trumpet in a long time and it was abundantly evident but we persevered with it and kept on doing it. Pretty soon a fellow started visiting the church and he was pretty much a professional. Now he had gone into business but still had that professional ability and it was about the same time our music director John came.

So we started building from there and not long after that someone said they had a saxophone and boy could he play. Then another one joined and another one. So they started in particular from this one music genre, jazz, that later turned into big band stuff and ended up with

a great orchestra for our worship time but on the outreach side they would go put concerts on. There would be people that would show up at these concerts that I can promise you would not darken the door of a worship service or even hear me preach but as they did these concerts people in the band would stand up after they had done some kind of incredible solo and tell those in attendance how much Jesus meant in their life and they would give their testimony. When it was all over someone would say ‘Hey Pastor Reeder can you come close us with prayer?’ I would just pray the Gospel in that closing prayer. It was a wide open door.

Right there where we served was a small town called Matthews that had a big Labor Day Festival every year. They would say ‘If you have something you can do to make this a wonderful community event please take advantage of this opportunity.’ So because this festival was only two blocks from our church we said to the city ‘Would you like to use our parking lot for free? The only thing we ask is that you give us a place for a bandstand so that our people can give a concert for free.’ I would then get a chance every once in a while to stand up and share the Gospel. Our band was good! They attracted many and the door was opened up. They would give testimonies as they played, I would share the Gospel and we would get the chance to talk to people with a number of people coming to Christ along with four symphony people. It was amazing to see what these four people did for our jazz band when they became a part of it too after accepting Christ.

Those are the things that can happen with event evangelism. We put the Gospel in it. It was accessible. It was done for people with a common interest. It was done with excellence and thoughtfulness. It had all those five marks in it that we could make use of so you can be thinking of ways you could do an event of your own. I will be giving a list at the end of this study that you may want to consider doing as well in this coming year. Yes please come to event evangelism but don’t come alone. Bring someone with you like those you have been having conversations with about Jesus which is what our Bridge one was – conversational evangelism. Then have more conversations with them as you follow up. Here is a situation I want you to see in Mark 2.

Mark 2:13–14 says *[13] He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. [14] And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.* Here is evangelism and discipleship. He calls Levi, a tax gatherer. Remember from all those self-righteous people that tax gatherers were traitors and thieves. We tend to get away from them but Jesus went after him. He sought this one and called him to Himself through salvation and to follow Him. He called him to Himself as Lord and Savior. What did Levi do? He rose and followed Him.

Isn’t it interesting that all because of a two-word sermon “Follow Me” a tax gatherer, Levi, gets saved and follows Jesus. The place is Capernaum and if you go through the Bible you will see that Jesus has been doing some preaching and teaching in this area. Matthew and Luke go into a bit more detail on this but Mark just picks this up. I am absolutely sure that when Jesus said to Levi “Follow Me” that was not the first time that he had heard Jesus nor was it the first time somebody had talked to him about Jesus. Please remember this; conversion is an extraordinary moment but evangelism is a process. Either this message has been distilled to two words or it was a bigger message and Levi had heard from others and likely Jesus Himself before this moment recorded in Mark. Now we come to, not the planting or the watering or cultivating, but to the harvest moment – Come and follow Me. Let’s see what happens next in this passage.

Mark 2:15 says [15] *And as he (Jesus) reclined at table in his (Levi or Matthew's) house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.* Matthew says 'I'm going to have a party, an event' and he pulls together an event at his house. Jesus comes and has a meal with him. I particularly chose this because of how this echoes the parable of the lost sheep where Jesus sits down with tax collectors and sinners to welcome them and receive them. In this case Matthew is the one who has created the moment and brought them in. And the predominant number of people are sinners and the people Levi had a network of relationships with. They have a common interest for they were all tax collectors. Because of what has happened to Levi/Matthew, he arranges this event for those he had a common interest with and now many are coming to follow Jesus. You can imagine what will happen next. There is shouting time in heaven and grumbling time on earth.

Marks 2:16–17 says [16] *And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"* [17] *And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Here is the bigger lesson that the self-righteous will never know that they need a Savior because they think they are healthy but in reality they are sick. If you are sick and think you're healthy, how great is that sickness? If you call the light darkness and the darkness light, how great is that darkness?

I also picked this passage for another reason. Jesus is calling sinners to this event. This isn't just a time of fellowship for those who are converted but it's an event to bring people to that need to know Him, who need the Savior. It is an event that is attractive (interest), accessible, has the evangelism but also the Evangel Himself and it is done thoughtfully. When these events are done Jesus wants us to bring people to them who are in need of a Savior and that is what has taken place here at this event at Levi's house. We see all those five marks at this event. Let's look at another event in Acts 17.

Acts 17:16–21 says [16] *Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.* [17] *So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.* [18] *Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.* [19] *And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?"* [20] *For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.* [21] *Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.*

Here Paul is in Athens waiting for the rest of his team but while he is there he looks all around him. I have actually stood on Mars Hill and looked down at the ruins on the road that they are referring to here in this passage. You can still see the old statues of the gods of the Greeks and the Romans and when Paul saw these idols he was provoked. He was provoked by the idolatry and the sin but he wasn't provoked at the sinner. No, he went to the sinner and he would have a conversation with them and preach for them. He would do proclamation evangelism and personal evangelism.

He was going to take the Gospel to the Jew first and he would find them in the synagogue. Where would he find the Gentiles to reach them? He would find them in the marketplace. So he goes 'fishing for men' in this marketplace. Now, whenever Paul goes to a

synagogue he starts his talks with Jesus as the Messiah and he calls them to faith and repentance. The Bible says he will reason with them from the Scriptures that Christ is the Messiah but he doesn't start there when he goes to the Gentiles. The Gentiles are not trying to determine who the Messiah is so he needs to let them know they need a Messiah. So Paul doesn't start with Jesus with the Gentiles but he starts with the doctrine of God. Then he'll go to the doctrine of man – you're fallen. Then he goes to God's solution to your predicament – the Messiah. He knows his audience to know where to start. The Jews had the doctrine of God for the Old Testament was full of their depravity, their sin and that they needed a Savior. The Gentiles were sinners and groping around for a god but this God needed to be defined for them.

That's exactly what Paul does when they create an event for him. Paul turns that event into an evangelistic event. They want to know what Paul has to say about these strange divinities and the resurrection. The Greeks wondered why you would even believe in a resurrection since the dead were considered something evil. So they invite Paul to stand in the midst of all of them. Let's continue in Acts 17.

Acts 17:22–34 says [22] *So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. [23] For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. [24] The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. [26] And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, [27] that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, [28] for*

*"In him we live and move and have our being'  
as even some of your own poets have said,*

*"'For we are indeed his offspring.'* (Paul is quoting Epicurean and Stoic philosophers here.)

*[29] Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. [30] The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, [31] because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."*

*[32] Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." [33] So Paul went out from their midst. [34] But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.*

So when Paul addresses these philosophers at the Areopagus it is an intellectual event where he has been invited to speak to them. We see that he addresses these Gentiles by starting with the doctrine of God. As you go through this you will notice that Paul affirms God as Creator, as Redeemer and Sustainer. 'In Him we live and move and have our being.' Then Paul tells them who they are. You are not an accident. You are not from a series of demigods and finally arrive at humanity. God made you. He made the first man and woman and from them we all come, one race, the human race and this entire race has fallen into sin. God has appointed a day of judgment. You have no hope but this same God has appointed a Man to save you, and that is the Son of God, who took upon Himself humanity to take your place. He is the Good

Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep and they come from flocks all over the world into the fold of Christ. This One came to die for you so that you could have everlasting life.

Now this isn't the church of Athens that created this event to save intellectuals so I'm kind of cheating here. They actually came up with the event but Paul took over the event and made it an evangelistic event. He did it with excellence. It was accessible for he talked to all of them. Common interest? Paul found that point of common interest, things they were saying that were true because he even quoted their own philosophers. Everything in the Bible is true but not all truth is in the Bible. Out here in general revelation that is truth too. While unbelievers are total depraved and cannot construct truth in a way to glorify God, periodically they will say something that is right.

My example is a clock we have in this room. Many have noticed that it has been broken for quite some time but it's still right twice a day. Now I wouldn't depend on that clock. The philosophies of men can get some things right but you just don't depend on them. Paul found some things that a couple of their philosophers had said right and said 'here we have some common ground.' From that Paul shared the Gospel with them in this event.

Get ready, for when you do conversational evangelism and build that bridge, then take advantage about doing an event that either you create or the church creates that you make use of as a tool in your evangelistic tool box. So get ready because there will be three responses. All three are in this text. One response is that some will believe. Another response will be that some will mock and ridicule and a third response will be that some will be curious which will be the people you are ready to invite to the next event. They will be ready to keep the conversation going. My guess is that Paul did get back with those who were curious and wanted to talk more about it at another time.

So you can not only do a personal event but your congregational community (Sunday School class) can do an event. Your small group or supper club or Bible study group can do an event. Any of our pastors on staff here are all available for these types of events and are qualified for this title. We're going to have an event here soon called 'stump the chump' night and we want you to bring all your non-Christian friends. Got a verse, a doctrine, a question? We have 18 chumps on our staff ready to be invited to one of these events. Or you can do a roast the preacher night. There are a variety of things you can do with your small groups. We will also try and provide some events for you this year but you can do personal events, small group events or Sunday school events on your own as well.

I have ten things you can do in this coming year. I am picking out some church wide events that you can make use of in this coming year. One is the Sportsman's Blast on February the 9<sup>th</sup>. Secondly, is a '3:16' event held on March 16<sup>th</sup> which comes from the verse John 3:16 but this is a movie based on the most played radio single by the group MercyMe called 'I Can Only Imagine' which brings the true story behind the song to life. It is about a transformed relationship between a father and son. Use this opportunity to bring someone who doesn't know Jesus. Send them a copy of the song and then go from there in conversation to this event. 'Did you know there is story behind that song? Would you like to hear that story?' Then lead into a hospitality bridge by getting coffee or ice cream afterwards to continue talking about it.

Thirdly, there will be a Palm Sunday night concert and drama with guest artist that will be a wonderful opportunity to invite people to come to. There will be the Easter Sunday morning services that will be evangelistic in focus and a concert that evening with a folk group that will be done with excellence. Fourthly, is the week of Vacation Bible School which is a great opportunity to invite neighborhood children to and they do five drama presentations during

that week, once each day of the week. The next generation of our folks are putting that together for us and it is a wonderful opportunity to invite children to and then get their parents to come to the closing of it that Sunday night.

Number six, is we will have Christianity in America that will coincide with our Christianity Festival this year and that will take place on Sunday night July 1<sup>st</sup>. Number seven is the Advent and the Ballet where the Gospel is displayed so wonderfully. Number eight is our Advent Festival on December 16<sup>th</sup>. A ninth thing is that throughout the year there are things like our Narrow way Production, the Motown Production, other Ballet events, other musical concerts with one coming up in the Spring and all of those. Be on the alert for them and take advantage of those events to invite people with common interests.

Finally, we are planning on at least four and maybe more Sunday night services that are going to be evangelistic. I grew up on that where every Sunday night service was the evangelistic service but there was only one problem and that was, nobody brought any unbelievers. The pastor would give an evangelistic sermon and then we would sing 'Have Thine Own Way' or 'I Surrender All' or 'Just As I Am' until someone went down front at the end. We don't need to get the saved, saved but the saved need to bring someone that needs to hear the Gospel. So we will have those events as well.

I want to encourage to take advantage of any or all of these events and please have your own events as well but those will be things we will be providing as a church as you conversationally share the Gospel and build relationships with people. So now you have this event bridge you can take them over to the bridge to Life which is the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is through a common interest, with excellence, accessible, with the Gospel and we'll try and do it thoughtfully. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the Lord Jesus our Redeemer, our Savior. Thank You Father for the privilege to talk about some very practical things that You have already outlined for us in Your Word that we can use. Lord, we're not trying to be ingenious, we're just trying to find what You have done, do it again, and make sure that everlasting, transgenerational, transcultural, ever relevant message that Jesus saves sinners will be presented to those who do not yet know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Lord, we know that nobody seeks You but we also know Jesus that You seek sinners and You seek them through Your people as You empower us by Your Spirit to seek the lost that You might save the lost and bring them home. We give You praise in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

Building Bridges person-to-person to bring them to the "Bridge to Life."

BRIDGES

#1: CONVERSATIONAL EVANGELISM

#2: EVENT EVANGELISM

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

1. Sportsmen's Blast – 2/9

2. "I Can Only Imagine" – 3/16

3. Palm Sunday Concert – Concert/Drama
4. Easter AM Worship and PM Concert
5. VBS - 6/4-10
6. Christianity In America Festival - 7/1
7. Advent Ballet – 12/9
8. Advent Festival - 12/16
9. Concerts/Ballet/Performing Arts
10. Sunday P.M. Evangelistic Services