

XI. L.E.A.D. in Biblical Perspective  
*Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship*  
“Building Bridges—#4: Proclamation Evangelism”

Mark 16:14, 15

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We are in a series of learning how to build bridges to bring people to the Bridge of Life. We are going through them in a certain order but they don't necessarily need to be used in this order. Let's look at our text for this study in Mark 16:14–15 which says [14] *Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. [15] And he said to them, “Go into all the world and **proclaim the gospel** to the whole creation.*

It is proclamation of the Gospel. It is proclamation evangelism. We have been looking at bridges we can build to bring people to the Bridge to Life training program that is sharing the Gospel with one verse, Romans 6:23 but our building bridges are between person to person to bring them to the Bridge to Life, Jesus Christ. So in this study I want to share with you the bridge of proclamation evangelism by giving you a certain picture of it before we dig down into it.

What do I mean by proclamation evangelism? This is preaching evangelism or preaching the Gospel to large groups of people. Where would these large groups of people come from? Hopefully they have come together to hear the proclamation evangelism because of the previous bridges where we have established conversational evangelism, one on one and not beginning by telling and selling but by asking and listening in order to share the Gospel with people. Perhaps we have used event evangelism where those whom we are talking with have taken them and then we have followed up with hospitality evangelism where we open our hearts, then the doors of our homes so that people are brought into our home and then through that the Gospel is shared which was the third bridge we looked at. After these three bridges then we can bring them to a focused opportunity for proclamation evangelism.

So before I go further I want to express that this is very dear to my heart. Looking back in nostalgia, when I was growing up Sunday worship was the stated time of praise to God. Certainly the Gospel was going to be preached and people would be invited to Christ. On Sunday night we actually labeled it the evangelistic service but there was only one problem with this evangelistic service. There weren't any people that needed to be evangelized that were being brought to it. So with that in mind, I would love to do Sunday night evangelistic services but I'm little scared of the pressure I might be under to save the already saved that will be attending. Have we developed any relationships with people where we would invite them to this kind of service, knowing that everything about this service is designed as an act of evangelistic preaching?

All preaching has evangelism in it, at least every sermon I do I try to make clear the Gospel and have an opportunity either at the beginning, the middle or the end where I will invite people to Christ. This is something different. This isn't a sermon of exposition that includes evangelism but this is an evangelistic sermon – proclamation evangelism. The way to get unsaved people to these services is when saved people have relationships with unsaved people and have had conversations with them, gone with them to events, had them in their homes and

then as they have built this relationship they can have them go with them to a church service, a gathering of God's people where it's focused upon evangelism.

So what does proclamation evangelism look like? In Mark 16:15 it says to 'go into all the world' which means we are not to wait for them to come to us. You go to them. We are to seek to save the lost. Then it tells us what we're to do as we go and that is to proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation. I believed this is fulfilled two ways. One is that personal evangelism fulfills this. When you go and conversationally share Christ with people that in a sense is proclamation evangelism. In that moment the Spirit of God promises to work through you into their hearts and lives.

Another way this is fulfilled is that those who are gifted and called to preach take the time to develop those sermons that proclaim the Gospel evangelistically pointedly to the people that are brought to hear the Gospel. We used to call this itinerant evangelists who would go around and preach the Gospel. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century that is actually the way it grew the Presbyterian church for the Presbytery would send in an evangelist like a Samuel Davies who would go from place to place preaching evangelistic sermons. After preaching these sermons they would send back to these places pastor/teachers who would plant churches from those who had been responding to the evangelism. So here personal and proclamation evangelism is taking place.

What happens in this second aspect of proclamation evangelism that is building on personal evangelism and corporate proclamation evangelism where people are brought together for evangelistic sermons? Preaching evangelistically has a number of identifying marks which I'm about to give you and then we'll look at three passages of Scripture that will illustrate it and illuminate it for you.

First, is that proclamation evangelism is a sermon that is focused on the primary content of the Gospel itself. This is not someone doing an exposition on church government and then puts in a part of sharing the Gospel. It is an exposition of the Good News of how men and women can be right with God. In Mark 16:15 it says to go and proclaim *the* Gospel. So the content of an evangelistic sermon is the Gospel.

Secondly, it is an act of preaching that Gospel. Here is an illustration. On cable television there is a series of films on World War II in the Pacific that are really well done. They try to document the mission and the task after Pearl Harbor to begin to fight World War II island to island. In each case, except for one that I know of, the island always had to be taken by soldiers on the ground. You don't take it with suit, you take with boots. You don't win the war from the sea or the air but from the ground. Now those men whose boots are on the ground though, loved to see the help from the air and the sea as they help soften the defense up with the bombardment. This would go on and on and it would all make an impact. These men on the ground would fit pill box to pill box and trench to trench. Then at night they would paint the targets and call in the help again. That umbrella of bombardment would come over top of them to follow up what they had done on the ground.

I think that's the picture of evangelism. When the Gospel is preached with conviction and compassion, boldness and humility, and the Gospel facts are displayed in sermonic form then it starts to soften up hearts. Then you're the boots on the ground, the one on one follow up who asks the questions 'what did you think?', 'what did you hear?' and then they come back. And in that second round of preaching they may come to Christ. I know I'm speaking anecdotally here but I think the Bible and church history bears this out where the preaching of the Gospel is softening up the heart to hear and to listen.

What kind of sermons soften the heart of the unbeliever or what kinds of sermons does the Lord use to soften the heart? What does that evangelistic preaching look like? Many times after they have heard and you talk with them and they come back sometimes the fruit of it is in subsequent sermons where people begin to hear and respond to. I have never yet prayed with someone who gave their life to Jesus Christ who had not already talked with someone else and heard the Gospel proclaimed. That has always preceded it. Generally by the time I'm talking with someone about the Gospel it has already been planted or cultivated or watered in some way. You need to remember that evangelism is a process and not a momentary act. Sometimes you are planting a seed, watering it or cultivating it but conversion is a moment in time and the act of God. Evangelism is God at work through us in the lives of people in the process of sharing the Gospel with them.

There is a place for both personal proclamation and the preaching proclamation. The preaching proclamation both prepares for personal evangelism and has the opportunity to follow up. So here are a few more things to look for in an evangelistic sermon.

One, an evangelistic sermon knows the audience. Where is the audience? Who are they talking to? They know who they are talking to so they know where to make contact with them. They make contact where their audience is and therefore know where they need to start. What do they bring to them? They bring the Gospel and here are five things to look for in a Gospel sermon.

One, a Gospel sermon must communicate the doctrine of God – who God is. This is not done exhaustively but clearly. You don't begin with men. You begin with who God is. The whole point of the Good News is to be right with God. So why am I not right with Him? How can He do anything so I can be right with Him? Do I need to be right with Him? So here is where it starts.

Secondly, it goes to the doctrine of man as a sinner. This is man in his fallen condition. Men are helpless and hopeless and in need of a Savior.

Thirdly, it moves to God's solution and that is His Son, Jesus. It tells who He is and what He has done. Jesus is the Son of God who has come in the flesh to save us from our sins. He has done this by going to the cross to pay for our sins and to provide for us a perfect righteousness. It is a life that is righteous and a death that is atoning and He is risen.

Fourthly, is a call to faith and repentance. People cannot believe and repent unless God gives them the ability. God is not the one doing the believing and repenting but the one who is coming to Him does. You still call them to faith and repentance knowing that God has to give them the ability to believe and repent. That is why the Bible says in Ephesians 2:8–9, [8] *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,* [9] *not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

People are called to believe knowingly, rationally, emotionally and volitionally – knowledge, conviction and trust to come to Christ. Now think of repentance as the other side of the coin of faith, where it is a radical turn from sin, not to do better, but to Christ. In other words, when someone gets found they repent and leave their sin to come to the Lord. Will they do better? Yes, but the doing better is the fruit of repentance and the deeds appropriate to repentance. So if you believe then you have to repent and you can't repent unless you believe so they are two sides of the same coin. You can't have saving faith without Godly repentance and you can't have Godly repentance without saving faith. Both are gifts from God. II Timothy 2:24–25 says [24] *And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to*

*teach, patiently enduring evil, [25] correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.*

The fifth thing in a Gospel sermon is the declaration of eternity and the reality of a judgment seat that has only two directions, heaven and hell. The judgment is always a part of preaching the Gospel. I did a funeral earlier today of a man who came to visit me four months ago to tell me that this day was coming and he wanted me to do his funeral. I told him I would do it and then what he said next I hear from many in this congregation who ask me to do their funerals and that is 'preacher don't waste the moment talking about me, tell them about Jesus and that they need to be saved.' I tell them 'I am going to talk about you but I'm going to do that so that I don't waste the moment because I can talk about you in order to tell them about Jesus, but I need you to live for Jesus until that day so that when I talk about you they will want to know about Jesus.' That's called a testimony and the testimony can be used to get to the Gospel, so the testimony just sets it up to share the Gospel.

So at the funeral today I was able to share with people his testimony and then said 'if Jesus doesn't come back there is going to be a day in which there is another service like this and you're the guest of honor because as it says in Hebrews 9:27, [27] *it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.* The Gospel tells you there is a sure Hope and that Hope is Jesus but He's your only Hope on that day. I get the opportunity to tell you about it and you will make the most important decision of your life right now.' Someone may think 'I'm not going to decide' and yet that is a decision. Jesus said if you aren't for Him then you're against Him. You may get another chance to revisit that decision and praise the Lord if you do, but do know you have made a decision when you say you won't decide. The judgement, heaven and hell, all rests upon what you do with this Savior.

So proclamation evangelism is bold as you speak of all of those five issues. It is humble because the one speaking about it is a product of that Gospel of grace and it's glorious because the God who has provided the way rejoices when people come to Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. So these five things are a part of a Gospel sermon.

So back to a third element of proclamation evangelism, it is passionately persuasive. It is not a philosophical presentation of the likelihood that Christianity is a good idea and you ought to consider coming to Jesus but you get up on a mountain and announce Good News. You are a town crier and this proclamation says 'all is not well but all can be well and it can be well with your soul.' Now the preacher is fully aware that we can't persuade people into the Kingdom but we also want people to know that we are passionately invested in this. So we speak persuasively knowing that God can use our persuasion but only God can give ears to hear and eyes to see. Ultimately, He is the only One who can convert and persuade but that doesn't mean we don't speak persuasively. We reason with people, with passion and pleading as we seek to persuade. Here is what Andrew Bonar said that made Robert Murray McShane's sermon so great and that is he would plead with passion to persuade men to come to Christ.

Now I would like to show you how this is supported in the Scripture by looking at a couple of different passages. As we look at these passages I want you to be able to understand what proclamation evangelism is and for you to pray for preachers who are gifted in evangelism. My dear brother Al Baker is a gifted evangelist. I enjoy evangelistic preaching and I love to preach evangelistic sermons. Ben Wilkerson started Evangel Presbyterian Fellowship who was a gifted evangelist. I could go on and on about evangelist preachers but what is it that they are doing in their evangelistic preaching? They are making contact, preaching the Gospel and are

passionately persuasive so let's see how that bears out with the Apostle Paul who seemed to be a pretty good evangelistic preacher. Let's start by looking at Acts 13.

Acts 13:13–19 says [13] *Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, [14] but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. [15] After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it."* (One thing you learn in seminary is to preach, pray or die and this is certainly true with Paul.) [16] *So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said:*

*"Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. [17] The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. [18] And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. [19] And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance.* (Here in two sentences he has covered about seven books of the Bible)

Did Paul know his audience? Yes he was in a synagogue. He started with the doctrine of God by showing them what God had done in their history. Let's continue.

Acts 13:20–25 says [20] *All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. [21] Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. [22] And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'* [23] *Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. [24] Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. [25] And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'*

So we see that Paul knew his audience, he made contact with them, he drew them in and he is persuading them. He refers to the doctrine of God. He makes the point that we are lost and God has been putting up with us. We are not an asset but a liability. Then after he covers the first seven books he covers I and II Kings, I and II Samuel and I and II Chronicles. He gets to David and then through David comes Jesus. As he gets to Jesus he gets to the third point of the Gospel. He refers to John the Baptist as a witness to the Gospel. Now let's continue.

Acts 13:26–43 says [26] *"Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. [27] For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. [28] And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. [29] And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. [30] But God raised him from the dead, [31] and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. [32] And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, [33] this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you."*

[34] *And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David."*

[35] *Therefore he says also in another psalm, "You will not let your Holy One see corruption."* [36] *For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell*

*asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, [37] but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. [38] Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, [39] and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. [40] Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about:*

*[41] “‘Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.’”*

*[42] As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. [43] And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.*

Here Paul continues as he gives the doctrine of man who is in need of the Savior, the doctrine of Jesus and then the call to believe, repent and come to Him lest they be under God's judgment, like their forefathers. So he has preached the Gospel to them. And as always happens there are three responses – no, rejection, yes I believe and follow, and some who will come back. They keep coming back because evangelism is process. Then notice what happens.

Acts 13:44 says *[44] The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.* So it's growing but then there is all this opposition but here is what I want you to see which is where you rest in evangelistic preaching. Then this message went to the Gentiles. Acts 13:48 says *[48] And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.*

Here you see the responsibility of man as Paul fulfills his call to preach the Gospel and as Paul does his work of sharing the Gospel we see it spilling over from the Jews to the Gentiles. It is summed up as we preach, we call and God gives the increase. We plant, water, cultivate and God gives the increase. Who came to Jesus? It was as many as God appointed to eternal life. Do we ever know who those are until they commit their lives to Christ? No, we just have the Gospel and we're to throw it everywhere to everybody. That is how evangelistic preaching is taking place and then God calls His people through that process and brings them to Himself.

A man said to me 'If God is only going to save the elect from this free offer of the Gospel to everybody then isn't that kind of discouraging to you?' I said 'No because everybody I'm talking to is spiritual dead and if I didn't think God had some people out there that needed to hear it then I wouldn't even bother to preach.' I don't want to go talk to a zombie. The only reason I talk to dead people that are spiritual is because I was one and God brought me from death unto life and I know God can do it again. God will do it again and He'll surely do it through the prayers and preaching of His people. Then we see God accomplishing His purposes.

Now let's look at Acts 17. Here is Paul speaking at the Areopagus. So now instead of being with Jews in a synagogue he is now with Gentiles as one standing among philosopher. He has been invited to preach here so let's see what he says.

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.”*

*[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.*

With the Jews, Paul didn't start with the doctrine of God but went to their history for they already knew God and he didn't start with fallen man but he jumped right to Jesus. Here, with the Gentiles he starts with the doctrine of God. In this text he speaks of God as Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer. God made everybody. He was not a Darwinian race freak. He believed there was only one race, the human race with multiple ethnicities. We all have the same daddy and momma (Adam and Eve) and God made them. God created us and then Paul jumps right into the sovereignty of God in his evangelistic sermon, where we tend to bring it in later in people's lives. God sovereignly made them and then predestined their allotted times and places to live. This God has provided the Savior, His Son, Jesus and then calls them to faith and repentance. Then he tells them that He has appointed a day to judge all of humanity. We also see here the same three responses as in the previous text. Some disbelieve and mock, some believe and follow, and some say they would like to hear him again.

Now I'd like to look at just one more text in Acts 26. The Apostle Paul was told he would preach before kings and he did as well as governors. He preached for Festus, Felix, Agrippa and somehow to the members of Caesar's household and Caesar. I have stood in this very place and Lord willing will go back again soon. This sermon is awesome and he uses his testimony to get to the Gospel. Here is what he says about his conversion and his calling.

Acts 26:19–20 says [19] *“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, [20] but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.”* What is Paul's ministry? It is calling men and women to faith and repentance by believing in Him and turning to Him to put their faith and trust in the Lord.

Now I'd like to speak pastorally to you. We are going to find various ways to have such evangelistic preaching whether it's me or someone that we invite in. Would you even now put people in the incubator of prayer that you might bring them to proclamation evangelism? Please pray for proclamation evangelism. I would love the church of Jesus Christ to be so much evangelizing everybody everywhere every day that we would have to be doing proclamation evangelism every Sunday night to keep up with the people that you're bringing. You can build this bridge into your conversational evangelism, your event evangelism and your hospitality evangelism. It's another tool we can add to our tool box but it's not just any tool for it's one that God has ordained and one that God has used.

Perhaps again we'll hear like in the days of the itinerant evangelist Whitfield as an unbeliever, and not just any unbeliever, made this statement after being so astounded by what was happening in that day; "It looked like the whole world was coming to church." The unbeliever was Benjamin Franklin. Do you know why the whole world was coming to church? It was because the whole church was going into the world to bring them. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the anticipation of evangelistic preaching, the anticipation of a place filled with Your people bringing those whom they love and that love enough to talk to them about Jesus and bring them to hear about Jesus. Father, I long to see not only the desire but the very need of evangelistic preaching because of Your people going to the highways and byways to compel the lost to come and hear for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.