

XIV. L.E.A.D. in Biblical Perspective
Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship
“Hindrances to Evangelism as a Lifestyle—Introduction”

Acts 8:4–6

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We have one street in heaven, with no back alleys or sub neighborhoods for we're all on that street and that street is Jesus. We belong to Him in all of His glory. I also think of the line in that hymn Just Because He Lives, 'life is worth a living' and I would ask what is a worthy life to live? Many of you would respond by saying the sojourner's journey which we have learned from the I Peter series – to pursue personal holiness, to love one another, to cultivate an appetite for God's Word, to live a life of obedience that gives praise to God and to be in subjection to every human institution. That's the first five commandments of the life worth living, because He lives. Now we get to talk about evangelism where we are always to be ready to give account for the hope that is within us. We are to have a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship.

In 1976 I picked up a book and I had already been impacted by the content of the book. The book was written by D. James Kennedy titled Evangelism Explosion. I absolutely loved the book and we kind of modified some of the aspects of how to present the Gospel because we needed it a little bit simpler however I'm so thankful for it. One of the things that captured me from the book is a point that Kennedy makes. He said “What if an enemy wanted to defeat another army. One of the best things they could do is convince the army they're fighting that when it's time for battle only the generals should fight, not the soldiers.”

The call to win souls to Christ is a war. Satan will do anything and everything he can possibly do to thwart you. We know our sovereign God reigns, but you are in a real life war. I want you to get in the battle and that's why we're looking at this topic of a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship which started last year and will go into this coming year. I remember us praying through this and my lifestyle and your lifestyle can open a door to evangelism but a lifestyle doesn't evangelize. To evangelize you actually have to share the Gospel with people. Now our lifestyle can open a door to this or close a door to this. It's not that it's unimportant, but no one is going to go to heaven because they admire the grace of God that has changed your life. They have to know Jesus and to know Jesus they have to hear the Gospel. They have to be saved by faith and faith comes from hear the Word of Christ.

Is it just the pastors that ought to be sharing it or maybe the pastors, elders and deacons? Or is it to be everyone? Perhaps you have heard evangelism explosion but I have five 'e's.' We have a call for everyone evangelizing everybody everywhere every day. This is a real, penetrating, permeating, pulsating lifestyle of evangelism, but we don't do that. We don't enter into that as God would call us to enter into it, why not? My job as a pastor is to help us engage in what the hindrances are to it and I'd like to present to you in this study five hindrances to everyone evangelizing everybody everywhere every day. First, I'd like to look in Acts 8.

Acts 8 is what happened after the persecution of Stephen. Stephen has just died for the faith and he used the persecution that came upon him unto his death as the opportunity to evangelize, even crying out to the Lord for forgiving grace to be given to the ones who were stoning him. Acts 8:1–7 says [1] *And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they (referring to the church) were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. [2] Devout men*

buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. [3] But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

[4] Now those (from the church in Jerusalem) who were scattered went about preaching the word. [5] Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. [6] And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. [7] For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. [8] So there was much joy in that city.

Isaiah says in Isaiah 40:9 says *[9] Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"* So go on the mountain. Be ready to proclaim in the valleys, the glens, the fields but you go find a mountain. One might think they are a pretty good target on a mountain, perhaps but go get one for how beautiful are the feet of those who bring Good News (Isaiah 52:7).

Who is proclaiming the Word in the Acts 8 passage? It was those who were scattered. So who were those who were scattered? Let's let Scripture interpret Scripture. Acts 8:1 tells us those who were scattered was the church in Jerusalem except the apostles (the generals). The apostles were still back there but all the soldiers in the army of the Lord which is another word picture for the church, were being scattered. So here it's not simply the apostles being bold to proclaim the Gospel, the emphasis is on those who made up the life blood of that church. The term we use a lot is lay men and women, so the everyday members were the ones who were scattered and they are the ones who brought the Gospel to Judea and Samaria.

This is pure speculation on my part but I kind of believe what I'm about to say. When Jesus ascended He told the Disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit to come upon them for them to receive power to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the utter most part of the world. In Acts 1 through 7 we have this glorious work of the power of the Gospel at work through the Spirit of God and the people of God evangelizing Jerusalem. There were 3,000 here and 5,000 there and that was just counting the men. Acts 2:47b says *[47b] And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.* So here they went from around 120 to about 9,000 and then to probably 14,000 and it keeps on growing.

What are they supposed to do now? They are to go to Judea and Samaria, but they don't. I'm not criticizing them I'm just noting that they didn't go to Judea and Samaria. In fact, if you keep reading that when they go to Judea and Samaria some will only want to evangelize Jews. Peter will have to affirm the fact that they ought to be evangelizing the Gentiles too and that the Gospel is to be spread everywhere. So they don't go and then comes persecution.

Again this is speculation on my part. I think it would have been a better idea for them to have a Global Missions conference to find the missionaries to send to Judea and Samaria, but they didn't so God sends them. Persecution was not the end of the church at Jerusalem for it was just the sending of the church to Judea and Samaria. By the time you read Acts 11 it will get sent out to all the world as they commission those at the church of Antioch, Judea and Samaria to go into all the world through the ministry of Barnabas and Paul.

In other words, we start where we are, our Jerusalem and then we go out of our Jerusalem. Our Jerusalem is Birmingham and then we go to Judea and Samaria which for us would be the state of Alabama and North America. Then we go to the utter most part of the world but you don't send out there what we're not doing here. You don't do here what you're not ready to send out there. So there are these concentric circles. Gospel evangelism is almost

like the rock that you pick up and throw into the lake and out comes the concentric waves until it eventually moves out and we hear in Acts 17:6, [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,"*

In Acts we get to hear about the progress that was happening to the north and west but Acts doesn't even deal with what was happening south. There was a lot happening south and in fact probably the greatest testimony in the early centuries was in Egypt. The center of learning for Christians was a place called Alexandria. The greatest Christian library that ever existed was in Alexandria but the book of Acts is at least charting this one for us so we can learn from it and be encouraged by it.

When I started this L.E.A.D. series I shared that if every one of us by God's grace would allow us to bring one person to Christ in a year and initiate discipleship in their life, then the two of you go and win someone the next year and so on, it would only take 36 years and the whole world would be evangelized, where the population of the whole world has been saturated with the Gospel. I'm not even taking into account mass crusades. So from my human perspective this is something that I want to happen.

As I study my Bible there are two things that have to happen before Jesus comes back. One is that the Gospel has to go to all the nations. This is one of the reasons I love world evangelism. Number two, Jesus won't come until all the elect have been saved from every tribe and nation. There is going to be somebody someday that wins that last person and a trumpet blows. I actually think about that every time I have the privilege to pray with someone to receive Jesus. I don't know if they are truly converted or not but if it is truly a conversion it rushes through my mind that this could be the last person that needs to receive Jesus before He comes back.

Peter tells us to hasten the coming of the Lord in II Peter 3:12a which says [12] *waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God.* How do we hasten the coming of the Lord? We don't get God to change His time table. We get on God's time table and He is patient not willing for any of His beloved to perish. He will not come until all of His beloved has been brought to repentance. So for me to hasten the coming of the Lord, I need to be sharing the Gospel with people and that is constantly challenging me in my life.

I fully realize there is a time to speak and a time to be silent. I believe the inerrancy of God's Word and Ecclesiastes tells us there is time to speak and a time to be silent (Ecclesiastes 3:7). There is also the reality that when I am silent and I ought to be speaking that is not a righteous silence, that's a guilty silence. I want to recommend a book to you that I first read in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is by John Stott titled Our Guilty Silence and he recognizes the same truth of when to speak and when not to. Now you can be forgiven because Jesus forgives us of all of our sins but instead of embracing a guilty silence, why not have a bold but humble speaking about the Gospel.

So how do I take advantage of those moments so that my silence is not a guilty silence? I refuse to be silent because I've learned how to talk and ask questions. I have learned how to share and be silent in order to listen so that I know how to respond. We need to engage in evangelism. Why don't we engage in evangelism where everybody is evangelizing everyone everywhere every day?

I by no means claim any inerrancy but I have prayed long and hard about this and I have come up with five hindrances of evangelism. I will cover them over the next five studies in more depth. The first hindrance I see is that we have a lack of motivation/incentive. Many times in

the halls of this church on Sunday I hear a lot of talk about college football and that's not sinful but I know we're motivated to talk about what we talk about, even those who claim the safety of being an introvert. We will find a way to talk about what we are motivated to talk about. What would be God's antidote to the hindrance of a lack of motivation? What would be the Biblical incentives for us to evangelize? So that is the first hindrance to evangelism.

The second hindrance is a lack of confidence for some of us in sharing the Gospel. This means that we are being controlled by our fears. Jesus tells us in I John 4:18 that perfect love casts out all fear, because fear always controls. Fear hinders us from sharing the Gospel. When I became a Christian and I was working to put my wife through school I worked for UPS as a package car driver. Now a locker room with truck drivers is not really a religious experience. I kept thinking how I was going to share the Gospel in the UPS locker room. The first one for me was the fear of being marginalized in that environment. I will tell you how I overcame this when I get to this study on overcoming fears and where confidence comes from.

The third hindrance is a lack of clarity about the message and the method. In other words, what is the Biblical call in evangelism and exactly what is it? Because of this lack of clarity many times it hinders us from sharing the Gospel.

The fourth hindrance to sharing the Gospel is the lack of power. There is a reason Jesus said before you go into the streets, go into the Upper Room. We need the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. We need the power of prayer. Who do we deal with this lack of power that silences us? There is lack of connection. I really believe in personal evangelism. If you have ever prayed with someone to come to Christ, I think if you ask them a couple of questions you will find out that you're not the first person to talk with them about Jesus. You just happen to be in the position of reaper. Somebody else has already planted, another did some weeding and perhaps another cultivated. Somebody else was engaged in their life and you took your place in the process.

Fifthly, there is a lack of community in evangelism. While each one of us needs to evangelize, we need to do it together. We were doing evangelism explosion at Christ Covenant in Charlotte and I ran out of trainers. I miss my sister Vicky so much because she was one of my key trainers. She has won all the people she is going to because she is with the Lord now but she loved evangelism explosion. My sister said to me "Harry, you can take two teams because you're the preacher." So I did that. I told one team to wait while I went in with the other team to get them started and then I'd come back and join the first team to get them started. After that I would go back to the other one to help them finish up etc.

One of the men who went with me was also named Harry. Harry was a very exuberant man and I should have known what was going to happen. So I started off the team Harry was on and said "I have to leave now but here is another fellow named Harry and he is going to share with you about this message." Harry started into the EE presentation and I kind of slid out to go help the other team get started. After I got them started I then returned to Harry's group.

As I pulled up to the house Jim, a man on Harry's team, came running out the house and said to me "Harry you have to get in here, we're going to get sued as a church!" I came in the house and Harry had backed that woman all the way up into a corner, with her knees in front of her, and his hand is on her Bible as she is holding onto her Bible as he is praying for her to come into the Kingdom. Her eyes are wide open and all she can see is his bald head. When she saw me walk in she says to me 'Help!' That's when I realized you have to pick your team well.

Evangelism is teamwork. Sometimes you're planting, sometimes you're watering, sometimes you're cultivating, just get in on the teamwork. So we will also address the lack of

community and how that's a hindrance when we think it all rests on me. When I know something rests on me that I'm incapable of doing, most of the time I just don't do anything. So in the next several studies we'll look at these five hindrance more in depth in order to promote the lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship where everybody is evangelizing everyone everywhere.

There are 30 plus parables of our Savior that He used to teach and the key parable of all the parables according to Jesus is the parable of the sower. It is about sowing seed, sowers, and soils. The seed, sowing and sower are all the same. The only thing that ever differs in the soil. It's all good seed – good sower, good seed, good sowing. But there are three responses on unbelief which are hard ground, rocky ground and thorny ground. There is one response of belief and that's good ground.

In the parable of the sower there are two lessons that become very obvious to me. Lesson number one is the faith of the seed is determined by the condition of the soil, not by the sower, the sowing but somebody has to monkey with the soil. Somebody has to change the heart and there is only One who can do that. That is so freeing to know because all I have to do is throw seed. Now that doesn't mean I'm going to be haphazard about doing that but I just throw the seed.

The second lesson is that when you throwing the seed, the sowing of the seed (evangelism), over the field (the world), to the hearts of men (the soils), is an indiscriminate sowing. Did you notice how the sower sows? He drops it on the hard ground, the rocky ground, the thorny ground and the good ground. He doesn't say 'where will I throw the seed?' When I first came to pastor in Charlotte, I'll never forget when one man asked 'who is going to be your target audience as you plant this church?' I said 'Sinners, just whoever we can reach with our voice and whoever our people can reach with everyone evangelizing.' Just put the Gospel everywhere and we can't get it everywhere without everybody evangelizing every day everyone.

Then when we are done going through these studies on these hindrances then maybe we can have a couple of really pure, true blue, red hot, Holy Spirit, glorious God-honoring evangelistic evening services, because we're actually talking to someone to bring them. We don't have to evangelize the saved. We're actually planting seeds and now we can see how the community gathered can do evangelism as we are processing it together.

About the last time this country had a true, sweeping, national evangelistic wave was the Great Awakening from 1735 to 1765 and I love what Benjamin Franklin said. I hope he was converted before he died but I'm not sure he did but his best friend was one of the greatest evangelists that ever lived, George Whitfield. He wouldn't miss Whitfield's preaching but he would never take money with him because Whitfield would always take up an offering for his orphanage and Franklin said 'once I hear him preach I'm ready to give all my money' so he wouldn't take his money because he would give it all. I wanted him to give his soul and I hope he did.

Benjamin Franklin made this comment about the Great Awakening, "It looked like the whole world was going to church." What he didn't get was the reason it looked like the whole world was going to the church was because the whole church started going to the world. We are not to be of the world but to reach people in your sphere of influence with the Gospel.

1948 was an interesting year for that was the year I was born and it was the year I got my grandfather's name. I became Harry Lloyd Reeder III and he was Harry Lloyd Reeder senior. That was the same year my grandfather had four vocational initiatives going on. I had always wanted my father and grandfather to write a book titled jobs I have known and loved throughout

my life. In that year my grandfather was a scout for the Washington Senators scouting baseball players and played for the Senators. He was on the Billy Graham Crusade team and worked with a partner named Grady Wilson. He also had an insurance agency and the fourth vocation was he owned a baseball team.

The baseball team he owned was called the Sumter Chicks and were a member of the South Atlantic AA Baseball League. He had a young man who was a bat boy. They would talk about Jesus together. He was an interesting young man who went on to be a baseball player. In fact, one day he got a phone call from another baseball player who was in his last hours of life. That baseball player was Mickey Mantle. He asked him to come to the hospital he was at in Texas and he agreed to go.

The man in the hospital was Mickey Mantle and he had something to tell Bobby Richardson, the one asked to come to the hospital. When Bobby walked into his hospital room Mickey said ‘Bobby I wanted to tell you I committed my life to Jesus. I wished I had done it a long time ago but I wanted to tell you and I wanted you to pray with me.’ Bobby wanted to make sure this was a true conversion so he saw his opening and said “Mickey you don’t have to come to me to pray with you, all you need to do is go to Jesus.” Mickey said ‘I did that. You told me that for years, but I didn’t want to go meet Jesus without telling you because of all the times you told me.’ Bobby Richardson was the bat boy that used to work for my grandfather.

It’s an amazing tapestry of the people coming into the Kingdom of God. I didn’t tell you that story just because he was my grandfather but my point is how we do it personally, but we’re in it together. God uses people in all different ways but oh the glory when the Holy Spirit brings them to saving faith in Christ. So let’s get in the game. More importantly, let’s get in the battle.

It wasn’t the Apostles that went proclaiming the Word but it was everybody. I praise God for the pastors who are here sharing the Gospel but the bigger deal is for all of us to be sharing it. So let’s go through these next several studies together on the hindrances and ask the Lord to give us a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. Just think of yourself so old that you don’t care about what they say about you, just tell them about Jesus. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. As we begin this series of looking at the hindrances that stand in front of us, help us to address them Biblically and to understand them, Lord. Remove the obstacles so that we have a lifestyle of sharing our faith, evangelism, sharing the Gospel, evangelism, and discipleship, come and follow Jesus, for I pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Power Point

HINDRANCES TO EVANGELISM

1. Lack of Motivation – Biblical Incentives
2. Lack of Confidences – Fears
3. Lack of Clarity – Biblical Calling
4. Lack of Power – Holy Spirit & Word of God
5. Lack of Community – Connection

LIFE TAKEAWAYS

L.E.A.D. — Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship

Everyone Evangelizing Everybody Everyday Everywhere