

XVI. L.E.A.D. in Biblical Perspective
Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship
“Hindrances #3—Overcoming the Lack of Gospel Clarity”
I Corinthians 15:1–11
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September 30, 2018 • Evening Sermon

We will be looking at a number of Scriptures in this study. In this study we have come to a third hindrance and with this one we know enough to be saved which means you know enough of the Gospel to share with other people. But sometimes I think we feel either ill-equipped or not vassal enough in the actual content of the Gospel as we share it with others. Remember evangelism is not merely leading a life that will attract people to Christ although that is important, but evangelism is sharing *the* Gospel. The definite article tells you there’s something definitive called the Gospel. Either you get it right or you get it wrong. If you get it wrong then that’s what we call heresy. When someone moves away from the Gospel we need call them on it and let them know not to bow to the pressures.

Paul tells the Galatians that even if he comes back from the dead or an angel appears preaching to you another gospel you grab that angel by his glittery, ethereal pants and throw him out of the pulpit (Galatians 1:8). This Gospel must be embraced faithfully and consistently for it is the power of God unto salvation. So we will look at some essential ways that we can grab hold of it.

I was so blessed in the training I received from Dr. Kennedy’s EE (Evangelism Explosion) and how it had been packaged by a friend of this church, Briarwood. We still do that training here at Briarwood and we have our Bridge to Life training where anyone can be equipped in sharing the Gospel. Please take advantage of these kinds of opportunities when they come your way. One of the most wonderful dynamics of EE is being able to take people with you when you share the Gospel to help train others in sharing the Gospel. Another thing I thought was great about EE is that it pursued the Gospel by asking others questions.

One of the questions I use quite often is ‘Is there any reason why you shouldn’t receive this Christ as your Lord and Savior.’ I love this question because to say ‘yes’ then someone has to say ‘no’ and to say ‘no’ they have to say ‘yes.’ If I ask them ‘do you want to become a Christian’ and they say ‘no’ then the conversation is pretty much over but when I ask them the other question about giving any reason why they shouldn’t and they say ‘yes’ then the conversation isn’t over because the next thing out of my mouth will be, ‘please tell me that reason because I’d like to hear it. If they say ‘no’ then I would say ‘let’s pray together’ and we can move on in that commitment to Christ. All those questions are built around being able to share with someone the Good News that Jesus saves us. Why is it Good News, what is the Good News and how can we understand it? This is something called *the* Gospel.

As I was trained in EE there would be a number of ‘fishing pools’ I would go to share the Gospel and one of the places I enjoyed going was a place called the Chateau Restaurant. I would take out a napkin and write down three things and I will tell you what those three things are but it had to do with sharing the content of the Gospel with someone. I’ll never forget a guy named Buzz who was from Macon, Georgia. I had been talking for about 30 minutes with him when he said ‘Let me see if I have this accurate. My daddy told me that whenever I went out to eat with a preacher I had to pick up the check.’ I said ‘Buzz you have a really smart daddy. I think you ought to honor and obey your father.’ Buzz said ‘So I’m going to pick up the tab and that means

you are free to leave here so what I think you have been telling me is that Jesus paid it for me and if I receive Him as Lord and Savior then I'll be free to go to heaven one day and live for Him on the way to heaven until that day.' I said 'That's exactly right, Buzz.' Buzz picked up the tab and the napkin I had written on that we had gone through and he put it in his Bible.

A year and half after I came to Briarwood in 1999 I received a phone call that Buzz had unexpectedly died. He had wanted me to do the funeral and so I agreed and went to officiate the funeral. There were many people at his funeral with many of them having tragic outlooks in life and I normally will use the Bible of the person who died to do the funeral service with. As I opened the service I told the story of when Buzz and I were at the Chateau Restaurant, one of my favorite fishing ponds. I told them our talk was about his Bible and what I wrote on the napkin and showed them how he had it in his Bible. Then I shared what was on the napkin with those at the funeral and it was a wonderful opportunity to share the Gospel with others as well.

No matter what 'fishing ponds' you go to in order to share the Gospel you have only got one hook and that hook is the Gospel. So what is that hook and how can we put our hands around it? Let's start by looking at I Corinthians 15:1–2 which says *[1] Now I would remind you, brothers, of **the gospel** I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, [2] and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.*

Paul says there is something called the Gospel which has to be proclaimed. Paul preached it and proclaimed it to you and you can't be saved apart from it and the Gospel has to be verbally shared with those who you want to see saved. Then they have to receive it savingly. If they receive it savingly it will show up, not in the perfection of their life but in a changed life. They stand in the Gospel and are being saved. Even more than this, one day they will be saved. They are saved, they're being saved and they will be saved. The evidence of salvation is not perfection but perseverance, but there are some who don't savingly believe but vainly believe with a vain faith that does not focus on Christ and surrender to Christ. This vain faith will be evident not by falling down for all believers fall down but by falling away.

I Corinthians 15:3–8 says *[3] For I delivered to you as of **first importance** what I also **received**: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day **in accordance with the Scriptures**, [5] and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. [6] Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. [7] Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. [8] Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*

Considering that first phrase in verse 3, everything in the Bible is important, but not everything is of equal importance. I think the Bible teaches church government but you can get that wrong and still be saved. I think the Bible teaches baptism by pouring with sprinkling the effect but you can get that wrong and still be saved. There are all kinds of things that the Bible teaches that are of secondary importance which just means they aren't as important and are not directly related to your salvation but they are still important. But if you get those things that are of first importance wrong then you can't be saved. The Gospel is of first importance. That is the reason Paul said 'I did not come to baptize but to preach the Gospel' (I Corinthians 1:17). Paul knows that baptism is in the Great Commission and of its importance as a sign and seal of the new covenant but he also know baptism is downstream from the Gospel being proclaimed because if you don't get the Gospel right then baptism is meaningless.

Also in I Corinthians 15:3 we see that the Gospel is not something we have invented but we have received. The Gospel is not the product of human intuition or imagination but it is the

gift of Divine revelation. Now Paul received it directly of the road to Damascus. We receive it indirectly through the Apostles and Prophets in/from the Word of God. It is by revelation and not that which comes by philosophical imagination. That Gospel is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.

So the first thing we see from this I Corinthians 15 passage is that the Gospel is the vicarious atonement, sacrifice for sinners. Secondly, is that Jesus is risen as the statement of the victory of the atonement. Thirdly, is we learned that what Jesus did is fulfilling what was prophesied in the Scriptures – His death and resurrection. Fourthly, we learned it is a historical reality with witnesses to verify it. So we have found out that the Gospel is a definitive message, Biblically prophesied, fulfilled in the atoning death and victorious resurrection of Christ, Scriptural, historical and verifiable.

The Gospel is the glorious message that God's grace has, is, and will overcome our sin through the life, death, burial, resurrection and continual intercession of His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. The Gospel is a deliverance message. I know that some churches have what they call a deliverance ministry but that means they are promising you that if you come they are coaching you into how to believe you can get delivered from every possible sickness you can have. Although the problem with that is that the Bible says there is a sickness to the glory of God and a sickness unto death to bring us to the Lord.

Yet the Gospel is really the true deliverance message. You have been delivered from your sin. You are delivered from your sin. You are being delivered from your sin. You will be delivered from your sin. There was a young man who attended a Bible college in Tennessee who was trying to share the Gospel with someone every day before he got to class. I happen to be his target one day and he was going to touch the bases, check the boxes and I think I was his last opportunity before he got to class that day. He said to me 'Hey, are you saved?' There are moments in my life I just can't resist and I said 'Saved from what?' "You're sins!" 'Oh yes, I have been saved, I am being saved and one day I will be saved.' "What?" I repeated what I had just said and then he said "Are you are preacher?" I was just working off that I Corinthians 15 text.

I am saved but I am being saved from the practice of sin and I will be saved one day from the presence and any possible consequences of sin. Because I have been saved I have been given a new perspective by the grace of God. My old perspective was that my sin was worth everything but my new perspective is that it kills me. By the calling of the Lord He has given me eyes to see and ears to hear. I have been delivered from the persuasion of sin because He has called me and the power of sin for I have been born again, regenerated. I have been given a new heart. I still sin but no longer does sin reign over me. I do not sin because of the dominion (reign) of sin but because of the indwelling sin in my life – when I give the devil an opportunity in my life or when I don't flee temptation or kill the old man within me.

I have been delivered from the penalty of sin for I have a new record through His blood that was shed for me. Romans 8:1 says [1] *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* I have been delivered from the place of sin for I am in the family of God – I've been adopted and belong to God the Father. I am being saved from the practice of sin because I have a new life. II Corinthians 5:17 says [17] *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* I'm imperfect, uneven, unlevel but I have a new life in Christ. And one day I will be delivered from the presence of sin through glorification in a new heavens and a new earth with a new body. Not only will there be no sin, no consequences of sin with no sickness, no death, no thorns or thistles as I work in the

new heavens and the new earth but even the ability of sin will be removed. That is a glorious day that will be coming. So that is the Gospel promises of deliverance – I have been, I am and will be delivered. So how can I share that simply and faithfully with people?

Now I'd like to look at Romans 1:16–17 which says [16] *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it (the gospel) is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

Again, here it is noted the Gospel is definitive. This is not someone else's gospel but the Gospel of Jesus has been definitively revealed to us and we need to get it right. This Gospel can save any sinner from any and all sins, except that blasphemy of the Holy Spirit when you reject His call to come to Christ. You are never too far away or too deep in your sins. There is no pig trough that you are in that you can't come home to the Father who comes for you through His Son Jesus Christ to redeem you.

It is not only the power of God but the righteousness of God that in the Gospel you don't simply get forgiven, you get innocent. You have the righteousness of Christ that is given to you. The Gospel is also inclusive. Any and all, everyone who believes shall be saved. It is also exclusive for there is no other way to be saved. Everyone who is not saved is already born with a destination locked in and there is only one Message that can rescue them. That Message has been entrusted to us to share with them. If you don't believe then you cannot be saved. Christ is the only Way who is the Savior of sinners and we want to humbly but boldly share that Good News with everyone that Jesus Christ saves sinners gloriously and powerfully.

Who are sinners? We're going to look next at Romans 3. I'm going to share with you how you can share this message with others. Paul has said he is not ashamed the Gospel and now he is telling us why this Gospel is so important. In Romans 1 Paul shows us how every pagan who has not heard the Gospel is liable and under God's judgment but they are not as liable as one who falls into the judgment seat of God, having been under the shadow of a pulpit that has pleaded with them to come to Christ because with greater light comes greater responsibility but they don't step into eternity innocent. When one of my mentors was asked 'What about the innocent bushmen in the jungle, where will they spend eternity?' He answered 'Well, all innocent bushmen in the jungle will spend eternity with Jesus but there is only one problem, there are no innocent bushmen in the jungle.'

Then Paul brings the philosophically religious, man-made religious pagans in Romans 2 and then in Romans 3 he brings the Jew before the Judgment Seat and we see the verdict near the end of Romans 3. Romans 3:23 says [23] *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* Do you see why you don't need to make the Gospel relevant? It already is relevant for everybody needs the Message. They may not want it or be drawn to it or they may be adverse to it and perhaps vehemently adverse to it unless the Holy Spirit prepares them and opens their heart but there is nothing more relevant that you know in your life than the Gospel. This Gospel is there because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

What does it mean that *all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God? Since we don't have time to go through Romans 4 and 5 let's cut to the summation in Romans 6. I think all verses in the Bible are important but if you understand this verse I think you can understand what you need to understand from the Bible. I think this verse just may be the greatest verse in the Bible with the greatest word in the Bible. Romans 6:23 says [23] *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The Greek word for death here is *thanatos* which means separation or the rending apart of what is not meant to be rending apart. It is not like your body and soul are perforated where they can come apart. Body and soul are like two threads woven into one cloth and death is unnatural. It is the curse of death. There is a physical death. When someone asks me if I can pray they will have a natural death I tell them I can't do that because there is nothing natural about death. There was no death in this world until we hit Genesis 3 and it comes as a penalty of sin.

Secondly, there is a spiritual death. The Bible says we are separated from God when we are born because of our sin nature and our sin record. Ephesians 2:1 says *[1] And you were dead in the trespasses and sins.* I am not born into this world sin-inclined or sin sick simply but I'm born sin dead. That's why it says in John 6:44, *[44] No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.* The Bible says whosoever will may come (Revelation 22:17). The difference between 'may' and 'can' is that whosoever will may come but none of you can come for the difference is permissibility. I love that word 'draw' in John 6 for it's the same idea of putting a bucket down a well and drawing up water. I can go to the well and say 'Water, I'm thirsty, you *may* come to me' but the water will do nothing for it's under the bondage and law of gravity. But if I drop a bucket down that well and draw it up now it *can* come to me.

This is what has happened to you. One day you came but it was not because you wanted to more personally but on the day you came it was because God fixed your 'wanter' for then He gave you a 'want to' and an ability to come. This is why Jesus said to Nicodemus John 3:3, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."* The new birth is not the reward for you believing but it's the act of God that allows you to believe.

The third death is eternal separation from God if He says to you 'Depart from Me you workers of lawlessness for I never knew you' (Matthew 7:23). This is all because of our sin and what our sin has earned us. Aren't you glad there is not a period 'after the wages of sin is death'? Then comes the greatest word in the Bible – but. *But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* We go from wages to gift, sin to God and death to life all in this one verse and the only way to get from death to life is through Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Now when you come to Him what happens? Now let's look at Romans 10:13–17 says *[13] For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." [14] How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15] And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" [16] But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" [17] So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

Only the Holy Spirit can give the ability to believe but the Holy Spirit only works with the hearing of the Gospel which has been entrusted to us who by the Spirit we are sent. Do you see the flow here? To be saved you have to call upon the Lord but you won't call upon Him until you believe in Him and you won't believe in Him until you hear Him and you won't hear Him until somebody brings the Gospel to you and He speaks to your heart. His sheep know His voice and they follow Him (John 10:27).

I have good news. If you are a Christian you have been sent by the Spirit to take the Gospel to people that they might believe and call upon the name of Jesus Christ. As you do that and they hear the Gospel, God accomplishes His purposes in saving all of His people from all of their sins for all of eternity. Do you really understand that you are sent by the Spirit and do you

understand that when you share this Gospel that Jesus Himself speaks through you? Isn't that amazing?! So why would we be silent? Now you don't know the ultimate outcome and we will look at that in our next study. For some it is life unto life and for some it is death unto death but He speaks through you. He sent you.

My wife did a needlepoint for me on part of this text in Romans 10:13–17 and it was the part that said 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Good News.' We joke about this because I have the ugliest feet that the Lord has ever made in all of eternity which I will just leave to your imagination. Yet she says they are beautiful if they are used to bring the voice of Christ to people. Do you like how your feet look now? How do you want your feet to look? If you are sharing the Gospel with people that they take you to then they become beautiful feet as they carry you to the mountain and you proclaim the Good news.

Here is what I do when I meet with people. I ask them five questions that get them talking about themselves and then I ask them 'do you mind if I ask you two more questions?' They will typically say 'no' because I have already let them talk for about 30 minute. The first one is 'if you were to die tonight do you know where you would spend eternity?' As they contemplate that I will then say the second 'if you stood before God and God said '(Their name), why should I let you into heaven' what would be your answer to God?' This isn't that God would say it like that but it allows them to look at themselves and what they believe. The Bible does say in Hebrews 9:27, [27] *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment*, so we will all appear before Him.

I also have two other questions that I ask at times because sometimes I find out those I'm talking to have no idea or no sense of Jesus and the Gospel so I will start with 'Do you think there is a heaven?' That question is so effective after about five minutes of turbulence in an airplane. Then I will say 'How do you get there?'

If I'm asking the questions 'if you stood before God...what would you say?' whatever they say to that I repeat it twice because if they don't know Jesus the answer is almost always a works based answer and I want to get it on record but I do it graciously. If I end up asking the other two questions saying 'how do you get there' that response will almost always be a works answer and I will repeat that twice to get it on record. Then I will say 'will you allow me to share something with you' where I will pull that napkin out because I have found that people follow with you better when you put it in front of them.

The first thing I write on the napkin is 'our situation' and I will explain that we are born into this world with the same situation. According to the Bible do you know that all of us our born with a bad heart because we're sinners. Romans 3:23 says [23] *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*. We are sinners because we are born with a sin nature so we have a bad heart and that's why we sin.

Then I will share how we have a bad record. We have a bad heart and that means we actually sin. What if you just do three sins a day yet the Bible says in Romans 6:23, [23] *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*. God is a Holy God and that means every sin is a capital judgment. If I live to be 80 years old and I stand before God while committing only three sins a day then I will have committed about 80,000 capital crimes registered against me. Remember sins are in word, thought or deed and I have a hard enough time of not committing about three by the time I leave my house in the morning and get to the first light on highway 280 at highway 119. Even when we do these sins they pollute what we're doing. It's like putting two rotten eggs with one good egg in an omelet – it pollutes everything that I'm doing.

This is my situation so I am under God's righteous judgment and He says that He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 34:7). One day I realize my situation and then I heard Good News. God had a solution. Out of His unmerited love His solution was Jesus Christ. John 3:16 says [16] *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* Jesus went to the cross to die for all of my sins and because of that He now gives me a new heart. He takes my old heart and cancels it. I can be born again and He also gives me a new record. I will then ask them I can show them that and usually they will agree to it.

Then I will tell them this; II Corinthians 5:21 says [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.* My sins were put on Him and He paid for all of them on the cross. Now that gets me out of hell but it doesn't get me to heaven because heaven is for the righteous. Jesus took His record which is perfect righteousness and He gives it to me so that every time God looks at me He sees the perfect righteousness of His Son. So in Him I'm forgiven and in His righteousness I'm accepted in Christ.

How can you have eternal life? That brings me to the third thing which is 'our salvation' and you receive this gift by faith and repentance. One arm is Jesus I believe and the other arm is Jesus I repent of my sins. Paul says in II Timothy 1:12, [12] *which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.* Know you're a sinner, know He is the Son of God, know He died for your sins and rose again and if you're convinced of that in your heart now put your trust in Him.

Sometimes I will use a chair and say 'I know this is chair, I'm convinced this is a chair, but you know I know it's a chair when I trust it with all of my weight' and that's what I want to ask you to do right now. I want you to say 'I know I'm a sinner, I know that Jesus died for my sins, I know He is risen and He offers to me the gift of eternal life in place of the wages of my sin and I want to put my trust in Him alone, weight of all eternity on Him and that means I want to turn from my sins to put my trust in Him.' You don't turn from your sins to do better for you will do better but you turn from your sins to put your trust in Him alone. Do you understand what I've just shared with you?

I wished I could tell you that everyone I talk to says 'Harry you are just so wonderfully clear' but that doesn't always happen. Dr. Schaefer taught me that for every honest question take the time to give an honest answer. Then I finish by asking them 'do you see any reason why you should not receive Jesus as Lord and Savior?' Then we get to pray together and I get to follow up with them and I tell them 'Would you go tell three people about what you just did?' One fellow I asked this was a Jewish man who came to the Lord and he said 'Do they have to be Christians?' I said 'Preferably not.' Then I tell them to read John chapters 1 through 3 and then try to set up a time to talk about what they read. Then I tell them I'm going to leave you with one more word from Jesus. John 6:47 says [47] *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.* Welcome to the forever family of God.

Now I will finish out this study this way. Here is a similar question that I ask you that I would also ask someone I was sharing the Gospel with – is there any reason why you should not share that Good News with the people that you know? If there is a reason I'd like to know but if there's not then go tell them. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the wonderful clarity of the Gospel and the good news of the Gospel. Help us to simply share with people that Jesus is a Friend to sinners because He has destroyed our enemy of sin and that we can have everlasting life when we put our trust in Him, turning from our self and our sin to Christ and surrender all. Father, help us to share that to the praise of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

The Gospel

The gospel is the glorious message that God's grace has, is, and will overcome our sin through the life, death, burial, resurrection and continual intercession of His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

A Deliverance Message (Rom. 1:16, 17)

Our Situation

- I. Bad Heart
- II. Bad Record

God's Solution

- I. New Heart
- II. New Record

Our Salvation

- I. Faith
- II. Repentance