

XX. L.E.A.D. in Biblical Perspective
Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship
“From Hindrances to Helps in a Lifestyle of Evangelism”

Acts 2:37–47

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I recently saw a survey done by two reputable survey companies. It was ascertaining in what environment did people become Christians. Interestingly, it said right at 88 percent of the people who become Christians do so before age 22. The second thing that struck me was in what environment they became believers. Fifty percent of that survey said they came to Christ through someone personally sharing the Gospel with them. For some it was family, some it was friends, a neighbor, a co-worker and the majority being family but it was some personally who shared the Gospel with them. Twenty plus percent said they came to Christ through a church event of some type. I would do my own interpretation there where my guess is the 50 percent may not have had anything to do with any church events but with the 20 plus percent, while they singularly remember a church event, I would guess they didn't go to the church event without someone talking to them and inviting them. Then perhaps someone even talking to them after the event in terms of what they heard and their response to it.

With this in mind there are a couple of things I want to bring before you and I want to give you an invitation. I want to give you five helps in this study in making evangelism an effective part of your lifestyle that are very practical and from the Scripture as well as experience. Let's start by looking at Acts 2. Here it is Pentecost and the Spirit of God has fallen upon 120 people where they have now gone out into the temple area and proclaiming the Gospel in Jerusalem.

Acts 2:37–39 says [37] *Now when they heard this (Peter's sermon) they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"* [38] *And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off (code language for Gentiles), everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."* Immediately we see Peter doing evangelism but not conversion. He knows that only God can convert. Peter calls them to the Lord but the Lord calls them from death unto life.

Acts 2:40–41 says [40] *And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."* [41] *So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.* It is my contention that this 3,000 is just counting the men because later on 5,000 will come and it specifically says that it is just counting the men. This would be the Hebrew method counting. So likely here we have households responding which likely would bring around 6,000 or more responding to this mass evangelistic event that is taking place here in the streets of Jerusalem.

Then what happens? The church is established and now we get this beautiful Biblical profile of a healthy church. Acts 2:42–47 says [42] *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. [43] And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. [44] And all who believed were together and had all things in common. [45] And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. [46] And day*

by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, [47] praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Here you see them making an intentional commitment to preaching and teaching so that they can grow in grace. We see them share the Word and the breaking of the bread is referring the Lord's Supper and not to a meal in a home. So we see the regular observance of the Lord's Supper. Then there were the prayers, plural, where there are public prayers, private prayers, formal, informal, spontaneous, set, petition, praise prayers and all kinds of prayers are taking place in the life of this church. We also see that they have things entrusted to them, not hoarders, but if someone had a need they would willingly share it with one another. We also know they were meeting in small groups because they were meeting daily and sharing meals.

In other words, we see that they were following the pattern of Jesus where there were multitudes, small groups – 70, 12, 3. They had large groups for celebration and outreach. They had small groups for discipleship and fellowship. They were constantly engaged to the praise of God and that's why God saves us – to the praise of His glory. Since people are being added day by day then we know they are sharing the Gospel extravagantly, without discrimination, throughout the city and the Lord is converting. If people are coming day by day then their sharing is a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. That is what is being described in this passage and it's not just an event. God is attending this lifestyle with effectiveness as many are coming to Christ daily.

Periodically, there will be large evangelistic events with the public preaching of the Word that have moments where a large many come, like here with 3,000 and later there will be 5,000 who come at an event but day by day there are individuals coming so we see both events and personal sharing going on at the same time where both are making use of each other. With that picture in front of you I am going to give you five helps for you to consider and I will pull them all together after I give them to you individually.

The first one is to pray for and support evangelistic preaching of the Gospel. I can assure you by God's grace that the Gospel will be brought forth in every expository sermon from this pulpit and the invitation for people to come to Christ will also be there. So there will always be an evangelistic element to any preaching. When the Word is being preached Christ and the cross are always there plus you can always go across the pew to bring the cross to them to bring them to the cross. More than that there are also sermons that will have an evangelistic element by content, substance and intent and that's what Peter is doing in this sermon at Pentecost. He takes Joel 2 and turns it into an evangelistic sermon and uses the book of Isaiah to give the invitation as 3,000 come. This is also equipping the saints who are sharing the Gospel every day and people are being converted every day.

In Mark 5 Jesus leads to Himself a demoniac and when the demoniac is converted he wants to get in the boat and go with Jesus. This is how Jesus responds to him in Mark 5:19–20, [19] *And he (Jesus) did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."* [20] *And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.* Jesus is run off from this region but leaves behind two converted demoniacs that He tells to go out for Him, as He doesn't let them go with Him. They start proclaiming the Gospel to their family and friends and in less than eight months Jesus will come back to this same area. This time instead of multitudes leading Him out of this area, multitudes are flocking to hear Him

and so many come that He will repeat the miracle of the fish and loaves because He will have to feed them.

I'm not sure where all that revival culture came from in this desolate area but the Bible does tell us that two converted men went back to tell their family and friends and things started happening. Therefore in the next large evangelistic event comes with the Preacher of all preachers who comes into the region, then multitudes come and it says that Jesus has compassion on them for they were like sheep without Shepherd. So we see this matter of preaching and personal evangelism working like hand in glove throughout the Scriptures and how God blesses a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship with genuine conversions.

The second help is the matter of prayer meetings that coincide with preaching. People tend to tell me often how they can get crowds for this and that but they can't seem to get a crowd for prayer. Al Davis, a Baptist friend of mine said, 'You can tell who loves the church by looking at the crowd on Sunday morning, you can tell who loves the preacher by looking at the crowd on Sunday night and you can tell who loves Jesus by who shows up at the prayer meetings.' I understand that can be an overstatement readily but we laugh and smile because there is an element of truth to it.

Prayer is not the hot item but it is absolutely crucial and I have never yet seen a revival without prayer. I also have never seen a prayer meeting that numbered more than the people who came to the revival which translates into the prayer meetings being usually small. But God doesn't count who are in prayer. James 5:16b says [16b] *The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.* Prevailing prayer does not require hundreds but it requires fervency, and an intolerable burden. When God came down to deliver His people out of Egypt you will see a number of times as you read the book of Exodus where it says 'He heard their groaning.'

I am the world's worst patient. I have the greatest nurse that has ever existed who will continually put up with me but I don't like to feel bad at all. So I can be known for my constant groaning when I don't feel well saying, 'Lord, can You please help me get better?' Where does groaning come from? It comes from a condition or pain that is intolerable. Can our prayers for revival be characterized as groaning – a groaning before the Lord?

Europe is dominated by statist socialism. Its Christian heritage is not only absent and dishonored but it is being vacuumed out. The Middle East and areas of the South Pacific are dominated by would-be Islamic caliphates. Turkey at one time was the center for Christianity. It is now dominated by a new would-be Islamic caliphate. Northern Africa at one time was the greatest Christian library that had ever existed in Alexandria and the bishops of this area were noted for their theological insights. Today it is dominated by would-be Islamic caliphates. North America is the product of two Gospel awakenings and is now dominated by a robust, virulent, secular humanism which is fully committed to vacuuming the presence of Christianity out of the culture.

That shouldn't cause us to get mad at them but at sin because we know sin is always the posture of unbelief unless the Lord ministers by common grace and redeeming grace which comes to us and through us. How should we respond to that? Will we groan in prayer over this before the Lord or will we keep just going on like business as usual? Will our preaching be singed and saturated with that evangelistic element and evangelistic efforts? Will our prayer meetings call upon the Lord?

One of the great testimonies for Biblical Christianity was erected in our country in 1638. Before there was a food supply there was a gloriously, robust, orthodox, Christian school

established in Boston. It was Harvard. By 1688 the seeds of apostasy had already blossomed. So in 1701 they started another school because of the apostasy of Harvard. That is about 60 years later. Yale begun in 1701 as the remedy to Harvard and yet by the mid 1700s Yale had apostatized. God raised up a man who was the grandson of Jonathan Edwards whose name was Timothy Dwight who was the president of Yale. There in the student body that had totally embraced the French Enlightenment, Timothy started chapel messages that were not cultural events but was Gospel preaching. Chapel messages were given three times a week and each time he would dismantle every thought that stood against Christ and present the Gospel.

Through the kindness of the Lord's ministry that attended His way, by the turn of the 1800s a second great awakening was initiated in our nation and its seed base was in the colleges of New England – Williams College and Yale College. There at Yale Timothy was preaching the Gospel with such power that they had revival after revival with eight documented revivals from 1801 to 1831. All of them were attended by prayer meetings and preaching.

We have our own great awakening that came here and gave birth from 1735 to 1765. Probably the moment of ascendancy was the year 1741 where the Gospel broke out in London in a fresh way. It was the preaching of the Oxford Methodist Howell Harris, Daniel Roland, Charles Wesley, John Wesley, and George Whitfield that was making its impact. They wouldn't allow them in the churches so they took the Gospel to the fields, the coal mines and they would be pummeled with rocks and garbage. They were targeted with their lives but they kept preaching the Gospel and the revivals broke out in London.

Scotland, Pastor McCollough at a place called Canvas Lane, looked with great envy, asked some of these Oxford preachers to come and preacher and the Canvas Lane revivals broke out. Then it jumped over and in this same year of 1741 on July the 8th a preacher was invited to preach for a number of churches in New England. The sermon he selected was the one that had made little impact in his own little congregation but he stood to preach his sermon titled Sinners in the hands of an angry God and his name was Jonathan Edwards. Now with great fervor the sparks that had already started in 1735 burst forth in glorious flame.

Now long after that Whitfield also came over preached the Gospel in Edward's church and as Jonathan sat in the pew and heard it he just wept. Men and women were brought to Christ in revival and at the same time something happened that is connected to it. The revival touched the heart of a composer who had gone into spiritual and personal depression. He retreated into the darkness of his room in London. Then someone gave him what had been written as an oratorical and as he read it his soul was set aflame with the Gospel. In that same year, 1741, Handel put the music to Messiah which is something that is sung often during the Christmas Season. It was the birth of a great awakening in the life of a man through preaching and prayer that took place.

I would like to take you to a couple of evangelistic prayers in the Bible that a friend of mine sent to me. The first one is in Matthew 9:36–38 which says [36] *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. [37] Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; [38] therefore **pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.**"* The Lord of the harvest is the Holy Spirit. The Owner of the harvest is the one who has secured its plenty which is Jesus. The Father sent Jesus to secure the harvest and now the Holy Spirit is the One who sends out the laborers. Now let's look at Luke 15.

Here we will see that we are to proclaim the Gospel out into the world. Luke 15:7, 10 and 32 says which says [7] *Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner*

who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. [10] Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” [32] It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’ I want to be pointed here. We get excited over so many things but with all due respect a major sports team win does not set off parties in heaven. One sinner who repents sets off a party in heaven. There is celebration in heaven over this one sinner. Now let’s look at Ephesians 6.

This is a great passage on the armor of the Lord. Ephesians 6:18–20 says *[18] praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, [19] and also for me, **that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,** [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.* Pray for me that I’ll do my duty. Now let’s look at Colossians 4.

Colossians 4:2–4 says *[2] Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. [3] At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— [4] that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.* Now let’s look at II Thessalonians 3.

II Thessalonians 3:1–2 says *[1] Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, [2] and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.* The focus here in prayer is that we will be delivered from evil (men) and that the Word will speed to those who have no faith through His saints. Now let’s go back to Acts.

Here is where again thousands will come to Christ. This is what preceded that great evangelistic thrust. Acts 4:29–31 says *[29] And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, [30] while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” [31] And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.*

I read those texts for this reason. Most of the time when we think of evangelistic praying we are usually praying for those who are going to hear the Word and that is fine and good for we are to pray for God to give eyes to see and ears to hear. I’ve been impressed with the fact that it seems that the weight of the Bible is that to assure us we don’t have to worry about a harvest for He has already secured it but what we’re missing are the workers. Each one of those prayers I read pointed us back to the laborers. The harvest is rich but the laborers are few. Will we be in the harvest for that seems to be where the prayer is focused?

So now back to the five helps. As a reminder one is to pray for and support evangelistic preaching of the Gospel and two is the matter of prayer meetings that coincide with preaching. Help number three is to have invitations. Go and invite people to such preaching. I would love to see more people here who don’t know Jesus and I praise the Lord for everyone here who is looking for a place to grow in grace. Let’s go find the goats that He is ready to make sheep and let the Gospel do its work in their lives. Invite people to preaching services and events where you can invite people to come and participate in events. The Christmas season is coming up so invite people to those events during that season to hear the Gospel and share the Gospel as well.

Number four, enlist help. Get people to help you do this. I have never led anyone to Christ where I was the only participating in this event in their life. I love to see teams of people start moving into someone’s life. Invite them to your Bible study. Some have the gift of

watering, others the gift of cultivating, other the gift of reaping but get together and enlist help with one another. Then people come to Christ and no one really knows all who were involved with that person coming to the Lord.

There was this story I recently read of a beautiful 13 year old girl back in 2003 who was asked to sing the national anthem at one of the NBA games and she went to sing and just froze. She was like this child prodigy that everyone thought the world would see here but she just froze. She couldn't even hum the anthem. Nothing would come out of her mouth and then up behind her came one of the greatest men of the history of the Cleveland Cavaliers and it's not who you are thinking. He was an amazing coach who I used to watch him when he played and his name is Maurice Cheeks. Cheeks put his hand on this little girl and said 'it's going to be okay, let's do this.' Cheeks was not a singer but he started singing and then she started singing. She got the rhythm and the tune and Cheeks just faded back and nobody saw him. There are all kinds of people that do that work in evangelism. It is a team effort where we are working together to lead people to Christ.

Fifthly, learn to use questions. One of my daughters said to me that one of the reasons questions work so well is that questions are asking people what they think and what they want to say and everyone has an opinion and think you deserve to hear it. There is nothing they like to talk about more than themselves. So you can get them to Jesus by getting them to talk about themselves. You can say 'Would you be offended if I wanted to invite you to something?' Whoever says they will be offended at that? That is an open door to invite them to something evangelistic. One of my daughters also said the three words she loves to use most after someone has answered a question is when they say '(can you) tell me more.' Just keep people talking.

So what if someone says 'I don't know.' My daughter would tell you then come back with 'well, if you did know, what do you think it would be?' So here you open up the opportunity to share the Gospel with people. But I do think you have to pray for boldness. I think you have to groan for the work of evangelism. You need to call upon the Lord for His help.

So here is an offer to you. Next week I'll be preaching an evangelistic sermon and it will be a blessing to believers but it will be designed to invite unbelievers to Christ. Do you know any unsaved people? Will you invite unsaved people to hear an evangelistic sermon? In the gathering of God's people there will be fellowship and when it is over you can talk with them about it. I know that some of us have a hard time sharing the Gospel due to our personality and all but you can invite someone to something and when you leave you can easily ask them 'what did you think about what you heard?' Let the preacher and what he preaches do the heavy lifting for you and then follow it up with asking them what they thought about it. You may even be able to ask about a couple of things you heard.

So those are my practical suggestions on making evangelism a lifestyle and those are the offers to you. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for the time to be in Your Word. Thank You for the way You have worked in and through Your people so that those who are not Your people become Your people through the glorious work of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Lord, we don't want to package up events simply to manipulate people emotionally but we do want events that present the Gospel to people's heart, mind and will so that they can know, be convicted and place their trust in Jesus. Thank You that we can do that one to one, two to one, one to three and in a large group as well

but give us the blessing to be engaged. I call upon You to give us a burden for people to come to Christ and to give us the boldness to tell people of Jesus or to bring people so that they can hear of Jesus for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.