

XXX. L.E.A.D in Biblical Perspective
Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship
“Foundations #3—Lifestyle Stewardship”

I Corinthians 4:1–5

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This is God’s Word and it’s the truth. I Corinthians 4:1–5 says [1] *This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.* [2] *Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful (trustworthy).* [3] *But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.* [4] *For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.* [5] *Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

This past week I was in Atlanta for two reason. One had to do with a meeting regarding a decade of Campus Outreach and then an annual meeting I attend of PCA pastors where we pray together, hold each other accountable and discuss how we can be used in and from our denomination to the world. I have been meeting with these 20 men for almost 30 years now and they have become good friends. One of them is Randy Pope and I want to share with you something he said that directly relates to our two year theme of Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship. Why are we asking God to build at the core of this church a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship in all of its ministries and members? Perhaps this story will help you.

Last year Randy retired or a better word would be retreaded and is no longer the lead pastor of Perimeter Presbyterian Church in Atlanta but now he is an assistant pastor at that church. His responsibility is to head a ministry called Life on Life Discipleship which is a ministry he developed a number of years ago at this church. Randy gave us his number one reason that ministry became is ‘retirement’ focus. It is that a number of years ago they commissioned a two year study of a five mile radius around Perimeter Presbyterian. They identified all the ministries in that five mile area. They found out what all those ministries were doing and how Perimeter could support them better for the extension of the Kingdom as they attempted to minister faithfully for the Savior.

The survey uncovered an amazing response that was almost one hundred percent of all of those ministries. They told them to just keep doing what they were doing at Perimeter because their best people involved in those ministries all came from Perimeter Presbyterian. The reason they are so good is because they are being discipled – just keep on discipling. At that moment I was about ready to put my hands up and say ‘touchdown!’

I want the world to come to Christ. I want to bring Christ to the world. I want every member to be the salt of the earth and a light to the world. We need it desperately but it won’t happen unless the church stays on its mission, on message and in ministry. Our mission is the Great Commission. What is our work product? It is Christians discipled who know how to live the Great Commandment – to love the Lord with all their heart, soul and mind and their neighbor as themselves. We do that through the four ministries of the Great Commission. It is through outreach to God which is worship. It is through outreach to the world which is evangelism. It is

through inreach which is loving one another and then through downreach which is to be discipled and to disciple others. This is what we exist to do.

There are three maxims. The church has a mission that is narrow and focused. It is to evangelize and make disciples. The mission of the Christian is broad and comprehensive. Christ made us, saves us, sustains us and He is to have preeminence in all things. The third maxim is if the church doesn't stay focused to its mission then Christians will not be able to do their mission. The church is not a civic, political, philanthropic or educational organization but we disciple people who go into these organizations as salt and light.

There are a lot of blessings when a church does that but you can't let the blessings become the mission. Our mission is not church growth or mercy and love for those are consequences of being on mission. The church is a discipleship funnel for it has a large entry point called Lord's Day worship and as you come down the funnel it gets a little narrower to what we call congregational communities (Sunday school), then to small groups that meet in homes to even smaller groups. We are just copying what Jesus did – multitude, 70, 12, 3. The product is evangelize disciples who evangelize and disciple others. It is maturation through multiplication to mobilization but the church has to stay on mission, on message and in ministry.

How do we do this? We go back to the basics and I'm calling it the five foundations where they all build on each other. The structure is only as good as the foundation. The first one is first one which is Christianity 101 where everyone is a theologian. Eternal life is that you know God and His Son Jesus Christ and that's theology. The second foundation is the disciplines of grace (private and public) and those are the ways we will know God and His Word as we grow in grace. The third foundation is stewardship where Christ is preeminent in all things and you are steward of all He entrusts to you – time, talents, finances, relationships. The fourth foundation is personal evangelism which is everyone evangelizing everybody everywhere every day. The fifth foundation is true worship who worship in spirit and in truth through lifestyle worship and gathered worship. Now that you're saved you want to magnify the glory of God. Worship is exactly where you get into the funnel and when you come out of the bottom that makes you more accurate and pleasing to God in true worship.

In Christianity 101 the objective is eternal salvation. The objective of discipleship is life transformation by the power of the Spirit of God, using the Word of God and begins with the Gospel of grace which is the foundation, formation and motivation of the Christian life. We answer five questions in Christianity 101. First is, what is truth? It is the Word of God. Two is, who is God? Third is, who is man? He is made in the image of God. Four is, what's wrong? This is the doctrine of sin. The fifth question is, how can it be made right? This is the Gospel.

We get this through the means of God's grace from the fountains of God's grace that He has ordained. We get this through the Word of God and the Spirit of God which come to us through Jesus. There are certain places you go to drink of the fountain of grace through the conduits of the Spirit of God and the Word of God. The private means of grace are reading, studying, memorizing and meditating on the Word and prayer. Then the public means of grace is the Word read, preached, sung, confessed, shared in fellowship, displayed in the sacraments and returned in public prayer.

In this study we'll cover the third foundation. When you have a solid 101 and are involved with the means of grace the result will be an increasing and intentional life of stewardship. Let's begin by looking at the first two verses in the I Corinthians text. In Christianity this is how you need to regard the Apostles. I Corinthians 4:1–2 says [1] *This is*

how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

[2] Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful (trustworthy).

Here is what I was thinking on this. When I read the epistles these Apostles call us fellow servants and fellow stewards. If they see us this way then perhaps where Paul talks about his servanthood and stewardship, I can get lessons on my servanthood and stewardship. This is what caused me to go to this passage and think how this applies to our lives. What does it mean to be a good steward? Lifestyle stewardship will be our theme next year so we'll continue to cover this more but here I'll try and wet your appetite about stewardship as a lifestyle in being discipled as a steward.

I'm going to start by giving you two Greek words that make up one word. The word stewardship comes from two Greek words that are contracted together – *oiko nomos*. *Oiko* is the Greek word for house. *Nomos* is the Greek word for rules or laws. So stewardship is rules of the house or the house rules. Did you grow up in a home that had rules? I sure did and I don't have time to give you all the rules I had to follow in my home. The reason this word 'house rules' is chosen here is because you're a house. Who lives in that house? God, through the Holy Spirit has taken up residence and the God who owns that house is saying to you that there are certain rules you follow but they are not rules you do for salvation. They are the rules He has set because He has saved you.

This is also the reason there are two 's-words' about stewardship. One is servants of Christ and stewards of what God has given to you. We are to be trustworthy stewards and Christ's servants. You can't be a trustworthy steward until you are His servant. Servant here means a slave of love. In other words, it was someone who had been set free and then out of love from the one who set him free, became his slave. We were slaves to sin and Jesus set us free because He loved us. Now we who love Him becomes His slaves for life. We are His servants. Bid O Master and we follow. That is the identity mark for those who are in Christ.

What does God say to His servants? He says 'I appoint you as stewards. I now am yours and You are Mine therefore all that you have I gave to you. Now you use it for Me.' You are stewards guided by His Word as to how your Savior (Master, Lord) is preeminent in all things in your life. This is the essence of stewardship. It's not just finances. It encompasses all of life, where you are manifesting Christ as preeminent through your joyful service of the One who set you free.

We talk a lot about being an orphan because of sin and Jesus saved me so now I'm a son of God. So then we talk about sonship and even write songs about it. I don't hear or see too many writing about being a slave to sin and He broke the chains. Now I am chained by grace and love to my Savior as His servant and slave. We go from slaveship to sin to slaveship to Jesus as we're here to serve Him.

How do we serve Him? We do that motivated by the love of Christ in service to follow His Word to bring Christ preeminent in all things because you are in the means of grace as you are constantly drawing from His Spirit and His Word. The Christian life isn't lived by intuition. It is lived by the means of grace which are there to help us grow in grace and the means of grace are not done only privately. This includes gathered worship and fellowship with others. II Timothy 2:15 says *[15] Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.* The means of grace are there to help you show the preeminence of Christ in your life. These foundations all work together as they are built upon each other.

This text in I Corinthians 4 gives us three things about a steward we can't miss. Why are you a steward? One is that God has appointed you as a steward and He has appointed the breath of your stewardship. Some of you may have a 500 square foot house and others a 5,000 square foot house that God has entrusted to you. I don't know what square footage is holy but what is holy is how you got it, why you got it and whether it's idolatry in your life. It doesn't matter to me how big your house is but my question is does your house have a big hold on you or does it belong to Jesus? He owns everything. Do you use your house for Jesus or does it use you? It doesn't matter how many zeroes are in your bank account because the real question is does it have you or does Jesus have it through you? I don't know what the circumference of what God has entrusted to you but I want you equipped and discipled so whatever you have my desire for you is that Christ is preeminent in every one of them and not you. So He has appointed your stewardship.

Secondly, you will be accountable to the One who appointed you in everything He gave to you. Paul said in this I Corinthians text that he doesn't answer to the human courts and he is not disdaining the role of human courts. He is basically saying that in everything he has he has to answer ultimately to the Lord because He is the One who gave it to him. One day we will all answer to Him on how we used what He entrusted to us. All those things He has given to you is to be used for His glory, not yours and ultimately we'll all answer to this at the Judgment of Stewardship. Praise God I don't have to be at the judgement of salvation because Jesus has already showed up there for me at the cross and purchased me from all of my sins. His righteousness and His blood are my defense. I will give an account of my stewardship – did I use it for me or invest it for the Kingdom? This brings me to the third thing.

Thirdly, we want to be trustworthy, faithful in this stewardship. Paul says he awaits to hear his commendation from the Lord. What do you want to hear about your stewardship when you stand before the Lord? We want to hear 'Well done, good and faithful servant and steward.' This is not done perfectly but well done. Wouldn't you like to overhear your child saying how good they think you are to one of their friends? I want to hear from my heavenly Father, not that I was mediocre or haphazard in what I did and I know I'll never hear I did it perfectly or ever have been profitable but I do want to hear 'well done good and trustworthy servant for I put you in charge of these things, now enter in for I'm giving you these things for all eternity.'

So here is the takeaway. Christian stewardship is revealed by a lifestyle that is committed to the preeminence of Christ in all things, flowing from a servant's heart, filled with the love of Christ because it's filled with that love for Christ. Normally when people preach on stewardship they give you the three 'T's' which are time, talent, treasures. These are great but next year I'm going to take you to the three 'R's' of stewardship. One is the responsibilities that God has given to you. God has given me responsibilities as a husband, father and now grandfather and I love that one. Ultimately as a parent the responsibility is that the child goes away talking about the Jesus who showed up through their parents and their parenting. What does it mean to be a member of the church of Jesus Christ?

People have asked me how I prioritize responsibilities in relationships. I tell them that every place they took a vow before God is a priority. There are marriage vows, baptismal vows, membership vows, for some ordination vows, and in a courtroom there is a vow to be a witness of truth. When you sign contracts those are vows before God. Those things become a priority in your life and we want to be good stewards in all our responsibilities, including our vocations because we're to do our work heartily as unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23).

As a Christian you live in two kingdoms. You live in the Kingdom of God to represent the King of Kings into the kingdoms of this world as a citizen of the United States. Jesus is not the tribal God of America or the go-to for this country. Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and everyone in authority in this world I want to call them to bow to King Jesus. I want to be a citizen who honors the King as I am a good citizen in my own nations. I have a responsibility as an ambassador of Christ, as an evangelist, as a missionary, a disciple and a discipler. I am to have good stewardship in all my responsibilities and relationships. What would your neighbor say about Jesus knowing that you're a Christian? The Lord has given the world the right to make that judgment. They make judgments about our Jesus through what kind of neighbors we are.

The second 'r' is we are to be good stewards of our resources which include your finances but it also includes your talents. I am astounded at the talent in this church of those who can build, fix and do it seems like just about anything. I praise the Lord for this. These people bless me and my wife because I can't do what they can do. We all have a spiritual gift for Jesus said you have one. Your gift is operative in the body of Christ right now. What ministry is being blessed as we fulfill the mission? I know we all go through providential hindrances like illnesses, loss of jobs, deaths but are you stewarding them? I get the opportunity so many times to connect people who get to steward these experiences with others who go through them. They steward their challenges and providential experiences in life. We steward our possessions – home, car, etc. Jesus owns them all, everything I have.

The third 'r' is our relationships. We are called to be good stewards in our relationships and we can do that as we steward our experiences with others. We have so many in this church who already do this and I praise God for how all of this has been used in your life. I am looking forward to getting the opportunity this coming year to go in more depth about this and how we can do this in our lives.

I said at the beginning I wanted to tell you two things from my trip last week and I have already told you one which about Randy Pope and what he said about discipleship in his church which is what we need to do. Praise God. I also want to tell you about Campus Outreach and as I do this I will fulfill a promise as I close out this study. The people of Campus Outreach I met with overwhelmed me with what message they wanted me to give to you. They said 'Please tell all the elders, pastors and members at Briarwood thank you.'

They are referring to the 1980s. Briarwood's mission statement as been for God's glory Briarwood is committed to equipping Christians to worship God to reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ and one young man that mission laid hold of was Tom Carradine. He knew that some of the big Christian organizations went to the big college campuses and he told Frank Barker he wanted to go to some of the smaller private ones. He suggested they start at Samford University and then that overflowed to Montevallo then to West Georgia then to Berry. Then comes First Presbyterian of Augusta and they wanted to do Campus Outreach in their area so we gave it away to them. The people we were discipling went there to get it started and this led to others which I can't name them all, but here is what happened last week.

Campus Outreach went from Augusta to Charlotte, North Carolina and then to Greenville, South Carolina and this last week 22 pastors and franchise directors pleaded with me publically and privately and asked me to thank you for your stewardship. Do you know how many college students have come to Christ and gone into ministry? They wanted me to thank the elder for their example, the members for their stewardship and sacrificial commitment and you gave it away. There are 22 franchises of Campus Outreach in the United States and 13 internationally which comes to 35.

We don't stop there because the Lord blessed that so much we now have something called YBL – Young Business Leaders. This gave birth to WBL – women's business leaders. They gave birth to Christian Medical ministry. It gave birth to training evangelists called Birmingham Theological Seminary. It gave birth to a performing arts ministry of evangelism and discipleship. It gave birth to a sports ministry and a camp. It gave birth to Bridge to Life ministry of one on one evangelism training that have been given to church after church. So praise God for stewardship.

I thank God for what He has done but asking God through Christianity 101, the means of grace, and stewardship where Christ is preeminent in all things that the best is yet to happen. One of my favorite RV bumper stickers says 'Being of sound mind we spent it all.' Here is the Christian version of this; Being of saved mind, a transformed mind, we gave it all, we used it all that Christ might go to the world and the world to Christ. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Ask God to show you your stewardship. Show me the circumference of what You have entrusted to me. Show me the center of the preeminence of Christ as to why You have entrusted it. Show me the substance of how to use this for Jesus. Speak with the Lord now. Today if you have not yet come to this Jesus who is the Steward of eternal life and is ready to give it to you and make you a steward with a forever life, because He is ready to save you. You don't have to go be a steward to be saved. You just come to Jesus just as you are and He will give you a great life, a challenging life, even in a broken world a life of triumphant in Christ. If you would like to pray with someone about committing your life to Christ please call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we would love to pray with you and help you get started in your new life with Christ. If you want to pray with someone about stewardship call us as well. O God our God do Your work here in our midst. God we don't claim to have everything but we want You to have everything You have given to us. We want the blessing of owning nothing but being Your steward and You knowing this, Jesus, whatever You get to us it will get through us for you and that's what we ask because we know little is much when God is in it. I thank You in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

**CHRIST'S CALL TO HIS CHURCH
ON MISSION – ON MESSAGE – IN MINISTRY**

Great Commission – Great Commandment – Great Commitment

- The Mission of the Church is narrow and focused.
- The Mission of a Christian is broad and comprehensive—"Salt and Light."
- If the church does not stay committed to its Mission (narrow) then Christians will not be able to do their Mission (broad and comprehensive). {note}

LIFESTYLE OF EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP (L.E.A.D.)

FIVE FOUNDATIONS

- I. CHRISTIANITY 101—*Everybody is a theologian*
- II. THE DISCIPLINES OF GRACE—*Growing in Grace*
- III. STEWARDSHIP—*Christ Preeminent*
- IV. PERSONAL EVANGELISM—*Everyone Evangelizing Everybody Everywhere Everyday*
- V. TRUE WORSHIP—*Gathered and Life*

Christianity 101 – FOUNDATIONS #1

The Objective of Evangelism is Eternal salvation; the Objective of Discipleship is Life Transformation by the Spirit of God with the Word of God beginning and with the Gospel of Grace which is the Foundation, the Formation and the Motivation of the Christian Life.

Scripture–God–Man–Sin–Gospel

The Disciplines of Grace – FOUNDATIONS #2

The Word of God and the Spirit of God

Read – Preached – Sacraments – Fellowship

The Means of Grace and Growth is simply yet profoundly the desire to be an answer to the Prayer of Jesus from a heart for Jesus.

“Sanctify them in the Truth; Thy Word is Truth.”

Lifestyle Stewardship - FOUNDATIONS #3

CHRIST'S SERVANTS

TRUSTWORTHY SERVANTS

Life Takeaway

Christian stewardship is revealed by a lifestyle committed to the “preeminence of Christ in all things,” flowing from a servant’s heart filled with the love of Christ.

RESPONSIBILITIES

RELATIONSHIPS

RESOURCES