



You Are a LIVING EPISTLE

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WES HUFF (Christian apologist and theologian): “Do you know there are five Gospels? You are aware of the first four: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. What’s the fifth? It’s you! You are the fifth Gospel. And there are people in your lives who may not be reading Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but I bet they are reading you. And by reading you...how you are living your life, how you are impacting those around you. That can be a profound encouragement [for them] to go back and read the first four.”

SONG I USED TO SING: “You’re the only Jesus some will ever see. You’re the only Word of life some will ever read. So let them see in you the One in Whom gives all they’ll ever need. You’re the only Jesus some will ever see.”

Psalm 31:19 (NLT) – “How great is the goodness you have stored up for those who fear you. You lavish it on those who come to you for protection, blessing them before the watching world.”

NOTICE: The world is watching YOU being blessed. But they are also watching you if you are not!

Acts 1:1 – “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,”

NOTE: He is talking about the Gospel of Luke!

Guess where the Gospel of Luke ends off? The ascension of Jesus...ya, exactly where Acts picks up... but Luke is about where Jesus BEGAN to do and teach...Acts is where He continues to do and teach!

YEP, it is the disciples in Acts, doing and teaching (but it is Jesus).

GUESS WHAT...today, it is no longer the disciples...it is us! We are continuing to do and teach, just like the disciples, just like Jesus started.

OUR JOB is to show the world who Jesus is and what He said. To show them!

Before a watching world.

2 Corinthians 3:1-3 (NASB)

- 1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?
(AMP) – “ARE WE starting to commend ourselves again? Or we do not, like some [false teachers], need written credentials or letters of recommendation to you or from you, [do we]?”
- 2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all people,
The church at Corinth was their letter of recommendation...look at them and who they are and how they live.
- 3 revealing yourselves, **that you are a letter of Christ, delivered by us**, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.
(KJV) – “...ye are manifestly **declared to be the epistle of Christ** ministered by us...”

BELOVED: Yes our lives are the GOOD NEWS of Jesus and what He does in the lives of His kids...but this tells us that we are even a bit more.

We are EPISTLES OF CHRIST!

“Epistles” – letters or messages for others to read and see.

We are letters FROM GOD to those around you about the goodness and love of God.
We are LIVING letters! Just like the early church was after Jesus ascended.
We are the SAME letters that Jesus was while He was on the earth.

Your LIFE is God's voice speaking to those around you...for them to see.

Think about this:

What we learned about LOVE we learned from the EPISTLES of 1 Corinthians and 1 John (and others).
What we learned about FAITH we learned from the EPISTLES of Hebrews and James (and others).
What we learned about attending church and tithing we learn from the EPISTLE of Hebrews.
What we learned about living righteous we learned from the EPISTLE of 1 Peter (and others).
What we learned about the fruit of the spirit we learned from the EPISTLE to the Galatians.
What we learned about the armor of God we learned from the EPISTLE of Ephesians.
What we learned about the gifts of the Spirit and the work of the spirit we learned from the EPISTLE of 1 Corinthians.
What we learned about living by the spirit vs. the flesh we learned from the EPISTLE of Romans (among others).

NOTE: The list goes on.

MY QUESTION: What is the world around you learning from the EPISTLE of you? What are they learning from the EPISTLE of Pastor Thad?

- * How to be impatient in chaos?
- * How to love?
- * How to be annoyed with people?
- * How to walk in joy?
- * Are people reading about the goodness of God or the stress of my situation?
- * Are they reading about the love of Jesus on the cross or the insufficiency in my life?

1 Corinthians 11:1 – “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”

Acts 16:22-36

PREVIOUS: Paul and Silas have cast out the devil of a girl (fortune teller demon); and her masters were angry and got the city to rise up against them, beat them and arrest them.

22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.
23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:
24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

PEOPLE ARE WATCHING! What are they reading?

25 ***And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.***

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.
27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.
28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.
29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

30 And brought them out, and said, ***Sirs, what must I do to be saved?***

QUESTION: What did he read? It changed his life and the lives of his family!

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.
32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.
33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

You are a Living Epistle

- 34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.
- 35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.
- 36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.

Are people seeing the HEALER? PROVIDER? MORE THAN ENOUGH?
Or are all they are seeing is your sickness, lack and everything that is missing from your life?

Are they seeing your SHEPHERD? VICTORY? LOVE?
Or are all they are seeing is your chaos, discouragement, defeat and unfaithfulness?

Christians should make the TRUTH seem more true and a lie seem more false!
We should NOT JUST carry the message, but we should BE THE MESSAGE!

IMPORTANT: The most important message that I will EVER preach is not any of the messages in this pulpit...but the message I declare every day in my daily life.

How to Be Bigger Print :-)

We are all EPISLTES...but what kind of message are we sending?

AGAIN: It seems like I am talking about something that is setting a challenge in front of us.
God will give us help if we decide to do it!
How do we become a better EPISLTE?

Five Keys to Being a Better Epistle:

1.) Be MORE CONNECTED to what Jesus did on the cross.

The disciples saw it...they experienced it...they wept as it happened...

YET: We are often unmoved by the stripes and wounds that Jesus bore for us.

ILLUSTRATION: Doc's tears when I talked about what happened on the cross.

ILLUSTRATION: The lady who would start testifying and would start bawling for what Jesus did on the cross. She would be so embarrassed.

BELOVED: If that doesn't grip us, every time we think about it, we are not really connected with what He did.

2 Peter 1:16 – “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but **were eyewitnesses of his majesty.**”

The letters the Apostles wrote were clear and loud, because what Jesus did was VERY REAL to them.

2.) Be MORE CONNECTED to His Word.

You absolutely CANNOT reflect what you don't know or you don't have!
If you are IMMERSSED in something...it is easy to SHOW IT OFF.

2 Corinthians 3:18 – “But we all, **with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,** are **changed into the same image** from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

The more we look into the mirror of HIS Word...the more we become like Him...become the message we were created to be.

3.) Be MORE CONNECTED to Him.

Yes, spend time with Him...worship Him...praise Him.

Matthew 6:33 – “**But seek ye first the kingdom of God**, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Psalms 16:11 – “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: **in thy presence** is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

Isaiah 40:31 – “**But they that wait upon the LORD** shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

NOTICE: The message! Increase...joy...strength! When the world is running out...we are preaching a message.

4.) Be MORE CONNECTED to His Body.

The more you fall in love with others...the more you reflect Him.

The more you judge and find fault with others, well...

Jesus commanded His followers to love one another as He loved them. Look for practical, every day ways to serve your neighbors, forgive those who wrong you, and give generously of your time and resources.

1 Corinthians 11:27-30

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

5.) Be MORE CONNECTED to Holy Spirit.

Use your Heavenly language.

He's a revealer.

He's a guide.

He's an empowerer.

Connect to the Holy Spirit...you are connected to the gifts.

When you are connected to the gifts...the world reads about the power.

Conclusion

What are your friends and family reading? Not just hearing, but reading!

Are they seeing how to walk by faith? In joy? In peace? In power?

Your life is the only Word some will ever REALLY read...what are they reading?