

Lifestyle Evangelism is . . .

. . . To speak Law & Gospel (Part 1).

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9). How true, how important, and how fitting are these words from John. These are the words we speak on Sunday mornings before we confess our sins, all our sins, our sins of thought, word and deed. These words remind us of the importance of confessing our sins so that we might be given forgiveness of sins, because, if we do not recognize and confess our sins, we are refusing God’s gift of forgiveness.

What does this confession have to do with *Lifestyle Evangelism*? Confession has much to do with *Lifestyle Evangelism* because, too often Christians are perceived to be either hypocrites or people who think they are better than others. Thus, it is important that we begin by recognizing our own sins and the fact that we are “by nature sinful and unclean.” It is important that we do not put on airs, that is, that we do not present ourselves as being better than non-Christians because the fact of the matter is that we sin just as much as anyone else, and often even more, because we know God’s commandments and still disobey them.

In his explanations to the Ten Commandments, Dr. Martin Luther reminds us that we sin against the commandments, not simply by doing something we should not be doing, but by not doing some things we should be doing. Or to say it another way, we sin more sins of omission than sins of commission; yet, these sins are just as damnable as the others.

Therefore, it is important that we recognize and confess our own sins first; then, so that we might be able to recognize and lovingly call attention to the grave sins of our unchurched family and friends (who may not know or understand what sin is nor its grave implications). Remember, the Law must be proclaimed in its severity if the Gospel is to be taken seriously. For, as many people believe, if I am not so bad, then why would I need a Savior? Yet, we speak the words of the Law with love, care and concern for the one to whom we are speaking.