

# The Tide Lifts Ships

by Russell DeLong

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*Evangelism is the tide of God's Spirit coming in, and it has the power to lift the ships of worship, fellowship, stewardship, and discipleship.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 16:11, Mark 9:23, John 15:8, Ephesians 1:23, Ephesians 3:19, Ephesians 4:13, Colossians 1:19, Colossians 2:9

**Topics:** "Evangelism", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

Russell DeLong shares a powerful sermon inspired by the phrase 'The Tide Lifts Ships,' emphasizing the impact of evangelism as the tide of God's Spirit coming into people's hearts, lifting various aspects of their faith. He illustrates this with a story of a sunken ship being lifted by the tide, relating it to how evangelism can lift the ships of Worship, Fellowship, Stewardship, and Discipleship in the church. DeLong warns that when the tide of evangelism recedes, the church's vitality in these areas diminishes, leading to spiritual decline and worldly distractions.

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## Transcript

Scripture: Psalms 16: 11; Ephesians 1: 23; 3: 19; 4: 13; Colossians 1:19; 2:9

In a conference with Dr. Jesse Bader, secretary of evangelism for the National Council of

Churches, he dropped a phrase that stayed with me and upon which I have been meditating - The Tide Lifts Ships.

Immediately I thought of that ship which had been sunk in the harbor of a large city,

obstructing navigation -- in fact, rendering that harbor useless. Ships of any size simply could not enter and unload their cargoes. The city fathers decided that the submerged, disabled vessel must be lifted and towed away. Irrespective of the cost the channel must be cleared -- otherwise the business of the city would be almost completely ruined. Experts were summoned and proposed plans tried, but to no avail. The ship was sunk so deep and was so securely entrenched that nothing would budge it, much less lift it. When everything had failed and the city and harbor leaders were at wit's end trying to conceive of an effective scheme, an old sea captain approached them and said, "I can raise the sunken ship. Give me a try." After consultation and in view of the fact that their methods had failed and feeling that nothing could be lost, they authorized him to proceed.

The captain first procured two large, old mud-scows -- flat-bottomed boats with square ends. These he placed over the spot where the vessel was sunk, one to the right and the other to the left. His next move was to send divers down to fasten thick steel cables to the disabled ship and place them under it. The ends of the steel strands he attached firmly, tightly, and securely to the mud-scows. Do you see the picture clearly? Steel cables attached to one scow, then down under the sunken ship, and up and secured to the other scow. These operations all took place when the tide was out and the water at its lowest level. When all was in readiness, the captain sat back and waited for developments while critics said that it would never work. The captain declared: "We'll get results. It's only a matter of time -- six hours at the most. The cables are strong and will not break. They are securely attached. The scows cannot sink. We've done our work. We'll just rest and wait. The tide will lift the ship."

Little by little the tide came in. The cables tightened, then they strained; they creaked a little. The tide kept coming in -- the scows rose bit by bit, riding the waves. They tossed somewhat but always rose a bit higher as the tide rolled in. Finally there was a great release when the sunken vessel was sucked and pulled out of its grave at the bottom of the harbor. With the submerged vessel in tow the victorious captain cleared the harbor of its obstruction. Why? He knew the power behind the tide. He also knew that if he could securely harness the sunken ship to the mud-scows, it would come up as the tide came in.

Yes, the tide lifts ships.

In a publication of the Methodist church I came across this phrase. Evangelism Lifts Ships. My heart responded affirmatively. Why? Because evangelism is the tide of God's Spirit coming in -- yes, and into the hearts of people.

Evangelism lifts the ship of WORSHIP. When the tide comes in, more people want to worship and the form is filled with spirit.

Evangelism lifts the ship of FELLOWSHIP. As the tide comes in, there is a growing feeling of comradeship and brotherhood. We are really fellows in the same ship going to the same place.

Evangelism lifts the ship of STEWARDSHIP. When the tide comes in and all hearts are filled with the Holy Spirit, it is not hard to empty our pocketbooks to support the cause of Christ. When the floodgates of God's love are opened on our souls, sacrifice seems sweet and giving seems very easy. Stewardship is lifted when the tide of love comes in.

Evangelism lifts the ship of DISCIPLESHIP. When the tide comes in, unconverted husbands and wives, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, neighbors and friends are touched and lifted out of sin to become disciples of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Most certainly and unfailingly evangelism lifts the ships of Worship, Fellowship, Stewardship, and Discipleship.

It is also a corollary truth that when the tide of evangelism begins to recede and go out,

these ships begin to flounder on the shoals of secularism, individualism, selfishness, and formalism.

When the Church is not evangelistic, worship is empty and sterile, resulting in ecclesiastical absenteeism. Millions do not go to the holy sanctuaries. Worship is affected both qualitatively and quantitatively when the fires of evangelism go out.

When the Church is not filled with the spirit of evangelism, fellowship turns into cliques and clubs. Communion with Christ is broken and fellowship with other church members is marred by jealous, suspicious, and miserable irritations. Evangelism oils the machinery and unites the army of God around a common objective -- the salvation of men.

When the Church is not evangelistic, stewardship suffers. Tithes are withheld and offerings are small. When our love for God decreases, our love for things increases and thus our money is diverted from the channels of the Kingdom to the marts of the world.

When the Church is not evangelistic, discipleship is smothered by selfishness. When the tide goes out, disciples break vows and no new disciples are made.

The Church to be successful and triumphant must keep the tide coming in and running high. Evangelism lifts all the ships.

How may we lift ships?

Two spiritual scows are needed: one of PRAYER, the other of FAITH. These are strong and reliable. Then fasten the strong cables of LOVE around the ship or difficulty you want lifted or changed, tie them firmly to the scows of PRAYER and FAITH, and then wait confidently for the tide of God's Holy Spirit to come in. Any ship can be lifted.

Jesus said: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15: 8).

And again He said, "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9: 23).

Yes, prayer and faith will bring God's tide in. Tie them by bonds of love to any problem and it will be solved.

No trouble is so deep, no difficulty so great, but what God's tide will lift it.

Pray and believe and let the tide come in.

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