

Engagement Project - Tour 5 Articles

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The Engagement Project

Tour 5-Part 1: The Royal Vision - Engaging with Grace

Del Tackett's "Engagement Project" reaches a pivotal moment in Tour 5, Part 1, "The Royal Vision: Engaging with Grace." This segment shifts from theoretical foundations to the hands-on application of loving our neighbors, building on prior tours that gazed upon God's face (the "crown jewel") and explored the King's order—the Royal Law of loving God and neighbor. Here, Tackett unveils a vision for believers to embody this command, emphasizing that God has fully equipped us for the task, just as He did in creation.

The discussion opens with the essence of loving our neighbor: what it truly entails and what misconceptions to avoid. Tackett reminds participants that this isn't an optional add-on but the core of Kingdom living. Drawing parallels to the Garden of Eden, he illustrates how God equipped plants to thrive, animals to fulfill their roles, and Adam and Eve to steward creation. Similarly, after Jesus' ascension, believers are empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry out the Royal Law. "You have everything you need," Tackett asserts, underscoring that the primary Kingdom work isn't reserved for missionaries or clergy but entrusted to ordinary people—"common folk" like us. The challenge is to "catch the vision," recognizing our divine provisioning for this mission.

To bring this abstract idea to life, Tackett shares Kristen's inspiring story. Kristen had always imagined mission work as something distant and international, perhaps in far-flung countries. Yet, she came to a profound realization: "I never thought God would ask me to go outside my door in the mission field where I live and get to know my neighbor." She knew the biblical mandate to love neighbors but grappled with the practicalities: "How do you live that out day to day? Especially when you don't know your neighbor." Her big question to God was, "What do you want me to do? Walk across the street and bang on doors? Do I take cookies?"

The turning point came unexpectedly while hosting a party. She ordered a picnic table from Lowe's, moved it to her front yard, painted it turquoise, and placed it under a tree. In a simple act of surrender, she declared, "Here I am, Lord, your will be done." This turquoise table became a symbol of invitation, sparking conversations and relationships right in her neighborhood. Kristen's experience demonstrates that engaging neighbors doesn't require grand gestures; it starts with availability and obedience in everyday spaces.

Tackett then pivots to the biblical narrative of Saul of Tarsus and Ananias, reframing it not just as Saul's dramatic conversion—encountering the living God and becoming Paul, with immense downstream impact—but also as the story of Ananias, an ordinary believer. From Acts 17, Tackett highlights how God sovereignly determines the times and places where people live, even the boundaries of nations. If God plants nations, he reasons, couldn't He also plant our neighbors? Saul was directed to a specific house on Straight Street, where Ananias awaited. This prompts reflection: God knows our exact address and our neighbors'. We live where we do because someone like "Mrs.

Smith" across the street needs the shalom we can bring. Participants are encouraged to contemplate this providence: our neighbors are not random; they're divinely positioned for us to engage.

With this foundation, Tackett articulates the Royal Vision, inviting participants to rephrase it personally. At its heart: Christian families or singles committed to the shalom—the holistic peace, flourishing, and well-being—of their neighbors. This vision unfolds as:

- Building real relationships with those providentially placed in our "Jerusalem" (our immediate local context).
- Through intentional prayer and action.
- Infused with grace, wisdom, and truth.
- Being attractively winsome in demeanor.
- Tearing down walls of division and skepticism.
- Building up trust through consistent, genuine interaction.
- Ultimately, doing the work of the Kingdom, turning the world upside down one neighbor at a time.

This isn't a program but a lifestyle where the people of God live out the Royal Law transformatively.

Delving deeper, Tackett unpacks each element. Commitment is the starting point: without dedication to the Lord and His command, the entire endeavor falters. We can study the material, but action requires resolve. "How shall we then engage?" he asks, focusing on building *real* relationships. Jesus models this perfectly: early in His ministry, He formed deep bonds with a small group of twelve disciples, then invested even more intimately in three—Peter, James, and John. Even the Son of God recognized that depth can't be spread thin; you can't cultivate profound connections with multitudes.

Class interactions enrich this, defining significant relationships through qualities like trust, time investment, authenticity, vulnerability, and generosity. Tackett expands with his list: not shallow or surface-level, but involving true friendship, open communication, shared meals (noting the spiritual depth of "breaking bread together"), collaborative projects, sacrifice, and unwavering trust.

But how do we make this happen? Participants suggest availability (carving out time), commitment to overcome distractions and obstacles, and real love. Tackett agrees, adding the need for deliberate effort: spending quality time, exerting energy, making sacrifices, and dismantling barriers. In a culture rife with sales pitches and manipulation, skepticism forms thick walls—everyone seems to have an agenda. Overcoming this requires persistence.

He employs a farming analogy to drive the point home: cultivating deep relationships is like preparing virgin land for harvest. Early farmers faced arduous tasks—felling trees, hauling rocks, plowing tough soil, tilling, fertilizing, weeding, and more rock removal. It's laborious, sacrificial work, but essential for fruitfulness. Without it, nothing grows.

Ed and Mary's story vividly illustrates this commitment. As ordinary believers dedicated to their neighbors' shalom, Mary enrolled in French classes to bridge a language gap with one neighbor, enabling meaningful dialogue. Ed redefined social circles, calling neighbors "friends" and

embarking on a photography trip with a neighbor to foster connection. Mary highlighted the "gift of not being so busy," allowing space for these investments. Their example shows that relational depth demands creativity and intentionality.

Tackett contrasts this with "drive-by Christianity"—quick, superficial interactions that feel easy but yield no lasting impact. Handing out tracts or occasional waves won't suffice; neighbors need authentic engagement. Poignantly, he notes: "It is highly probable that the only real relationship your neighbor will ever have with a Christian is with you." This underscores the weight of our role; we may be their sole window into the Gospel's transformative power.

In summary, "The Royal Vision: Engaging with Grace" calls believers to a committed, relational pursuit of neighborly shalom. Through stories like Kristen's turquoise table, the providential planting in Saul and Ananias's encounter, and practical insights on cultivation, Tackett equips participants to step out in faith. This vision isn't about distant missions but the mission field at our doorstep, where grace-filled actions can ripple into eternal change. By embracing this, ordinary Christians become agents of Kingdom upheaval, one genuine relationship at a time.

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The Engagement Project

Tour 5, Part 1: The Royal Vision - Engaging with Grace

In Tour 5, Part 1 of Del Tackett's "Engagement Project," titled "The Royal Vision: Engaging with Grace," participants dive into the practical side of loving our neighbors as commanded in the Royal Law. Tackett begins by clarifying what this means—and what it doesn't—emphasizing that God has equipped believers for this mission, much like He equipped plants, animals, and Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. With Jesus' departure, the Holy Spirit empowers ordinary people to fulfill this role, entrusting the Kingdom's primary work to "common folk." The call is to catch this vision: everything needed is already provided.

A poignant story illustrates this through Kristen, who placed a turquoise picnic table in her front yard as an act of obedience. Initially envisioning missions abroad, she realized her neighborhood was her mission field. Struggling with how to start—should she knock on doors or bake cookies?—she simply set up the table under a tree, praying, "Here I am, Lord, your will be done." This small step opened doors to genuine connections.

Tackett draws from the biblical account of Saul of Tarsus (later Paul) and Ananias, highlighting how God orchestrates encounters. From Acts 17, God determines the boundaries of nations and peoples, implying He also "plants" our neighbors next door. If He can position Saul on Straight Street, He knows our addresses and those across the street—perhaps for a divine purpose involving "Mrs. Smith."

The core of the Royal Vision is articulated as: Christian families or singles committed to the shalom (peace and well-being) of their neighbors. This involves building real relationships in our "Jerusalem" (immediate surroundings) through prayer and action, infused with grace, wisdom, and truth. Believers are to be attractively winsome, tearing down walls of skepticism and building trust to advance Kingdom work—one neighbor at a time.

Tackett stresses commitment to the Lord as foundational; without it, nothing happens. Real relationships aren't shallow—they require depth, like Jesus' investment in His disciples, narrowing from twelve to three. Class discussions define significant relationships through trust, time, authenticity, vulnerability, and generosity. Del adds elements like communication, shared meals, joint projects, and sacrifice.

To cultivate these, effort is essential: spending time, overcoming distractions, and breaking through cultural walls of manipulation. He likens it to farming virgin land—clearing trees, removing rocks, plowing, and weeding demands sacrifice. Ed and Mary's story exemplifies this: learning French to communicate, redefining neighbors as "friends," and embracing less busyness as a gift.

Tackett warns against "drive-by Christianity," which is easy but ineffective. Ultimately, believers may be the only genuine Christian connection their neighbors ever experience, urging a transformative engagement that turns the world upside down.

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