

# Engagement Project - Tour 7 Articles

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## The Engagement Project

### Tour 7-Part 2: Royal Vision - Engaging with Truth

#### Recap Part 1: Laying the Foundation for Truth-Centered Engagement

In the first half of Tour 7 from Dr. Del Tackett's *The Engagement Project*, we were reminded that we live in a unique biblical era—the epoch of engagement. Jesus ascended, sending the Spirit of Truth to guide us (John 16:13), equipping ordinary believers for the royal task of advancing His kingdom. Truth is not optional; Jesus came to testify to it (John 18:37), and we are called to carry out the royal law by building deep relationships and engaging with grace, wisdom, *and* truth.

Tackett unpacked key Scriptures: preparing a defense with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15), gently instructing to lead others to truth and escape Satan's snare (2 Timothy 2:24-26), and seasoning speech with salt while redeeming kairos moments (Colossians 4:5-6). Truth must be spoken in love (Ephesians 4:15), for the true good of the other—not to dominate or score points. He warned against two extremes: excited believers blasting truth without love (echoing the "clanging gong" of 1 Corinthians 13:1) or fearful ones withholding truth in the name of a cultural, non-confrontational "love." Both distort the gospel.

The session highlighted the danger of making truth the "endgame" rather than a means to restoration. In a skeptical culture, trust-built relationships allow truth to penetrate. The purpose of truth is wrapped in agape love—seeking the other's shalom with sacrificial zeal.

The highlight was Rosaria Butterfield's testimony: a militant lesbian feminist professor transformed through over 500 meals at the home of Pastor Ken and Floy Smith. Rosaria said the Lord "sent a neighbor to come and get me." Tackett challenged us: If Rosaria lived next door, would we invite her even once? Do we truly believe God can change hearts through us? Yes—because we have His truth, Spirit, and community. Part 1 ended on this high note of empowerment and possibility.

#### Diving Deeper into Part 2: No Agendas, Only Ambassadors

Picking up seamlessly, Part 2 begins with reassurance: we lack nothing for this mission. The Spirit of God indwells us, the Word equips us, and the fellowship of believers strengthens us. Ken and Floy Smith modeled the entire royal vision perfectly—no shortcuts, no coercion.

Crucially, Ken never invited Rosaria to church. Why? Their priority was relationship, not recruitment. Church attendance would come (or not) organically. Forcing it early could have erected walls. Instead, they poured into friendship, earning the right to speak. Rosaria's profound insight captures this: "Ken was wise to know that he could only speak truth as deep as our relationship could stand." Truth without relational depth bounces off hardened hearts; layered over trust, it pierces and heals.

Here Tackett addresses the "big elephant": evangelism. Many believers freeze or overstep because we conflate roles. We desire salvation for neighbors—that's good! But desire can morph into agenda: a mental script where we steer every conversation toward "the pitch." This turns people into projects, eroding authenticity.

Tackett's diagnostic question cuts deep: "If we knew for sure our neighbor would *never* come to Christ, are we now free not to love them?" Ouch. If our "love" evaporates without conversion potential, it was never love—it was bait. Genuine engagement loves without strings, mirroring God's unconditional pursuit of us while we were enemies (Romans 5:8-10).

A sobering real-life story drives this home. One Christian couple invested years building friendship with unbelieving neighbors—shared meals, help during hardships, no preaching. Trust grew deep. Then another couple from church visited and, in one evening, unleashed aggressive evangelism: "You're going to hell without Jesus!" The relationship shattered instantly. Years of bridge-building collapsed in moments. This warns us: agendas destroy; grace invites.

Repentance is God's domain alone (2 Timothy 2:25; Acts 11:18). We cannot manufacture it through clever arguments or emotional manipulation. Our role? Faithful presence, truthful words in season, prayerful dependence.

Tackett bolsters this with research from *I Once Was Lost* by Don Everts and Doug Schaupp. Surveying 2,000 converts (from atheists to Muslims to skeptics), they identified five thresholds of conversion. Threshold one—universally—was "trusting a Christian." Every single person entered significant relationship before believing. No drive-by evangelism succeeded alone. This affirms the royal vision: relationships are the gateway for grace, wisdom, and truth.

Finally, Tackett shares the story of Ludmila, a believer in communist-era Prague. Amid persecution, she embodied joyful, fearless witness. We, too, are ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20), representing a kingdom not of this world. What if we affixed plaques to our doors: "Embassy of the Kingdom of Heaven"? It would reframe our homes as outposts of grace—open for meals, questions, and truth, no agendas attached.

## **Application: Living the Agenda-Free Vision**

This tour liberates us. Engagement isn't a sales quota; it's ambassadorship. Start with prayer for neighbors, then act: invite for coffee, help with yard work, listen without rebuttal. Build depth slowly. When truth arises naturally, speak it gently, seasoned with salt.

Ken and Floy prove ordinary believers can reach the "unreachable." Rosaria's life—now a pastor's wife, author, and speaker—testifies to God's power through faithful love.

As Tackett urges: Believe God can do this in you and through you. The epoch of engagement awaits. Will we love freely, speak truthfully, and trust the Spirit? The world hangs in the balance—one relationship, one meal, one truthful word at a time.

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# The Engagement Project

## Tour 7, Part 2: The Royal Vision - Engaging with Truth

Last week, in Part 1 of Tour 7 from Dr. Del Tackett's **The Engagement Project**, we explored the vital role of truth in the epoch of engagement. We recalled Jesus' words to Pilate: He came to testify to the truth (John 18:37). With the Holy Spirit as our guide into all truth (John 16:13), we are commissioned to build deep relationships, engage with grace and wisdom, and boldly yet lovingly speak truth—for the genuine good of others, not to win arguments. Drawing from key verses like 1 Peter 3:15, 2 Timothy 2:24-26, Colossians 4:5-6, and Ephesians 4:15, we learned to season our speech with salt, avoid clanging gongs of loveless truth (1 Corinthians 13:1), and reject a cultural "love" that withholds truth. The inspiring story of Rosaria Butterfield's transformation through the patient hospitality of Pastor Ken and Floy Smith challenged us: God equipped ordinary believers like them—and us—with His Word, Spirit, and fellowship to reach even the most unlikely neighbors.

In Part 2, Dr. Tackett deepens this royal vision, emphasizing that we already possess everything needed: the Spirit of God, the Word of God, and the fellowship of believers. Returning to Ken and Floy's example, we see how they embodied the vision without compromise. Ken never pressured Rosaria to attend church; their focus was genuine relationship-building. As Rosaria later reflected, "Ken was wise to know that he could only speak truth as deep as our relationship could stand." This underscores a core principle: truth lands powerfully only in the soil of trust.

Tackett confronts the "elephant in the room"—evangelism—and clarifies roles: ours versus God's. Our desires to see neighbors saved can subtly become agendas or scripts, turning conversations transactional. He poses a piercing question: If we knew for certain our neighbor would **never** come to Christ, would we still love them freely? True agape love has no hidden strings; it seeks their shalom unconditionally.

A cautionary story illustrates the fragility of trust: one couple patiently built a relationship with unbelieving neighbors, only for it to shatter when another Christian couple intruded with aggressive evangelism. This reminds us that agendas destroy what grace builds.

Ultimately, only God grants repentance (2 Timothy 2:25). We plant and water, but He gives growth (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). Tackett references **I Once Was Lost** by Don Everts and Doug Schaupp, noting that in interviews with 2,000 new believers, every single one first crossed the threshold of trust through a significant relationship with a Christian.

The tour closes with the story of Ludmila in Prague, highlighting our identity as ambassadors of Christ's kingdom (2 Corinthians 5:20). Imagine plaques on our homes reading "Embassy of the Kingdom of Heaven"—a call to radical, agenda-free hospitality that reflects God's heart.

This vision transforms engagement from duty to delight: love without expectation, truth without force, all empowered by the Spirit. As we discuss tonight, let's pray for courage to live this out in our Jerusalems.

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