

# Connecting to Community

## Understanding and Embracing the Culture Coming Our Way

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### I. Introduction

1. It is a unique season for us a church and for the church abroad. We are living in unprecedented times and we are positioned in a place of great opportunity. This is the season that we have built for, praying for and believing for. It is not church as usual, and we must be very strategic and discerning in the days ahead.
2. The pressure of the season, the erosion of culture and the breakdown of relationships on every front have changed the dynamics of who we are reaching and how we might connect them to the church.
3. We must carefully assess who we are attempting to reach and how we will connect with them if we are going to be successful in building the church. Although are vision and values remain consistent, regardless of times and seasons, our means in which we implement vision should constantly be reviewed and changes to reach our culture must be considered.
4. Despite the season, our vision remains the same – “Our vision is to build people into fervent followers of Christ who are reaching out and impacting communities, cities and nations for the kingdom of God.”
5. Simply stated, we are called to reach people and make disciples.

### II. Understanding Community

#### A. What is a Community?

1. The Book of Acts is our blueprint and preached here as a core value of who we are and what we are trying to build.
2. The common theme throughout the Book of Acts and New Testament is the emphasis of, “doing life together.” SAY TOGETHER. The “POWER OF COMMUNITY” is done TOGETHER. Not just cohabitating, or gathering in the same room, but united in one group with common heart, soul and vision.
  - They, “prayed together.” [Acts 1:14](#)
  - They, “came together.” [Acts 2:6](#)
  - They, “gathered together.” [Acts 4:5](#)
  - They studied together. “[apostles doctrine](#)”
  - They were knit together [Eph. 4:16](#)
  - They worshipped together. [Acts 2:47](#)
  - They ate together. [Acts 2:46](#)
  - They built together. [Eph. 2:2](#)
  - They served together.
  - THEY DID LIFE together!!
3. Community defined = “The intentional development of meaningful relationships, based on common biblical principles and purposes, resulting in each person having a sense of belonging, acceptance and significance.”
4. The church is a community of faith, not a building.
5. The church is built on relationships not programs.

## B. Defining CBC Community

1. We all agree principally, but how does this apply to us practically at CBC? How do we understand those that are coming our way and then assist them in developing meaningful relationships that result in each person feeling as if they belong, are accepted and have significance?
2. BIG IDEA – It must become our priority and our mission to connect every person that God entrusts to our care to a place of authentic community.

## C. A CBC “Community-minded Leader”

1. CBC Community Minded Leader defined – “A leader who understands, embraces and passionately pursues developing a community of believers that create a culture of love and care for every person, and assist everyone to connect to the family of God and reach their God-ordained destiny both inside and outside the church.”
2. Jesus was the Master Community Minder Leader – Always saw the needs, recognized the opportunity and took time out to connect:
 

-Blind Bartemeus (Mark 10:46-52)	-Woman with issue of blood (Matthew 9:20-22)
-Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)	-The Prostitute (John 8:1-11)
-Woman at the Well (John 4:1-25)	-Feeding of the Five thousand (Matt. 14:13-20)
-The Leper (Matthew 8:1-4)	-The Thief on the cross (Matthew 23:42-43)
3. He had compassion for each person and wanted to see them restored. We must do the same. Once we have determined to make this type of culture a priority, we must then recognize that there are varying types of community that exist in our church.

## D. Four Types of Community

1. Public-Oriented Community – This space is typically a larger gathering where everyone is gathered around a common purpose where not everyone knows each other. This is a safe environment where personal interaction may not be required of every person.
 

Includes: Weekend Services  
Midweek Services  
SSN  
Events and Outreaches
2. Social-Oriented Community - This space can exist in a variety of groups or crowd sizes. This environment encourages surface level interaction that allows people to feel more comfortable with those around them without having to enter personal details about their lives.
 

Includes: Small Groups  
Serving Positions  
Bible Studies  
Specialize Ministries  
Connect Gatherings

3. Personal-Oriented Community - The primary characteristic of this space is that relationships are established that transcends the dependency for organized church event or program to exist. The relationship is mutually accepted by engaged parties and is initiated by the parties involved.

Includes: Natural relationships beyond church program  
Mutual engagement of relationship by parties involved  
Shared interests and hobbies

4. Intimate-Oriented Community – This space is developed over many years of personal-oriented relationship where deep love, trust and covenant is established between the individuals involved. These are life-long relationships.

Includes: Life Long relationships  
Deep trust, covenant relationships  
Most people will develop only 5-10 of these relationships in a lifetime.

## IV. Connecting People to Community

### A. The Importance of Understanding Culture

1. In order to reach a particular group of people we must first understand the group of people we are attempting to reach.

**1 Chronicles 12:32** the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, knew what Israel ought to do.

**1 Corinthians 9:20-23** and to the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. <sup>21</sup>To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. <sup>23</sup>I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings.

2. Although we are reaching all types of people from a variety of different backgrounds, cultures, experiences and ages, we will never be all things to all people. Although we have a heart for all people, we tend to attract a certain demographic of people.

### B. Defining the Culture we are attempting to reach

What is the culture look like that we are trying to reach? This plays such a critical part as to how we connect with those coming into the church. What they believe, how they behave and their perceptions of us greatly affect how we should relate to them as well as how they will relate to us.

1. **Their Beliefs** – The United states is home to over 200 different types of religions and belief systems, but is dominated by seven major faith groups: (From *The Seven Faith Tribes* - Barna).

- a. Casual Christians - There are about 225 million adults in America and approximately 150 million fit into this category. Their belief system is differs greatly from Biblical Christian beliefs:
- 74% claim to have personal relationship with Jesus.
  - 38% are certain they will have eternal life.
  - Only 18% spiritual maturity equates to making commitment to community of faith.
  - 18% engage in big three weekly: church attendance, read bible, and pray.
  - Less than 5% tithed their income, average about 1.5% of income to all contributions.
- b. Captive Christians - There are roughly 36 million that fit into this category, about 16% of population. This segment of Christian would be a combination of evangelicals and Protestants. Their combination of Bible-based conviction and spiritual practices has transformed them into different people. Conversion is real, they live what they believe.
- c. American Jews – The largest population of Jews now reside in United States, 6.5 million, which is close to half of Jews worldwide. 2% of U.S. population. Contemporary Judaism has its roots in the Middle East, but its heart is in postmodern West. The changes redefining the beliefs of Judaism are extensive, too much to mention, but do play a role in the make-up in the belief structure of USA. It has become more of a culture than an actual religion.
- d. Mormons – There are 13 million Mormons worldwide and approximately 5 million living in the U.S., 40% living in Utah alone. Almost as many leave the church as are added to the church resulting only in small net gain annually. Although there are varying degrees of awareness of Church doctrine over 77% state that family values are their top priority.
- e. Pantheists – The 31 Flavors of America’s belief system, which include Hindus, Buddhists, New Agers, and most religions rooted in Eastern religion. This group represents about 1.5% of U.S. Population, about 3.5 million. 57% of this entire group is of Asian descent.
- f. Muslims - A collection of vastly different Muslim segments and theological views. Varying studies show this group to be between 1.5 to 4 million, best estimate to be around 2.3 million. Over 50% of this group lives in Northeastern United States. Most feel highly rejected and grossly misunderstood and wrongly labeled with extreme radical Muslims.
- g. Spiritual Skeptics – About 11% of Americans are either Atheist (9%) or Agnostic (2%). This group has doubled in size in last quarter century now totaling about 25 million Americans. One of the fastest growing groups with expectation for aggressive growth in the coming years.
2. **Their Behaviors** - The behavioral issues coming into the church can’t be ignored and have a great bearing on how, who and where we connect with the people coming into the church.
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|---|-------------------------|
| -Divorce                                | -Alcohol                |
| -Adultery                               | -Gambling               |
| -Fornication                            | -Social Dysfunction     |
| -Cohabitation - Couples Living together | -Non-committal          |
| -Substance Abuse                        | -Financial Mismangement |

3. **Their Perception of the church** – The reality is Christianity does have an image problem in America. This is rampant not only in the unchurched world, but also is a growing movement in the ‘de-churched’ world (those who profess Christ as their savior, but don’t attend church). Their issues are in part perception, and in part truth.

Statistics taken from age bracket that CBC reaches the most:

- 10%, regardless of beliefs feel that religion is not a priority in their life.
  - Large percentage has a bad impression of present day Christianity.
  - We have become famous for what we oppose, rather than what we are for.
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|-------------------------------------|--|
| a. Anti-homosexual                  | 91% of unchurched believe this about the church. |
| b. Judgmental                       | 87% of unchurched believe this about the church. |
| c. Hypocritical                     | 85% of unchurched believe this about the church. |
| d. Too Political                    | 75% of unchurched believe this about the church. |
| e. Old-fashioned                    | 78% of unchurched believe this about the church. |
| f. Out of touch with Reality        | 72% of unchurched believe this about the church. |
| g. Insensitive to Others            | 70% of unchurched believe this about the church. |
| h. Boring                           | 68% of unchurched believe this about the church. |
| i. Not accepting of other’s Beliefs | 64% of unchurched believe this about the church. |
| j. Confusing                        | 61% of unchurched believe this about the church. |

### **C. Defining Those that are Coming to Your Church**

Take the time and determine who is coming into the doors of your church. This important exercise will greatly affect how you build your connection ministries:

1. Number of guests per year
  - a. Weekend services
  - b. Children’s Ministries
  - c. Youth services
  - d. International services
  - e. Coffee cards
2. Marital status – Should include married, single, widowed, divorced and separated.
3. Age– Include all age groups as they apply to each ministry area of the church.
4. Children – Percentage and ages of total visitors.
5. Conversions, Rededications Total Visitors – Important to notice in regards to connecting.
6. Interests in Church (from Guest and Connect Card) –
7. Pastoral issues and requests.

## Recommended Book Reading List

Understanding those we are attempting to reach recommendations:

- *Preaching to a Post Modern World* By Graham Johnston
- *UnChristian* By David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons
- *The Shape of Faith to Come* By Brad Waggoner
- *The Seven Faith Tribes* By George Barna
- *Lost and Found* By Ed Stetzer
- *The Quitting Church* By Julia Duin

Connecting to those we are reaching recommendations:

- *First Impressions* By Mark Waltz
  - *Lasting Impressions* By Mark Waltz
  - *Fusion* By Nelson Searcy
  - *No Perfect People Allowed* By John Burke
  - *Multi Site Churches* By Scott McConnell
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