

Sharing the Gospel

Pastor Marc Estes

I. Introduction

There is a rising challenge for the church today to present the gospel in a manner that is relevant to those we are attempting to reach without compromising truth of the message. In order to effectively reach a post-modern world, the church must address the culture in which we live and learn how to effectively communicate the timeless message of the cross in a manner in which they can receive.

A. Introduction to Sharing the Gospel

[I Corinthians 9:19-23](#) Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 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. 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. 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. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

1. As we look at how we are to effectively share the gospel and reach the 21st Century harvest, we must not underestimate the changes taking place in the way the lost person thinks. Start with story...
2. As the twenty-first century emerges, the particular way of thinking, as we know it, is rapidly disappearing and we are on the verge of a whole new standard and foundation of societal mindset.

#Princeton Theologian, Diogenes Allen, says, "This change is perhaps as great as that which marked off the modern world from the Middle Ages."

#Leith Anderson, author of "A church for the Twenty-first Century" says, "We are experiencing enormous structural change in our country and in our world...changes that promises to be greater than the invention of the printing press, greater than the Industrial revolution."

#Gene Edward Veith Jr., Author of *Post Modern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, says, "Many people today are sensing that the modern era is over. In nearly every sphere, from academic fields to new social phenomena, the assumptions that shaped twentieth-century thought and culture are being exploded. As we enter the twenty-first century, it seems clear the Western culture is entrains a new phase, which scholars are calling post-modern."

3. Best summarized by Walter Truett Anderson, who says, "we are presently in the midst of a transition from one way of thinking to another. He cites three processes shaping this transition:
 - a. *The Breakdown of Belief*: Today there is no universal consensus about what is true. We are in a unregulated marketplace of realities in which all manner of belief systems are offered for public consumption. Perception is that there is no absolute truth. Truth is relative to each individual.

- b. *The Birth of a Global Culture*: All belief-systems become aware of all other belief systems. As a result, it is difficult to accept any of them as absolutely true, especially in a culture with no absolutes!
- c. *A New Polarization*: Conflicts over the nature of social truth tear at our society. We have “culture wars”, particularly battles over the critical issues of education and moral instruction, This has made its way to the political center stage, making the issues quite hostile.

C. The Emerging New Mindset

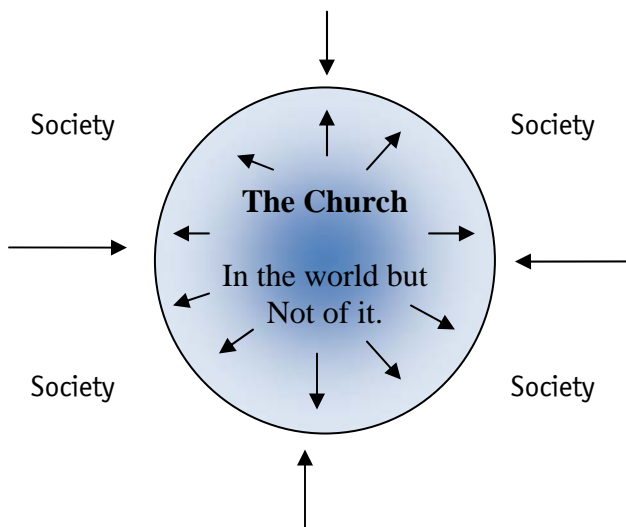
1. *Immoral behavior has turned into a loss of moral criteria*: People used to be able to identify right from wrong. Even if involved in a particular sin, they at least admitted it was wrong. Now the concept of right and wrong has become relative, supposedly removing guilt and condemnation of the mind.
 - SIN + WRONG + DON'T DO IT = Pre Modern and Modern era
 - SIN + WRONG + DO IT ANYWAY = Transition from Modern era to Post Modern era
 - SIN REDEFINED + NO WRONG + DO IT WITH PLEASURE AND NO UNDERSTANDING OF CONSEQUENCE = Postmodern era
2. Christians and Modernists debated over what is actually the real truth whereas Postmodernists believe there is no such thing as truth.

The Affects of shifting to Post Modernism mindset :

- Reason is replaced by emotion.
 - Rationalism is replaced by subjectivism.
 - Morality is replaced by relativism.
 - Reality itself is just a Social construct.
 - Trying to control chaos is replaced by embracing and affirming it.
 - Determinacy replaced by indeterminacy.
 - Establishing a Hierarchy replaced by cultivating Anarchy.
 - Searching for truth in words & language replaced by rejecting both meaning & Word.
 - Cultivating presence replaced by embracing absence.
 - Depth of surface and form replaced by anti form. Disorganization is organization
3. These colossal paradigm shifts taking place must provoke the church to embrace new methodologies in reaching the harvest of the twenty-first century.

II. Aligning the Church for the Twenty First Century Harvest

The church has always had to confront its culture and to exist in tension with the world. To ignore the culture is to risk irrelevance; to accept the culture uncritically is to risk no impact, stagnation and even redefining of church and gospel message. (Acts 1:8; 2:47; 5:28)



#Hydraulic pressure – As society pushes, it should create pressure that pours us out into society, not implosion

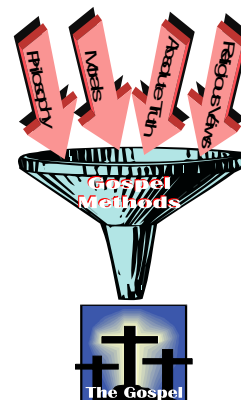
A. Recognizing the Window of Opportunity

1. With the failure of modernism, the philosophical pillars have lost their force and validity against the truth of Christianity. Those that embraced Modernism are now searching for something else!
2. There is a window of opportunity to create a credibility and relatability with the postmodern person if we become “wise as a serpent and gentle as a dove.”
3. It is now a great opportunity for forward-thinking Christians to reach in to a society that is realizing the doctrines and philosophies of Modernism has crumbled.
4. The challenge will be to understand the new way of thinking and come up with new strategic methodologies to penetrate the post-modern mindset while not compromising the Truth of the Gospel.

B. Review of Past “Gospel Methods”

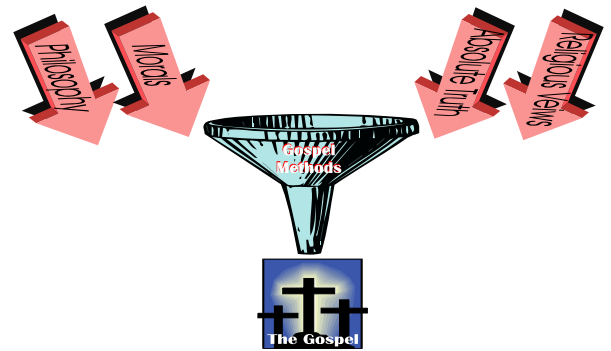
1. **Chart One: 1960's and 1970's Gospel Methods-** Our methods matched the mindset and philosophies of the day. Although there was the beginning of a shift in philosophy via such people as Timothy Leary, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Grateful Dead, Jimi Hendrix and the entire Freedom Revolution, the church was still able to reach and retain a large portion of society.

1960's and 1970's Gospel Methods



2. **Chart Two: 1980's and 1990's Gospel Methods-** As society changed our methodologies lacked in meeting the mindset of society. There were attempts to reach the lost through method's that even minimized or hid the gospel message, in hopes we could relate to a people turned off to church. Furthermore we continued with methodologies of the 60's and 70's using a public, confrontational style only to find out it pushed people further from the gospel.

1980's and 1990's Gospel Methods



3. **Chart Three: Twenty First Century Gospel Methods-** The methods we used must match times in which we live, while at the same time deliver the gospel message without compromise.

#Gene Edward Veith Jr. states, "Whether Christianity will once again exert it's influence on the culture, or whether Christianity will become further marginalized in the twenty-first century, Christians must pay close attention to the signs of the times... Christians dare not be blind to change of this magnitude."

#Wayne Gretsky, I go to where the puck will be."

Twenty-First Century Gospel Methods



C. Stick Close to the Gospel Truth in Turbulent Times

1. All new Philosophies and influences are governed and controlled by new ethics and our goal is to line ourselves up with God's unchanging truth and provide new, strategic, uncompromising ways to present the gospel in a relevant and effective manner.
2. Biblical faith has weathered the storm of every assault, even to the point of persecution and martyrdom.
3. It has proven to be relevant to every philosophy in every age regardless of how many have tried to silence its message.
4. Every philosophy and worldview, with the exclusion of Christianity has proven itself to be a falsehood and emptiness regardless of the countless millions that follow its teachings. There are only quickly replaced by another set of vain assumptions.

III. Twenty-First Century Gospel Pillars

The gospel message will always remain truth. Truth remains, but our strategies must align with the each witnessing encounter. With the increase of post-modern thinking in the minds of those we are attempting to reach, one must be careful not to assume that beliefs and worldviews are similar.

A. Pillar #1: Every person has a perception of Eternity

Regardless of religious persuasion, or lack thereof, every person has a perception of what Eternity might be. Those views may consist of; heaven, hell, reincarnation, a distant galaxy, or cease to exist.

A. Pillar #2: Absolute truth is the foundation to life itself

To a generation that believes that truth is relative, the need for establishing the foundation is the beginning point of sharing the gospel.

B. Pillar #3: The Bible is the foundation for all Truth

There is only one book that has ever stood the test of time as being 100% infallible. Establishing the Bible as the sole source of your message is vital to the presenting of any future principles.

C. Pillar #4: The nature and characteristics of God can be defined

God must be redefined back to His original description. Without elevating God to His rightful place in the minds of man, it is impossible to present the gospel with any sense of need or urgency.

D. Pillar #5: Sin is an absolute problem not a relative, narrow-minded concept

People must understand sin as “rebellion against God” and it’s affect on humanity in order to understand the immeasurable gap between themselves and God due to their own personal sin.

E. Pillar #6: Hope and unconditional love are available to those who seek God

Even in the midst of judgement, God provides a way of escape and the opportunity for a new life. This is key to reaching a generation without hope.

F. Pillar #7: The Cross remains as the central message of the Gospel

1. The message of the cross is the power of God unto salvation. The price that Christ paid for the sin of mankind must be clearly understood to make activate its power in a person’s life.
2. We need to not only give attention to the cross, but also his resurrection power, that he conquered death and hell.
3. There must also be the realization that Jesus is the only way, and no salvation is found in no other name.

G. Pillar #8: The only One who can truly fill needs and voids is God Himself

Society continues to look to everything but God to fill the immense holes in their life. The need for love, hope, peace, joy, purpose, acceptance and identity will only be found in God. This can only happen when people enter into a personal relationship with Christ. This too, is an important part of the gospel.

H. Pillar #9: Commitment to Christ is a life-long decision

People must understand the commitment of a life-long relationship before praying a prayer. Just as in a marriage, a couple must understand the cost before entering into a covenant relationship.

I. Pillar #10: Becoming a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ is the Goal

God desires disciples, not just decisions. The point of salvation marks the beginning of the journey, not the end. A key part of sharing the gospel is to assist people into understand the new life that has begun.

NOTE: To see this gospel approach in a booklet format that can be used to share with others that need Christ, please see, "Eternity: The Ultimate Choice" by Marc Estes. (Resource Page on www.marcestes.com)