

Building a Gospel Centered Culture

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I. Introduction

1. Last night we talked about the “Convictions of a Gospel Centered Leader.” We discussed five key convictions everyone of us should embrace:
 - a. We are living in supernatural times.
 - b. We are promised a supernatural harvest.
 - c. Reaching people far from God is our primary purpose.
 - d. The church must go into the city to get the city in to the church.
 - e. The heart of church is determined by the hearts of the leaders.
 2. Once we have removed all the mindsets that inhibit us and move forward with some corporate leadership accelerators, we must next take some practical steps in our lives to create a Gospel-centered culture in our local church. **This session, “Building a Gospel-Centered Culture.”**
 3. The culture of the church is primarily established by the leaders of the church. Healthy churches are comprised of healthy leaders. Apathetic churches are made up of apathetic leaders. Evangelistic leaders will create a culture of evangelism.
 4. Culture defined – “Characteristics that identify a certain group of people, including beliefs, thoughts, attitudes and actions.” (Believe, think, feel and act).
 5. Evangelism is defined – “Sharing the Good News with those who need it!”
 6. IF we are going to create a Gospel-Centered Culture within our church we must move beyond our beliefs, and make it a part of our every day thoughts attitudes and actions! BELIEVING IS NOT ENOUGH!
- #Dave Emerick Story – Local Man Drowns in Lake**
7. In order for us to change our culture there are a few things we must do!

#1: Align our lives to the call of the Gospel

1. With all of life’s challenges, pleasures, and distractions many have lost sight of the urgency and of our purpose as Christians? “Why are we here sucking air on planet earth?”
#95% no converts, 50% churches no converts in one year (165k), 80% plateaued/declining
Ephesians 4:1, “Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.” What is that calling? Why are you *REALLY* here?
Mark 16:15-16 “And then he told them, “Go (ye) into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere.” NOT sometimes, to someone, somewhere!
2. Although many feel that sharing their faith is an obligation as a believer, for the most part, it is not a sense of great urgency and concern for those who would be spending Eternity without Christ.

3. Today, my heart is stirred to encourage you to consider your life as a leader and to ask you to prayerfully consider right now, to evaluate your present fruitfulness in reaching people without Christ, and to consider “*Aligning Your Life to the Call of the Gospel.*”

Q - “When was the last time you shared with someone? Prayed for someone? Wept?”

4. **Align** = “to come into precise adjustment or correct position; to change from being out of balance, into balance.” May be 5% or 95% out, but come in line!
5. 36 million (16%) TRUE Christians in USA, only a few sharing gospel regularly. Most not out of rebellion, but distraction. Most LOVE God.
6. Principally agree, but practically don’t apply. Isn’t a high priority in life.
7. What value do you place on a lost soul? Measured by the time, money and energy you expend toward reaching those that are lost.
8. **The value one places on that which is lost determines the sacrifice one is willing to make to find it.**
John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.

#Penny and \$100 Bill on floor = Value

Limited Concern...Limited Sacrifice...Limited Value!

Increase the Value of the Lost Item: = Increase the Sacrifice

9. As leaders, WE MUST POSSESS IT!

#2: Bridge Relationships with those who need Christ

1. Relationships are the primary vehicle used to win people to Christ.

86% of all who come to Christ come through a RFNC. **#How many of you?**

Diagram: 3 or less in six month 100% leave, 7 or more in six months 100% stay

2. The Bible is the filled with examples.

- Andrew brings brother Simon Peter
- Their friend Phillip brings Nathaniel ([John 1:35-36](#))
- [Acts 2](#)- “Went to the temple and from “house to house.” Thousands saved!
- Cornelius, the Roman Centurion, brings relatives and family ([Acts 10](#))
- Phillipian Jailer brings his circle of relationships to Christ ([Acts 16:27-34](#))
- ❑ If we are going to win our city to Christ, we must have relationships with them!

3. In order to build a relationship with them you must first understand them.

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

I wish had more time to discuss, but can only highlight some thoughts for you. There are many books, studies and discussions taking place amongst Christian leaders today, trying to discern the society in which we live and what we should do about it. This is an issue that needs more discussion.





a. **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).

i. Casual Christians - There are about 225 million adults in America (306 million people overall), and approximately 150 million fit into this category (**66%**). 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% tithe their income, average about 1.5% of income to all contributions.**

ii. Captive Christians - There are roughly 36 million that fit into this category, about **16%** of U.S. 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.

iii. 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 small part in the make-up in the belief structure of America. It has become more of a culture or civilization than an actual religion. **#Smaller percentage in NW, majority live in NE USA.**

iv. Mormons – There are 13 million Mormons worldwide and approximately 5 million living in the U.S. (**2%**), 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 value and priority.

v. Panteists – 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.

vi. 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 2.3-3.5 million (**1.5%**). Over 50% of this group lives in Northeastern United States. Most feel highly rejected and grossly misunderstood and wrongly labeled with extreme radical Muslims.

vii. 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. **#Percentages are higher in the NW.**



b. **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. TOP 10 AREAS:

- Divorce
- Adultery

#High percentages in most categories

- Fornication
- Cohabitation - Couples Living together — #ALL are common in church today!
- Substance Abuse — How do we connect with people this way? Not idea of good friends!
- Alcohol
- Gambling
- Social dysfunction
- Non committal
- Financial mismanagement —



- c. **Their Perception of the church** – The reality is Christianity has 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 church reaches the most:

- 90%, 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. |

When you combine the beliefs, behaviors and perceptions, it gives us a fresh perspective of the challenge we are facing today! Culture has changed! So must we also change!

4. Mobilize people to build relationship with the Unchurched:

- Help to contextualize the gospel message to appeal to those they are reaching.
- Encourage all to pray and ask God for 7-10 people to pray for and begin building relationships.
- Have all focus on RFNC- Most fruitful **# 86% of all who come, do so through relationship**
- Release people to be proactive in building relationships with those in their life. (meals, outings, calls)
#Simplify your church schedule and commitment so people can “BE THE CHURCH.”
- Help people to discover common interests, OR start small group that focuses on interest.
- Inspire people to get involved in the community: (schools, gym, political, social agencies)
- Have all Small Groups focus on reaching out to others based on their group focus.
#FPU, Marriage and Parenting – All open and catered to outside community.
- Create weekend experiences that your people are excited to invite their friends.

#3: Be an Example to those who need Christ

- Once we align our lives and begin to develop relationship with those who need Christ, it is imperative that we are an example to them. Character and testimony is a key. Show them you are different. We are the light of the world/salt of the earth.



- b. Strategy #2: He Paralyzes the Harvest (*These two strategies create a spiritual DMZ zone*)
II Corinthians 4:4, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

#We are perceived as Judgmental, critical, hypocritical, too political, unloving and prideful.

3. As Christians, we must rise to a new level of authority! In our lives and surroundings, and actions. He gave us his power and authority.

Luke 10:19, "I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you." **#Ron Thompson/Rich Roberts Story**

4. As Leaders, we must rise to a new level of authority in spirit! In our lives and surroundings, and actions. He gave us his power and authority. Luke 10:19

#5: Ferently Prayer for those who need Christ



1. We have aligned our lives, built relationships, become an example to them, understand there is an enemy... next, we must make sure to pray for those who need Christ regularly.
2. Any time, anywhere, anybody ever gets saved, is because someone prayed first! Evangelism without prayer is like an arrow without a tip. Prayer is evangelism.

Colossians 4:3-4 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Prayer opens the door for the gospel to be shared!!

James 5:16 ...The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

#Holy man, teach me to pray! How bad do you want your Friends and Family saved?



3. Five Breakthrough prayers to teach everyone in your church - Pray that the Lord would...
- Bind the spirit that binds the mind of the unbeliever. (2 Cor. 4:4)
 - Pray that the Lord would loose the spirit of wisdom and revelation. (Eph 1:17)
 - Pray that the Lord would release a spirit of adoption. (Rom 8:15)
 - Pray that the Lord would put laborers into their path (Luke 10:2)
 - Pray that the Father would draw them. (John 6:44)
4. Pray for Ways to Pray for the Lost (Many of you already are doing).
- Incorporate into every weekend service - **#Purple Boards and Salvations.**
 - Include in every leader and staff meeting. **#Connect Cards, Pre-service Huddles**
 - Implement into every small group meeting. **#Before FPNO, Rest Stop,**
 - Inspire every person to include in their daily devotions **#God put someone in my path.**

#6: Meet the Needs of those who need Christ



1. The quickest way to win people to Christ is simply to love them. Show them you care!
Q- Wendy Libke story
2. Lost people usually know they are doing something bad, whether they admit it or not!
#Read Jesus Today Pg. 78, "Man in the Pit"

3. Jesus ministered this way to the lost repeatedly in the Gospels. 46 TIMES!!!

- Poor
- Sick
- Lost
- Abused
- Accused
- Accused

John 8:1-11- The prostitute, kneeling down beside her, showing her he cared!
"Then Jesus stood up again and said to her, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."

Luke 10:33- Good samaritan story:
"Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he had compassion on him."

4. Compassion: "Have your bowels yearning, feel another's pain as if it were your own.

#Little Annie- Nurse reaches out to girl in need, named little Annie, in a Boston mental institution. Annie Sullivan would be the one to do the same and responsible for ministering to Hellen Keller. Needed Love and Care long term! Her ministry continues on!!!

5. Meeting Needs in your City

- a. Every city has its own unique challenges. What works in our city won't necessarily work in yours.
- b. Identify the needs within your community and fill them: #Newspaper, News, Listen!
#CBC- Portland Schools Budget Cut - Comm. Care Day, Meals, kids/Shaver DROP IN CENTER
Police – Occupy Portland, Rest Stop = 300+ officers a month.
Latch Key Kids – Bridge City Summer twelve weeks. Hundreds weekly.
Young married mom's: Tea and Tot's for stay home mom's
Refugee/Burmese issue - ESL small groups
- c. Release people in their area of passion. Structure for growth, not control.
- d. Plan church-wide initiatives to mobilize church. #LiveLove movement.
#Show DHS Pictures and story of 100+ workers in tears. Now all nine locations and open door.
- e. Ask every small group/ministry to meet some need regularly.
#Paint lady house on corner.
- f. Every person to meet needs of those around them daily.
#Waitress at Applebees - \$100 Tip

#7: Be Ready to Share when the Opportunities are Presented



1. If you do the previous six "must's" God WILL give you the opportunity to lead people to Christ. When He does you had better be ready....AND your people had better be ready!
2. God will use you, when you least expect it! He doesn't work on our timeline, but his. In a classroom, at work, in a restaurant, etc.

1 Pet 3:15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always {being} ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you...

3. Train your small group in evangelism.
4. Teach your small group to reach out at all times, not just for event-oriented outreaches
"Evangelism is who you are, not what you do." Teach this to your people.

Most people aren't used mightily by God, simply because they are not available!

#Man Across Street in Tahoe, 6AM- "I was about to kill myself."

Pray over churches for growth, revival, evangelism, etc.