

YAMs

Summer Midweek 2010



The Gospel, The Culture and The Church:
a radical reformation



yams summer midweek 2010 | wednesdays @ 6 p.m.

Week One:

Introduction: Knowing and
Engaging Your Culture



covenant chapel

INTRODUCTION:

I really believe in the gospel's ability to transform people and the culture. And I'm here, working on staff at a church because I believe Jesus established the church as the primary way of bringing the gospel to people. And so, I care very much that the church, and our church, Covenant Chapel, be effective in engaging our culture with the gospel.

This summer, we are going to talk about The Gospel, The Culture and The Church. We're going to explore the call Jesus gives to love all three and how the three interact.

So one of the first things we have to do is define these three things. And, just in case you're like me and you have grown up in church or been around church for a while, let's try to define these things without using really "churchy" lingo – "Christian-eze" if you will.

THE CHURCH

How would you define the Church?

The Church: To Love our brothers.

(John 13:34-35; Heb. 10:24-25; 1 John 4:7; 1 John 3:13-16; Matthew 13:24-30)

- **Specifically:** The Church (capital "C") is the "body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27) – not a building, facility, activities, etc, but those who follow Jesus united together in loving community to build one another up, admonish, teach, protect, care for, and put others above ourselves. This loving community can and should include people who don't yet have a relationship with Christ – so that they can experience what it means to follow Christ. But, by definition the (capital "C") church are those people who have put their faith in Jesus' death and resurrection to save them from sin.

THE CULTURE

How would you define the Culture?

The Culture: To Love our neighbor.

(Matt. 22:37-39; Gal. 5:14)

- **Specifically:** Those people around us – outside the loving community of the Church - with a particular set of values and beliefs. Even though they most often disagree with our values and beliefs, and even though these people may even be our enemies, we are called to love them as we love ourselves.

THE GOSPEL

How would you define the Gospel?

The Gospel: To Love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength

(Deut. 6:5; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27)

- **Specifically:** The good news of Jesus Christ. That he died in our place, paying the penalty for our sin, was raised from the dead to defeat sin and death and restore the relationship with God each of us was created to have. If we believe this, ask forgiveness for our sin and commit our lives wholeheartedly to obediently following Christ's example, we have eternal life with God and are saved from eternity separated from God in hell. (1 Cor. 15:1-8; Rom. 10:9; many more)

At its heart, Christianity is not a religion, but a mission. It is the realization that something is wrong that causes us to be separated from God. It is God's mission - God doing the work, by the death and resurrection of Jesus, to reconcile us to himself. And, after our reconciliation to God, it is our joining God in that mission to reconcile others to himself.

And these three things: The Gospel, The Culture and The Church, are the three aspects of that mission Jesus calls his followers to join.

QUESTION: In your opinion, how are these three aspects related?

When we fulfill our mission in each of these areas, it looks like this:

- The Gospel enters the culture and transforms people
- Transformed people unite as the body of Christ – the Church
- The Church carries the gospel to the surrounding culture and beyond.

And round and round we go – with people of the culture being transformed by the gospel, built up in the church and sent out to share the gospel. It's an awesome picture when all three work together.

The goal of our discussions this summer is to figure out what this should actually look like in our lives. It is great to have theories and ideals, but it is really difficult to actually start living this way.

So there is no homework or anything like that. It's summer, so I'll let you enjoy the break. But I would love it if each of us used our time this summer to figure out why we should live this way and, moreover, to figure out how to actually live this way.

In other words, I want each of us to begin to view ourselves as missionaries.

QUESTION: what, in your opinion or experience, is a "missionary?"

If tonight is the only night you come, and if you only remember one thing from our discussions this summer, this is it: **when we follow Jesus, missions is not something we do, it is something we are.**

And that is not at all to discourage things like international missions or full-time vocational ministry. Those are great things. But if we are serious about following Jesus, we are missionaries regardless of our career or our location.

Mark Driscoll says it well in his 2004 book, *Radical Reformission*: "We are all on a mission with Jesus every day, and we are either good missionaries or bad ones."

And we must make this mission of pursuing the Gospel, the Culture and the Church a part of our lives now. People don't just magically become missionaries when they go on a trip somewhere – it starts here and now.

A few years back at the Urbana student missions conference, Paul Tokunaga shared a great insight:

"The best missionary later is the best missionary now. The patterns that we establish for ourselves now will likely be our life style patterns when we're thirty, forty, and ninety. If you're a driven student now who only has time for studies, in twenty years you'll probably be a driven business person with ulcers."

So in order to explore this idea of the Gospel, the Culture and the Church, we'll seek to do two things: understand our culture and engage our culture.

I believe that to effectively engage our culture with the truth of the gospel, we must first understand the people of our culture – who they are, what they believe, what they think about the gospel and the church. Then we can explore ways to effectively engage our culture with the truth and the love of Jesus.

QUESTION: What are you thinking so far? Is this something you've thought much about in the past? How does all this hit you?

FOR NEXT WEEK:

Start to look around for examples of interactions between the Gospel, the Culture and the Church. Think of past experiences, check the news, ask people you know – both Christians and non-Christians – what their experiences have been. Next week, we'll share some of these stories and talk about why there's such a need for reform in our mission.