

YAMs

Summer Midweek 2010



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



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

Week Five:

Begin: starting to engage our culture



covenant chapel

BEGIN:

This week we're talking about what it looks like when we, the church, begin to engage the culture with the gospel.

I met with a pastor of a church plant in Midtown a couple years ago and he said something very insightful. Really it is the basis for how we begin to view ourselves as missionaries to our culture. He said there are four essential components that must characterize the way we engage the culture with the gospel:

Awareness

We must always seek to understand our culture. We have to talk to people and get their opinions, not just make broad assumptions. Example: we can't just blindly assume that our culture carries the same perceptions and misperceptions we've talked about last week. Most likely there will be a lot of similarities, but blanket assumptions will get us nowhere.

Vision

Of the four components, this is the one that changes least. Our vision is the big picture of people coming to Christ, beginning to grow in their relationship with Him, and being disciplined toward maturity. We cannot be ashamed to say that plain and simple. It must be our goal as the Church. To lose that vision will make everything else we do self-centered and short-sighted.

Strategy

The strategy is the specific plans and means of sharing the gospel. This one needs to be the most flexible. However, it is most often the one people are most rigid on. Generally speaking, people pick a strategy they like because it worked somewhere at some time. They then hold firm to the strategy; ignoring the first two characteristics - awareness and vision. (Examples: Passing out tracts in Midtown; using PowerPoint slides for sermons in the African bush.)

Courage

Courage almost seems out of place on this list; but next to vision it is the most important. Courage can't be taught – it must come from being empowered by the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit, we must have courage to do what it takes to engage people. Courage will look different in different situations and scenarios, but mission won't happen without it. Biblically, courage must always be motivated by love. We are to be bold and speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

Hopefully the past several weeks have helped us grasp the Vision. So now for the next few weeks of this course we will discuss awareness and strategy – as they really cannot be separated from one another. Awareness of our culture must drive the strategy. That is why strategy must be flexible. As we are continually aware of our culture, we should be continually willing to adjust our strategy to reach people with the Gospel.

Last week I asked you guys to look at some questions about the culture of Southern Kansas City. Let's talk through these and what implications they may have on strategies to engage our culture with the gospel.

Look at this as a big brainstorming session – the bullet points below are the thoughts/opinions of another group from Covenant Chapel who went through this about two years ago. Before you read their ideas, brainstorm your own thoughts. Then compare and consider these ideas as well.

Note: this process is truly how we begin mission in our lives. We must care about people enough to understand their views, understand their objections to the Gospel and to seek out opportunities to speak the truth in love.

- **Where do people spend their time and money?**
Bars | Kids (kids activities) | Homes & home improvement | Clothes/fashion
Physical appearance (gym membership, tanning, etc.) | "toys" (boat, cars, motorcycle) | Working | Shopping | Web surfing
- **What do people read?**
Wall St. Journal | Business books | Oprah | People Magazine | 435 South Magazine | Websites | Magazines (gossip, sports, fashion/self-help)
- **What music do people listen to?**
Broad mix – rap to classical | Suburban gangster – younger, rap music | Mp3s
- **What movies and TV shows to people watch?**
The Office | Lost | News | House M.D. | Sex & the City | Grey's Anatomy
Desperate Housewives | Reality TV | Crime Shows | Epic TV Shows
Christian niche
- **What do people find humorous?**
Political commentary (primarily pro-republican) | Lack of humor? | HBO/SNL
Church | Education system – non-nationals think America is humorous
Sarcasm
- **What do people dream about?**
Owning a bigger home | Having more money – able to retire/take care of themselves | Owning a lake home | Success | Kids being successful
American Dream | Travel/vacations | Have it all | Comfortable living
- **Where do people shop?**
Outdoor high-end malls (Town Center, Zona Rosa, Plaza) | Everywhere
Name brands | Thrift stores | Internet
- **What do people fear?**
Economic problems | Negative things happening to their family | Not making enough money/financially independent and well-off | Anything that hinders their comfort | Losing their job | Loss of what they have | Lack of security
Poor health

- **What cultural experiences do people value?**
Going to the lake | Chief's games | Visiting downtown/midtown – not living there | Study abroad/travel | Plaza
- **What are the most painful experiences people have had?**
Divorces | Cancer/other medical problems | Family death | Financial problems | Job loss | Addictive situations
- **In what ways are people self-righteous?**
I've had success, anyone who doesn't does something wrong | Hypocrisy – I believe the bible, but I don't live it out | "at least I don't....." mentality | My denomination/church does it right – everyone else is wrong | Don't accept help/criticism | Success/dreams | Anybody doing things differently
- **Whom do people trust? Why?**
Pastors – bible-belt cultural Christianity | Republican party – they'll protect their money from taxes more often | People they know | They don't trust a sale – they sniff it out and immediately are turned away | No one – painful experiences | friends
- **What is the religious/spiritual climate of the culture?**
Very acceptable | Many attend church | Few follow Christ | Shared "morality" but not radical, committed Jesus-followers | Independence | Most already exposed to the gospel
- **What do people think about the gospel?**
Good stuff – makes a lot of sense | Not essential/not necessary | Most of it's good, except the part that demands I change my life | Shouldn't cramp my lifestyle | Belief doesn't drive the way I live | Limitations on fun | They don't think about it | Angry, open hostility
- **What sin(s) will the gospel first confront and then heal for these people?**
Laziness | Greed | Self-righteousness | Wasted potential and wasted lives | Hypocrisy | Self-reliance | Pride | Fear | Addictions | Bitterness/anger/hard hearts

SUMMARY:

From considering these questions, what strategies are beginning to form in your mind for how to engage people with the gospel? What might it look like to take this awareness and apply vision, strategy and courage?

Next week: Loving your neighbor...really

As we've considered some of the places, people and issues that the gospel will transform in our culture, we'll continue thinking about what it looks like to live as missionaries by looking at various methods of evangelism. What is a good method to share the gospel? Is it even good to have a method? What is a Biblical and practical approach to sharing the gospel in our culture?