

Ministry Strategies for engaging our culture

Part 1: Be a Caring Community

“Mass-techno-liberal capitalism”

4 key elements of this principality:

Mass- built and operated on a large, highly centralized basis. communications media, transportation, energy and disposal systems.

Techno- technologically complicated, and intensive. Entire societies are markedly dependent on technology for communication, transportation, etc.

Liberal- It is philosophically guided by classical liberalism. It focuses not on community but on the individual, interpreted as a maximizer of self interest. It assumes there is not and cannot be a common substantive good.

Whatever good or goal someone lives for is accordingly a “private” and never a “public” matter.

Capitalism- is intended to regulate the activities or self-interested, liberal individuals by putting them to competition in the free market. Now arrived at the stage of advanced capitalism, markets are themselves massive, technologized and centralized ⁴

Questions:

What can a community be like if it is not defined by caring?

What things define our community?

If we want our fellowship to be defined by caring, where do we start?

What obstacles might we face this year to being a caring community?

“For good and for ill, we live amid a pervasive, infinitely insinuating social, political, and economic ethos. It is something that in biblical terms might be called a principality or power, a vast and captivating structure that both holds our world together and threatens to destroy it...” ¹

The possibility of authentically rich and full life is a resounding advantage the church (and other genuine communities) profoundly holds against mass-techno-liberal capitalism. As John McKnight writes, real and vital communities are based on care and consent. “Care cannot be produced, provided, managed, organized, administered, or commodified. Care is the only thing a system cannot produce. Every institutional effort to replace the real thing is counterfeit” and is inevitably recognized as such. I can never escape the nagging suspicion that my therapist might not give me so much time and attention if I was not paying him. The store clerk smiles not so much because she is glad to see me as because she wants my business... All these are honorable enough endeavors, of course, but not really practices of deep and abiding care. We can care and be cared for only in genuine community.

People who belong to such a community want to belong to it – they cannot imagine worthwhile life without it. Such a caring and consensual community is a place, a collocation of relationships, where “interdependence creates wholistic environments, people of all capacities and fallibilities are incorporated, quick responses are possible, creativity is multiplied rather than channeled, individualized responses are characteristic, care is able to replace [professionalized] service,” and active citizenship rather than passive clienthood is made possible. ²

The predominant world system would indeed have us entirely dependent on its centralized services and products. It would have us imagine that the only politics that matter and can make a difference are national or international politics. It is powerful, awesome powerful, but it cannot provide care and it does not elicit consent.

It is through the genuine community of church that Christians can tell their stories, celebrate their life and their hope, and acknowledge their tragedies. ³

- 1) Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society* (InterVarsity Press, USA, 1996), pp 189
- 2) John McKnight, *The Careless Society* (New York: BasicBooks, 1995) p 167
- 3) Clapp, *A Peculiar People*, pp 197-198
- 4) Clapp, *A Peculiar People*, pp 189-190

Ministry Strategies for engaging our culture

Part 2: Be a Witnessing Community

Questions:

What does it mean to be a “witness”? Define it as a legal term. What does a witness do?

What does God say about himself? What responsibility does he place on his own shoulders?

Isaiah 43: 8-13

8 Bring forth the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears! **9** Let all the nations gather together, and let the peoples assemble. Who among them declared this, and foretold to us the former things? Let them bring their witnesses to justify them, and let them hear and say, "It is true." **10** You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. **11** I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior. **12** I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses, says the Lord. **13** I am God, and also henceforth I am He; there is no one who can deliver from my hand; I work and who can hinder it?

WORKSHEET:

Let's make a list of evangelistic methods which you might have used/been trained in/heard about:

Things we likely can use as descriptions for those things:

- Methods
- Formulas
- Packages
- Presentations
- Entertaining events
- Techniques
- Arguments
- Knowing the right answers

What do all those things have in common?

1 A foundational belief that **the responsibility to be successful in evangelism is _____.**

<p>Our responsibility:</p> <p>Know, believe, understand that God is God, bear witness to what we have seen about God.</p>	<p>God's responsibility:</p> <p>Prove he is God, sovereign Basically, everything else.</p>
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3 An underlying value that **the _____ of conversion justifies the _____ of how we get someone there.**

We will talk more specifically about the role of Apologetics in conversion and discipleship in a few weeks.

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Part 2: Be a Witnessing Community

Let's look at the second passage.

John 15: 1-8, 26-27, 2: 7-11

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. **2** He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. **3** You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. **4** Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. **5** I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. **6** Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. **7** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

26 "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. **27** You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. **8** And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: **9** about sin, because they do not believe in me; **10** about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; **11** about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

What does this mean for God? What does he promise?

He will act

The burden of proving anyone wrong is on God's shoulders!

The burden of proving God's existence is on God's shoulders!

Implications of this for our Witness:

Our responsibility:

Step 1: Abide in him.

Step 2: Be witnesses. Talk about what we see and hear.

Step 3: Watch out for what God is doing!

How do you feel hearing that this is our role as Christians?

What does this free us of?

Let's pray together that God would honor these promises.

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Questions:

What is similar to Isaiah in John's writing?

Look at the scene in 16: 7-11?
Who is on trial?

Defendant?
Judge?
Prosecutor?
Witness?

Why is it an advantage that Jesus go away?

Apologetics: A defense of the faith.

Ministry Strategies for engaging our culture Part 3: Letting the Word speak for itself

Last week: Who's responsible for "converting" non-Christians?
This week. Let's get more into Apologetics.

What is to be our Apologetic?

Typically, what is that like?

_____ answers to _____ questions.

The problem ???

The typical responses flunk the tests of most non Christians. They are neither satisfactory nor adequate at expressing the heart of God about such things.

The answers are no longer convincing.

Rational answers only go so far with people who are non-rational.

Typical answers are either too philosophical, or they don't really deal with the issue at hand.

Let's talk about one of them. Here are a few possibilities.

The problem of evil. If God is a loving God, why do bad things happen?

What about other religions. Are non-Christians going to hell?

What about gays or lesbians?

What about all the denominations? Can't they all get along?

What about the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition. Look at all the bad things Christians have done.

What might a satisfying Christian response to these issues be?

An additional concern we will talk about next week, is the if we are honest with ourselves, we often have these same questions.

How do you feel having questions like these and being a Christian? How do you think Jesus feels about that?

What is required of us if we are to pursue this?

Humility/servanthood

Giving up our power/giving up our right to be right

Looking out for others

Remember

John 16: 8b-11

And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: **9** about sin, because they do not believe in me; **10** about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; **11** about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

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Ministry Strategies for engaging our culture Part 4: Asking the right questions at the right time

Discipleship and Conversion

“**Christian**” means “little Christ”

Discipleship: the process of becoming more Christ-like as a follower of Jesus

Discipleship issues: issues which must be dealt with in order to become more Christ-like

Conversion: the event or process of becoming a follower of Jesus

Conversion issues: issues which must be dealt with before a person becomes a follower of Jesus

Let’s go back to something I had said previously—

If we are honest with ourselves, we often have these same questions our non-Christian friends have.

WORKSHEET SECTION:

Let’s talk about that a bit. How many of you have found satisfying answers to those questions we talked about last week? What other questions do you wonder about that are hard to figure out?

Okay, so if you are a Christian and you have those questions, are they critical ones to someone’s Conversion Process?

If “no”, that makes them Discipleship Issues. So why do we feel like we need to make non-Christians grapple with them *before* they become Christians? And why do we feel like we need to make non-Christians find satisfying answers to them *before* they become Christians?

What are some **True Conversion Issues**? What were some for you? Questions that you needed answers to before you were able to make a decision to become a Christian.

Let me say this:

The MOST appropriate time for Apologetics questions is AFTER they are a Christian. Why?

So... **If we are to be concerned with asking the right questions at the right time, what questions are okay to ask before someone’s conversion?**

The ones that _____ ask _____.

The ones that _____ have _____.

Why?

Apologetics: A defense of the faith.

Ministry Strategies for engaging our culture Part 4: Asking the right questions at the right time

The ones that THEY ask YOU.
The ones that YOU have YOURSELF.

Let's talk about the "Why" behind those two statements.

3 Things we need to understand and move towards.

Listening: A wise person once said that more than *90% of evangelism is listening to people*. If we listen and ask questions, others will feel far more cared for and valued, and be more likely to listen to us. Respect what they think and how they feel.

Pacing: God knows the speed at which all of us are journeying in our spiritual walks. Who are we to pressure someone and push them more than God is? If we wish to respect God and the other person, Pacing is necessary. *We are not in a sprint and need to rush God's timing*. And non-Christians need to feel OK with the pace at which they are moving in their spiritual journeys.

Space: We need to respect their privacy and give them space in which to process, ask questions by themselves, and ask their questions to God. And we need to provide space within our fellowship, in events such as bible studies and large group where those who are not Christians can be welcomed and a part of our community. They need to feel welcomed and able to ask their question. *They need the space to be accepted for who they are* often *before* they are able to enter into meaningful discussion with Christians.

Let's split up into 2 groups. Let's discuss Pacing and Space.
How can we as a fellowship, create Space?
How can we as a fellowship, allow for Pacing?

How does creating Pacing, Space and Listening effect our witness within our friendships?

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Part 5: Handling “Absolute Truth”

Handling “Absolute Truth” in a culture that denies “absolutes”

Traditional Strategy for *moving someone through the Conversion Process*.

- 1 Confront with apologetics questions, including the Absolute Truth of the gospel.
- 2 Push for a Response to the Gospels' Absolute Truth for everyone.
- 3 The Crossroads: Either accept or reject the Gospel based upon how they respond to the notion of Absolute Truth..

What is the *strategy* behind this?

Deal with traditional Christian Beliefs, such as Absolute Truth, before conversion.

The unfortunate potential result: Someone could conceivably decide *Jesus is not for them*, not because they disagree with Jesus or don't want a relationship with Him, but because they are prematurely asked to respond to a non-critical issue of whether they believe Jesus is True for everyone.

A Proposed Strategy for avoiding this could be what we have been talking about :

Deal with traditional Christian Beliefs, such as Absolute Truth, after conversion, as God seems to be bringing it up in their lives.

How this might look:

- 1 Propose Jesus' as true for them.
- 2 Let them respond to Jesus' call to them.
- 3 Decision: accept or reject Jesus based on their response to Jesus.

Later, as a Discipleship issue:

Deal with the question of whether belief in Jesus must be true for everyone later.

The potential result: Someone would be free to decide whether to follow Jesus as the core issue, then decide for themselves as they listen to the Spirit, what they think about other non-critical issues.

Questions:

Let's talk about this.

How might a strategy like this effect how we do evangelism?

How does it benefit witnessing within our friendships?

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Part 6a: Leadership and Power

Questions:

How does Jesus treat children?

How does Jesus seem to feel about their mistreatment?

How does God say he will respond if the Israelites mistreat foreigners?

How does God expect the Israelites to treat others?

Who specifically is named?

What is similar about the categories of people who are named in all these passages?

Let's talk first about authority issues/questions. What questions do you have that are related to authority use/abuse or the use of power? What questions do your friends have?

Mark 9:30-42

30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; **31** for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." **32** But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him. **33** Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" **34** But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. **35** He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." **36** Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, **37** "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me." **38** John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." **39** But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. **40** Whoever is not against us is for us. **41** For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward. **42** "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea.

Mark 10: 13-16

13 People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. **14** But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. **15** Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." **16** And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Exodus 22: 20-27

20 Whoever sacrifices to any god, other than the Lord alone, shall be devoted to destruction. **21** You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. **22** You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. **23** If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry; **24** my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children orphans. **25** If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them. **26** If you take your neighbor's cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down; **27** for it may be your neighbor's only clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that person sleep? And if your neighbor cries out to me, I will listen, for I am compassionate.

Zechariah 7: 4-10

4 Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me: **5** Say to all the people of the land and the priests...
... **8** The word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying: **9** Thus says the Lord of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; **10** do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.

Leviticus 19: 13-34 (14-15, 33-34)

30 You shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord. **31** Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God. **32** You shall rise before the aged, and defer to the old; and you shall fear your God: I am the Lord. **33** When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. **34** The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

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Ministry Strategies for engaging our culture

Part 6a: Leadership and Power

Why does God get so bent out of shape?

category	how to treat them	why	consequences
children	Put them first, take them in arms, blesses		that millstone is better, Jesus gets indignant
man casting out demons	leave him alone	On our side	that millstone is better
orphans	don't oppress, don't abuse		God hears, wrath burns, will kill you, make your family widows and orphans
widows	don't oppress, don't abuse		God hears, wrath burns, will kill you, make your family widows and orphans
resident aliens	don't oppress, as a citizen, love them as yourself	You were aliens in Egypt	God hears, wrath burns, will kill you, make your family widows and orphans
aged/old	rise before them, defer to them		
poor	don't charge interest, don't oppress	God calls them "my people"	God will listen if they cry out
neighbor	give back what you take evenly	God will hear their cries, it may be all they have	God will listen if they cry out
one another	don't devise evil in your hearts		

Think about your (or your friends) reactions to the abuse allegations in the Roman Catholic Church.

What are some implications of this on our roles as leaders in the fellowship?

How did the process of Jesus going to and dying on the Cross show how Jesus used his power?

So, if God takes abuse of power seriously, what does that mean for us?

How do we know how or when to use authority?

Zech 7:9 Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another

Mark 9: 37 Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me

Mark 9:40 Whoever is not against us is for us

Leviticus 19:34 Treat the alien as a citizen, Love the alien as yourself

In short: Use power to serve others, not ourselves.

A good safeguard: Be accountable to those you lead, not just those who lead you.

How we use power is a key to our faith being attractive to others. We have a tremendous opportunity to show that we actually can use power to serve others.

This is precisely why Leaders being Sponsors, Shepherds and Coaches are critical in accurately communicating the gospel in a culture with huge authority issues.

Ministry Strategies for engaging our culture

Part 6b: Leadership and Power

Last week we looked at “What NOT to do.”

This week, we will look at “What to do.”

One of the most central speeches Jesus gave on how to live our lives as Christians.

It’s not about knowing more or about knowing or believing the right things. It’s about being “better” people. It’s not about being right. It’s about “living right”. And following in Jesus’ footsteps.

Matthew 4:18-25

18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen.

19 And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.”

20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. **21** As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. **22** Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. **24** So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. **25** And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

Matthew 5: 1-16

1 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. **2** Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **4** “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. **5** “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. **6** “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. **7** “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. **8** “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. **9** “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. **10** “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11** “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. **15** No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Questions:

When is this happening?

What is Jesus calling them to?

What does Jesus want for his followers?

What is this picture of following Jesus like?

Let’s talk about these. What is hard about them? Why would anyone live like this?

What is Jesus thinking? Why does he call his disciples to follow Him this way?

Why? What’s at stake?

This is how you become a fisher of men. How you become Salt, Light, etc.

How we are to let our light shine is by living out vv 3-12.

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Ministry Strategies for engaging our culture

Part 7: Be the Minority

Questions:

How does the person writing this song feel about being a minority?

What are the advantages of deciding to reject aspects of majority culture?

What do you like/dislike about being in the majority?

Who do you think churches or Christians you know would rather be? As the minority or majority?

Questions:

What does it mean to be subversive?

Where do these sanctified subversives get the ability to do what they do?

How do you feel about the idea of something like this?

Minority by Green Day

i want to be the minority,
i don't need your authority,
down with the moral majority,
cause i want to be the minority.

i pledge allegiance to the underworld,
one nation under dog there of which i stand alone,
a face in the crowd unsung against them all,
without a doubt,
singled out,
the only way i know.

i want to be the minority,
i don't need your authority,
down with the moral majority,
cause i want to be the minority.

stepped out of the line,
like a sheep runs from the herd,
marching out of time,
to my own beat now,
the only way i know.

one light, one mind,
flashing in the dark,
blinded by the silence of a thousand broken hearts,
for crying out loud she screams out 2 me ,
a free for all,
F*** them all
you are your own sight.

i want to be the minority,
i don't need your authority,
down with the moral majority,
cause i wanna be the minority.

one light, one mind,
flashing in the dark,
blinded by the silence of a thousand broken hearts,
for crying out loud she screams out 2 me ,
a free for all,
F*** them all
you are your own sight.

i want to be the minority,
i don't need your authority,
down with the moral majority,
cause i wanna be the minority

i want to be the minority. repeat 3 times

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Sanctified Subversion

... it's [the Bible's] pages explode with examples of sanctified subversion. From a position of slavery and imprisonment, Joseph redirects the Egyptian empire. Esther the lowly concubine works behind the scenes on behalf of her subjugated people. Nathan, calling King David to account for grievous crimes, resorts to the indirect and plebeian tactic of the parable to slip beneath the king's superior defenses and convict him with his own words. The entire book of Daniel can be fairly and profitably read as a case study in sanctified subversion... ..In the light of such sanctified subversion, Jesus' whole life, work and death take on new meaning... ..A number of Jesus' parables and other sayings hint at a subversive plebeian mentality and spirit, maybe nowhere so concisely as Matthew 10:16. ¹

The original Christians, in short, were about creating and sustaining a unique culture — a way of life that would shape character in the image of their God. And they were determined to be a culture, a quite public and political culture, even if it killed them and their children. ²

- 1) Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society* (InterVarsity Press, USA, 1996), pp 202-203
- 2) Clapp, *A Peculiar People*, p 82