

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

...IN COMMUNITY?

EVANGELISM | COMMUNITY | CHURCH COMMUNITY

The chief aim of the church in this category: CREATE ENTHUSIASM FOR INVITING THE NEIGHBORHOOD. Church people are encouraged to get their neighbors on the campus where they can experience God and his community. Church people interacting with their nonbelieving friends and neighbors spend a great deal of time determining which events at the church best suit the specific needs of the neighbor. As such, the best possible expansion of the church is to create other, more accessible versions of the main campus so more people can be invited.

Evangelism is measured by the conversion statement, "I believe". People are encouraged to invite nonbelieving friends and family to a service specifically catered to accomplish that end. Relationships are deemed "redemptive" if their is a constant trajectory of moving someone toward an "I believe" moment.

... IN THE CULTURE?

The church's role is to instruct people how to safely interact with the surrounding culture. Often, this is accomplished by providing a subculture, sanitized in Christian language and symbols. The intent, then is not to transform the culture but to make it safer for Christian consumption.

Examples: Halloween becomes Harvest, RockBand becomes PraiseBand, World of Warcraft becomes Left Behind, Altoids become Testamints

...IN WORSHIP?

The role of the Christian in worship is the enthusiastic response to God in singing and prayer. Often, worship can be evaluated by the "buzz" or "energy" in a room in which people sang, raised their hands, or clapped. Popular perception regarding worship is that it is the scheduled time between the welcome and the teaching in a given service. Most often worshipers are intended not to distract from the performance of bands and stage leaders.

...IN GLOBAL OUTREACH?

The Gospel is the message of Jesus' free gift of going to heaven when you die. The actions of justice and service lend credibility to the person carrying that message. The perceived principle aim is often to assist people in making a decision to prayer a sinners prayer. Works of justice make the spoken gospel message real. Local ministries are trained and encourage to address the needs of the people so they can more effectively tell the Gospel.

...IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH?

A spiritually mature person is one who: is an active/regular attender of church services, tithes regularly, is in a small group, serves in the church or in the community, shares their faith with their friends and neighbors, prays, eschews all activity and association deemed unacceptable in Christian social circles, and has at least five mornings of the week started by time in God's Word.

The believer is expected to live in gratitude for the heaven-bound life they will eventually receive when they die. The believer is guaranteed, by virtue of the "sinners prayer", a trip to heaven. The real benefit of belonging to God is achieved upon the death of the believer.

There is a huge emphasis on the Truth(s) of God and less emphasis on the experience of the individual and his or her experience/interaction with God. Classes and seminars detail the full explanation of the accurate picture of God.

...IN RELATIONSHIP WITH CREATION?

Because the likely end of the world is a fiery one in which it is mainly destroyed, the earth isn't essential. The physical world, while occasionally beautiful, is so incomparable to the beauty of the life to come that it isn't necessary to sustain. Creation gives us insight into a creator, but working to protect it is likely a distraction from the true beauty of knowing Jesus.

...IN LEADERSHIP?

What constitutes healthy ministry and healthy leaders?

A healthy ministry is one that achieves its mission objectives effectively and in a timely manner. A pastor is deemed healthy if he or she has "empowered others to accomplish the work of the ministry." The leader is motivated to "get the most out of his or her people" to increase expansion and further effectiveness.

Most often, healthiest leaders are the ones with the most "I believes".

"I believe..."

You might die today. You have a sin issue. You should make Jesus your personal savior so that you can go to heaven when you die.

key scripture: Rom. 8:1
John 3:16

...IN LEADERSHIP?

What constitutes healthy ministry and healthy leaders?

Healthy leaders are those who follow Jesus humbly and who are intent on seeing Jesus' kingdom lived out in the present through the Church. Leadership requires a certain level of comfort with immeasurable and unquantifiable kingdom expansion. Metrics, as such, are not the key indicators of a healthy ministry or a leader. How closely a leader and his/her followers walk with Jesus is a much better indicator of health. Any success is a direct result of God's miraculous intervention and faithful adherence of the leader to follow. Measuring the effectiveness of a leader requires an active relationship. A paper summary alone will not suffice.

The leadership of the church ought to reflect both the vision and scope of the mission itself: in gender, in race, and in wealth.

...IN COMMUNITY?

EVANGELISM | COMMUNITY | CHURCH COMMUNITY

My life is the life of the church enfolded in the life of the community.

Evangelism is not the exercise of sharing the propositions of my faith, rather it is the sharing of my whole life of faith with my neighbor. Becoming an "inviter" has far more to do with inviting others into my life and has less to do with getting people to experience the church campus. The Gospel, thusly, is on display in the context of relationships (vs. in the context of a weekend service) and believers who are determined to be and act neighborly.

... IN THE CULTURE?

The church's responsibility is to understand the ways in which the surrounding culture is being created, transmitted, and consumed. The aim of the church is to significantly impact all areas of the culture either by direct or indirect influence. Particularly critical is the reciprocity between technology and culture. Culture is shaped by emerging technology and technology is shaped by emerging culture. As such, the church and its people ought to know how to interact with an increasingly mobile community. What are the pitfalls facing mobile people? What are the benefits? How does a Gospel of transformation sound to someone always on the move? The felt need of people seemed to formerly revolve around a need for forgiveness. Now, more and more people are feeling a lack of connection and loneliness. How do technology, culture, and the Gospel interact to address this experience?

...IN RELATIONSHIP WITH CREATION?

"When we are face-to-face with our creator, I believe his question for us will not be, 'How was the earth made?', but rather, 'What did you do with it?'" - Richard Cizik

When Christians take care of their cars it is called *stewardship*. When Christians care for the earth they are called a lost liberal. The principle attitude is that the earth, like all things is a gift from God. To take care of it honors God. Consider: What if free drinks/coffee were offered to staff so long as they brought their own cup?

...IN WORSHIP?

The role of the Christian in worship is the active participation in the life of being and becoming a worshiper. The work of worship is the whole-life response of a person to God's goodness, His mystery, His nearness, His distance, His wrath, His grace, Him. The picture of worship has less to do with the observer of performances and far more to do with the participation of following and responding to Jesus.

...IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH?

☐Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."
☐John 15:5

Maturity is *not* the spiritual disciplines. Maturity is *not* the fruit. Fruit is the evidence of our connection to the vine. Spiritual maturity is a descriptor of intimacy with Jesus. And intimacy and closeness cannot be measured by attendance or practices. The church's role in spiritual growth is to help people understand how to open themselves and their lives to greater intimacy with Christ – not merely replacing old activities with new ones.

Small groups and various curricula constitute only one portion of spiritual growth. Critical to growth is the role of the spiritual mentor in helping people to identify where and how God is speaking, moving, and interacting with them.

...IN GLOBAL OUTREACH?

The words and language of the gospel are inexorably linked to the actions and the fulfillment of God's justice in the world. Thus, the "Good News" about Jesus and his rescuing act upon the cross for all humanity are always and necessarily coupled with the "comfort for the brokenhearted", "captives being released", and "prisoners being freed".

Critical to the expansion of the Gospel in the world is a spirit of dedication to God's vision for the Church and an openness and humility to what God is leading our church and it's people to do in the world. Consider a 20% margin for exploration of new territory and God's leading in this endeavor.

"I will follow..."

Jesus initiated God's reigning kingdom in the world. Caesar and all other powers no longer rule. Eternal life is found living in the kingdom of God (here and in the life to come). The rule of Heaven is being brought to bear on the world in and through the church.

key scripture: Mark 1:15-16;
Luke 4:14-30/Isaiah 61