

**MEET
JESUS**

Nurturing an Evangelistic Culture

A short article with reflection questions to help you consider how to encourage more evangelism in your ministry.

Evangelism Training Resource

Introduction

Culture is something that some sociologists like to debate in lengthy PHD's. But really, *culture* is just a fancy way of describing the norms and values of a group. So, if a family's tradition is to eat roast turkey every Christmas eve, then that's their *culture*. Or if a neighbourhood believes that exercise is really important, they might install a bike path, set up a bike repair station and cheer each other as they cycle past each other on the streets. You'd then say that cycling is part of the *culture* of that community. But if an entrepreneur wants to change a culture from coffee drinkers to tea drinkers, they'll need to do more than just open a tea shop! First, they need to change the thoughts and habits of the people.

"Management guru, Peter Drucker, famously observes¹ that the culture of an organisation — that is, the beliefs or values held by the majority in that organisation — will thwart any attempt to implement a strategy if it is not compatible with it."² So, you can run all the *Introducing God* courses that you want, but if no one in your church cares about evangelism, it's going to flop. Structures are good, but they're short term. Culture is powerful, it's long-term behavioural change from the heart.

We're going to spend the next few hours (the total length is up to you) evaluating the current state of your evangelistic culture, and then consider ways of increasing the evangelistic zeal of your Christian community.

You could do this as a Staff Team, as a Congregation, or by yourself as a Ministry Leader.

As you begin, spend time praying that the Lord will transform all our hearts (of believers and unbelievers) that the whole world might be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the seas (Isaiah 11:9).

¹ There is debate as to whether this is really a quote from Peter Drucker! See <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2017/05/23/culture-eats/>

² <https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/culture-eats-strategy-breakfast/>

Where: Set a vision

Perhaps you've never thought intentionally about where evangelism fits into your Christian community. Perhaps others have tried but feel frustrated that no one's on board.

Wherever you're at, set aside all pessimism, realism and logistics for the moment, and try to think idealistically – What would be the model culture for evangelism in your context? *You may like to draw a picture or mind map.*

What do you think is hindering this goal at the moment?

How: One way to nurture an evangelistic culture

Depending on what obstacles you've identified, you may want to spend time problem solving those. But you may want to consider the power of culture. As Richard Chin says, *"Plans fail because culture eats strategy for breakfast! However, a thoughtful person will immediately recognise that it takes a strategy to create a culture! There can be a considered synergy between strategy and culture. And by God's common grace, this can be helpful for ministry."*

Read the rest of his article, before pondering the questions on the next page.

God's Plans and Strategy

Does God have plans? Yes, he does! His plans revolve around Jesus, his beloved Son. He is besotted with his only begotten Son.

His design, which he set forth in Christ for the fullness of time, is "to unite all things in him, things in heaven and on earth" ([Eph 1:10](#)). Jesus is to be "the firstborn among many brothers" ([Rom 8:29](#)). He is the head of the body, the church ([Col 1:18](#)). Jesus is to be the pulsating centre of the Universe where "every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" ([Phil 2:10-11](#)).

What, then, is God's infallible strategy to accomplish his plan? It is the **prayerful proclamation of Jesus Christ to all the nations through suffering**.

Paul puts it this way: *"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me"*. ([Col 1:28-29](#))

Please note that the "everyone" in v28 occurs three times. And it refers to everyone in this world. In a sense, this is Paul's "great commission". He has a global horizon because of the gospel.

Notice the other elements of this strategy:

1. Proclaiming Christ: This is the essence of mission. This is what we pray our brothers and sisters will do in "gospel poor" parts of the world – in public and in private, in the marketplace, in the public square, in the writing of letters, or even before governors, and courts! We proclaim Christ!

2. Warning: Proclaiming Christ means "warning everyone" about the truth of Christ. Truth matters—even when it's unpopular; even when it brings hostility.

3. Teaching: Proclaiming Christ involves "teaching everyone with all wisdom." That means talking about Christ himself — in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ([Col 2:3](#)) — and it also

means being wise in the way we proclaim Christ to different languages and cultures.

4. Purpose: Proclaiming this Jesus has a purpose – to "present everyone mature in Christ." This will mean walking in Christ as their Lord, rooted, and built up in him, established in the faith (the gospel!), and abounding in thanksgiving. ([Col 2:6-7](#)).

5. Struggling: Paul "struggles" to proclaim Christ (even from a prison cell!) and he does with Christ's energy. This suffering is not redemptive like Christ's, but it is—as John Stott so eloquently put it—"an indispensable link in the chain of their salvation".^[2]

So here is God's infallible strategy to reach the nations. It is the prayerful proclamation of Jesus Christ to all the nations through suffering.

Growing a Culture that Serves God's Strategy

Here's a corny (but memorable!) acronym to create culture: MAPSs

1. Modelling Gospel Flexibility

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." ([1 Cor 10:31—11:1](#))

As Paul seeks "the salvation of many" ([1Cor 10:33](#)), he *models* a ministry lifestyle of gospel flexibility without ever compromising the gospel itself. Paul commands us to imitate him.

Are you doing that? Is it reflected in your own prayers, and proclamation? Is it modelled in your hospitality? ^[3] If you are not modelling such behaviour, how can we expect others to do so?

2. Articulating right belief

Paul gets people on board by continually reminding them of the glory of God's plan and the strategy for its fulfilment. He changes the cultural appetites of churches by articulating and rearticulating the purpose behind the strategy!

Fruitful gospel ministries constantly articulate their purpose:

- Before every 9 Marks interview, we hear someone say: *"9 Marks is a ministry dedicated to equipping church leaders with a biblical vision and practical resources for displaying God's glory to the nations through healthy churches"*.
- Over at the Desiring God website, we keep being reminded that: *"God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him."*
- TGC US begins its podcasts by stating its purpose to *"renew the contemporary church in the ancient gospel of Jesus Christ."*

How do we go when it comes to articulating the foundational aspects of God's plan and strategy? Does it come through in our prayers? In the talks we give? The newsletters we produce? Articulated Vision leaks. It needs to be regularly topped up.

3. Prayer

Hopefully, this is a no brainer. But, given the previous point, Can I gently ask if your prayers are aligned with God's strategy in private and in public? Do they reflect God's strategy?

Do they even align with your own mission, values, and vision as understood by everyone in your ministry?

We are people utterly dependent upon God. Do our prayers reflect that?

4. Systems

The systems—or organisational structures—produce their own cultural effect. The key is to understand the purpose of systems and set them up thoughtfully so that they serve God's plan and strategy.

For example, in [Acts 6](#), the apostles had to organise a "system" to ensure that the daily distribution of food to all the widows was fair, without compromising their time to preach the Word. So they prayerfully appointed seven men to help them. Similarly, Moses prayerfully recruited seventy elders to help him bear the burden of caring for Israel ([Numbers 11](#)).

If you find a church that has a welcoming culture, chances are that somebody in that church thoughtfully organised a system to help facilitate that culture. I know one church where teams are organised to meet newcomers at the car park and walk them into the church building, introduce them to members, and ensure they spend at least the first

third of their time after the service with them. Small wonder visitors feel welcomed!

What systems are in place to ensure that your ministry is praying for global mission; for those suffering; for unreached people groups? Are there patterns that could be set up in Bible study groups,[\[4\]](#) or whole-church meetings?

Have you thought about 'systems' that encourage the proclamation of Christ in your own ministry? Are there courses that could be set up? Are your members being trained in how to share the gospel?

To grow a culture that serves God's strategy, your system should also include stories, and (s)elebration!

5. Stories

In [Joshua 4](#), Israel is told to gather 12 stones from the Jordan River and set them up as a reminder of what God did to keep his promises. In other words, they were to *retell the story* of how God kept his promises to get them into the Promised Land.

Memory shapes us, giving us a framework to interpret our present and also to move forward towards our future.[\[5\]](#) As one commentator put it: *"A community without memory is caught on a cultural and historical island, surrounded by various currents, but lacking the ability to break out of the present and truly approach its future."* [\[6\]](#)

Stories helpfully embody a culture and its underlying truths.

So do you tell stories regularly that align with God's strategy? Do people in your church or group hear stories about people coming to Christ? Are there testimonies? Stories of prayer and prayers answered? Is there a culture of asking people how they became Christians? Are there stories to remind those you serve that suffering is the norm for God's people?

6. (S)elebrate

Who can forget Israel celebrating in song after they crossed the Red Sea? ([Ex 15](#)). How can we not rejoice (with heaven!) when the lost are found? ([Lk 15:1-10](#))

How do you foster a culture of celebration in your church? How do you celebrate when people turn to Christ? Have you thought of ways to celebrate what's happening with the gospel throughout the world? Is praising God for his plan and strategy an important part of your ministry?

Conclusion

Culture can eat Strategy for breakfast. But here is a possible tactic to create a culture that serves God's infallible strategy. Modelling, Articulating, Praying, and Systems that include stories, and (s)elebration.

May a culture aligning with God's strategy be enjoyed with breakfast, lunch and dinner for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Reflection Questions

Modelling

- Are your leaders modelling personal evangelism?
- Are they praying for unbelievers?
- Are they displaying gospel generous hospitality that welcomes newcomers?

Articulating

- Look over the calendar for the year. What events provide opportunity to major on the Lordship of Jesus and God's desire to glorify him?
- Look over the sermons preached in the last month. Circle the moments where Christ's Kingship is mentioned and hearts are encouraged to delight in his glory? (If you're not the preacher, look over your sermon notes or begin counting how often this is mentioned each week).
- Is God's glorious plan mentioned regularly in your group's...
 - Bible Studies
 - Songs
 - Training programs

Prayer

- What does your group pray for publicly and privately (eg. in Small Groups)?
- How could you regularly remind your members to pray for the proclamation of Jesus?

Systems

- What systems are in place to ensure that your ministry is praying for global mission; for those suffering; for unreached people groups?

- Are there patterns that could be set up in Bible study groups, or whole-church meetings?
- Have you thought about 'systems' that encourage the proclamation of Christ in your own ministry? Are there courses that could be set up? Are your members being trained in how to share the gospel?

Stories

- Where and how can you share stories of evangelism?

Celebrate

- Where and how can you celebrate God's saving work in your midst?
- What do you think are the most appealing things about Jesus?

Pray

Pray that the Lord will bless your group with hearts that delight in God's glory seen in the face of Jesus Christ, and naturally overflow with words of adoration and praise to all those around them.

Other resources

Read how one Church navigated change well to increase their evangelistic culture.

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/evangelism-culture-change/>