

MC Leader's Training: *Everyday Gospel Rhythms*

2.16.09

The Attractional-Missional Church

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your souls. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

1 Peter 2:11-12

What are we attracting people with and for?

Presently, we find ourselves having a polemical debate around Attractional vs. Missional Church, as mutually exclusive emphases. The issue really isn't about whether we are for or against attraction. The issue regards the source and means of the attraction.

Who or what are we attracting people with and to?

Is the gospel attraction that we are displaying for people an event or the gospel people?

And for what purpose are they being drawn? To remain in the place they came or to leave the place equipped and sent, prepared for ministry and mission?

The people of God have always been called to be a display people for God's Glory AND a sent people to the nations...

Where do we see both Attractional and Missional throughout The Story of God?

In what ways were the people of God called to display the Glory of God?

The People of God were supposed to be a display people for the nations in the everyday stuff of life so that the nations might see and experience the goodness and glory of God and be draw to Him. The attraction was never merely an event, but the glory of God being displayed in the everyday life of God's people.

Church is not an event. It's a Community.

Mission is not an event. It's a Lifestyle.

We are called to live ordinary life with Gospel Intentionality.

Tim Chester

The forms and activities that the Church equips for and leads her people into must be the stuff of everyday life or the Church will merely be events and programs we attend as we fit them in and around the rest of life. This often leads to a *de-sacredization* of the majority of life, robbing our people of living the Gospel out in the everyday, OR to a life pack with "church" programs pulling people out of the missionary context.

Every believer is called to full-time paid ministry – God just chooses to route our paychecks through different sources.

The Normative Life

We are called and sent to BE the Church on mission for God's glory ALL the time whenever we gather, wherever we go and in whatever we do – every part of life is supposed to be dedicated to the ministry and mission of the gospel¹.

To walk in line with the gospel means that the truth of the gospel gets worked out in the stuff of everyday life – through everyday activities. Although it may seem strange to a world that is perishing, it should not seem strange or abnormal for us to live our lives with gospel intentionality on gospel mission because of our gospel identity.

Consider the Elder and Deacon Requirements...

These are not some high and lofty ideals, but rather what we would hope for everyone who is leading a home and growing in the gospel. It's the stuff of the everyday life.

How would the people in your Missional Community define full time ministry?

In what ways are you demonstrating that ministry is done in the everyday stuff of life?

How are your people living out the mission of God in the everyday?

A Wholistic Approach to Ministry

In order to lead our people to see all of life as ministry and mission we must equip them to live out the gospel in everyday activities – everyday rhythms.

We have found some transferable patterns or rhythms of life that we see throughout The Story of God and in every culture in every part of the world². Through each of these rhythms people have the opportunity to walk by faith – *walking in line with the truth of the Gospel*³ – or walk in fear or prideful rebellion to God – *walking in unbelief*.

When we come to understand and believe the Gospel we realize that we are saved by faith not works AND we are *being* saved by faith not works. We know that the *righteous live by faith*⁴ and every moment is pregnant with the opportunity to walk by faith and therefore in line with the truth of the Gospel. Training up ourselves and others to walk in line with the truth of the Gospel is really all about learning to *walk by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave up his life for us*⁵ in every part of life.

These everyday rhythms that we have identified can be easily observed in the very beginning of The Story before the Fall of Man and through The Story we can see how they can be lived out in faith or in fear or prideful rebellion...

¹ 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17

² We believe we are called to equip people for Gospel Mission in such a way that it can be done in any context in the world. That is why we have not merely adopted a model of ministry but Gospel Rhythms of life that are lived out in every context in the world.

³ Galatians 2:14

⁴ Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11

⁵ Galatians 2:20

What everyday rhythms of life do you observe in the Garden including the Fall of Man that are also present in every culture in the world?

The Everyday Rhythms

STORY-FORMED... We know and submit our lives to the Story of God while also becoming familiar with each others' stories and the stories of our culture.

God has been unfolding his Story since before time began. We believe we are participants in the Story and our only hope for redemption and restoration from our fear and prideful rebellion is when by faith we submit our lives to the overarching Story of God. Therefore, we regularly reacquaint with and submit ourselves to The Story by interacting with God's Word. We look for ways and times to tell the Story often. We also take time to listen to others stories and lead them to submit their lives to God's Story⁶

Every person on the planet is living their life inside of and in light of a larger story shaped by the country they live in, the cultures surrounding them, the family they were raised in, the worldview they believe... Until they understand all of this in light of the Redemptive Story of God, they will give themselves to lesser stories that do not work.

**Where do we see this rhythm in the Garden and Fall of Man?
How could they have lived by faith and how did they NOT live by faith?
What does 'walking in line with the truth of the Gospel Story' produce?**

The Story...

We are a story-formed people who are living our lives based upon and within a story. All of our beliefs, identity and actions are all connected to the dominant story. This is why we need to know it and we are to talk about it when we sit, stand, walk along the way, eat, lie down, etc...⁷

My Story...

I need to continue to grow in the gospel of grace and truth. I need to be self-aware and let the Spirit and the Word show me where my life past and present is not in line with the gospel story.

Our Stories...

We need to get to know each other's stories and pay close attention to where we are not believing the Gospel. As we hear each other's stories ask:

**Where in your story are you struggling to believe the Gospel?
OR
What about your Identity in Christ are you struggling to believe and how does the Gospel answer your need?**

The Culture or Community's Story...

In order to be an effective missionary, we need to know the story of our culture – what has shaped it, what is the dominant story line, what are the idols, where are the open doors for the gospel – both demonstrated and declared and be prepared to show how the Gospel Story fills in the gaps, corrects the lies or successfully completes it's story.

⁶ Genesis 1:1-2; John 1:1; Psalm 1; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

⁷ Deuteronomy 6:6-9

What are some next steps your Missional Community should take in order to be a Story-formed people?

LISTEN...*We submit to God through consistent backward and forward listening*

Jesus listened to God in prayer to know his Father's will. We listen to God because through the Gospel we are now aware of our ongoing need for Him. We listen '*backward*' by regularly interacting with God's Word—the Story and the Son. We also listen '*forward*' to hear what God is saying to us today. We believe He declares to all people what He is like through His creation and specifically speaks to those who belong to Him through His Spirit⁸.

Everyone is listening to someone or something as the primary voice or voices that they submit their lives to – an expert or teacher that they follow. These might include a school of thought, a leader or charismatic personality, demons, or lies from the past. Until the Creator is THE Expert and THE Teacher to whom they compare all other voices, they are prone to deceit and lies and worship of self or others.

Where do we see this rhythm in the Garden and Fall of Man?

How could they have lived by faith and how did they NOT live by faith?

What does 'walking in line with the truth of the Gospel' through listening produce?

...To God

The gospel reminds us that we are fully dependent upon God's Spirit to teach us the truth, convict of sin, and show us the way to go and empower us to do everything God wants. So, we must walk in submission to the Spirit if we are going to live as God intends.

...To Myself

Pay attention to what you say to yourself. C.J. Mahaney states in his book, *Living the Cross Centered Life*, that when listening to ourselves, we should speak the gospel to ourselves. In order to regularly realign ourselves to the truth of the gospel, we need to listen closely to what we say to ourselves and compare that to the gospel and our gospel identity. Where what we are hearing doesn't match up to the gospel, we should preach the gospel again to ourselves. Ask the Spirit:

Where is my self-talk out of line with the truth of the Gospel?

...To Each Other

We need to listen to each other carefully to discern where they are not yet gripped by the gospel, paying careful attention to whether their story is about them and dependent on something other than God. Listen for the fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh⁹

...To Our Culture and Community

The people in our community are telling us what they believe and why. We need to ask questions and listen. If we are to be prepared to give an answer for the hope we have, we must spend less time just preparing answers and as much time listening for the questions. Listening to others first is prerequisite for gospel engagement. We should be listening constantly to know which story they believe in and where that story has proven weak and ineffective to save.

What are some next steps your Missional Community should take to grow in Gospel Listening?

⁸ Mark 1:35-37; John 16:7-15; Hebrews 1:1-3; Romans 1:20

⁹ Galatians 5:16-24

CELEBRATE...We gather together to celebrate God's extravagant blessings in Jesus

God's calls people to regularly celebrate his goodness and grace. We gather weekly in missional communities and regularly as a larger family, to share stories and celebrate all that God is doing in and amongst us. We invite everyone to these celebrations as a way of displaying and declaring God's Glory, exhorting each other in the Gospel and encouraging each other in Mission.¹⁰

We are created to worship and one of the ways is through celebration. Every person in every part of the world celebrates. The real question to whom or what is the celebration directed? Because of sin and idolatry we are prone to celebrate the creation instead of the Creator.

Where do we see this rhythm in the Garden and Fall of Man?

How could they have lived by faith and how did they NOT live by faith?

What does 'walking in line with the truth of the Gospel' through celebrating produce?

...God's Grace

If we truly understand and believe the gospel, we should be the most celebratory people on the planet. God regularly called his people to celebrate through feasts and parties because he did not want them to forget His grace and abundant provision. The very celebration wasn't just a response – it was also a demonstration of what God is like and has done. We must enter into a regular rhythm of celebrating God's extravagant blessings.

...In My Life

Part of my ability to live out the gospel is dependent upon my regular reflection on the gospel. I need to regularly set my affections on things above – the work of God in Jesus Christ and what is now true of me because of Him. *I should ask myself:*

How is gospel celebration a part of my everyday life? How should it be?

...With Each Other

We are called to not give up meeting together so that we might spur each other on to love and good deeds. Jesus himself demonstrates this through his first recorded miracle – at a wedding feast where he affirms the celebration of life together because celebrating life together demonstrates the working out of and one of the purposes for the gospel. *Ask yourselves:*

How often are we gathering together to celebrate and how does the Gospel inform it?

...With Our Culture and Community

The people God has sent us to are also celebrating – they happen to be celebrating a different god and a different story. We need to enter into their celebrations and do it unto the true God, fully aware that even this celebration is within His Story. Then, within the celebration we are to look for ways to serve, redeem, bring gospel light, etc...

As a Missional Community what celebrations should you be participating in as you seek to bring the Gospel to bear within the culture God has sent you to?

¹⁰ Leviticus 23; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:24-25

What celebrations should you be creating in order to invite others into the celebration of the Gospel?

BLESS...We intentionally bless others through words, gifts or actions

God desires that all people would be blessed through Jesus. And now, as his Body, we believe we live out this mission as we bless others. We intentionally seek God's direction for who he would have us tangibly bless each week.¹¹

We all have talents, resources and time. Some of us believe we have earned these things and therefore we are entitled to them. This leads to greed and selfishness stemming from pride and causes fights, quarrels, divisions and anxiety¹². When we believe that all we have is from God's gracious hand – gifts given not due to our own work – then we selflessly share what we have for the sake of others leading us to acts of service, sacrifice and love.

Where do we see this rhythm in the Garden and Fall of Man?

How could they have lived by faith and how did they NOT live by faith?

What does 'walking in line with the truth of the Gospel' through blessing produce?

...Blessed By God

Just like Abraham we have been blessed – we have received unmerited favor and provision. This is not because of anything we have done, but because of all that God has done for us in Jesus Christ. We are co-heirs with Christ and blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms.

Take some time to write out and meditate on all that God has blessed you with in Jesus Christ...

...To Be A Blessing

We are not blessed just for our own good. We have been given what we have so that others might also receive. We must regularly take account of what has been given to us and realize that it is not ours, but God's to steward. Then, in light of the gospel that reminds us that He became poor so that in his poverty we might become rich, we are freed up to pour out our lives and things so that others might be blessed and taste and see that the Lord is good.

Identify all that God has given you to bless others with and ask Him to show you what to do with it...

...Each Other

When we believe the gospel and realize that I didn't gain what I have nor do I really own what I have, and then see that our Father in heaven provides for his children through sharing what we He has given us each other. Then I come to see that I don't really own anything and yet at the same time I have more than I ever dreamed (brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, houses, cars, clothes, food, etc...¹³). All that we have is His and all that is His is ours.

Identify the needs of your family as well as the resources given to the family and then ask God how you are to take care of each other.

...Our Culture and Community

God's intent in blessing His people has always been so that those who don't know Him and his grace might see Him at work in and through us and come to Him through our lives. We must direct our eyes outward and begin to believe that He has given us everything for *life* and *godliness*. He has resourced us with what we need to do the gospel work of blessing others who don't know Him yet.

¹¹ Genesis 12:1-3; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 2:12

¹² James 4:1-6

¹³ Luke 18:29-30

What does the culture or community you are sent to really need and how has God blessed your Missional Community or the larger Expression to display the grace of the Gospel to them?

EAT...We regularly eat meals with others to invite them into Gospel Community

Meals are a daily reminder of our common need for God and his faithfulness to provide both physically and spiritually. Jesus called us to remember him and his sacrifice for us through a meal. When we eat together, we commune around this truth. We regularly eat meals with those not in our immediate family or circle of close friends, discipling them toward a life of dependence on God.¹⁴

In every part of the world hunger is a daily reality – whether they have plenty or lack – we all get hungry more than once a day. God gave Adam and Eve the opportunity to demonstrate their faith through the eating of food. They choose to eat unto themselves out of unbelief and rebellion. God has likewise given every person in every part of the world a regular reminder of their need and an opportunity to eat unto themselves in unbelief and rebellion or unto God in faith and with thanksgiving.

Where do we see this rhythm in the Garden and Fall of Man?

How could they have lived by faith and how did they NOT live by faith?

What does 'walking in line with the truth of the Gospel' through eating produce?

...Unto God

Whatever we do, whether we eat or drink, we do it unto God. Every meal really is a demonstration of the gospel. We come hungry (a real need) and our need is graciously met (Whatever we have is from God). Since we eat three times a day, we get a gospel reminder over and over again IF we eat unto God. It's interesting that throughout the Story, food continues to be the prime example of God's provision meeting their need. And in every case, they ate unto God or unto themselves.

How might you eat differently if your eating was informed by the Gospel and unto God in faith?

...With Each Other

When we eat together we commune over our common need and God's provision. In doing this we proclaim the gospel to each other over and over again. That is why it is so important to eat together regularly – a loving community of believers communing around the work of Christ is the best apologetic of the gospel AND eating together is one of the ways we are commanded to do this.

Consider how you might 'preach' the gospel to each other through our 'common' meal – The Lord's Supper...

...With Unbelievers

The table for the Jews, as also in our day, is very symbolic AND communicative – who we eat demonstrates who we love. This is why Jesus was called a friend of sinners – he ate with people who were dirty, unreligious, and visibly or sociably unacceptable. The table is one of the most powerful displays of God's love and acceptance of sinners.

How often do we eat with those who don't believe what we do?

How should your Missional Community shape its life around communing at the table with unbelievers?

¹⁴ Leviticus 23; Matthew 6:11; 26:17-30; Acts 2:46-47; Romans 12:13

RECREATE...We take time to rest, play, create and restore beauty in ways that reflect God and the work of the Gospel to others

After powerfully and joyfully creating the universe, God rested. We were created in his image and therefore were made to joyfully create and rest as well. We regularly take time to rest, play, create and restore beauty in ways that reflect what God is like to our community¹⁵.

In every culture and with every person we witness the desire to rest and create – although the means by which people work it out might be different, we find a universal and historical practice of ReCreating. However, apart from the gospel people remain restless in their work and labored in their rest. The Gospel enables people to rest while working because the work that justifies them was accomplished in Jesus – they don't need their work to give them significance any longer. The Gospel also enables people to truly rest when not working, because they know that God is always working – they don't have to worry that their lack of work will prevent the world from spinning.

Where do we see this rhythm in the Garden and Fall of Man?

How could they have lived by faith and how did they NOT live by faith?

What does 'walking in line with the truth of the Gospel' through ReCreating produce?

...We Rest in God's Work

Because God has accomplished everything necessary for our justification and is the one who will finish the work He started in us, we can rest. Whether working, playing, sleeping or creating – we rest in His work and His abilities and His power. Our rest then is not only a result of the Gospel, but a demonstration to the world not at rest in the gospel.

How and where in your life are you at rest in the Gospel?

Where are you restless and what about the Gospel are you not believing?

...We Work, Rest, Create and Play

We now approach work not needing validation or security – we can truly work unto the Lord and be free to do it as worship (not worshipping the job, the boss, the paycheck or the credibility we obtain). We can also truly rest – vacation or not, sleeping or not, etc... because the world is held together and run by Him and it will be restored by His work in and through us, not our work apart from Him. We can also create freely, not dependent on the quality of the creation or the validation of others to say it is good, but rather because we are already called good in Jesus Christ. Finally, we are free to play, because our Father is in charge and gives us all we need.

How could our work be a better reflection of the Gospel to the world around us?

In what ways could we be 'playing' and 'creating' such that it would be an appropriate display of the Gospel to our culture?

...With Each Other

We recreate together as a way of preaching the gospel to one another. We also become a display together of the truth of the gospel to a watching world. Our resting, creating, working and playing all proclaim that our God is Creator, Sustainer, Provider and Redeemer.

How could your Missional Community reshape its weekly, monthly and yearly rhythms to live out this rhythm?

¹⁵ Genesis 1-2:3; Deuteronomy 5:12; Mark 2:23-28; Hebrews

Where in your culture does the Gospel need to creative, playful work of the Gospel?