

Evangelism and missions is central to the purpose of the church

(REMINDE THAT GREAT COMMISSION IS BOTH OUTREACH AND DISCIPLESHIP; outreach is getting more people into his kingdom-discipleship is more kingdom into his people

Matt. 28:18-20 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Acts 1:8 but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

2 Cor. 5:18-20 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

The purpose of the church is not to perpetuate itself. The church is commissioned as God's instrument to reach lost people. It is lost people and not found people, that are the central focus of God's concern (Mark 2:17; Luke 15). Of course, God has great concern for all Christians, but his concern extends to people all across the world who live without him. When a church adopts a mission that excludes evangelism as its central purpose, the clock is ticking toward the breakdown and destruction of that church.

Other things that commonly usurp an outreach focus: good fellowship (sweet, but what happens to our fellowship if don't have outreach? , deep knowledge, political agenda, family protection, corporate worship, etc. THINGS THAT ARE NOT WRONG, BUT ARE INADEQUATE AS A FOCUS

Therefore, the church must not make these its primary focus (THE GOOD IS OFTEN THE ENEMY OF THE BEST)

What happens if the church loses an evangelism focus? (NOT ALL THESE HAPPEN ALL THE TIME, BUT MANY WILL)

1. Vitality and excitement wane because new converts are the lifeblood of the church. They "validate" the gospel and increase our own confidence in it and God's power.

2. No new people means no home group plants which means no new leaders and workers needed which means less motivation for learning and sanctification among members. (FOR PEOPLE TO GROW THEY NEED MINISTRY RESPONSIBILITY)

3. We get more self-focused because there are no new converts to care for.

4. Relational conflict increases because instead of banding together to help witness and care for the new converts, we start looking at how others aren't meeting our needs (Movie: *Remember the Titans* -- black and white students in a Virginia high school forced to integrate overcome racial differences in their drive to win a state championship).

5. The church gets involved in "brass-polishing" or "gingerbread"-doing less important things that further detract from our real mission.

6. An "ivory tower" Bible-club mentality develops and people debate nonessential issues and can't relate to non-Christians.

7. A "ghetto" mentality develops that justifies lack of contact with non-Christians-which will lead to increased vulnerability to tribalism, materialism, and hidden sin. (IN HISTORY MOVEMENTS TEND TO GO INWARD-THERE IS A SPECIAL DANGER IN ADULT HOME GROUPS)

8. The church becomes calloused to the plight of the lost (apathy). Not just that they are going to hell in the next life, but that they are miserable in this life. (MT 9 SHEEP W/O A SHEPHERD)

Eph. 2: 12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

How then will we stay on track?

Key #1: Remember the 3 participants in evangelism & their roles.

God's part:

- The Holy Spirit convicts

John 16: 8-10 "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; (9) concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; (10) and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

John 12: 32 "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

- **God creates opportunities**

Col. 4: 2 [3-6]** Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; 3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; 4 in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. 5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.

In the same way, God will at times arrange "divine appointments" for lost people with Christians who are willing to discuss their relationship with Him. But this doesn't mean that the process of leading them to Christ will be rapid or easy.

- **God empowers those who share their faith.**

Eph. 6:19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

1 Cor. 2: 2-4 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. 4 And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

Stephen in Acts 6; Acts 4:13 untrained men (Other Acts fillings)

What happens if we lose sight of this?

Depending on your temperament, push more and withdraw because overwhelmed
Tend not to pray

Hearer's Part: The hearer must choose whether or not to believe.

The fallacy of the taking ownership of the person's choice. WE STRUGGLE PERHAPS THE MOST WHEN OUR FAMILY MEMBERS WON'T BELIEVE

Mt. 23: 37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. (he wept [Lk 19:41] and was broken hearted about their response, but did not take ownership of their choice)

E.R. DOCTORS: they lose people all the time. What would happen if they take responsibility for every one who died?

Luke 8:5-15 Parable of Soils

John 7:17 "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself."

God answers the questions of the person who is investigating honestly. In other words, they must have a bias of being willing to respond to the truth of God. God responds to that willingness by providing sufficient evidence.

What happens if we lose sight of this?

- We would tend to take on more responsibility than they should.
Symptoms of this problem would include (1) tying up all your time with a few reluctant people or (2) resorting to manipulation. See 2 Cor. 4:2-4.

Our Part: To present the message of salvation in a way that the hearer can understand

Our part matters! To evangelize means to "verbally share the good news of God's reconciliation through Jesus Christ, and to invite people to receive this gift."

People can freely choose a relationship with Jesus Christ. Therefore they must hear the message to believe. The Body of Christ must do its part to present the message.

Three things we can do practically to better do our part:

- Testimony
- Lifestyle of Personal Investment

- Willing to broach spiritual conversations

Rom. 10:14 How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

2 Cor. 5: 18-20* Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Lifestyle matters:

Titus 2:9,10 Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good faith that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

WHAT THEN IS THE EXTENT OF OUR ROLE? Are we just like an assembly line worker? Any creativity and judgment calls? Or is like a manager who has to keep a number of things in mind?

Harvest vs. Search Theology: 2 different views of the our responsibility in evangelism

One says, "All that it important is swinging the ax" The others says "yes, but is the woodpile getting bigger?" And if not, we ought to look at how we are swinging, how sharp the blade is, what kind of wood are we swinging at etc.

Christians often disagree on whether or not one should account for results of the church's evangelistic efforts. Some consider this to be vital to a faithful evangelistic witness and would consider their church as failing if there were prolonged periods of time without evangelistic fruit. Others consider a focus on counting attendance, conversions, church growth, etc. to be ungodly. We introduce these terms to initiate you into this debate.

Search Theology

Definition: Searches for people through the faithful proclamation of the Gospel, leaving results between God and the hearer. OK, BUT DOES THAT GO FAR ENOUGH?

Examples: Go door to door or hand out tracks (OR ANY OTHER METHOD)-if it doesn't yield, you don't question it because results are up to God.

Search theology is flawed because:

- It does not go far enough. It neglects analysis of results.
- The Great Commission provides a command which includes results.(MAKE DISCIPLES; ALL ETHNOI; THINGS WE CAN TRACK)
- The example in Acts: Luke includes numbers in his report of the early church. (2:41; 6:7, 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:10,20)
- It lacks a dynamic approach (rather than wooden or mechanistic) to evangelism and therefore its adherents do not persuade (Acts 17:2-4; 18:4; 2 Cor. 5:11, 20), persist (Acts 17:17), or adjust (1 Cor. 9:19-23-CULTURAL FACTORS).
E.G. READING THE SITUATION AND ADJUSTING YOUR APPROACH
NOTE THE DIFFERENCE B/W PETER'S APPROACH IN ACTS 2 AND PAUL'S IN ACTS 17
- Search theology has been used to justify failure in evangelism. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS A PROPER DISSATISFACTION

Actual REASONS for failure:

- Sin (including sin of omission such a lack of outreach effort)
- Unresponsive field
- Wrong or un strategic methods

Harvest theology (AGAIN, THE WOOD PILE)

Definition: Finding and winning receptive people (harvesting) through faithful proclamation of an understandable Gospel, keeping an eye on results to determine effectiveness and future methods.

Examples: LEARNING ABOUT POSTMODERN THINKING AND ADDRESSING IT CONSCIOUSLY IN TEACHINGS RATHER THAN JUST TALKING TO THE MODERNIST. USING A METHOD THAT WORKED WELL WITH STUDENTS AND KEEPING IT WHEN THEY GET MARRIED AND HAVE KIDS.

Harvest theology is Biblical because:

- It does reflect on results.
- It is dynamic.
- Focuses on the responsive field (like Xenos with students-NOT SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY ARE OUR KIDS)

Dangers in Harvest theology:

- Results are not always immediate (2 Tim. 4:2 "...in season and out of season.")
- God's part may be minimized.
- Taking your identity from results. However, to have a proper sense of identity does mean escaping the pressure of knowing the lost are not being found.
- May cheat to get more numbers (becoming market-driven; quantity over quality)

1 Cor. 3:5-7 What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. (6) I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. (7) So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

- **Mk. 4** -- parable of the soils

Key implication of Harvest: Contextualization

Key ideological shifts in today's culture

How is it that vital evangelistic movements die? Sometimes it's because they departed from the gospel, but more often it's because they lose touch with the culture.

We must not only know what the good news is, but must also know our culture's current ideological objections to the gospel and how to respond. We need to discern the "spirit of the age," recognizing that it changes in important ways. For example, not too many years ago, skeptics rejected Christianity because it was thought to conflict with science. Today, just as many people reject Christianity, not because it has been carefully examined and found inconsistent with science, but merely because it claims to be universally true! This shows a significant shift in how our culture thinks.

To get things rolling, the class could note other reasons that people reject Christianity.

We would never think of sending missionaries abroad without knowledge of the language and culture of the target field. Today we must do the same thing at home. We are cross-cultural missionaries right here!

We must try to understand the key ideological shifts of our culture. How has thinking changed in the western world in the past generation?

Two Key Shifts:

1. From Christian to Post Christian
2. From Modern to Postmodern

The way it was	The way it is
<p>1. Spiritual background</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominal Christian experience- most people had some exposure to the Christian world view. • Information such as "The Four Spiritual Laws" provided compelling reason to receive Christ. While many never heard the gospel, people did believe the basic concepts of a just and loving God, "true 	<p>1. Spiritual background</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little significant exposure to the church • Many people

<p>moral guilt," and forgiveness. A clear presentation of the Gospel put these concepts together in a way that often made sense to this critic.</p>	<p>mix and blend different faiths to arrive at what they believe (E.G. New Age). It is common to hold that all faiths are equally true. Note: unfortunately, even many with an evangelical church background have bought into this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Today's perspective is that we are not able to call things morally right and wrong (it is not "politically correct"). People today will say that assigning true moral guilt to someone or some situation is "intolerant;" rather, we should be open to everything . <p>Therefore the Gospel</p>
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	message doesn't fit with this perspective.
<p>2. What the critics thought</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically minded skeptics appealed to reason and evidence (especially science) • Christians would defend their faith (apologetics) using classical arguments (design of the universe, design of man, and the study of 'how we know what we know') or evidence (historical evidence for the resurrection, for the reliability of the Bible, etc.). The rational critic would often find these types of arguments persuasive. 	<p>2. What the critics think</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically minded skeptics find the claims and content of Christianity dogmatic and offensive. Christianity can't possibly be universally true because it excludes other religious voices and traditions. "Hmmm, that's great for you, but you can't impose your truth on me." Truth and reason bounce off many people today. • Christians still need to make use of classical arguments and evidences, but also need to be able to

	<p>defend the notion of absolute truth and critique relativism. Therefore it will take more patience and "pre-evangelism" is often needed.</p>
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The most significant aspect of the "spirit of the age" today has to do with truth. While Christianity may be accepted as true for Christians, it can't be true for those who believe something else. And to "impose" your religious views on others would be viewed as intolerant, close minded and arrogant. Show the video (Gary DeLashmutt, Dennis McCallum, Jim Leffel, and William Lane Craig).

Crossroads Video

Consider these 2 questions as you watch the tape and we will discuss them.

What are the 2 views of "truth."

What are the 2 views of "tolerance?" (film clip of the Indian & missionary)

Start Tape

1. Introductory remarks by Leffel
2. Ohio State campus interviews of students' views of truth
3. Craig defines truth as philosophers do "corresponds with reality"; biblical notion is same, by implication.
4. Den's overview of today's views of truth.

1st pause for discussion at 3rd "stop" marker (immediately after #4 in video sequence: Den's definition of postmodern "truth" to discuss truth . . .)

Two views of truth:

- "Out there" (revealed by God) and can be discovered
- "In here" (in my mind or in the culture) and is something we create

For Class teachers: some additional info about truth:

- It is objective, not merely subjective (ROM 3:4). We have access to revealed truth, but we have not mastered it or been mastered by it completely. Our aim is to be biblical people. (1 Thess 2:15) We are not always objective, but our aim is to be objective, fair, and just. Our response to the truth should be personal and thus has subjective elements. The truth exists outside of us and is not effected by our force of will or our feelings.
- It is absolute, not relative (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 4:12; Jn. 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5,6; Rev. 7:9,10). We are not absolutely correct or certain about everything, but our aim is to greater accuracy and

certainty. We do not have universal knowledge, nor do we know how to relate truth to every situation, but our aim is more knowledge and discernment for its application.

- It is antithetical, not synthetic (Matt. 12:30; Ex. 20:1-6). We acknowledge supra-rational aspects of God, but we do not invoke "mystery" in order to sanction contradiction, intellectual laziness, or relativism.
- Truth is a bestowal of God's grace, not my propaganda. Truth is given for our good, not to control and exploit us (ROM 1:16).

Restart Tape

5. Gary: Description of views of tolerance.

6. Video clip of Amazonian Indian's objections to Christian missionary trying to change them is equivocated with intolerance and arrogance.

7. Craig: Religious beliefs today are considered a "matter of taste" rather than fact -- much like we look at whether or not someone should like broccoli.

8. Dennis: The key in communication is to help them see they already DO believe in objective/absolute truth in many areas. Plus, those who denounce Christianity as wrong because we are absolutists just contradicted themselves -- they made an absolute statement by saying we're wrong!

9. Craig: Value of human life without objective truth -- total immorality because there is no agreed upon right or wrong way to treat one another.

10. Den: Hitler did what he felt was right in his heart -- so "what I feel is right" is not a very workable determinant for any belief system.

11. Gary: explanation of healthy personal relationships only possible if understand and agree what is right/ wrong/ proper, etc. in a relationship. From a postmodern point of view, there is no such objective thing available and certainly we can't call on the other person to act a certain way.

12. Madonna video clip.

2nd pause immediately after Madonna's video

Two definitions of "tolerance"

1. BIBLICAL: Personal respect and love for individuals despite deep disagreement with their beliefs. The former (and biblical) definition of "tolerance" made a distinction between people and their religious beliefs. It meant that people should have the legal freedom to practice the religion of their choice, and that you should personally respect and love them, even if you conclude that their beliefs are false. We should expressly affirm this kind of tolerance and deplore this kind of intolerance.

2. CONTEMPORARY: Includes the old view, but adds that we must affirm the validity of all beliefs

Today's "tolerance" has removed the distinction between persons and their beliefs. It means that you must never call others' beliefs false or untrue, or you are an arrogant, intolerant bigot. But this definition confuses tolerance with truthfulness.

How does the film clip of the Indian and the missionary portray tolerance?

Have you encountered this kind of objection? What do you think about Dr. Craig's distinction between "matters of taste" and "matters of fact"?

Regarding the Madonna video What elements of postmodernism does the Madonna video portray?

Ask if they were able to critique the lyrics and see the postmodern, relativistic thinking. Ask if they were disgusted by the sexual overtones, the "occultic" innuendoes, etc. So are we going to reject these people or are we moved by compassion to reach out to them?

Restart the tape -- end before Dennis answers about how to communicate to the postmodern thinker.

13. Gary: Great impact on those who don't know Christ when they see love in action and as they comment on it, we describe the source.

14. Craig: Is the church ready?

Impact of postmodernism on relationships

How do these two definitions of tolerance impact our relationships?

e.g. No common basis of truth for resolving conflict in relationships and moving forward.
Sharing how your relationship with God has given you a basis for resolving conflict in your relationships is a natural way to lead into a discussion about the gospel.
What do you think about Gary's point about the loss of relationships when we deny objective truth? How does the Madonna video underscore this concern?
Can you see how denying objective truth leads to serious moral problems? Where do you think this manifests itself most in our culture? (E.g. breakdown of the family, etc.)

Now we need to take a closer look at the issues -- next week.

Memory Verses

2 Cor. 5:18-20* - We are ambassadors for Christ.

Col. 4:3-6 - Pray for open doors.**