

A Culture of Evangelism

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 ESV - “The Ministry of Reconciliation”

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Introduction

What is culture?

Culture is our way of life. It includes our values, beliefs, customs, languages and traditions. Culture is reflected in our history, in our heritage and in how we express ideas and creativity. It is how we do life as a church; it is who we are as followers of Christ.

How do we cultivate culture?

- Nourish through knowledge
- Support through storytelling
- Sustain through celebration
- ~~Vivify~~ ^{vitalize} through vocabulary
- Animate through action

A healthy culture of evangelism is evidenced when churches are "loving communities committed to sharing the gospel as part of an ongoing way of life, not by the occasional evangelistic raid event" (47).

Four Ways We Can Cultivate a Culture of Evangelism

1) Love Jesus and His gospel-v14-15

¹⁴For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

The love of Christ ^{controls} ~~constrains~~ us

CSB: "For the love of Christ compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: If one died for all, then all died."

KJV: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead"

Controls, compels, constrains: present continuous action → ideas

- Walled in, boundaries - direction

- Pressure or force - action
- Spitballs

It is love that gives us our direction and empowers our action

This is not a vague notion of Christ's goodwill towards us that controls, compels, and constrains us but very specifically his love shown to us in the gospel

Love of Christ:

Romans 8:31-39 ESV ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is motivating!!

Love—the love of Christ—and the gospel—one has died for all cultivates a way of doing church that includes evangelism.

How does this work?

- His love generates our love: **1 John 4:19 ESV** We love because he first loved us.
- It is our love that leads us to obedience: **John 14:15 ESV** If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
- Commandment: **Matthew 28:18-20**

Let us saturate ourselves in the gospel; let's pray gospel, think gospel, meditate gospel, sing gospel, pray gospel, teach gospel. Let the love of Christ in his gospel cause love to rise up in our hearts and out of that love obey the Great Commission! This is the motivation the Bible prescribes!

2) See People Clearly-v16-17

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

We regard no one according to the flesh

CSB: "From now on, then, we do not know anyone from a worldly perspective."

NLT: "So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view."

What someone is by human standards, from a human point of view, according to worldly standards and values that derive from living as if one's present, physical life is all that matters...

NIVSB: seeing people according to how they relate to Messiah

We need God's perspective. We need to see them and we need to see them clearly and accurately.

We need to really see people for what they are; we need to see people for what they can become.

What they are:

Cory McKenna's sermon - without excuse, condemned, desperately in need of salvation

When you see your family member, neighbour, colleague do you SEE them in their relation to Jesus?

Do you [see] desperately needy people, hurting and helpless image bearers who do not even know salvation is only found in Christ and his work in the gospel?

What they can become:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

God's perspective:**2 Peter 3:9 ESV**

⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Sometimes God desires things that he has not decided.

Ezekiel 18:23 ESV

²³ Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

Ezekiel 18:32 ESV

³² For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live."

→ We need to see people.

3) Understand Conversion-v17-18

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

Poll: Evangelizing vs. evangelizing successfully

Discrepancy in the number of hands indicates a misunderstanding of conversion

Two phrases: "new creation" and "All this is from God"

"**New creation**" continues the theme of creation which is present from the very beginning of the Bible, ^{A theme which} and culminates with the creation of the new heavens and new earth at the end of the Bible.

Pentateuch has God as the creator of everything and has him creating everything out of nothing.

The prophets compare the puny and powerless gods of ^{humanity's} ~~humanities~~ idols worship with the all-powerful and everywhere-present ~~God of Israel~~; he is ^{Creator of the universe} a God who will fulfill promises and execute judgment, ^{because He is the Sovereign ruler}

The book of Psalms celebrates and worships the God of creation noting that creation itself declares his Lordship.

The books of Wisdom show God demonstrating his own superior wisdom in the act of creating.

In the New Testament we see that the catastrophic damage to creation is already being overturned in the new creation. That is, Jesus, who himself is the new Adam, is the agent of the new creation who are men and women who have been born again through faith in him.

The idea of new creation points to the truth that God is the sole author and agent in a person's conversion.

↳ There is one Creator

“All this is from God” makes it clear that conversion—being born again or regeneration—is a work of God.

Some people believe that men and God are equally involved in salvation. I used to believe this myself. But I have come to believe that salvation is by God alone. God alone effects our spiritual rebirth.

This is crucial because of it impacts greatly how we think and act when it comes to evangelism.

If God alone effects salvation, then we are messengers and nothing else. We are ambassadors, as our passage indicates, who are responsible to accurately teach people the gospel. We aim to persuade, but the persuading is not done by us but by God.

humanity are co-effectors of salvation it is easy to see
 If a ~~person~~ ^{person} ~~participates~~ ^{participates} with God in their own salvation, the evangelizer now becomes responsible for the supernatural act of raising a spiritually dead person. *Certainly God participates in an effectual way, but so does the evangelist and so does the spiritually dead person.*

I think the guilt, fear, and condemnation we feel in regards to evangelism comes from not evangelizing. And I think we do not evangelize, in many cases, but we are so worried about delivering the message in just the right way because we are responsible to close the deal. But that is not our responsibility because we cannot accomplish that supernatural act and because we have not been called to perform that act that only God can do.

If you understand that conversion is effected by God alone, and that he uses his people to convey the gospel by which people hear and are saved, then we cultivate a culture of evangelism because we realize we are to be faithful in sharing the message and are to trust God to save people.

Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*: "You and I aren't called to use our extensive powers to convict and change the sinner while God stands back as a gentleman, quietly waiting for the spiritual corpse, his declared spiritual enemy, to invite God into his heart. Rather, we should resolve to preach the gospel like gentlemen, persuading while knowing we can't regenerate anyone, and then stand back while God uses all his extensive powers to convict and change the sinner. Then we'll see clearly who it is that can really call the dead to life, and although he'll use us in the doing of it, it's not you and I who are actually doing it."

I think an understanding of conversion in regards to God's work of salvation will be of great help to our culture of evangelism.

4) Evangelize together as one-v14-21,

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Think of the motivation, the encouragement, the fun, the perseverance we could experience if we were all into this idea of evangelism together. We are not meant to be lone ranger evangelists. Doing things alone is hard; emotionally, psychologically, and even physically.

- Jumping the older kids at camp!

Philippians 1:3-5 ESV ³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Application - *How can we cultivate a culture of evangelism*

- 1) Saturate yourself in the gospel. - *Love Jesus and his gospel*
- 2) Pray that God would help you see people clearly.
- 3) Study Scripture and godly writings to better understand conversion.
- 4) Stay together.