

## Recalibrating Our Churches Towards Effectively Reaching The Lost #1 Creating The Space For Impactful (and multiple) Gospel Encounters

### Personal Story Of CRCF and the season of Harvest B1:10

If I was going to identify the key 'change' we made was *to make space for non believers to have an impactful gospel encounter.*

*Gospel Encounter : Nichodemus; Women at the well; Martha and the resurrection*

I had always had a deep theological belief about the importance of people clearly hearing the gospel message in the process of salvation but what happened now is we built our strategy around it.

### Thinking about the theology of salvation and its practical implications

#### Romans 10 : 5 - 17

5 Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them."<sup>[a]</sup> 6 But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'"<sup>[b]</sup> (that is, to bring Christ down) 7 "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'"<sup>[c]</sup> (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,"<sup>[d]</sup> that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: 9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. 11 As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame."<sup>[e]</sup> 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."<sup>[f]</sup>

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"<sup>[g]</sup>

- (v 5 - 7) Firstly, Paul tells us that *finding peace with God and with ourselves* is not as difficult as religion would make out.

*I.e. It doesn't require adherence to moral codes or acts of devotion nor is it a mystical knowledge that requires an endless pursuit.*

- (v 8) Rather, Paul says, how we obtain *peace with God* is clearly revealed in the gospel message.

It is Christ...

Timothy Keller book 'Preaching' is one of the greatest studies and practical guide to transforming our preaching to be 'Christ Centered' and make the gospel the center of every sermon rather than the 'add on'.

- (v 9 - 13) Paul highlights **four truths** he wants people to be convicted of, and respond to, *as he proclaims the gospel message* .

Truth	Response
We are a broken, damaged, people in need of healing, forgiveness, and a new way.	<u>Surrender</u>
Jesus Christ is the son of God whose death is a full and complete payment for our sin and brokenness.	<u>Declare with your mouth</u> 'Jesus Christ is Lord'.
The resurrection gives hope of the possibility that there is new life in Christ.	<u>Believe in your heart</u> that you can be made new through Christ
Christ is willing to come and change the lives of those who call on him.	<u>Call on Christ</u> for salvation

**It's crucial to note that the aim of the proclamation of the gospel message is both to impart knowledge AND to stir emotion so as to move a person to call on Christ.**

Paul often used language like...

*'I want you to know...', 'I don't want you uninformed...' 'That you may grow in knowledge....'* to express the significance of knowledge in the gospel.

He also used....

*'That is might persuade you...', 'That I might provoke them the jealousy...'* etc as he recognized that coming to faith was a heart matter as much as it was an intellectual matter.

All of the apostles used the language of...

*'Call on the Lord...', 'Repent....' 'Turn to the Lord...'*

- (v 14 - 15) Paul urges us to make *the intentional proclamation of the gospel* a priority in our ministries.

There are two big takeaways from this...

1. The proclaiming of the gospel message is *the key means of grace* for salvation.

I believe that the *anointed preaching* of the gospel is the means by which we have the tool to overcome the issue of 'spiritual deadness'.

Biblically, the 'Word Of God' has the power to create life where there is none and make the dead alive.

*1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*  
Gen 1 : 1 - 3

*3 He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"  
I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know."*

*4 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!  
Ezekiel*

I read this into Paul's declaration concerning the *power of the gospel*.

*14 I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. 15 That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.*  
Romans 1

2. We are to be very intentional, strategic, and driven in the pursuit of creating gospel encounters.

#### **A. It started with a change in the way we prayed..**

There is often too little 'intercessory' prayer over the programming and mission of the church. While it is crucial to have a prayer team for the pastoral needs of

a church it is essential that we have prayer for the mission and purpose of the church.

*Illus : CRCF still has a Tuesday prayer (intercession), Wed (word and worship), Thursday (Outreach).*

Some key scriptures to prayer through...

*36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

*Matt 9*

SomWe often pray that God would 'bring in souls' when this scripture recognizes that we are called to do the work and we pray for workers.

Workers...evangelists (influencers, connectors, people gatherers)

**B. Revised and crafted a strong gospel encounter that was both intellectual and impactful.**

- a. Engaging
- b. Discussion (power of listening) enabled AND subject focused (leading questions).
- c. Reasonable length (3 sessions)
- d. Response designed
- e. Leadership Training (and ongoing)

### **C. Reorientated our messaging with nonbelievers towards the gospel encounter.**

We thought through the process of how a person might respond with less emphasis on a *supernatural encounter* to more of a *natural response*. This is based on the belief that the session itself will be the *supernatural encounter*.

***Building off the Sunday morning connection (in person and online) with non believers once having established what our 'gospel encounter' looks like.***

- For us it was 'Why Jesus?' was going to be the primary gospel encounter
- We decided to run it on Sunday morning during the service for a number of reasons on a monthly cycle.
- We took a mentality of the invitation to 'Why Jesus?' being equal to an altar call in our integration of it into it's communication from the pulpit and online.

*Illus : Marcel's video*

- We thought through and continually adjusted the sign up process.

### **D. Identified and Intentionally Created 'Fishing Holes'.**

'A fishing hole is any location in a church that we connect with non believers in a greater ratio than normal' i.e. *soccer team, mums group, youth, young adults, etc*

'Sometimes these naturally happen and sometimes we can 'program' them'.

'Many churches have fishing holes but fail to have a strategic and intentional plan for actually fishing in them'.

### **E. Actively sought to release the power of multiplication.**

Lynn Valley FG and the organic questions of 'online 'Why Jesus?' and 'Why Jesus?' with a friend.

### **F. We made 'baptism' as the marker and the celebration.**

### **G. We hired an 'evangelist'.**

## **Five Reasons Churches Must Become Intentional About Creating Gospel Encounters**

1. It changes us from a museum mindset to a missional mindset.
2. Conversion is the biblical model for church Growth
3. It raises up a generation of new leaders who are pioneers rather than pastoralists.
4. New Believers Bring New Life To A Church (revival)

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