

An Unstoppable Force

Click [here](#) for the discussion (after June 24)

Essential reading: An Unstoppable Force by Erwin Raphael McManus

We'll start here (in chapter 6):

Revolutionizing Organizational Leadership

“God is not a God of chaos, but a God of order” has been one of the theological mantras of the modern church. Out of this has come a particular view of leadership: Leaders organize! Yet organizational leadership is different than directional leadership. It is important to acknowledge that there are many different forms of leadership. The term leadership can mean different things in different organizations and occupations.

Often, what is described, as church leadership is organizational leadership. Value is found in someone who can structure and manage a complex environment, rather than in someone who can create one that needs to be harnessed. The real contribution of the organizational leader is bringing stability and continuity. Mid-size congregations often evaluate spiritual leadership through this template. Success is measured by predictability and order. The danger is going beyond an order of worship to a worship of order!

In many ways the role of a pastor has become that of a spiritual manager. There is a critical distinction between managers who maintain organizations and leaders who create community by catalyzing movement. The former leader creates a corporation of people; the latter, a people with a cause.

Genuine leaders personify the values and vision of the people they lead. They do not simply espouse the vision of the movement; they embody it. What they focus on, whom they empower, and what is rewarded are central to the development of a cultural movement. Sometimes we look to great secular corporations that are led by extraordinary leaders for help. But all too often we ignore the components that make them worthy of emulation. We dissect their skills, disciplines, competencies, and habits in the hope that we can pick up that critical piece in the leadership puzzle. Yet for many of us, especially in vocational ministry, the real essence of leadership is so obvious that it is easily missed. True leadership is spiritual!

Secular Leadership Is Spiritual

Phil Jackson wrote a book called Sacred Hoops: Spiritual Lessons of a Hardwood Warrior, describing his experience as coach for Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls. Howard Schultz chronicled his Starbucks experience in Pour Your Heart into It: How Starbucks Built a Company One Cup at a Time. Steven Jobs described his creation of Apple as a mission from God, calling his sales force evangelists! Everything that makes leaders unique is spiritual. Many things that make them effective are learned and concrete, but the essence of their true leadership remains intangible. There are others who do the same things they do, yet these unique leaders still rise above the rest. Whether it's in the corporate world, in sports, in politics, or in religion, the ability to create a culture of success is described by mystical language.

We describe it as charisma when referring to the individual and chemistry when speaking of the team. We don't always know what it is, and it clearly comes in many forms and styles; yet we know without question when someone doesn't have it. Soft-spoken or outgoing, it doesn't seem to matter. True leaders are able to influence not only individuals, but also environments. They transform corporate values and their environment on a cultural level.

Successful leaders can rally individuals around shared beliefs and a common vision. As these people work toward the good of the whole, they experience personal fulfillment and intense satisfaction. In fact, if you listened to them passionately describing their experiences within these organizations, you would get the impression that their work itself is a religious experience. Great organizations have an ethos of greatness. It's not just that they do great work, but they literally work out of greatness. Winning teams make average players better and good players excellent. Great coaches create and shape ethos. Great CEO's create and shape ethos. Great presidents create and shape ethos. Each is a spiritual leader.

True leadership affects the soul of the organization and the spirit of the people. The irony is that, while secular leadership has become blatantly spiritual, Christian leadership has become blatantly (and blandly) secular. We need to recapture the invisible aspects of leadership. We must focus our attention on the creating and shaping of ethos and then on the structures that best nurture and harness its potential. In the end leadership is nothing less than spiritual. And spiritual leaders are essentially cultural architects.

A Movement of Visionaries and Dreamers

In Acts 2:17-18 we read: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."

If you want a certain kind of movement, you enlist a certain kind of person. Looking at the contemporary church, you would almost have to conclude that its founders were administrators and managers or at best theologians and teachers. Yet we find that God chooses visionaries and dreamers. In fact, God promised that when he poured out his Spirit on his people, they would become visionaries and dreamers. They would proclaim not only what God was doing, but also what he intended to do in human history.

What would our churches be like if God made manifest the descriptions in this passage? What would be required of spiritual leadership if we understood ourselves to be visionaries and dreamers? This prophecy from Joel was repeated by Peter to young men who were born under the weight of captivity, young men who had never known freedom, young men who knew only Roman oppression. Yet God was going to make them visionaries—suggesting a freedom they had never tasted or known. At the same time God would make dreamers of old men—old men who had lived their lives waiting for the Messiah, old men who believed God would deliver them, old men who would soon breathe their last breaths under the bondage of Rome. This was God's promise—evidence of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the people of God. And the new Christians experienced it—sons and daughters, men and women, all who were touched by the Spirit of God.

It's hard to believe that a movement born of visionaries and dreamers would become dominantly known for its traditions and rituals. If you were to look at your own congregation and evaluate honestly what's valued and appreciated, could you say that people are more encouraged to create than to conform? The church should be a place where dreamers are nurtured and visions are realized. The apostolic ethos is a thing of wonder and childlike curiosity, a place where ideas are valued and where a spirit-inspired imagination runs free. God has a lot on his mind, and it is through the church that he makes it happen.

A wonderful thing about being around new believers is that they haven't discovered the limitations the church has embraced. Their ability to believe in God is so pure that it sometimes terrifies older Christians. Do you remember when you believed God could do anything? that God actually heard your prayers with an intention to answer them? Do you remember when you believed that Elijah was an ordinary person just like you and that if you prayed like he did, God would answer your prayers, too?

The first-century church was founded on the adventurous journeys of men like Paul and Barnabus. It was never intended to be a place of safety from the rapidly changing world. The church should be the greatest revolution ever initiated on this planet. She moves from generation to generation through the dreamers and visionaries who believe that nothing is impossible with God. And like prophets, they call God's people to live their lives as if God is truly God.

Ethologically Sound Leadership

It's painful but important to realize that our communities reflect our leadership. I'm troubled when pastors tell me what they don't like about their congregations. I could understand this if they had only been there for two weeks or maybe even two years. But I hear this from pastors who have been at their churches more than five years. They're frustrated because people don't "do evangelism" or people are too afraid of risk or a variety of other issues. One of the most difficult things for a leader to do is help a pastor look in the mirror.

If you've been leading your congregation for more than five years, your congregation likely reflects who you are. If you hold the position of leader, and the ethos does not reflect your core values, then you're not the leader—someone else is. If you are genuinely the leader, and you do not like the values of your congregation, the first place you need to bring change into is your own life.

Ethos emerges from the lives of individuals, and whether you realize it or not, you've been shaping the ethos of your congregation from the first moment you gave a message or made a decision. We're going to look at six different areas in which you as a leader have a direct impact in the ethos of your congregation.

Once we've exhausted the previous topic, if there is time, we will move to a discussion of chapter eight entitled Soul Environments. Central issue will be: How do you make disciples in a movement culture?

Soul Environments

If the primary role of leadership is the creating and shaping of ethos, then the pastor becomes a spiritual environmentalist. Jesus instructs us to make disciples of all nations. This process involves leading his disciples to publicly declare him through baptism and teaching them to obey all things. We have too long seen this as a systematic process rather than an environmental one.

This metaphor is both culturally appropriate and Biblically grounded. Paul tells Timothy that if someone is to lead the church, the house of God, he must effectively lead his own home. The Greek word for house here is oikos. This word refers to the sphere of influence contained within human relationships. But sometimes we forget that oikos is also the root word for what has come to be known as ecology. An ecological system that is healthy is essentially a healthy family system.

Paul is saying that if you're a poor environmentalist at home, how can you be an effective environmentalist in the house of God? Paul writes this criteria in the middle of other measures for spiritual leadership, suggesting that they all are connected to this imagery. When you break it down to its primal essence, spiritual leadership is the ability to establish and grow a healthy community.

If you are a parent, you understand this is no small task. It is an incredible challenge to invest your life in other human beings, especially from birth to adulthood, and to go beyond simply enforcing rules to transferring beliefs and values. Your goal is to shape character and produce a genuinely healthy human being.

An apostolic ethos erupts out of the context of human relationships, not apart from it. The dynamic movement that brings personal transformation and historical change is rooted in the simplicity of right relationships. These relationships begin in a healthy relationship with God that flows naturally into healthy relationships with others.

The birthplace of the apostolic ethos is certainly the great commandment, but the focus of this ethos is found through the commission. The spiritual environmentalist focuses on five environments for spiritual health. At Mosaic we wrap these environments around five elemental images.

Good Morning

From: Erwin McManus
Comments

Good morning. This is pretty much a new experience for me, so I'm looking forward to interacting with whomever is out there. The flow of the week will go like this: we'll talk about whatever you want to for as long as I want to. If no one asks a question, then I'll just pick up somewhere where I think it might stimulate conversation. Unless you have a question burning to be addressed, let's begin here: "It's more important to change what people care about than what they believe." This can be either just food for thought or the beginning of our discussion. Electronically yours, Erwin P.S. If there's a practitioner out there, I am more than happy to interact on real life and specific ministry issues.

Re: Good Morning

From: Cathy Townley
Comments

This may be a duplicate... although I think I didn't post correctly the last time, but anyway, sorry if this is twice... greetings Erwin. I'm happy to meet you. We've been reading your book for the last 2 months at our church... which is a large lutheran church in the suburbs of Minneapolis. We're pretty non-traditional for a lutheran church, with but a few clues as to our heritage. I'm overseeing the development of an apostolic, relational church planting network in the US and North America, which has grown out of an indenous movement ouf our church to embrace the value of multiplication. It's a new thing for us... but it's happening. We are just kicking off our network this week, and it's pretty exciting. We're connected by mission, vision, values, and a few doctrinal beliefs, which form the foundation of our relatiionships. We exist to expand the kingdom by offering support to planters in the field, but have no agenda to control the type of church that gets planted. We only ask that it be culturally relevant, and that we remain connected by our founding principals. We are currently supporting four churches financially, but have several more relationships brewing in various capacities. 20 leaders were present at our kick off celebration last night. We have a vision of starting 150 new churches in our generation, but i think it will move much faster than that... an unstoppable force that we're tapping into by encouraging multiplication; two of our 4 churches are already moving toward developing new networks. That's how i believe this will grow. It's overwhelming and confusing and thrilling. My boss who hired me is really a missionary at heart, who has developed a very fast paced connection of "stuff happening" in Malaysia and Bolivia. He's the one who brought your book to us to read. The entire 50 plus person staff plus all our church planters are reading your book. My boss is going to FLIP OUT when I tell him I'm participating in this seminar. I look forward to this week, and intend to tease my boss mercilessly for not being a part of EBA. Cathy Townley www.judeanetwork.org

Re: Good Morning

From: Candace Lansberry
Comments

Good morning to you as well. I am the pastor of a new UM church start in Arizona, and I do agree with your opening statement. It is more important to change what people care about-- and at Song of Life, we are trying to care more about being disciples of Jesus Christ than in being 'the church.' We're doing pretty well, but occasionally, the status quo of transferred United Methodists rears its ugly head. Right now I'm working with the leadership on their own discipleship, and trying to get them to understand that that part of our meeting is much more important than the tasks of ministry (ie. finance, etc.) to which they are called. Perhaps some of this has to do with the concept of 'being' vs. 'doing.' We tend to be a nation of doers!!! Good conversation--looking forward to the whole week! Candace

Re: Good Morning

From: Richard Jordan
Comments

Erwin, My name is Richar Jordan, Minister to Adults, Pitman Creek Church of Christ, Plano, TX. I have enjoyed your book and been privileged to hear you speak at the National Pastors Convention. You have brought up many issues in your writing that I believe churches are struggling with right now. Especially when we consider where we go from here and what our focus should be.

Re: Good Morning

From: Kevin
Comments

Hello, My name is Kevin, a Southern Baptist from rural (small town) Alabama. You said, . . . "It's more important to change what people care about than what they believe." I think I would agree. I find that so many of the people in our church and that attend ocassionally aren't really sure what they believe. (And for that matter I'm not sure they ever even think about what they believe). It's not that "doctrine is dead." But they don't focus much on "what we believe." They do, however, know what they care about. I realize that this is much bigger than my church. I understand that this is a real big deal with many seminaries now -- practical theology vs. (whatever the other side of the coin is called). David Well (Gordon Conwell) writes about this in "No Place for Truth." For the most part, I never give it much thought myself, but from time to time to do find that I am in a tough spot because people don't really have a deep theological base (can't really think of an example now). So what's your notions? Kevin

Re: Good Morning

From: Larry
Comments

Erwin, and all, Greetings. I am a lay, paid servant (Adult Christian Education and Evangelism) at a UM church in Findlay, Ohio. My understanding based on 4 years of observation here is that most Christians are motivated by what they care about. Caring can be a strong motivator and I have found many folks looking to see how their beliefs reflect their cares. We did a 30+ week study a couple of years ago called Christian Believer. It a doctrinal study that was much like the style of Disciple Studies. Most of were challenged during the study to bring our caring (as demonstrated by actions) in line with our beliefs. If this isn't clear, blame on my still being new to the forums!

Re: Good Morning

From: Randy, Pastor, Independence Christian Church, KY
Comments

Erwin, Greetings, In response to your opening statement: "It's more important to change what people care about than what they believe." This is certainly true if you speak of beliefs as more of a doctinal than experiential reality. But if you view beliefs as what people experience as true

at their gut level, the distinction isn't as pronounced. In this sense, I would describe as what people care about is what they believe. Comments?

Re: Good Morning

From: easum
Comments

Welcome Erwin, I know this will be a great seminar. Your book has an amazing layout with excellent graphics. The content is superb. Im interested to see what the comments and questions are from the group. Ill drop in from time to time to see how the discussion is going. Again, welcome Bill

Good Morning

From: Eddie Hammett - NC Leadership Consultant
Comments

Greetings from NC. Just got to drop in for a while. Good dialogue. Thanks. I'm Leadership/Discipleship Consultant for the Baptist State Convention of NC and author of three books helping the church move into the 21st Century. My challenge over the years has been how do you manage what is (expected by most established churches) while you birth the future (needed to reach the unchurched worl) Living in that tension seems needed but is often over whelming.

Re: Good Morning

From: Wesley
Comments

Eddie, What is your experience/thoughts when addressing your 'tension' with the "If they don't receive you, shake the dust off your feet and move on." I heard Len Sweet use this reference in a Lutheran context and although some chuckled, many preservationists were dumbstruck and scared. My thought is that many people go to meetings, church and pump me up conventions to get juiced, but not to move on out into....

Defining beliefs

From: Erwin McManus
Comments

Hey, Randy, thanks for being the first one to respond. There are two ways of looking at language. One is from what the words mean as an ideal, and the other is how they actually work within culture. I think it's pretty safe to say that the modern church has a clear distinction between believing and caring. We have created a religious culture where you can believe

many things that have no practical effect or outcome in our lives. It would be much cleaner if belief and concern were inseparable. But then again, in a world where there is so much information, we could not possibly care about everything we know, understand or even believe. Beliefs that transform are the kind that you and I are talking about. Thanks for your feedback.

Re: Defining beliefs

From: Richard Jordan
Comments

Erwin, I think that you have hit on one of the toughest issues within my church tradition. What is a belief? Many in our congregations equate their doctrinal beliefs with what they are concerned about. I am from a heritage that has, very modernly, been concerned with being right. It is hard for our people to see anything but that. If they are wrong they will have to admit something they are afraid of. And dare I say, they might actually have to get out of the pew and do something about this relationship with God. I know that may sound harsh and judgmental. But, I also believe it is something I have struggled with and believe that our churches struggle with. I met you at the Leadership Network discussion group they held at their offices a few months ago. Blessings, Richard

Defining beliefs

From: Erwin McManus
Comments

Hey, Randy, thanks for being the first one to respond. There are two ways of looking at language. One is from what the words mean as an ideal, and the other is how they actually work within culture. I think it's pretty safe to say that the modern church has a clear distinction between believing and caring. We have created a religious culture where you can believe many things that have no practical effect or outcome in our lives. It would be much cleaner if belief and concern were inseparable. But then again, in a world where there is so much information, we could not possibly care about everything we know, understand or even believe. Beliefs that transform are the kind that you and I are talking about. Thanks for your feedback

Re: Defining beliefs

From: Randy
Comments

Erwin, I couldn't agree more that the reality in our language and world does distance beliefs and caring. With that said, I'd like to press the issue of what people care about a little further. I've been pastoring an established congregation in the turn around/change agent/prophet role now for four years. While this demands that I instill a prophetic word in the hearts of the people and awaken them to truths they may not have ever received, I have also found that the most passionate and enduring motivations arise out of what people already deeply care about. This then becomes an issue of values clarification and spiritual gift discovery, among other forces.

Caring about Jesus

From: Easum
Comments

I totally agree with Erwin on caring versus believing. Another way to put it is What is it about your relationship with Jesus that the world can not live without knowing? It is clear to me that people are belonging today before they believe. it is also clear to me that information has much less to do today with transformation than in the past. Every study done seems to suggest that passion is an essential ingredient in leadership today. A case in point, Good To Great by Collins. Deciding what it is that we are so passionate about that it consumes most of our waking moments is a key to leadership. For Christians this all consuming passion is ones relationship with Christ, which is one reason some things work in some churches and flop in others. God honors this form of passion, which has little to do with programs of strategic plans

Catalyzing Movement

From: Bruce Cole
Comments

Erwin, at Faith Church in suburban Chicago we've been working on helping people get in touch with what they care about by following the tracks of their tears...i.e. what breaks your heart, makes you weep, is what you care most passionately about. So, now that we're focused on leading and serving based on what we care about, what has mobilization looked like at Mosaic over the years. To fine tune the question, you wrote, "There is a critical distinction between managers who maintain organizations and leaders who create community by catalyzing movement. The former leader creates a corporation of people; the latter, a people with a cause." Can you take us through the kinds of things you're doing as a lead pastor to catalyze movement? Bruce Cole

From Beliefs to Passions

From: Erwin McManus
Comments

That's exactly what I'm trying to get at. What the opening statement attempts to do is to force us to consider that you can believe in something without caring about it, but you cannot care about something without believing in it. Great opening dialogue. Where would you like to go from here?

Re: From Beliefs to Passions

From:
Comments

Erwin, Stirring opening statement, thanks. I picked something up in both Randy's and Bruce's comments about managers and leaders. I think you've were leaning in the same direction as well. I've been grinding around about "How do pastors move their managers into leaders, caretakers into visionaries?" Managers care about the church, the building the budget etc. Leaders are passionate about Jesus. I serve a rural Lutheran congregation with a council of nine (1 visionary, 1 doer & 7 managers and me). In a congregation that is stuck, my inclination is to find those who are passionate about following Jesus anywhere, pray, open scripture and tell stories of Jesus' work in and beyond the church.

Re: From Beliefs to Passions

From: Wesley Dunbar
Comments

Sorry I forgot to put my name on last post. Wesley

From Beliefs to Passion

From: Randy Lowe
Comments

Most of us have witnessed the belief and passion differences in the way people give to ministry. We have two children's ministries that reach into the community, "Advance" after school mentoring program and "Good Morning Wauseon" an elementary age breakfast program. While people knew we had apportionments to pay to our denomination they individually directed their giving to the two children's ministries fully funding them for next two to three years. They believe in the ministry of the church/denomination but they have a passion for children and children's ministries that meet the needs of children and introduce them to Jesus Christ.

Re: From Beliefs to Passion

From: Randy--ICC, KY
Comments

I've noticed a morphing of words from caring to passion. This may be significant because I've observed that caring seems to apply more to people while passion applies more to purpose. The difference is noteworthy in that established, status quo churches, at least on the surface seem to be high on the caring, but low on the passion. But beneath the surface, they really don't care about people the way that God does. They love those who also love "their church," and can serve them as a means to preserve it. When preserving the institution is their real passion, they then value a managerial model of leadership which is only successful when it keeps the sinking ship afloat. Various types of pathologies and addictions both feed this and are fed by it. How about some dialogue about how to not only keep the ship afloat, but to chart a course, navigate the stormy waters and take the ship to God's destination?

Re: From Beliefs to Passion

From: Mike Loomis
Comments

Randy, I too think the change in words is important. Many mainline churches care about keeping the status quo, or avoiding conflict, but are not passionate about sharing Jesus, or even having Him come in and upset the apple cart. The reality in most mainline churches, I suspect, is that we just don't give a "damn" what happens to people. Part of that, I think, is that we have lost any meaningful theology of Hell. If I really believe that people are "living in Hell" without Jesus, or going to Hell without Him, I act differently. My priorities are changed. I live out a life of evangelism, rather than just talking it. That kind of passion goes far beyond the "caring" most Christians and mainlines are comfortable with.

Re: From Beliefs to Passion

From: Cathy Townley
Comments

"when preserving the institution is their real passion..." is a quote from the post to which I'm responding, and it has triggered a thought in my head. Passion has something to do with drive; it's fueled by values... what we care about, and is exhibited in behaviors. If we leaders take a serious look at our own behaviors, I think many of us must be forced also to see a "real passion," which is not always the gospel. Sometimes it's self preservation; sometimes it's status... lots of temptations for us as leaders. But if you have passion about the gospel above everything else, and long to see transformation inside a human soul, then you begin to not care as much about your own hide, and you'll grow a thick skin (many of us struggle with letting wounds roll off our back for the sake of mission), and you'll risk rejection and getting beat up... all because you have fallen in love the directive to baptize in the name of the father, son and holy spirit. Just a few thoughts... Cathy Townley

Re: From Caring to Passion

From: Randy--ICC
Comments

Cathy, Your call for self-examination is well-founded, and all believers are called upon to constantly check our motives. We must continually evaluate what values we really hold to and are these values congruent with the Gospel as proclaimed by Jesus Christ and the new Testament church? Furthermore, do we know the times we are in and the ways that the Spirit is moving and expressing the Gospel? My observation is that while sincere, sensitive, Gospel engaged Christian leaders may veer off course from time to time, controllers in congregations aren't even asking those questions. Some could raise the objection, "Who are you to question the way that people who have 'paid their dues' for decades do their church?" My answers: (1) "Nobody, if God has called me to simply manage their institution." or (2) "God's servant for such a time as this if God has called me to lead the church into the mission field with Jesus."

Re: From Caring to Passion

From: Passionate fire
Comments

Randy, I just wanted to note... the main point I was trying to express in my post wasn't really about self examination, though that's certainly good and part of what we need to do. The main point I was trying to make was about leaders who don't seem to have enough passion for the gospel so that the gospel is more important than the demands of consumers in the pews or folding chairs. I really believe it comes down to that. Cathy

Perserving the Institution

From: Eddie Hammett - NC Leadership Consultant
Comments

Cathy, I can identify with your comments and agree on many levels. I do believe that many of us fall into the traps of institutionalized religion. Often our priorities, loyalties and passions are to perpetuate the institution or it's programs, structures offices etc. rather than carrying out the Great Commission. Far too often I see people who don't see any difference between caring for the institution and carrying out the Commission. How sad this makes me. I'm not against the institution at all, for it does provide meaning and structure for some, but for the majority of our world it often creates more barriers than bridges to the Gospel message.

Re: Perserving the Institution

From: Wesley Dunbar
Comments

I remember Robert G. Tuttle Jr. from my days @ Fuller (now at Asbury) saying "When a 'movement of the Spirit' becomes institutionalized it stops being a 'movement of the Spirit'" History and our personal experience bears this out as we struggle within our various institution. But by the same token Hauerwas, Willimon, Campolo and a slew of sociologists would tell us that character is only formed in a community. The tight rope we walk is wanting to passionately make disciples (form Christian character) and at the same time not be seduced by the institution, which has formed our character. I choose to work within the institution, but will fight like a mad dog to not be seduced. Any help? Discernment? Wisdom?

Re: Perserving the Institution

From: Eddie Hammett
Comments

I agree that community is valuable and often experienced in institutions. Seems to me that we can experience community there as spring board for moving beyond our comfort to our

convictions. I too have chosen to work and minister in and through established institutions. I believe deeply that somehow we must help 'those dry bones live again' and to discover ways to build bridges rather than barriers that are often created in 'established institutions' who have become apathetic rather than organic. How do we build bridges and build life giving and life generating partnerships between all organizations and institutions who share common core values and dreams?

Re: Perserving the Institution

From: Randy--ICC, KY
Comments

Wesley, Maybe this is an oversimplified way to say it, but community is good, institution is bad. By this I mean the pictures which come to mind when these words are spoken is the institution as static, bereaucratic, and calcified, and community as lively, dynamic, and flexible. Institutions are the old wineskins and community is the new. The caution is that institutions were at one time and many still are communities, they've just taken on a life of their own and the means to an end now demands that it be served when the end no longer exists or has become obscured. We try to make some things last for many of the wrong reasons. Some things should have been laid to rest a long time ago.

Re: Perserving the Institution

From: Mike Loomis
Comments

I cannot help but think of the movie "Same Time Next Year" with Alan Alda & Ellen Burstyn(I think). He was a Senator who had an affair with this woman every year. The movie was more about how he was seduced by Washington than how he was seduced by her (or vice versa). It is a temptation all of us face. Few of us came into ministry with any intention other than fully serving Jesus. But the "stuff" of church life and denominationalism can seduce us quickly. I am still trying to recover from seminary and Method-ism. Most of us, especially me, need a good dose of Holy Ghost chaos as Erwin wrote and a little less order.

Tradition vs Traditionalism

From: W G Henry
Comments

Erwin.. I tried sending this post earlier and it just didn't make it. I have been blessed by your "Unstoppable Force". Unfortunately, I have loaned it out. Several points in your opening for this forum stopped me in my tracks.. but especially, "A wonderful thing about being around new believers is that they haven't discovered the limitations the church has embraced. Their ability to believe in God is so pure that it sometimes terrifies older Christians. Do you remember when you believed God could do anything? that God actually heard your prayers with an intention to answer them?" I am reminded of a truism of a few years ago, "Tradition is the alive faith of

people who are now dead... While Traditionalism is the dead faith of people who are now alive." Our congregation is a "First Church" that is really seeking to move with the power of our Tradition. She is moving out in witnessing..and worship and even will take the Vacation Bible School troops .. 4th and 5th graders out in daily mission to the community.. I want to know more about the prayer life of your congregation. I want to know how you move with that energy to stay in the alive prayer of faith ... W G Henry

Passion: the fire of the movement

From: Erwin McManus, Los Angeles
Comments

Hey, guys. Greetings from LA. Remember I'm on West Coast time, so while you guys are writing away, I'm still sleeping. Great comments since yesterday. To Eddie Hammett, I see you're from North Carolina. I went to school at Chapel Hill, so I have tar hill roots. If you overlooked it, I'm from El Salvador. To Cathy Townley, thank your boss, whoever he is, for putting Unstoppable Force in your hands. Your work sounds absolutely thrilling. Anyway, it's good to have all of you here. You guys made an interesting shift of language from caring to passion. I'm not sure if it's still there, but several years ago, Webster's #1 definition for "passion" was "The hours around the crucifixion of Jesus Christ." Its original comes from suffering or agony, as of a martyr. I'm looking at Webster's right now and sitting right there with #1 is the agony and suffering of Jesus during the crucifixion. I think this is a right-on definition. There are some things we're curious about, some things we're interested in, other things we're committed to, but there are really very few people who are passionate about anything – at least by this definition. It reminds me of the words of Jesus, "If you lose your life for his sake, you will find it." If passion is what we are willing to die for, then what Jesus calls us to is a passionate life of devotion to Him. WG Henry – you asked specifically about the prayer life of our congregation. I think one thing that might help is to understand our view of prayer. We have an activist understanding of prayer. The primary purpose for prayer is to hear God's voice and move in response to Him. Many Christians pray in the same manner as Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists. We put more weight in the ritual of prayer rather than in the dynamic of prayer. The truth of the matter is that most Christians don't pray nearly as much as the devout of other world religions. The real evidence of vital prayer is if there is tangible evidence that God has heard you and that you have heard God. On a more logistical level, we have a small prayer ministry that meets on Sunday mornings and other times, praying specifically for me and for other needs in the body and in the city. There are many times when people are invited during the celebration service to come forward for a time of prayer. This allows people to have both a physical response and is a congregational metaphor for our dependence on God. It's really critical to the health of a church for there to be many stories shared about God's dynamic activity. A part of our new members' process (even though we don't actually have membership, per se, anymore) is instruction in hearing God's voice. Bruce Cole presents the question, "Can you take us through the kinds of things you're doing as a lead pastor to catalyze movement?" Bruce, one of the things we've done this year is that we have moved from receiving people as members to bringing people on staff. Membership for us has required a high level of commitment, but we never liked the word or the term "membership," so we decided to make two moves in opposite and extreme directions. To communicate inclusiveness and unconditional love from the church to the world, we decided that anyone who desired to make Mosaic their place of faith could do so by simply indicating that this was their home. In that

sense, you could be a Buddhist, a Hindu, a Muslim, an atheist, even a Southern Baptist, and belong to Mosaic's community - which helps us become immediately the most inclusive community in Los Angeles. From our perspective, when a person indicates this desire, it is their invitation to us to guide them to a faith in Jesus Christ. On the other extreme, we eliminated, for all practical purposes, any kind of static membership. If you're a believer who simply wants to attend or come for the teaching, you connect at the same level as an unbeliever or seeker. To move to a place of spiritual leadership, you must decide to come on staff. This requires a five session seminar with a mentor, a one-day seminar in our home where we share a meal together and requires a fairly intense level of commitment. 1) You must commit to a life of personal evangelism.; 2) You must commit to developing authentic relationships with other believers for the purpose of intimacy and accountability. A part of this commitment is to live a holy life, and if and when you blow it, to come clean and let the body restore you to spiritual vitality. 3) You must commit to joining a ministry team where you serve others with others. 4) You must commit to be an active participant in worship and body life. 5) You must commit to minimally tithing and then moving to generosity beyond 10%. Connected to this commitment to giving is an understanding that you are to commit all your gifts and talents for the purpose of furthering God's Kingdom and bringing honor to Him. In the last chapter of An Unstoppable Force, I talk about a "radical minimum standard." Essentially we have taken our membership standard and simply acknowledged that the commitment you are really making is to come on ministry staff. It is exciting to anoint with oil, pray over and commission new staff people to take on the mission of reaching Los Angeles and the world. What some churches reserve only for "missionaries," we dispense freely to all who would hear His call and follow Him. A part of continuously renewing the apostolic ethos is empowering and blessing God's people while at the same time continuously raising the stakes and intensifying the passion.

Re: Passion: the fire of the movement

From: Eddie Hammett
Comments

Chapel Hill is one of my favorite places in NC!! Neat culture! Thanks for sharing your thoughts about prayer and membership at Mosaic. I couldn't agree more! Our pluralistic culture is pushing us to seek, find and connect with the Spirit's movement in the lives and relationships of others. Learning to build and experience community among pluralistic beliefs is a challenge as we strive to maintain integrity with 'our beliefs and traditions'.

Re: Passion: the fire of the movement

From: Wesley
Comments

Erwin, you refer to "apostolic ethos", it sounds like from what you said in the beginning and the responses we have seen over the last two days that an "apostolic ethos" is basically 'passion'. In your beginning article your words really strike home about leaders creating the ethos. (Although many of us struggle against an old ethos that is no longer personified and just hangs

in the air unnamed.) How do you create that ethos where you are? It seems to me it would revolve around stories, service, music, tears, laughter. Wesley

Re: Passion: the fire of the movement

From: Cathy Townley
Comments

I just want to chime in and say it's all those things you said, wesley, about story, etc, but it's also about values, and one of those values being "multiplication" in its various forms. When I think of those I know who are the most apostolic, I see a burning desire in them to share the gospel, in all places, in all lands, in every situation, with everyone... relentless. They raise up leaders and send them out, and care more about building the kingdom than they do about growing one church. There's that word caring again,,, Cathy Townley

Re: Passion: the fire of the movement

From: Wesley
Comments

Cathy, Thanks the reminder of defining values. We are in the process of that right now and I'm discovering that my values are not by and large the church's values. Mike Foss says that "a conflict over vision and values is almost always unresolvable", i.e. somebody's gonna move.

Re: membership vs. staff

From: Randy--ICC, KY
Comments

Erwin, I take it from what you wrote that staff can be either paid or unpaid servants, but mostly are unpaid if they fit the criteria you outlined. How many people at Mosaic are considered staff, and what ratio is this to the number who attend? Are you the founder of Mosaic? If so, have you followed this approach from the beginning? If you weren't the founding lead pastor, how did you make the transition from static membership to passionate staff?

Re: Passion: the fire of the movement

From: Cathy Townley
Comments

Thanks Erwin, for your comments about the passion of Jesus. I'd like to tie those comments to the other thread about chair sitters who are only passionate about the status quo; passion is probably the wrong word for those people. I don't think they're really willing to die even for the status quo. Tom Bandy's addiction metaphor is a more apropos description, as the behavior

they exhibit is not passionate, rather it's mechanical. In other words, they're already dead.
Cathy

Change in the leader

From: Mike Loomis
Comments

Erwin, you wrote, "If you've been leading your congregation for more than five years, your congregation likely reflects who you are. If you hold the position of leader, and the ethos does not reflect your core values, then you're not the leader—someone else is. If you are genuinely the leader, and you do not like the values of your congregation, the first place you need to bring change into is your own life." How does that "bringing change in your own life" flesh out for you? Are you talking of prayer time? If so, what has been most meaningful and life-changing for you? Mentors? If so, who? Reading? If so, what has been most formative in God bringing you to where you are?

disruption of service

From: Easum
Comments

Sorry for the disruption in service. Our server went down yesterday for several hours. It seems fine now. bill

Urban vs. Suburban - different strategies?

From: Terry Van Hook
Comments

Dear Erwin, Mosaic seems to be operating in a clearly "urban" (or older, settled suburban) environment. Many of the success stories around the country are churches in growing, suburban areas where people move in and are looking for roots and the leisure time activities have not been developed yet. (Ginghamsburg, Saddleback, etc.)
. What wisdom you you have for those of us in the "urban" environment that has a high population of apartment/condo dwellers, a more stable residential turn-over and are surrounded by developed, sophisticated "things to do?"
. Terry Van Hook, Culver City, CA (Westside of LA)

older/settled vs. new/moving families

From: Terry Van Hook
Comments

Dear Erwin. This gets a little long, and I'm not a trained urban sociologist, but I hope these words clarify some of my thoughts re: urban & suburban. You were surprised at my characterizations of "older" and "urban" with the wonderful swirl of people we know as L.A. My use of "urban" (or older, settled suburban) environment as a descriptive phrase is my effort to point to the change in lifestyle brought on by a more built up area. My understanding of "urban" refers simply to a more completely developed, mixed use of housing (apartments/condos/rentals) and older businesses (fewer malls, smaller parking lots) that form a dynamic housing mix which then becomes populated by singles and others who are not so tied to the community as were the families that originally settled the area. It seems that the population of such older areas are more transitory where people move often and new populations of people can grow almost overnight. At one time these areas were the growing suburbs, full of new homes and new families all moving in from someplace else... Bringing a need of community and a willingness to talk to their neighbors, organize Little Leagues and build up the schools. Churches become an important part of their life. Such areas are usually found at the growing edge of major metropolitan areas where land is cheap and the house therefore becomes affordable for young families. The "older suburban" population seems to me to be more oriented to entertainment rather than growing a family, (although today, entertainment is important there as well,) and they do not have the same sense of community and desire for "rootedness" that is found in the "community builders" of the new suburbs. Such areas usually were a growing suburb 30 years or more ago, but now have a different set of problems (traffic, Senior's needs, crime, renewal of aging business districts, etc.) "Doing Church" in such a fluid environment seems to me to be much more difficult. It clear to me that it's in this fluid population, "older, developed" environment that Mosaic has flourished. It's approach has reached out to those who are able to form "intentional communities." The growing suburbs seem to be more influenced by being a "geographical community." A spirit of "we are all in this together, so lets work to make our new community better." In a nutshell: less distractions, further to go for activities, and child/family centered. Churches can match this need. You discussion of the five years of transition from a low morale, debt ridden church to the dynamic fellowship sharing the gospel gets to the heart of ministry in such a fluid population that now surrounds many of our "older" churches. I thank God for you. Terry Van Hook

A Matter of Heart

From: Russ Noland
Comments

The previous post didn't have everything that I wrote in it, so I'm trying again. I haven't read all of Unstoppable Force. I'm working my way through it slowly because most of the time when I

read it, I find myself so deeply convicted by the kind of leadership that Erwin is talking about here that I honestly can't read any further. It's like playing with fire. I think that what Erwin has developed can't be replicated. I'm not even sure I can learn anything from him other than what's in his heart. Techniques, strategies, etc., all that seem to be a very secondary issue. Anyone who reads this book carefully, of course, knows that what is happening at Mosaic is a direct result of what has happened to its leadership. As I read Erwin, I honestly despair of ever being the kind of leader that he describes here. I do not have the skills, the heart, the passion that he talks about. I would LOVE to have all of those things, but I don't. So my issue is not so much about how to replicate Erwin's heart in my situation, but more about the kind of experiences of Jesus that led Erwin's heart to the point where it is and how do we go about finding our own "unstoppable" heart as God's chosen leaders? I have come to the realization in the past year or so that there is absolutely nothing I can do to change the people around me. God has to do that. But I am deeply concerned that I grow into being the kind of leader who can draw water from the well of life at any time in any place and give it to anybody who is thirsty. I'm not sure exactly what I'm saying, but I think we all have to agree that this has got to get way beyond the kinds of things we're talking about here. Even six steps to creating culture, as good as it is, isn't what Erwin's about. You can tell that if you've read the book. I want to know where you got your heart, Erwin. Tell us how you got the heart you've got...because that is the fundamental issue for all of us as leaders in tomorrow's church.

A Matter of Heart

From: Russ Noland
Comments

I haven't read all of Unstoppable Force. I'm working my way through it slowly because most of the time when I read it, I find myself so deeply convicted by the kind of leadership that Erwin is talking about here that I honestly can't read any further. It's like playing with fire. I think that what Erwin has developed can't be replicated. I'm not even sure I can learn anything from him other than what's in his heart. Techniques, strategies, etc., all that seem to be a very secondary issue. Anyone who reads this book carefully, of course, knows that what is happening at Mosaic is a direct result of what has happened to its leadership. As I read Erwin, I sometimes despair of ever being the kind of leader that he describes here. I do not have the skills, the heart, the passion that he talks about. I would LOVE to have all of those things, but I don't. So my issue is not so much about how to replicate Erwin's heart in my situation, but more about the kind of experiences of Jesus that led Erwin's heart to the point where it is and how do we go about finding our own "unstoppable" heart as God's chosen leaders? I have come to the realization in the past year or so that there is absolutely nothing I can do to change the people around me. God has to do that. But I am deeply concerned that I grow into being the kind of leader who can draw water from the well of life at any time in any place and give it to anybody who is thirsty.

mosaic experiment

From: erwin
Comments

several of your comments or questions ask for a bit of our story. mosaic is over 50 years old. born out of s.b.c. roots we are still affiliated. church had many great features when i came 10 years ago, yet faced some real crisis. it had been stuck at 500(adults and children- about 300 adults) and had been declining for 4 years. they were in about \$1,000,000 debt, deficit of nearly \$90,000 and a little more than a thousand dollars in the bank. low morale was no small contributor to the situation. terry, i have never heard anyone describe l.a. as older, settled suburban!the l.a. i know is highly fluid and unstable. the average age of mosaic is 24.4 and we are 82% single. 10% of our attendance, 20%of our "lay" staff are overseas mostly in the ten forty window. we currently have about 350 tentmakers who are are mosaic staff. there are about a dozen salaried team leaders who serve our staff and communtiy. weekly attendance is about 1200- 1000+ adults. we face the challenge of a city full of competing opportunities and temptations. you really have to work at insuring that what the church of jesus christ is doing is more compelling than what the world is offering. i am not talking about surface level entertainment, but a purpose and action more worthy of your time ,talents, and energy. obviously i am not the founder of this church, but in many ways i am the founder of mosaic. we were once the first southern baptist church of east los angeles, also bethel baptist church, also the church on brady. the transition was no small endeavor. it really took at least five years because we made some poor leadership and transitional decisions. i really began by painting a picture of what the church could look like if we risked everything and followed christ relentlessly. i think that i genuinely attempted to model what i was talking about and that made a huge difference. an apostolic ethos is certainly about passion, but it is more than that. it is all about what you are passionate about. this ethos is born out of the heart of god. it emerges when our values reflect the character of god and our passions express the heart of god. russ i have to dissent with your conclusions. i appreciate your affirmation on a personal level but i never would have written the book if i agreed there is nothing to be learned or that the truths and principles were not replicatable. i am convinced the principle role of leadership is to create and shape ethos. i do believe values can change. i do not agree that there is nothing you can do. this is the role ,responsibility, and calling of spiritual leadership. you were influence by others. we all have been! our parents, teachers, friends, enemies,have all been a significant part in shaping our values. don't give up. don't give in. don't settle for less. yes our hearts are the key. in our hearts we must believe we can make a difference- yes even change the world. the most formitive influence in my life has genuinely been the bible. god's invitaion to imagine,dream,journey,adventure,expore,risk,change, and become continuously compells me forward.

Re: mosaic experiment

From: Bruce Cole
Comments

Erwin -- thanks for detailing your story, especially as I haven't read Unstoppable Force yet -- but will be shortly. You wrote: "the transition was no small endeavor. it really took at least five years because we made some poor leadership and transitional decisions." At the risk of asking a painful question, would you be willing to detail some of those poor leadership and transitional decisions. I ask because I'm in that season right now of emerging from some poor decisions and would like to head off some others by learning from your experiences. Thanks. Bruce

Re: mosaic experiment

From: Randy--ICC, KY
Comments

Erwin, Thanks for the overview. It helps to have some background. Can you tell us some about the vision of mosaic? What unique way does God channel the passion we've all been talking about? What specific calling does God have for Mosaic to make disciples of Jesus that is unique for the community? How was this revealed or come to be? Did it arise from your "doing" kind of like an action/reflection model? Was it revealed through prayer? Revealed to you? To the corporate community? To the leadership? Can you share more with us what this this critical component of your identity is and how it came to be?

mosaic experiment

From: erwin
Comments

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Re: mosaic experiment

From: Russ Noland
Comments

I didn't mean to imply that there was nothing we could learn from your book, Erwin. And I also don't discount the fact that we are able to "influence" situations and people. But...I do believe that it is our hearts that makes the difference and that without that, no amount of program, process, or tweaking the system will matter.

Church ecology

From: Jeff Ling
Comments

Greetings and thanks for your wonderful book. A few years ago when we were dreaming of planting our church, a friend told me that as he wa praying, the words "a unique ecology" kept coming to him. We adopted that phase as our by-line. When your book came out I was quite interested in your "ecological" look at the church. In our particular setting we practice a hybrid of traditional and contemporary styles of worship. We refer to it as the ecological principle of the old feeding the new - i.e. - any ecosystem feeds off what has died. If everything of the past is stripped away then an ecosystem would perish. On the other hand, fresh growth is essential for life as well. Therefore we use a great deal of current music, images, video, interactive prayer and teaching but also have weekly communion, apostles creed, etc... Just curious as to your take on this. Gratefully, Jeff

Changing

From: Mike Thompson
Comments

I joined this discussion late, and have spent about an hour catching up. I am like many church leaders: I was raised in a traditional church, taught traditional ways do doing things at college and a denominational seminary, and plugged into the institutional machine. But I know from experience we can change. I became discontented with what I had been taught about "doing church" and began a journey that has taken several years. While I grew and changed, I sought to take others with me. As a result, we are trying to transition a 100+ year old church. It isn't easy, but our passions and beliefs can be changed. I have learned from Bill and Tom, Bill Hybels, and Eddie Hammett, as well as others, including things said on this forum this week. To the brother who seems down, the principles can be learned and transferred, and so can

some practices you learn. Thanks for letting me say this. And thank God He can pour new wine into us!

Re: Changing

From: Randy--ICC
Comments

Mike, Thanks for your comments. I really resound with your encouragement that change can happen and that we can create new wineskins for the new wine. It takes time, willingness to absorb criticism without losing heart, and God moments which we can't construct, but simply believe for and receive. Under the issue of not losing heart, failure isn't our deadliest enemy, in fact, its often a "friend in disguise." Our real enemy is loss of heart and vision, an enemy which will only conquer us if we succumb to it. (I Cor. 15: 57-58)

Church Ecology

From: Larry, Findlay
Comments

I just joined and was unable to read Erwin's book. I am curious about any more information you might share on church ecology.

Reaching the emerging culture

From: Erwin McManus, Los Angeles
Comments

Re: Reaching the emerging culture First of all, Terry, thank you for your response. You sound like a pretty insightful sociologist to me. It is interesting to describe what are perhaps the newest formations of our culture within the context of the oldest and most established areas. The old urban centers are becoming the new cosmopolitan. To be effective in this context requires a reexamination of the entire dynamic of community. We are often asked if we are a community church. In fact, those who are concerned about the city but have a suburban paradigm use a non-existent template to understand ministry in the city. In the city it is not so much about reaching your community, but creating one. While reaching a community is a great challenge, creating one is far more complex. Several of you asked about our transition. Perhaps the most significant mistake we made was that the former pastor, who was here 24 years before me, remained as an elder and held the position of the teaching pastor (although I did all the teaching). He was only 49 years old at the time of the transition, so it wasn't a retirement scenario. Though we held many common heart values, our approach, style and rate of change and implementation dramatically differed. Things worked well as long as I was furthering the vision and ethos he had established. Once that began to change as a result of my own personal leadership, things went bad fast. We underestimated the inseparable nature of spiritual leadership and individuals. You can give up your position, your title, really any formal authority, and if you have 25 years of leadership credibility, you have not relinquished

leadership in that context. It was not necessary for him to oppose me or any of my actions -to simply remain neutral or indifferent was enough to turn people in the opposite direction. If he expressed concern, doubt or disapproval, it was nothing less than polarized leadership. The elders of the congregation who had all been appointed by him and had known him for decades eventually asked him to resign. As you may well know, this is unheard of. It's always the new guy that gets the boot. These men, though his best friends, were committed both to my leadership and the future of the church. Russ, I more than understand discouragement and frustration and I appreciate your openness. I wasn't so much speaking to defend the book, but really to call you out to be the leader you long to be. I hear your heart and leadership is all about who we are and who we are becoming. I do think many of us misunderstand the power of influence and of our role in God's work. All of us have seen how Satan influences people to influence others. The power of evil is most rapidly transferred through human influence. It is critical that we do not relinquish this war. The battle is to win the hearts of men – to not only change their minds, but in that sense, change their hearts. I am convinced this is the key to transitioning in the congregation. You are right when you say it is not about programs, processes or tweaking the system. Until the heart of the church has been won, all the rest is meaningless. Jeff, the language that you guys adapted on a unique ecology is awesome. I love it. The analogy that the new ecosystem feeds off the old, i.e., the immersing generation needs to eat the old generation to thrive, is pretty vivid. A little Stephen King-ish, but absolutely fantastic. I just hope I like it this much when I'm really old. You're imagery falls right in place with the prequel entitled "Origins." I have a longer work on this same chapter called the "Genesis Design." I totally agree with your observations. To expand a little further on what are the keys of transitioning a church's value system, let me take a moment and focus on strategic battles and sacred blessings. Perhaps two of the greatest tools you have been entrusted with as a leader is the privilege of setting the agenda and affirming ministry. I think many pastors lose the culture because they are afraid to engage in conflict. In fact, I would go as far as to say that pastors who avoid conflict perpetually live in a ministry that is essentially in conflict. When you avoid conflict, your stress level can peak to an overwhelming level. You live in continuous fear and anxiety over when the hammer will fall. Whenever there is an opportunity to battle for biblical values, spiritual leaders step into it with courage. People know what you really care about, what you're serious about and where the church is really going by what you're willing to fight for. If your job is more important than your calling, no one will follow you into a dangerous future. In the same way, as a spiritual leader you have the power of blessing. What you affirm will dynamically shape the future culture of your church. Of course, the most powerful affirmation is who is entrusted with leadership. If you choose leaders who are doctrinally sound but not missional, information will become the highest value of the church. If you empower and bless those who passionately pursue Christ, the message will begin to get across that observers will not lead followers of Christ. Using your public time on Sunday morning to affirm through story and testimony the kind of life that should be admired and the kind of actions that should be emulated is a powerful tool for shaping ethos. -erwin

Re: Reaching the emerging culture

From: Wesley
Comments

ERWIN said, "In the city it is not so much reaching the community, but creating one." I'm not so sure that is restricted to "the city". I understand the statement, having been born and raised (36

of 48 years)in LA, but having served in rural congregations I see the same need here. The challenge or "conflict", as was referred to later in the post, is the lack of conflict. In the rural context it seems conflict is avoided at all cost by the churches ("we better not upset the pastor or he/she will leave and we never know when we'll get another one.) This conflict has been avoided for decades and is deeply entrenched. Pastors tend to love this scenario at first, but like scum on bad beer, conflict always rises to the surface. The EBA Addiction Test brings out all sorts of interesting demons. Naming the demon/addiction is tantamount to leading worship in the buff. Holding people accountable for bad behavior is unheard of. Calling people to go with Jesus into the mission field is upsetting the apple cart by bringing in undesirables, poor, shaved heads, pierced bodies, foul language. I'm inclined to think that the challenge of creating a community begins with the language we use, the prayers we pray, the vision we unrelentingly cast; because we pastor/preachers do have a tremendous amount of clout. The hurdles may be different than in the urban context, they may have a deeper root system, but they must be uprooted and we must create new community around a deep passion for Jesus and his passion for the poor, the outcast and any who will respond to the message. Never forgetting that we may have to shake the dust off and move on.

Re: Reaching the emerging culture

From: Cathy Townley
Comments

Erwin Said: "I do think many of us misunderstand the power of influence and of our role in God's work." From Cathy: Erwin, you had several pearls in your long post, but I grabbed onto this one because it's my current awareness / observation of stumbling blocks for many pastors in the field. I do believe it's common for pastor/leaders to grossly underestimate the power of influence they have over others, simply because of the Gospel -- not because of themselves; their faith and devotion to Jesus gives them enormous power that must be embraced, not rejected. When it isn't embraced, I've seen leaders at one end of the spectrum not wish to "control," and thus, crumble at the tiniest whim of someone in their congregation; at the other end, I've seen them leave people in leadership positions who are not really believers, and who have a truly evil agenda, to the point of destruction --- and the leader leaves them there because they think the system dictates that they must. I don't mean to be cruel, but I believe those are excuses that pastor/leaders adopt out of fear, perhaps, or something deeper... maybe even a crisis of faith. Anyway, I'm glad you said that. My problem, as I oversee pastors in the field for our church planting work.. I don't always know how to best "confront" the situation. I've actually told pastors they have far more power than they think they do, and that's not always received very well. However, it did sink in with one person, and that's good. Thanks Erwin. You're insightful! Cathy Townley

Re: the power of the Gospel

From:
Comments

Cathy, I couldn't agree with you more. I would say that in many if not most cases pastors now find themselves in situation where the pathology of the congregation will bury them if the power

of the Gospel doesn't override everyone's agenda. The call to grow disciples and manifest the kingdom is too important to abdicate leadership for whatever reason--clergy and laity alike. We are in a time where pastors don't settle this fundamental issue in their hearts and act on it that they will find that they can't even survive, much less thrive. I believe that Erwin said it so well in his post, "In fact, I would go as far as to say that pastors who avoid conflict perpetually live in a ministry that is essentially in conflict. When you avoid conflict, your stress level can peak to an overwhelming level. You live in continuous fear and anxiety over when the hammer will fall. Whenever there is an opportunity to battle for biblical values, spiritual leaders step into it with courage. People know what you really care about, what you're serious about and where the church is really going by what you're willing to fight for. If your job is more important than your calling, no one will follow you into a dangerous future." We must know that, while love conquers all and the weapons of our warfare aren't carnal but mighty through God, we are in spiritual warfare. This is one of the primary reasons for intercessory prayer, and squaring with the reality and need for it can make the difference between moving into God's great horizon, or ending up in psychotherapy with nothing but disappointment and bitterness toward the church community. Any thoughts??

Re: the power of the Gospel

From: Randy--ICC, KY.
Comments

Sorry, I forgot to identify myself in the last post

Re: Reaching the emerging culture

From: Randy--ICC, KY
Comments

Erwin, Thanks for sharing more about your story. I was intrigued by your comment, "In the city it is not so much about reaching your community, but creating one. While reaching a community is a great challenge, creating one is far more complex." I minister in a growing formerly rural transitioning to suburban area, so the city dynamic is distant to me other than the ministry I have done in the urban parts of Cincinnati. I got to thinking, while in the city, it's perhaps even more incumbent to create a community rather than simply reach the community, doesn't this to some degree apply to all church communities? By this I mean that God brings credibility to a church community before He brings visibility. Churches have to discern, describe, and develop their genetic code in order to have what it takes to reach their community. Churches all across the theological spectrum from Saddleback, to Ginhamsburg, to Willow Creek, to the Potter's house have all created a unique community through which to interface with their wider community. What do you think?

Thanks, Erwin

From: Warren Bird

Comments

Erwin, I've enjoyed reading all your posts this week, and want to thank you for their great insight. Thanks too for writing UNSTOPPABLE FORCE, which is really powerful. Mosaic remains my top "must visit" experience whenever I go to Los Angeles. God's best to you. -- Warren Bird.

Re: Thanks, Erwin

From: Randy, ICC, KY
Comments

Yes, thanks Erwin.

Wrapping it up...

From: Erwin McManus
Comments

Hey, guys. I'm in Miami right now talking on my cell phone to Holly, who works with me, and she's typing everything I'm saying to you from LA to wherever you are. Don't we live in an amazing world in an amazing time? Today is Friday and the weekend will soon be upon us, so my plan is today will be our last day. So if you have a burning question or comment, let me encourage you to send it in now. The conversation this week has been really enjoyable. Cathy, I shared with several of our leaders that you have incredible insight. And if you communicate verbally as clearly and powerfully as you do through text, you must be a wonderful speaker. Let me ask you guys two questions: One is, what is the greatest leadership challenges either you face or you are seeing other pastors face? And two, is there a contribution that Mosaic or myself could make to help you and your work? Wesley, one of the challenges for pastors in rural communities is that people live in the country for a reason. They choose a place where change is slow and the future can be avoided – at least to a degree. When a young pastor moves to these areas to bring change that is exactly what they don't want. In some sense it's like trying to bring the city to the country. If they wanted the city, they would have moved there. I think it is helpful to remember that people do not only choose the place they live, but also the time in which they live. Most people choose to live in the past. Most pastors are not trying to lead their churches into the future, but into the present. Cathy, one of the reasons pastors often recoil when challenged to bring conflict... I mean change is that they genuinely do not want the change that they verbalize. One of the subtle arts in leadership is making louder the voices we want to hear. Certainly the voice of Jesus is loud enough for any pastor to stand from a credible place to lead the church into God's future. In Isaiah 28:26 it says, "His God instructs him and teaches him the right way." Shouldn't it describe us? Isn't this the mark of true spiritual leadership to know the heart of God, to hear him speak and to follow him regardless of the outcome? And I do think that many pastors step into ministry with a radiant picture of the church filled with ideals and ideas, but they thought that the task of leading the church would bring them the admiration of God's people before it brought them the disdain and reproach of many they tried to lead. Often we are prepared for spiritual warfare outside of the

church and blindsided by the spiritual warfare inside the church. -erwin PS –I'll check the postings one more time at 7:30 pm eastern time. PSS - hi, warren. It's good to hear from you.

Re: Wrapping it up...

From: Cathy Townley
Comments

Hey Erwin, sorry i didn't respond sooner, i'm on the road today... anyway, here's my greatest leadership challenge: trying to work contextually with the leaders I supervise, i.e., to have the energy to pull it off, as the numbers increase of those I supervise. It's intense work, and every context is different. I don't see how i can effectively supervise more than about 10 or 15 leaders, yet our vision is huge. I love it, yet, it is demanding. The greatest leadership challenge I see in the field is exactly what we've been talking about on this forum. It's leaders who are tentative, and afraid. I think that's a massive issue. There are very few leaders who are truly apostolic, and they are SO FUN. I think being apostolic is BECOMING apostolic; for most leaders, it's taught, or captured. And finally, what you can do for us... I / we are in the process of developing an indigenous church planting network in which we identify, assess, coach, place and launch mission developers and their communities of faith. We'd love to network with you. I'll be in touch... Cathy Townley

Re: Wrapping it up...

From: Max Wilkins - New Hope Oahu
Comments

Hi Erwin and All, I have been in transition for about six months and have just rejoined the EBA Community (I missed it). I logged on today for the first time only to discover that I am at the tail end of this wonderful week. Erwin, I so appreciate you, the book (one of the most provocative and challenging I have read in a while), and Mosaic. It was good to have some of your people at DCAT this year. (I got to have lunch with your wife...you are blessed!) Thanks so much for sharing your heart this week. I also just finished listening to the four part sermon series you did on Loving the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. It was incredibly powerful and helpful to me. So...from a long way away, thanks for being one of my mentors. There is so much I would like to share in response to the week's posts, but it is nearly over, so I will only add two things. I loved what Erwin said about the urban church needing to create community. At New Hope - right in the heart of Honolulu - that is exactly what we are trying to do. In the new movie Lilo and Stitch, set here in Hawaii, the character Lilo gives a definition of the Hawaiian word "Ohana". (It is usually defined as "family") She says, "Ohana means family. No one gets left out. No one gets left behind." We are trying to create Ohana here. We will not compromise the values that drive us, but a spirit of Ohana and a community where healthy relationships are valued very highly are what we are about. I was touched by the unique "ecology" (that discussion was very cool) of New Hope from the first time I set foot on our campus. I truly think establishing a unique, life giving community within an urban area...a community that shapes values and frees up people to live out what God has placed within them, is the only way to be the church in our cities. I also liked all the stuff about passion. I have often said that belief as Jesus speaks about it is so much more than assent to a

proposition. I think when Paul speaks of heartfelt belief he comes closer to describing what you were all driving at. What is it that we believe enough that we would be willing to stake our lives on it? I guess that would be whatever we are most passionate about. One key, however, is what drives our passion? Because, truthfully, as Paul so well illustrates in Romans 7, when we are outside God's saving grace and not operating in His Spirit, we love sin. We are passionate about sin. (Thanks Erwin for reminding me of this powerful truth in your sermon series.) The only way we can replace our love for sin is to fall passionately in love with God and the Kingdom God desires. (Okay, I know I am rambling, but remember you all got a week's head start on me! Here is the point) One of the things I love about New Hope is our desire to create self feeding disciples through the practice of daily mentoring by the Holy Spirit. The desire is, instead of having the congregation be "fed" by the pastors, we try to teach people to directly feed from God. As a result, God DOES pour His Spirit on all flesh, and visions and dreams are commonplace here. The passions of many of our leaders flow from this daily time with the Holy Spirit and their deepening love of God. The result is not one vision, but a community of visionaries, where dreams are released and where passions flow. It is NOT pretty. Most of the time it feels like utter chaos. If God is the God who always brings order out of chaos, then God has abandoned us! The only constant here is change. However, it sure is cool seeing people discover passions they never knew they had, and dreaming dreams that are bigger than they thought possible. We have a LONG way to go here, and there is much to learn. That is why I am so grateful for forums like this and opportunities to learn from and with all of you. But, my experience here is teaching me that when we can get up the courage to move passionately into the unknown, following as best we can the pillar of fire, God can do some pretty incredible things. Okay, enough rambling. Mike, I hope all is well with you. It was good to see you at a distance a few weeks ago. Bill, I am glad to be back. I promised to stay in touch. I will email you next week. Blessings all, Max

Re: Wrapping it up...

From: Wesley
Comments

Thanks Erwin, it has been a good and provocative week. Greatest Challenge? A) To be able to cast a vision that genuinely connects with folks. B) To learn how to connect in a meaningful way with those outside the church. C) Developing a Christian character that is full of the fruit of the Spirit, in particular patience and endurance. We live in an age where hungry patience may be the most valuable virtue. What can you do? Keep writing, visioning, pushing the envelope, losing your self in Jesus, poking, prodding, searching, dreaming.

As the week ends...

From: Erwin McManus
Comments

Hey, guys, this has been a really enjoyable experience. Even eavesdropping on the rest of you interacting with each other has been great fun. All of you are full of insights and obvious passion for Christ. Max, thanks for logging on, even if it was at the last minute. Those of us at Mosaic love the community at New Hope. We greatly admire the leadership there and are

envious of your geography. I might be open to doing some personal mentoring for you guys... To Russ, Cathy, Wesley and the rest of you who have shared throughout the week, I am reminded of the important lesson that comes from grilling out. If you spread the coals before their hot, the flame goes out. But if you press the coals together, the heat sustains and generates a fire. As we've all shared together this week, prayerfully all of us have become hotter coals. One final personal thought about my own journey. The experiences that have changed my life, that have shaped my heart and that have fueled the fires of passion within me were all born out of faith adventures that only begin after I was willing to take a significant risk. This is sort of a catch-22. The courage to risk only seems to come from the context of courageous risk-taking. When you step out and trust in God, the courage to walk that path comes not before, sometimes not even early in the process, but right on time. By the way, if I could make a couple of commercials, we have an Origins conference which unwraps the content of An Unstoppable Force and deals specifically with creating an apostolic ethos scheduled for next May, 15-17, 2003. We'd love for you guys to come and would greatly appreciate you getting the word out. Marketing is pretty much word of mouth. And just a heads up, in the fall, I have a second book coming out called Seizing Your Divine Moment through Thomas Nelson Publishers. I think it will be a great help to ignite passion among the laos, not to mention those in pastoral leadership. It's basically a book on living as a spiritual pioneer. I want to thank Bill especially for inviting me to be a part of this forum. What a great learning experience it has been for me. If you'd like to know what's going on at Mosaic, just go to mosaic.org. If you want to get on the mailing list, just go to the Origins project. The Lord bless you all. Advancing the Invisible Kingdom, Erwin

Re: As the week ends...
From: Max Wilkins - New Hope Oahu
Comments

He Erwin, Please feel free to come out and mentor me any time you want! We have a guest room, and it is the only room in the house with an air-conditioner! You can walk to Kailua beach, the number one beach in the world! Thanks for sharing this week. By the way (if by chance you are reading this), your post says the Origins Conference is May, 2003. The Mosaic website has it listed for November 7-9,2002. Are there two different conferences or is one a misprint? Blessings, Max
