

November 1, 2020
Cor Chmielecki

Sermon Series: The Gospel Changes Everything

Sermon Title: The Church as a biblically faithful, counter-cultural, and culturally relevant community

As a church, we want to help you with two things:

- 1. Connect with God.**
- 2. Connect with each another.**

From the onset, each of those goals is opposed.

Why do we struggle in connecting with God?

- a. He is infinite. We are not.
- b. He is eternal. We are not.
- c. He is unchanging. We are not.
- d. He is present everywhere. We are not.
- e. All of his needs are met. I am constantly reminded of my lack.
- f. He is completely holy. We are...okay, I'll speak for myself...I am not.
- g. He is perfectly loving and just and gentle and fierce and compassionate and severe and kind...and I'm much less of each of those on my best days.

Why do we struggle in connecting with one another? So. Many. Reasons.

- a. Covid.
- b. Politics. Election results. Maybe...eventually...actual governance!?
- c. Racism.
- d. Abuses of power.
- e. Sexism.
- f. Broken trust.
- g. Economic inequalities.
- h. Lying.
- i. Fears about the future. Fears over finances. Fears over education.
- j. We attempt to overcome these by connecting via social media...and it fails. So we keep scrolling hoping against hope that at the end of this infinite scroll you will find the connection your heart is longing for.
- k. Even before Covid, our nation was experiencing an epidemic of loneliness.

Friends, you are not alone.

The main idea: If the Church generally, or if Hope Community Church Downtown specifically, is trustworthy as a biblically faithful, counter-cultural, and culturally relevant community, more and more people will connect with God and each other.

Connecting with God

How does a church, how does our church seek to be biblically faithful, counter-cultural, and culturally relevant community in **connecting with God**?

To be a Biblically faithful community

- God made it all perfect. Sin marred it all making it imperfect. Christ, who is perfect, died to redeem us all. Now, through his Spirit, he is Lord of all. One day, all will be made perfect again.
- Titus 2:11, Eph 5:25

To be a Counter-cultural community

- The call to follow Jesus - Luke 5:10–11¹⁰ and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people."¹¹ So they pulled their boats up on shore, **left everything** and followed him.
- Luke 18:28–30²⁸ Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!"²⁹ "Truly I tell you," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God³⁰ will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life."
- Believers need to provide a picture of what God designed and intended. This will often not fit with the forms found in the unredeemed culture. Ed Stetzer

To be a Culturally relevant community

- Matthew 11:28–30²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
- If we are going to offer the unsaved a new life, we should offer them a new place to grow in that life. This isn't a place of escape. It is a place of transformation. Ed Stetzer
- Luke 10:41–42⁴¹ "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things,⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Connecting with each other

How does a church, how does *our* church seek to be biblically faithful, counter-cultural, and culturally relevant community in **connecting with each other**?

Biblically faithful

- As God's chosen people: 1 Peter 2:9, Col 3:12, 1 Thess 1:4, 2 Thess 2:13
- As the temple of God: 1 Peter 2:5, Eph 2:19-22, Heb 3:6
- As the body of Christ: Eph 1:22-23, Rom 12:4-5, 1 Cor. 12:27, Eph 4:11-13

- With Christ as the head/foundation: 1 Cor 3:11, Mt 7:24-25, 21:42, Acts 4:11, Eph 2:20, Col 1:18
- As pillar of truth: 1 Tim 3:15
- As set apart and holy: Rom 1:7, 15:25, 1 Cor 6:1, 14:33, Eph 1:1, Jude 3
- As heirs of God: Rom 8:17, Gal 3:29, Gal 4:7, Titus 3:7, Heb 1:14
- This is about recognizing the fact that the truth of God is unchanging. He has revealed His truth through Scripture. We don't get to change it so we can reach more people. As has been said, "What you win them with is what you win them to."
 - What this means is win them with a show...those who come...get a show.
 - If you win them with the promise of food...those who come...get a meal.
 - But if you win them with the message of Christ...those who come...get Jesus. Salvation. Hope. Peace. Freedom from sin. Life everlasting.
- **What unites is greater than what divides us---whatever that means as Americans qualitatively or quantitatively---it is so much truer when it comes to those who share Christ, his Spirit, his gospel.**

Paul's imagery is that we represent a sovereign king from another kingdom. When you plant or develop your church--whether in Mississippi or Manhattan or Madrid--you are establishing an embassy whose purpose is to propagate the good news of the King from another kingdom. This is what it means to live sent. This does not simply mean we go for the good of the city, though it does include good for the city. This does not simply mean loving the poor, though it does include love for the poor. We go for what missiologists call a "transforming mission"...Admittedly the pressure changes as a new church grows. You will feel the pressure to do so many other things, many of them considered to be good ministries. But holding to a missional theology will remind you that the nature of the mission leads to the transmission of the Gospel. It should be true of all churches as they pursue a missional position that they hold the mission of God as primary. Ed Stetzer

Counter-cultural

- Matthew 5:43-45 ⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.
- The church is a counter-cultural enterprise. The culture will say "*this* group, *this* one group right here, 'We love'." Because Jesus loves all we too love all. The church doesn't look at anyone and declare "Enemy!" Political parties do. Those with power and those without power do. Those of various ideologies do.

Culturally relevant

- WARNINGS
 - I've often said, "If the 1950's came back, a lot of our churches would be ready to go." Ed Stetzer
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/november/contextualization-at-home-how-should-we-do-church.html>

- Regardless of the cause, the gospel message has now become “increasingly incomprehensible” to people. Keller, Timothy. Center Church (p. 190). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.
- The Bible and God are relevant in this culture and in every other culture. He and His gospel are relevant. Always. We are the roadblocks to relevancy, not the Bible. We live in a way that makes God seem irrelevant, but He is not to blame. Stetzer (article 1 above)
- Being known more for what we are AGAINST.
- Relevant educators use what is cultural to say what is timeless. Tim Elmore

The main idea: If the Church generally, or if Hope Community Church Downtown specifically, is trustworthy as a biblically faithful, counter-cultural, and culturally relevant community, more and more people will connect with God and each other.

- a. Covid.
- b. Politics and ELECTION RESULTS
- c. Racism.
- d. Abuses of power.
- e. Sexism.
- f. Broken trust.
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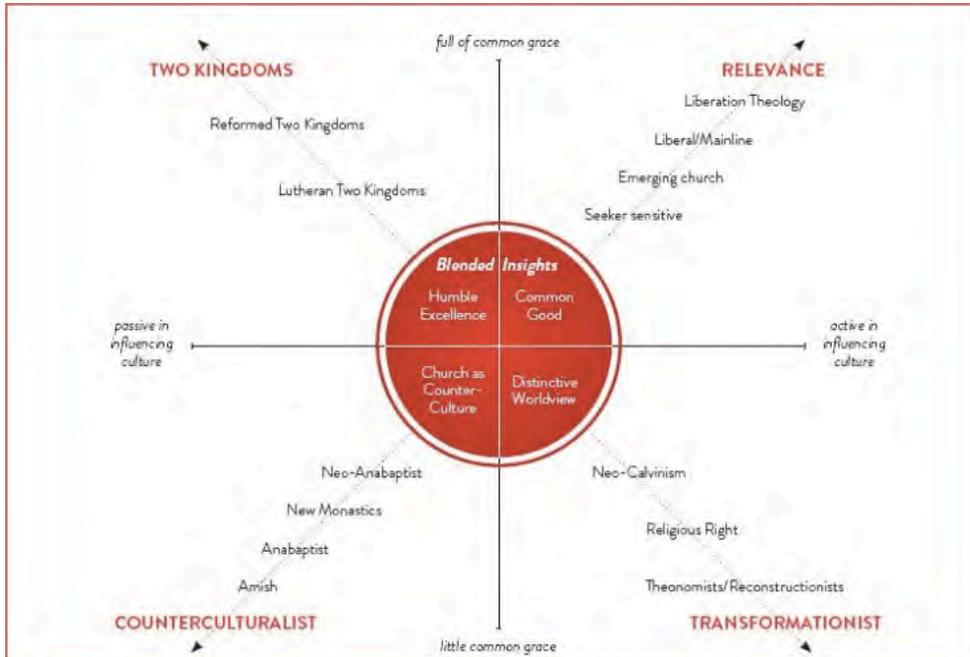
Struggle. Struggle. Struggle. Spiral. Spiral. Spiral. We so want to connect but deep connection can be elusive, made even more difficult by physical distancing and ad nauseum use of screens.

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See also:

- <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2011/august/cultural-relevance-and-living-sent-developing-missional.html>
- <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/december/contextualization-at-home-how-should-we-speak-truth.html>

Center Church and Keller address cultural engagement in chapters 15-18. His most well-known approach is the following diagram. It is illustrative.



All human activity and production are done for some end, with some vision, on the basis of some understanding of ultimate reality and the meaning of life — and this understanding will affect how the activity and production are carried out. Therefore, cultural production is something Christians should do, and they should do it in a way that accords with the glory of God. In other words, they should fully engage culture. Keller, Timothy. *Center Church* (p. 186). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Patrick Ray:

Secular leftists 10 years ago: The idea of original sin is so disturbing and shame-inducing.

Secular leftists today: I'm a racist, you're a racist, and there's nothing we can do about it except make ourselves a little less racist.

Fundamental to the proclamation of the gospel is being sent *to people*--and that means we must understand those people. Cultural relevance is understanding and communicating with the people God has sent you to reach. People are afraid of that term because it seems to be a compromise. It need not be. Stetzer

Connecting with God

Connecting with each other



The Gospel Changes Everything



**The Church: Biblically Faithful,
Culturally Relevant, and
Counter-Cultural Communities**

Fall
2020
Series

The church is to be:

- (1) Biblically Faithful,
- (2) Counter-Cultural, and
- (3) Culturally Relevant.

Connecting with God

Connecting with each other

Connecting with God – biblically faithful

Titus 2:11

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.

Connecting with God – biblically faithful

Ephesians 5:25

Christ loved the church and
gave himself up for her.

Connecting with God – counter-cultural

Luke 5:10-11

Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.”

So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Connecting with God – counter-cultural

Luke 18:28–30

²⁸ Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!” ²⁹ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God ³⁰ will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.”

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This will often not fit with the forms found in the unredeemed culture.

Ed Stetzer
Author, Speaker, Researcher, Church Planter and Missiologist
Executive Director of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College



Connecting with God – culturally relevant

Matthew 11:28–30

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

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Luke 10:41-42

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Connecting with God

Connecting with each other

Connecting with each other – biblically faithful

“Jesus is ideal and wonderful,
but you Christians, you are not like him.”

Indian philosopher named Bara Dada,
quote appears to be from the mid-1920s:

Connecting with each other – biblically faithful

As God's chosen people: 1 Peter 2:9, Col 3:12, 1 Thess 1:4,
2 Thess 2:13

As the temple of God: 1 Peter 2:5, Eph 2:19-22, Heb 3:6

As the body of Christ: Eph 1:22-23, Rom 12:4-5, 1 Cor. 12:27, Eph
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With Christ as the head/foundation: 1 Cor 3:11, Mt 7:24-25, 21:42,
Acts 4:11, Eph 2:20, Col 1:18

As pillar of truth: 1 Tim 3:15

As set apart and holy: Rom 1:7, 15:25, 1 Cor 6:1, 14:33, Eph 1:1,
Jude 3

As heirs of God: Rom 8:17, Gal 3:29, Gal 4:7, Titus 3:7, Heb 1:14

Connecting with each other – biblically faithful

“What you win them with
is what you win them to.”

Connecting with each other – counter-cultural

Matthew 5:43–45

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

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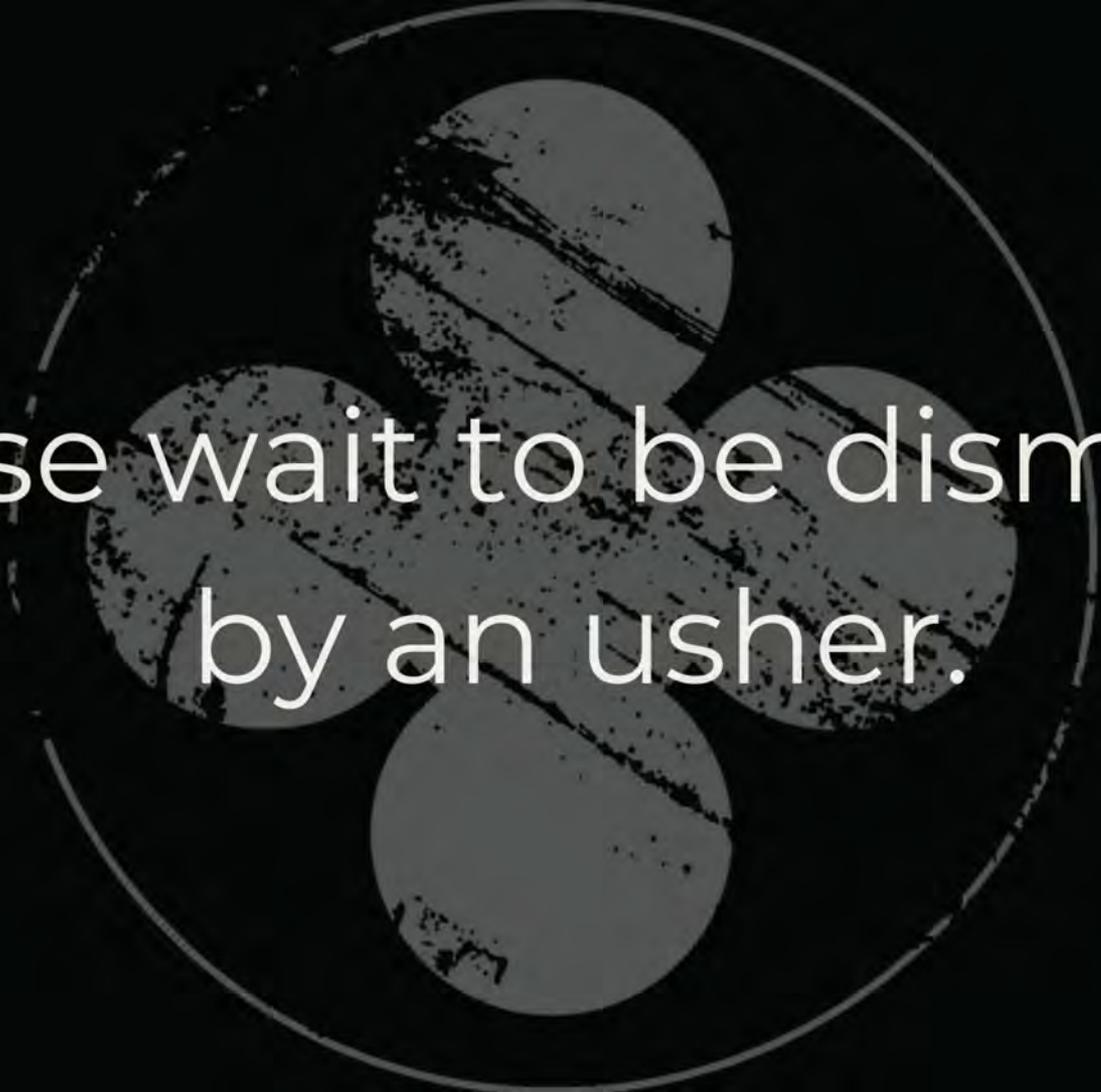
Connecting with each other – culturally relevant

Luke 2:9-11

⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

Are we committed, by the Spirit of Christ,
to being this type of community?

- (1) Biblically Faithful,
- (2) Counter-Cultural, and
- (3) Culturally Relevant.



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