

## Four Reasons Why Communicating Christianity is Increasingly Difficult

This talk examines four reasons Christians are finding it increasingly difficult to communicate the truth claims of Christ to those in the West. It considers the cultural shift in four areas: (1) conversation, (2) rational thought, (3) commitment, and (4) a view of the sacred. Each one is viewed against the backdrop of the Gospel. The talk concludes with some suggestions for overcoming these cultural obstacles.

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### I. A review of evangelism in last 75 years

#### A. Examining the wall

Jacques Ellul: *The gospel no longer penetrates. We seem to be confronted by a blank wall. Now if we want to go further, either we must find a door, or we must break down the wall. But first we must investigate this wall, in order to find out whether there is a door: thus we need to explore this world in which we are living. If there is not a door (as seems to me to be the case) then we must find (or create) the instruments we need in order to make a breach in it.*"(Presence of the Kingdom, 1989)

#### B. Ideas Have Consequences

##### 1. Why it matters

#### C. Importance of a vision of reality

##### 1. The rejection of Medieval realism

##### 2. Two visions of reality controlling the intellectual world

###### a. Anti-realism (postmodernity)

###### b. Naturalistic realism (science)

##### 3. The importance of philosophy in evangelism

II. Thesis: Understanding implications associated with the vision of reality controlling the intellectual life of any society is crucial to developing approaches for the proclamation of the Gospel.

A. Four cultural concerns challenging evangelism:

1. A general decrease in conversation skills

a. The role of media technology

b. Effect on community

c. Possible solutions:

i. Avoid functionalistic language in evangelism

ii. Rethink uncritical use of media technology

iii. Give space for reflection/solitude

iv. Attend to conversation in the home, church, and community

2. The general decline of rational thought

a. Relativism makes everybody right

b. People cannot follow the logic of an argument

c. Possible solutions:

i. Re-think how to use theistic arguments today

ii. Consider imaginative apologetics

iii. Give attention to Schaeffer's view of pre-evangelism

3. The increased expectation for options
  - a. Technology gives options
  - b. The loss of commitment and sacrifice
  - c. Possible solutions:
    - i. Present Christ as a person, not an option
    - ii. Structure church services and evangelism to avoid encouraging the thirst for options
4. The loss of the sacred
  - a. Everything has equal status – democratization of society
  - b. Functionalism prevails
  - c. Truth, Goodness, and Beauty recede
  - d. Possible solutions:
    - i. Avoid mechanistic language with the Gospel
    - ii. Stress Truth, Goodness, and Beauty
    - iii. Avoid functionalistic language where Christ is presented on the grounds it will increase one's sociological functional value
    - iv. Pro-actively: in all these areas our homes must practice conversation, rational discussion, sacrifice, and commitment, and live in light of the sacred

***Suggested Readings:***

Postman, Neil. *Technopoly*. New York: Random House, 1993.  
Turkel, Sherry. *Reclaiming Conversation*. New York: Penguin Books, 2016.  
Strate, Lance. *Amazing Ourselves to Death*. Peter Lang, 2014.  
Dreher, Rod. *The Benedict Option*. New York: Penguin, 2017.