

Effective Christian Leadership in the Twenty-First Century

Christian leaders in Europe and the West – whether they are pastors, ministry leaders, or leaders of Christian organisations – face the daunting challenge of ministering the gospel in a post-Christian and secular culture. They need to ensure that they remain faithful to the unchanging apostolic gospel, and yet that they contextualise it for the contemporary world. They often feel that they face an impossible choice between faithfulness and relevance. In order to meet these challenges they need to ensure that their ministries are driven by clear priorities set by the Bible, which will enable them to differentiate between core doctrines that are non-negotiable and mere cultural practices where flexibility is essential. Bible-centred leaders therefore need to walk a careful path as biblically-grounded evangelicals between a fundamentalist legalism that is culturally anachronistic and a progressive liberalism which deviates from the gospel itself. This workshop will examine the theological and missional priorities and principles of the early church, especially of the apostle Paul, and reflect on how these can equip us to face our contemporary challenges.

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I. The Challenge of Gospel Ministry in a Post-Christian Culture

- A. Attitudes to truth
- B. Attitudes to the church
- C. Attitudes to human sexuality
- D. Attitudes to personal freedom

II. How are some evangelicals accommodating the gospel to the culture?

- A. A missional justification
- B. Rejecting Biblical teaching
- C. Reinterpreting Biblical teaching

D. Marginalizing Biblical teaching

E. Reducing the gospel message

III. How are some evangelicals failing to engage with the culture?

A. A faithfulness/separation justification

B. Confusing gospel life with specific cultural practices and tastes

C. Emphasizing separation rather than gospel mission to the lost

D. Legalism rather than spiritual life

E. Lack of understanding of apologetic challenges

IV. Key areas of potential compromise for evangelicals in our culture

A. The authority and inerrancy of the Bible

B. The propitiatory atonement of the cross

C. The doctrine of creation/historical Adam

D. The sinfulness of sex outside of marriage

E. The wrath of God against sin

F. The exclusiveness of salvation through Jesus

G. The doctrine of justification by faith alone

V. What are the non-negotiable elements of the authentic gospel?

A. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

B. Romans 1:1-4

C. Galatians 1:11-12

D. 2 Timothy 1:13-14

VI. What constitutes false teaching in the New Testament?

A. Denial that Jesus is the Christ – 1 John 2:22

B. Denial that Jesus came in the flesh – 1 John 4:2; 2 John 1:7

C. Denial that Jesus is God

D. Denial that Jesus rose from the dead – 1 Corinthians 15:13

E. Denial of justification by faith alone – Galatians 1:6-10

F. Denial of the second coming to bring judgement – 2 Peter 3:3-7

G. Imposition of Judaizing legalism – Galatians 4:8-11; Philippians 3:2; Colossians 2:16-23

H. Imposition of asceticism – 1 Timothy 4:1-5

I. Acceptance of sexual immorality – 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 6:12-20; 2 Peter 2; Jude; Revelation 2:20-23

VII. What issues are matters of culture on which there is a flexibility in the New Testament?

A. Food – 1 Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14-15

B. Circumcision – Galatians 5:15 & 2:3; Acts 16:3

C. Dress/hairstyle – 1 Corinthians 11:2-14; 1 Peter 3:3-4

VIII. Paul's principle of gospel faithfulness & cultural flexibility in 1 Corinthians

A. 1 Corinthians 1:17 – Gospel preaching

- B. 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 – Sexual immorality in the church
- C. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 – Associating with unbelievers outside the church
- D. 1 Corinthians 8-10 – Food sacrificed to idols
- E. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 – Male and female relationships in church
- F. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 & 11:17-23 – Class issues amongst the congregation
- G. 1 Corinthians 15 – The resurrection

IX. Paul's flexibility in preaching the gospel to different cultural contexts

- A. The same fundamental message
 - Proclaiming Jesus is Lord
 - Authenticated by the resurrection
 - Exposing sin
 - Warning of Judgment
 - Offering forgiveness/salvation
 - Call to repentance and faith
- B. Acts 13:1-43 – to Jewish audience in Pisidian Antioch
- C. Acts 17:16-34 – to Greek/pagan audience in Athens

X. Implications for gospel ministry in Europe today

- A. Our greatest responsibility is to be faithful, not successful
- B. We must preach and teach the apostolic gospel
- C. We must go to where lost people are to be found rather than expecting them to come to us
- D. We must not change the demands of the gospel because people find them objectionable

- E. We must make every apologetic effort to communicate the goodness of the gospel
- F. We must avoid imposing non-Scriptural cultural demands on believers
- G. We must be careful to differentiate expectations of sanctification of new converts and mature believers
- H. We must respect the consciences of others when they are not contrary to Scripture
- I. We must be prepared to make every cultural accommodation to save the lost
- J. We must separate from those who are clearly false teachers

Suggested Readings:

Tim Keller, *Center church Europe: doing balanced gospel-centered ministry in your city*
Wijnen, Uitgeverij Van

D A Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, Zondervan

Kevin DeYoung & Ted Kluck, *Why we are not emergent*, Moody

Ray Ortland, *The Gospel*, Crossway

Bobby Jamieson, *Sound Doctrine*, Crossway

Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches*, Broadman & Holman Publishers

John Stevens, "Gospel Cooperation without Compromise" in *Serving the Church, Reaching the World* (IVP)

Glynn Harrison, *A Better Story*, IVP

Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay*, The Good Book Company

Helpful Blogs Engaging These Issues:

www.thegospelcoalition.org

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/>

<http://www.acts29.com/blog/>

www.9marks.org