

Leading an Externally-Focused, Evangelistic Church

Decisions for Christ should not be rare events but a regular part of church life. How do we communicate the gospel beyond the walls of our churches? This workshop will present a biblical vision for engaging our cities and share an urban church plant's experiments with seeker groups, artistic events, public debates, and cultural production.

René Breuel is the lead pastor of Hopera, a church in Rome, Italy, which started in 2012 and is currently planting its second daughter church. He has an MDiv from Regent College, Canada; an MSt in Creative Writing from Oxford University; and is the author of *The Paradox of Happiness*. He is married to Sarah and is the father of two energetic boys.

“While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him.” Acts 17:16-18

“The Difference between a Genius and an Apostle” ... is: ‘The genius is without authority’ ... This in turn is the category of my whole authorship: to make aware of the religious, the essentially Christian –but ‘without authority’.” Søren Kierkegaard

I. Introduction

- A . Centrality of the local church in God’s mission
- B . To reach nonbelievers and turn them into mature disciples is at the heart of our calling
- C . Witnessing community and preaching that engages culture and nonbelievers
- D . My chapter in the ebook *Movements of the Gospel* presents the wider story

HOW TO

II. Organize seeker groups

- A. They grow out of incarnational evangelism, friendships, and a vibrant witnessing community
- B. Limited initial commitment (for example, 8-week cycles twice a year)
- C. Keep the Christians out, let the seekers search
- D. Ingredients: food, engage a Gospel story, sharing and application

- E. When the Gospel becomes clear, meet them individually and invite them to a decision
 - F. Celebrate decisions and those who invite their friends
- III. Host debates and conversations**
- A. Take the initiative
 - B. Events grow out of relationships and nurture relationships
 - C. Give the event a clear structure (for example: 15-min talks, 7-min responses, 25-min Q & A).
 - D. Have a follow-up process in place for those who want to hear more
 - E. The story of Gianluca
- IV. Host artistic evenings**
- A. See launches and opening nights as opportunities
 - B. Embrace the initiatives that come forward within your church and city
 - C. Aperitivo evenings (food, live music, open mic, interviews, short talk)
- V. Empower professionals, artists, and thinkers**
- A. Engage thinkers and ideas in your preaching – including the professionals within your church
 - B. Honor, empower, and encourage them
 - C. Seek to understand their vision and respect their spiritual and professional journey
 - D. Give them space to experiment and bless their artistic vocation
- VI. Create cultural artifacts**
- A. We need artifacts for all disciplines, levels of proficiency, audiences, and degrees of theological explicitness
 - B. For excellence, embrace a ten-year perspective
 - C. Study, apprentice and fail several times

- D. Keep the flame burning with dead heroes, living models, older brothers/sisters, peers who support you, and younger people who learn from you

TAKE IT HOME : one key idea and one immediate application

Suggested Readings:

Timothy Keller and City to City Europe, *Movements of the Gospel*

Timothy Keller, *How to Reach the West Again*

Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*

Michael Green, *Evangelism through the Local Church*

Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Slatshaker*