

THE CORE VALUE: We value _____ and expect the clear, relevant presentation of Scripture to speak _____ to a _____ culture.

1. Engaging communication is about our _____

2. Clear and relevant is about our _____

3. Life to a dying culture is about our _____

The Take-Off

[Begin by playing Mr. Bean Falls Asleep in Church]

Well, that pretty much sums up the church experience of a lot of people, doesn't it?

Depending on which study you read, you'll find different stats and percentages, but one thing is clear: many people find the church no longer relevant to their lives, and typically the younger the age, the higher the percentage.

Let's see if today we can understand a bit about that problem and what part we can play in turning the tide of culture back to Christ and the church.

Last week we started our series - "@ our core" - by looking at why we value Biblical Truth as part of the UNDENIABLE message of Jesus.

Today, we'll look at another one of our UNDENIABLE values: This one deals with how we handle the message of Jesus.

We value engaging communication and expect the clear, relevant presentation of Scripture to speak life to a dying culture.

1. **ENGAGING COMMUNICATION** is about our methods
 - a. I had a professor in seminary make the following statement: "It should be a sin to bore people with the Bible."
 - b. Apparently, God agrees. Just look at some of the ways that God communicated truth to people who needed to hear it:
 - i. God told Isaiah to spend every day - or at least part of every day - for three years walking around main street stripped and barefoot as an example of what would happen (Isaiah 20:1-3)
 - ii. God told Ezekiel to make and play with toy soldiers as an illustration of what would happen to Israel. Then He had him lie on his left side for 390 days, then flip over and lie on his right side 40 more days. As if that wasn't enough, God told him to cook his food over a fire fueled by dung and also shave off his beard. (Ezekiel 4:1 - 5:4)
 - iii. God had Elijah engage in the first recorded bit of trash talking in a duel with false prophets on top of a mountain (1 Kings 18)
 - iv. Nathan told King David a story about a fictional man who was acting just like the King did (2 Samuel 12:7)
 - v. Instead of just *POOFING* Jonah to Ninevah, God had a giant fish eat him then puke him up on the shore so the fish-headed Dagon god worshipping Ninevites would accept him and his message of repentance (Jonah)
 - c. Paul at Mars Hill in Acts 17 is a great example of engaging communication
 - i. Paul was burdened for the culture - v. 16 - "greatly distressed"
 - ii. Paul investigated the culture - v. 16 - only way he could have seen the idols
 - iii. Paul went to the culture - v. 17 - synagogue and marketplace
 - iv. Paul knew the culture - v. 22, 23 - he knew about the statue to the unknown God
 - v. Paul referenced the culture - v. 28 - quoting the poem
 - d. What do we learn from this?
 - i. Paul worked hard to research that culture; it's hard to be lazy and engaging
 - ii. You can't engage culture without first knowing culture
 - iii. Sometimes we settle for what's encouraging to us rather than what's engaging for them
 - iv. When we desire to engage culture, it gives us the freedom to try different methods
 - v. Dance, art, music styles all examples of engaging methods

2. **CLEAR AND RELEVANT** is about our message
 - a. First we might need to know what our message is. What, in fact, are we to use engaging communication to say?
 - i. Acts 10:36 - One Lord, Jesus, bringing true peace
 - ii. Ephesians 2:17 - Peace to those far away and those near
 - iii. 2 Corinthians 5:19 - Reconciliation (peace) through Jesus
 - iv. Bottom line? We are at war with God, and Jesus made peace possible if we follow Him
 - b. The message is already clear and relevant
 - i. Clear means communicated in a way that can easily be understood (Romans 1:19)
 - ii. Relevant means communicated in a way that can easily be applied. (2 Samuel 12:7)
 - c. If we forget that, our message can end up being confusing, and there's nothing worse than a confusing message **[PICTURES OF CONFUSING TRAFFIC SIGNS]**
 - d. There are 2 mistakes we can make with the message we've been given:
 - i. Mistake cute for clear **[CHURCH MARQUEE]**
 - a) What does it mean?
 - b) No doubt the person who put it up did, but no one else does
 - c) Me putting up "Let Jesus help you get 'er done!" and finding out what it meant
 - ii. Mistake related for relevant
 - a) We can fall in the trap of thinking that in order to be relevant, we have to be like who we're communicating with
 - b) Looking like someone doesn't make you relevant. Neither does being accepted by them.
 - c) Speaking the very message they need at the very time they need it makes you relevant
 - d) A heart surgeon can be the biggest nerd in the world, but if I need heart surgery, he's relevant!
 - e. Paul showed the importance of speaking a clear, relevant message in Colossians 4:3-6:
 - i. He knew what the message was - v. 3 - the mystery of Christ
 - ii. He knew how he should proclaim it - v. 4 - "clearly" - Greek word means "to make manifest or visible" and "to be plainly recognized, thoroughly understood"
 - iii. He knew he needed to be relevant - vv. 5, 6 - be wise, make the most of every opportunity, know how to answer everyone with grace and salt (truth)
 - f. What do we learn from this?
 - i. The message is a great one of peace with God through Jesus (Hebrews 2:3)
 - ii. The worst thing we can do is confuse what God has made clear
 - iii. Sometimes, the best thing we can do is simply tell people the plain truth that God has already clearly spoken

3. **LIFE TO A DYING CULTURE** is about our motives
 - a. The last phrase in this core value really cuts to the core of who we are as a church
 - b. This is what can set us apart from many of the voices in the church that speak to culture
 - c. This speaks to our motives
 - i. God is a God who judges motives (Proverbs 16:2)
 - ii. This last phrase answers the "why" behind the "what"
 - d. There is no shortage of churches who use engaging communication to speak a clear and relevant message
 - i. Westboro Baptist Church picketing at funerals of American servicemen and women to bring attention to their anti-homosexual teachings

- ii. The church in Irmo, SC, that put the following on the church marquee: “You may party in hell, but you’ll be the BBQ.”
- iii. Both these churches are proclaiming a message that can be found in Scripture, but the way they do it calls the motives into question
- iv. Do they want people to be saved, or simply want to be the most creative “truth-tellers?”
- e. Sometimes we get caught up simply telling a dead culture that they are, in fact, dead
- f. But God is looking for believers who will speak an engaging, clear, relevant message in order to bring the spiritually dead back to life
- g. It is why Jesus came (John 10:10)
- h. People who have been lied to and robbed from don’t need someone to come beside them and tell them that they’ve been lied to and robbed. They need someone to tell them how they can live again.
- i. We value being that church.
- j. What do we learn from this?
 - i. Hurt people need helping people.
 - ii. Instead of pointing out the obvious, we should point out the “God-vious”
 - iii. Until we truly know the love of Jesus, we will take pleasure in pointing out the errors in our culture instead of pointing them to life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14)

The Landing

- Let’s try to wrap this up clearly
- One: we have been entrusted with a priceless message
- Two: the message of God will accomplish its purpose if we don’t cloud it (Isaiah 55:11)
- Three: perhaps the best way to wrap this up today is to pray like Paul did in Colossians 4:3-6
- That we would have **OPEN DOORS** in our culture, a **CLEAR MESSAGE** to tell them, and the **RELEVANT APPROACH** that helps them hear it, even if they don’t accept it
- While I close in prayer, I want you to pray those 3 requests about 1 or 2 specific people in your world who need to hear the message we’ve been given