

## GFM South Central Regional Staff Conference 2022

### Learning Groups – Evangelism and the Broken Church

Raised the issue in the pre-course reflection guide.

How does the current public image of the church affect your view of evangelism?

#### **Description:**

Evangelism and the Broken Church. The church has had many stories of moral failure come to light, its deeply divided, and is tainted by racism. When we interact with unbelievers and former believers, how do we respond to those who say, “I want nothing to do with the church?”

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#### **Part 1 – What is the threat? (questions from above)**

The moral failure piece is significant, but the more threatening one to me seems to be the political affiliations. Non-believers can easily spot political loyalties, they don't see the church parting ways with deeply flawed leadership.

The church has been hijacked by political interests. Many churches are very polarized by issues like gun control and abortion.

CRT and diversity greatly trouble churches plagued by white fragility, it makes it harder to talk about the real mission of the church.

Fears keep Christians from giving the gospel - we're afraid of hurting our relationships.

Images of the cross that we saw on the news coverage of the Jan 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection helped create unhelpful associations. (Jesus saves flags, crosses everywhere, bible verses).

The failure of churches and denominations to confront sexual abuse (Southern Baptists, Ravi Zacharias Ministries, Kanakuk Camps, Willow Creek Community Church in response to allegations about Bill Hybels – and the list goes on)

Historical track record of the treatment of Native Americans.

Internationals talk about the problems they've noticed

Secular perception that the church is pro-life and pro-guns.

The silence from the pulpit about obvious injustices and failures.

Theological brokenness of the church – the false gospels taught and promoted.

Materialism and greed are steeped in our churches. The average life inside and outside the church are identical

Many in the church thought Trump was wonderful leader powerfully used by God (and looked the other way about his obvious moral failures and foolish choices while in power).

Narcissistic leaders who failed so boldly and yet attracted so many to themselves.

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## **Part 2 – What is the opportunity?**

How can we begin to re-state the gospel in a way that stays above the polarized situation?

The campus community is seen different than the church as a context – there are some freeing aspects about being a the parachurch at this moment.

Christians ARE still broken after meeting Jesus, and it's good news that we are in process.

We have an incredible opportunity to reach internationals from every corner of the earth! They're not as steeped in the politics or the personality problems of narcissistic leadership.

IV does draw students from various denominations – their friendships and willingness to learn are an incredible opportunity.

People are isolated right now. The church may have furthered their alienation, but Christians spread throughout the culture can reach them apart from institutional mistrust they have.

The BIG gospel is really needed right now. We especially need to demonstrate the Gospel makes on WELL (at a moment of profound illness).

Christians have an opportunity to say what the gospel isn't! "If you find all this outrageous – we do to!"

ONE ON ONE interactions are vital right now. Maybe we should be ok with large group not being the best channel. What can we learn by investing more in one on one and small group approaches.

You might think we're a part of the system, but I agree with YOU – this is absolutely awful!

WE are a mission, not a local church.

People are aghast at the speed with which the church has unraveled and how awful some of what was not visible before is now on display.

The true church can shine more brightly in the current darkness.

Differentiate between putting our faith in Jesus not putting our faith in the church.

Opportunity here to also be a bridge INTO the church – we need to stay committed to the church. Since we can more easily connect with non-believers outside the church, we can have a role in rebuilding trust and connection to the church.

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### **Part 3- How can we move forward (stories, suggestions, resources, strategies)?**

Scripture is our best way forward. During a staff retreat the George Floyd murder happened. It really impacted the people of color on our staff team. We had two very different responses. We dropped the agenda of the entire retreat and spent time responding to what was happening. We searched scripture to answer the question “What are we to be to each other?” We are to be a people for himself.

We will have to be very intentional about inviting people to be a part of the people of God. Recall Pete’s talk – his reference to fellowship 1 John 1:3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may.... *have fellowship with us*. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

We have to realize how reluctant students are to affiliate with Christian community. Many just have an absolutely not attitude – zero time and margin to invest in sharing life with Christians!

Pete’s BIG GOSPEL versus small gospel becomes an important conversation.

Can we help some people find their cultural identity in the midst of this conversation?

What about the church engagement efforts of InterVarsity? Don’t we have a ministry division focused on this?

How can we talk about THE CHURCH universal and historical and international?

Angela – her thesis on the churches in Rev 1-7. The seven churches. They had corruptions within them. When we talk about the body of Christ, you’re going to have some ill parts and some well parts. Maybe we need to teach about church history.

There will be some parts of the body that need recovery and healing.

Kevin – been meeting with pastors. “I know so and so is great, but we never see each other.” We’re going to have something at our home this fall where we bring together several pastors. As parachurch maybe that could be our role.

We need to really work on how to refer people to churches. Angela really wants her students to land in the local church.

This is a great moment that we need to think clearly about our mission.

This is an opportunity for us to test our blind spots – we have to be attentive to our worst weaknesses. (Butch). We need to review our own life and ministry. We all are one bad decision away from something devastating in our work.

Stepping back. Engaging our practices – repentance, reflection, consecration, confession. SO vital right now to firm these up.

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**Resources:**

Good Faith podcast (David French and Curtis Chang)

Why We Gather (Dana Carson)

When Narcissism Comes to Church (Chuck DeGroat)

Jesus and John Wayne (Kristin Kobes Du Mez)

Jim and Casper Go to Church (Jim Henderson, Matt Casper)

Saving Casper (Jim Henderson, Matt Casper)

Unsettling Truths (Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah)

They Like Jesus but not the Church and UnChristian (Dan Kimball)

The Great Omission (Dallas Willard)

The Pandora Problem (E. James Wilder)

Life Together (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Brown Church (Robert Chau Romero)