

## On The Crossroads: Outline

### Brian Atkinson

#### Part 1: On The Crossroads

A crossroads is a decision point - but also an intersection of roads.

The Lord has placed the Church on the crossroads of the modern world just as God placed his people, Israel, on the crossroads of the ancient world.

We have the opportunity to provide tremendous influence.

#### Matthew 28:18-20 - The Great Commission

“Go” is the participle. (as you go, when you go)

“Make Disciples” is the imperative. (Make Disciples!)

“As you go and do whatever it is you do in your every day walking and talking and breathing, make disciples!

Make disciples of all nations!

Make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!

Make disciples and teach them to observe everything I have commanded you!

Acts 1:8

Jerusalem = right where you are.

Judea = your larger community.

Samaria = people you see but don't know.

end of the earth = (what could that be to you?)

1 Samuel 7:12 - Ebenezer

Scrooge - miserly, mean.

Ebenezer - a standing stone, altar, “Let me tell you what God did.”

A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens (Stave 5: Then End of It)

So, how do we run our lives, our churches and our ministries as if they were each standing stones? If we're begging for the chance to say, “Let me tell you what God did here,” we need to know more than the message of the Gospel. We need to know who we're trying to reach, how they communicate, how they think, what makes sense to them, how they see us - the messengers, as well as the message, and what works.

## **Part 2: Who is Our Audience**

Marshall McLuhan - "The Medium is the Message"

Everything about your church is part of your message.  
Worship style, architecture, even your coffee is your communication style; cheap and watered down, Starbucks, Seattle's Best, or Certified Organic Free-Trade communicates and tells people how you perceive them, your mission, and God. It's so much more than what happens on Sunday or whenever your worship time is.

Ron Popeil - "Set it and forget it!" style of communicating.  
Is your church known by consistency or excellence?

M. Rex Miller - The Millennium Matrix  
Tool Changes = Perception Changes  
Perception Changes = Understanding Changes  
Understanding Changes = Psychology Changes  
Psychology Changes = Interaction Changes  
Interaction Changes = Relationship Changes  
Relationship Changes = Institutional Changes

Our world has gotten smaller, and shrinks faster all the time.  
WWII - was far away, newspapers, newsreels and radio with Edward R. Murrow  
Viet Nam - in our living rooms with Walter Cronkite  
Gulf War - Live on CNN with Wolf Blitzer

An earthquake measuring 5.9 on the Richter scale struck the Eastern corridor on August 23, 2011. Seismic waves travel at about 3-5 kilometers per second, but data streams travel over fiber at about 200,000 km/sec. Mashable writer Lauren Indvik reported that tweets began reaching her New York Headquarters from Washington DC a full 30 seconds before the tremors, and long before any news reports from the media did. (XKCD.com cartoon)

Old and New Testament is Oral Culture

### **Oral Culture**

< 1500 AD  
Memorization  
Metaphor and Story  
Semikah (Authority)  
Messenger is the message - don't kill the messenger

Authority - Words are True  
2 Samuel 7:28a  
Revelation 22:6a  
Matthew 21:27 (ESV) also Mark 11:33 (ESV)

The Church catered to the Oral Culture - stained glass for a pre-literate society.  
Art is highly symbolic  
Not meant literally  
The message was not lost

## **Print Culture**

1500 - 1950  
Literal  
Accuracy  
Enlightenment

Centuries before printing there was of course handwriting and the written page began the transition from Oral to Print Culture. Messengers carried written letters with wax seals and signatures.

Information was verifiable. The Magna Carta in 1215 was not just about who was under the law, but it was put into writing. The authority of the messenger became the authority of the message itself, but still was in the hands of the one who wrote it.

Print Culture truly kicks off in 1450 with the Gutenberg movable type printing press - and the Church was on the cutting edge of culture. Many people had printed with movable type, but the Gutenberg Bible proved that books could be printed.

Only available to Universities, the church or the Über Rich.

The church was on the cutting edge of art.  
Creation of Adam - Sistine Chapel - Michelangelo  
More realistic  
Perspective - window to the world  
Humanism - started in the Greek world, and had a reawakening during the renaissance.

95 theses written in Latin and sent privately to his Bishop, Albert of Mainz

Martin Luther's buddies invented social networking. Translated into German, printed, and distributed covering Europe within 5 months.  
The protestant reformation happened because they hit LIKE and SHARE.

Down-side: Literalism = Iconoclasm  
"It's all there in black and white."  
"They wouldn't print it if it weren't true."

## **Demographics of Print Culture in the 20th Century**

The Lost Generation (born between 1883 - 1900) of World War I

The Greatest Generation or GI Generation (born between 1900 - 1924) of World War II

The Silent Generation or The Lucky Few (born between 1924 - 1942) of the Korean War

The Baby Boom Generation (1942 - 1964) - not all boomers.

## **Key Word - "Supposed to" - like Captain America**

Read the Bible

Follow Directions

Tithe

Serve

Join

Nationalistic Patriotism

## **Presentation Culture**

1950 - 2005

Linear

Creative

Interrupted

Experiential

## **Presentation Culture Identifiers**

Radio was a major factor of transition from print to broadcast - polished programs.

Polished

perfect

Model of what things should be (created by Print Culture)

Mayberry, Father knows best, husbands and wives in separate beds -

## **Key Word: Experiential**

Reality TV - Stupid?

But it's experiential.

The Super Bowl featured Pepsi's fan-submitted halftime show countdown, Coke had people text-in to choose the winner of their race. Experiential is a key

Church was on the cutting edge of Presentation Culture

Fulton J. Sheen began his Emmy winning broadcasts in 1951

Rex Humbard was the first to broadcast a weekly church service in 1952. By 1980s was on nearly 700 stations and in 91 languages.

Broadcasting professionals have been hired to create a smooth and even perfect presentation in churches like Willow Creek and Saddleback.

Good - this culture demands it. They respond to being drawn into the experience of the presentation.

## **Demographics of Presentation Culture**

The Baby Boom Generation (1942 - 1964) - not all

Generation X (1965 - 1982) - not all

Art becomes experiential

Salvador Dali - surrealist - create the "Suspend your disbelief" moment.

Crucifixion (Corpus Hypercubus) -1954

asks the viewer to depart from the literal imagery of Christ on the Cross and presents the subject in an altogether new way. When the audience makes that paradigm shift and joins the artist in his perspective, they experience old information in an entirely new way.

Presentation Culture has not fully infiltrated our society.

Classrooms of 2013 look much like the classrooms of 1950 and even 1850.

A teacher provides a book, students take notes,

What is the difference between a church service from 1850 - 1950 - 2013?

## **Digital Culture Identifiers**

2005 - ?

Speed

Non-Linear

Not perfect

Peer-Influenced

State of Flux

Participatory

Relational

Grass Roots

Speed:

Oral Culture to Print Culture = 5000+ years

Print Culture to Presentation Culture = 500 years

Presentation Culture to Digital Culture = 50 years

Digital Culture < 10 years old so far

50 Million Users

Radio = 38 years

Television = 13 years

Internet = 4 years

iPod = 3 years

Facebook = 2 years

Google+ <90 days

## **Digital Sub-cultures**

Web - most places have website by the end of 2005 - it's the transitional phase.

Web 2.0 - interactive - an update to the website. a buzzword - Bruce used it when he asked me to come out and talk with you.

Mobile - another update - mobile optimized, now responsive design - and mobile apps, tablets, phones

Social - Revolutionary change... or is it?

The Church managed to get to the cutting edge of the new digital culture through a side door so to speak. The Bible Gateway, started on a computer under Nick Hengeveld's desk at Calvin College in 1993 and moved to the Gospel Communications Network in 1995. Started and developed by an individual, Bible Gateway did not start as a church-sanctioned presentation of the Bible.

Revolutionary - as a tool but similar to Luther's 95 Theses in how it spread.

LifeChurch.TV

founded in 1996

Muti-site, Internet and Second Life

Broadcast over the internet

Internet tools to reach the digital culture

Also by LifeChurch.tv - YouVersion - most popular Bible app

The mobile expression of cooperation between:

LifeChurch.tv for the Mobile App.

Faith Comes By Hearing for Audio Versions

Several publishing partners for the versions in the Every Tribe Every Nation, Digital

Bible Library - maintained by American Bible Society - bibles.org

Mobile continues to grow.

Apple sold 3 million iPads in the first weekend the new version was available.

Facebook

Jesus Daily >15-million fans, poor quality just like most Christian art, literature etc. We have created and now respond to poor quality.

Jesus.page = 1.5-million fans - but high quality standards

## **Demographics of Digital Culture**

Generation X (1965 - 1982)

Millennials (1983 - 2004)

Mosaics, Generation Y

Generation Z (2005 - ?) aka: Plurals, Generation@, Net-Gen

## **Longing for Meaning**

September 11, 2001

Fallibility of Leaders (Business and Government)

Large Scale Changes in Global Economy  
77-million Baby Boomers median age is 60

Meaning - find it in many ways  
They do not think to look to God or the Church for meaning.

### **Another set of cultures just for the Church**

Churched  
Accustomed to Church  
Certain Expectations  
Able to navigate

Un-churched  
Not Accustomed to Church  
Certain Expectations  
Not able to navigate

De-churched  
Bad Experience with Church (usually a relational problem)  
Manage Their Expectations  
May/may not be able to navigate

Neo-Traditionalists  
Pews  
Books  
Hymns  
Retro  
Liturgy

### **Part 3: Who Our Audience Thinks We Are**

You are not who you think you are.  
We are identified by what we hate.  
Crusades, Spanish Inquisition, KKK - all hate and violence committed by people claiming to be Christians.

2 Peter 3:9  
God wants everyone

Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-32  
Rejoice at the return of the lost

Our world is broken and we are just as broken as anyone.

UnChristian by David Kinnaman & Gabe Lyons (2007)  
What a new generation really thinks about Christianity ... and why it matters  
Research from the Barna Group showed that people view Christians as:  
Hypocritical  
Get Saved!  
Anti-Homosexual  
Sheltered  
Too Political  
Judgmental

Is that how God wants us to treat people?

### **3 Old Testament Roles**

Jesus fulfills the 3 biblical roles of King, Prophet and Priest.  
Prophet - Spoke for God - Repent and Believe  
Priest - Sacrifices - brings you near to God - Prays for us  
King - King of kings, lord of lords

If we forget or even downplay how Jesus sacrificed himself for your sins - we can get hung up on the list of things in the law and end up with a fundamentalist bend.  
If we get hung up on Jesus as our King and Priest, but forget about how he calls us to repentance, we can be too liberal in our approach.  
And if we forget, as do most American Protestants, that Jesus is the king and lord of every aspect of our lives, then we tend to (self-inditement) become too evangelical. As Americans we resist authority in our lives. Submitting to Jesus means submitting to every layer of his authority in your life including parents, spouse, boss, president. Which of Christ's authority do you resist the most?

Craig Groeschel - The Christian Atheist, Believing in God, but living as if he doesn't.  
It's the big difference between what we believe and how we behave.

When you believe in God... but:  
don't really know him  
are ashamed of your past  
aren't sure he loves you  
not in prayer  
don't think he's fair  
won't forgive  
don't think you can change  
still worry all the time  
pursue happiness at any cost  
trust more in money  
not in his Church

And I will add -  
not in the Bible



## **Selective Bible Belief**

We are often selective about what we choose to believe.

God's Word in the Bible is true, even when you don't like what it says.

When we claim to be Christians and behave in ways that are not Biblical or are not Christ-like, it is confusing.

2 Corinthians 6:3

2 Corinthians 6:4-10

We are going to struggle and wrestle with this.

Just as Jacob/Israel did.

Genesis 32:22-28

## **Part 4: What Do We Do Now**

Using communication tools to spread the Gospel

The first step is to make sure you know your audience. You can make certain assumptions based on the demographic information available to you - but nothing is a substitute for good empirical data. If you have a college nearby with a social science department, or marketing, ask them for some students to help you craft a survey.

Target and prioritize

You may have been focusing on people who are not in your target.

Get help from them - making sure they know who you are trying to reach, why, and how.

You may find that you have a sweet spot in your community and that you have people in your congregation who are uniquely talented at reaching that sweet spot.

Of course you don't leave people out - get them on board to help you - and then they in-turn get additional help from their networks. It takes a missionary mindset.

Don't be afraid of different people or getting people from outside your church to help.

You need to be both real and transparent with your audience - inside and outside.

Our audience has expectations of us

Print: Accurate - Should

Presentation: Polished - Perfect

Digital: Authentic - Meaningful

Authenticity - our culture serves as a warning

Manti Te'o Notre Dame Linebacker - Heisman Trophy candidate

Lance Armstrong

Wizard of Oz

Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain.

Authenticity is key.

If someone can pull back the curtain - they will.

Explain what was going on behind the scenes.

2 Corinthians 6:3-4a

Don Miller - Blue Like Jazz

Confession Booth

"We are going to confess to them. We are going to confess that, as followers of Jesus, we have not been very loving; we have been bitter, and for that we are sorry. We will apologize for the Crusades, we will apologize for televangelists, we will apologize for neglecting the poor and the lonely, we will ask them to forgive us, and we will tell them that in our selfishness, we have misrepresented Jesus on this campus. We will tell people who come into the booth that Jesus loves them."

The Next Christians - Gabe Lyons - one of the authors of unChristian

He outlines 5 qualities of restoration church

Provoked - not offended

Creators - not critics

Called - not employed

Grounded - not distracted

In Community - not alone

Countercultural - not "relevant"

Separatist or Salty?

Antagonistic or an Inverted Lifestyle?

Relevant or Making Sense?

Doing the Most Good - even if you don't want to

Jeremiah 29:7

Countercultural

Anybody in here talking smack about any particular political leader?

Perhaps one in Washington DC?

1 Peter 2:13-17

"Our culture has accepted two huge lies. The first is that if you disagree with someone's lifestyle, you must fear or hate them. The second is that to love someone means you agree with everything they believe or do. Both are nonsense. You don't have to compromise convictions to be compassionate." --Rick Warren

Penn Jillette - Gideon Bible Story

Said nice things, Not defensive, really kind, nice, sane, talked with him.  
Don't respect people who don't proselytize

How much do you have to hate someone to believe that a truck is coming to kill you - and you don't help them get out of the way?  
Remember - if it weren't for God, there would be no Atheists.

### **What's Next?**

If I knew - I'm sure I would buy stock in it and give these talks from the Caribbean.

I'm not clairvoyant.

I don't know.

Did they see it coming?

Did the oral culture predict print? Did the people of the print culture predict the Presentation culture?

Did the broadcasters predict digital culture?

Let's be honest with ourselves.

People have been predicting flying cars most of our lifetimes.

### **A New Kind Of Missionary**

It's not about the newest technology - it's about being a new kind of missionary - into a new communication culture.

Missionary translators work with indigenous people.

Learn the local culture.

Get help from non-christians to translate the Bible

Then Preach, and teach the Bible - and teach the local native people to do the same.

You are missionaries to the next culture, the next generation, the next communication tool - however it looks and however it changes the way we perceive our world or how we relate to each other.

So, here you are on the crossroads.

Is this what your church looks like?

Desolate? Vague?

Or are you ready to start being missionaries and starting missionaries into these other cultures?

Getting them to teach you how they understand the world, relate to each other - and then you can influence those world views and relationships with the Gospel.

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