



A Biblical Vision For A Healthy Local Church

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ABOUT HCC

Against the backdrop of a rather spiritually dull, lifeless and desperately needy New England context...we have been exploring what the Bible has to say about elements of a healthy local church. Over the past several months we have been introduced to:

1. The God-centeredness of God
2. The centrality and supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things
3. A strong preaching/teaching/thinking/scripture-searching/living-out ministry model
4. Genuine Christian community and relational vitality
- 5. Creative cultural and civic involvement**

Another way to say all this is to say:

1. God is God and sees Himself as the Greatest reality there is...PERIOD!
2. Jesus is Lord over and in all things! He is the world's ONLY Savior!
3. "The Bible tells us so"...*and there's great evidence this is true...*
4. These truths create a powerful, unique, genuine, living community of Godly love!
- 5. God is...God comes in Jesus...then to our hearts...then to our world!**

Still, another way to say this is found on the cover of your bulletin:

*We exist to see, savor, and show forth the glory of God in Jesus Christ
through the power of the Holy Spirit
as a vibrant, holistic, and biblical 21st century church.
Our mission is to develop genuine disciples of Jesus Christ
who are continually transformed by His redemptive work
and are being equipped to
understand,
enjoy
and express
His Grace to our world.*

So let's be introduced to our mini-series: **A Creative Cultural & Civic Involvement**
lets define what I mean when I say culture & civic:

culture: The sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another. Culture is transmitted, through language, style, ritual, institutions, and art, from one generation to the next

civic: (*city, citizen*): Relating to, or derived from, a city or citizen; relating to man as a member of society, or to civil affairs.

Creatively being involved in the life and ways of people.

STORY OF ME & PAPA "YOU LOVE HIM, I'LL CHANGE HIM"



So lets' jump in on this topic: **A Creative Cultural & Civic Involvement**

Where do we begin?

TEST TIME:

I will ask you a question. It requires a 1-word answer. First answer the question ONLY in your head! On 3...all together give the 1 word answer. OK?

Q: Several weeks ago, when we began to look at genuine Christian community....

“We can have genuine godly community among ourselves because there is Genuine Divine community among the _ _ _ _ _ ! TRINITY

We begin with God!

We are creatively involved in the stream of life in our world...because God is intimately involved in the stream of life in His world...and in the lives of His created beings, mankind...and particularly involved in the lives of His Son's, blood-bought, resurrected and redeemed people!

Gen 1.1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...

He is Lord over what He has made...culture...of all kinds...over all time...over all the globe!
(pics of various cultures)

God made culture!

So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "... (24) The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, (25) nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. (26) **And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,** (27) that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, (28) for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "'For we are indeed his offspring.'" (Acts 17:24-28 ESV)

God writes a letter to His people to be involved in culture because He is!

Jeremiah 29:4-7 ESV (*These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon...*) "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: (5) Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. (6) Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. (7) **But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.**



Jesus sends His disciples into the world...because He was!

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*" (Matthew 28:16-20)

Jesus calls us to be VERY in the world...and VERY not of it!

Joh 17:11 I will remain in the world no longer, **but they are still in the world**, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—

I have given them your word and the world has hated them, **for they are not of the world** any more than I am of the world.
(John 17:14)

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. *They are not of the world*, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. **As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.** For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.
(John 17:15-19)

God clarifies about our involvement!

1 Corinthians 5:9-13 I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— (10) **not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.** (11) But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. (12) What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? (13) God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

God speaks further about our interaction and involvement in this world

(Colossians 4:5) **Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.**

Colossians 4:5-6 **Conduct** yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. (6) Let your **speech** always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to **answer** each person.

(1 Thessalonians 4:12) **so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders** and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

(1 Timothy 3:7) He must also have a good reputation **with outsiders**, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

8 Ways to be Missional (without overloading your schedule)

by Jonathan Dodson (Pastor, Austin City Life, Austin, TX)

Missional is not an event we tack onto our already busy lives. It is our life. Mission should be the way we live, not something we add onto life: “As you go, make disciples...”; “Walk wisely towards outsiders”; “Let your speech always be seasoned with salt”; “be prepared to give a defense for your hope”. We can be missional in everyday ways without even overloading our schedules. Here are a few suggestions:

1. **Eat with Non-Christians.** We all eat a couple or three meals a day. Why not make a habit of sharing one of those meals with a non-Christian or with a family of non-Christians? Go to lunch with a co-worker, not by yourself. Invite the neighbors over for family dinner. If it’s too much work to cook a big dinner, just order pizza and put the focus on conversation. When you go out for a meal, invite a non-Christian friend. Or take your family to family-style restaurants where you can sit at the table with strangers and strike up conversations (Krueger’s, The Tap, Friendly’s, Tacos Lupita, Skip’s etc.). Have cookouts and invite Christians and non-Christians. *Flee the exclusive subculture.*
2. **Walk, Don’t Drive.** If you live in a walkable area, make a practice of getting out and walking your neighborhood, apartment complex, campus. Instead of driving to check the mail, go to the convenience store, or visit a neighbor, get out and walk. Say hi to people you don’t know. Walk the dog. Bring the kids. Make friends. Get out of the house when your neighbors are out (weekends, after work, holidays, afternoons). Take interest in your neighbor’s hobbies. Ask questions. Engage. Pray as you go. *Save some gas and the planet.*
3. **Be a Regular.** Instead of hopping all over the city for gas, groceries, haircuts, eating out, and coffee, go to the same places. Get to know the staff. Go around the same times. Smile. Ask questions. Be a regular. I have friends at coffeeshops all over the city. I pray for them. They give me free drinks and food. I give them the free gospel of grace. I know a professor that used to wait by his trash can each week for the garbage collector and gave him a drink. *Be a Regular.*
4. **Hobby with Non-Christians.** Pick a hobby that you can share with your city, community, town. Get out and rub shoulders doing something you enjoy with others. City League basketball, football, soccer. Local bowling and cycling teams. Teach sewing lessons, piano lessons, violin, guitar, knitting lessons. Be prayerful. Be intentional. Be winsome. Be gracious. Have fun. *Be yourself.*
5. **Talk to Your Co-workers.** How hard is that? take your breaks with intentionality. Get a drink with your team after work. Show interest in your co-workers. Pick four and pray for them. Form mom’s groups in your neighborhood, just don’t make them exclusively non-Christian. Schedule play dates with the neighbors’ kids. *Be sociable.*
6. **Volunteer for a Local Non-Profit.** Find a non-profit in your part of the city and take Saturday a month to serve your city. Bring your neighbors, your friends, or your small group with you. The options are endless here. Attend an INC meeting. *Just do it.*
7. **Participate in City-wide Events.** Instead of playing X-Box, watching TV, or talking to your mom on the phone every weekend, go to city-wide garage sale, fundraisers, the festivals, the Haverhill Trails clean-ups, the summer shows, music festival @ Bradford



Common, Christmas stroll, etc. Go and meet people. Study the culture. Reflect on what you see and hear. Pray for the city. Love the city. *Participate with the city.*

8. **Look for opportunities to Serve your Neighbors.** Help a neighbor by weeding, mowing, building a cabinet, fixing a car. Stop by the neighborhood association or apartment office and ask if there is anything you can do to help improve things. Stop by your local Police and Fire Stations. Ask if there is anything you can do to help them. *Be creative.*

Don't make the mistake of making "missional" another thing to add to your schedule. Instead, make your existing schedule missional. Integrate the Gospel, Community and Mission in all areas of life.

Finally: Understand the world that God placed you in. Our culture is:

1. ever-changing
2. fast-paced
3. very culturally diverse
4. traditional
5. historical
6. urban
7. active
8. deeps Roman Catholic roots
9. seasonal
10. God knows how to reach His world and will continue to lead us effectively, humbly and winsomely!

For further study:

Read Isaiah chs. 1-5 and then 6.1-8 Who needs the forgiveness of Jesus more, others or me? Why?

Besides family, what non-Christian person has been over your house for a meal or to watch a ballgame or to simply get to know and share life?
