

Overflow leaders talk - September 2015

VIDEO: Church Signs

What's so bad about church signs?

Its just that most modern marketing works this way: you take a thing that's not that great (a car, a Big Mac, a political candidate) and you try to convince people that its bigger, better, faster, shinier, or smarter than it actually is. Why? Because if you didn't people wouldn't buy it. Or vote for it.

But when you take Jesus and his kingdom, and you slap a cheap marketing slogan on it you're doing the reverse...you're taking something that is bigger, better, faster, shinier and smarter and you're making it look small, provincial, quaint.

Why would anyone do that? Do we really think Jesus needs marketing? Do we really think we're qualified?

No, Jesus doesn't need marketing, what he needs is exposure. EXPOSURE. *"When the Son of Man is lifted up (lit. exalted), he will draw all men toward himself."* (John 12:32)

You see, the message of Jesus has always been more than a message, more than a slogan, more than a cutesy quip...the message of Jesus is a message incarnate. Its an idea, a promise, a hope wrapped up in flesh and blood.

And so when we think about how it is we do our task of spreading the good news about the kingdom, that God has come down and is undoing all that's wrong with the world and putting it back in right place...we don't need a slogan. We need a temple of living stones where God dwells by his spirit. We need a community that looks and acts and talks and lives like Jesus, made up of people that put flesh and blood on the claim that "God so loved the world that he sent his one and only son, that whoever believes in him might have eternal life." We need lives that will beckon people. We need people whose very presence in a room causes people to hunger.

Do you have a food that makes your mouth water, just the thought of it? For me its red meat. Even when I just think about it I'm instantly ready to sit down and eat. My mouth waters. This is what we are called to be.

That's why Paul said, "For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing." (2 Cor 2:16)

Your job is to make your neighbors hungry and thirsty for the only one that can fill them.

And that's a hard task. For me, that's the hardest part of church leadership, or being a pastor. Or a worship leader, or a youth worker, or a kids church teacher.

The greatest challenge and blessing of leadership is that people follow.

As a leader, you reproduce what you are. As a parent, you reproduce what you are. Its not

what you say, or ultimately even what you do when the cameras are rolling. Its who you are. And that's a scary thought.

The greatest challenge and gift of leadership is that you reproduce what you are. Everyone that follows you is becoming more like you. Scary!

Story of Chris: I have this neighbor that I'm still trying to help see Jesus. And as we began talking about his search for meaning (after making all the money a person could ever want and retiring at 40, after living in some of the greatest places in the world, dining in the greatest restaurants...living the *good* life) I would tell him about how great Jesus was. And he genuinely wanted to know why I thought so.

And I realized this guy, who spends most weeknights reading or watching lectures on the meaning of life, who goes to spiritual centers up in the Sierra Nevadas, and India and Greece in search of something deeper...I realized my life wasn't really the great news he was looking for. While he's watching videos on the meaning of life, I'm catching up on the latest Netflix original.

We each have to ask, would our neighbors, friends, co-workers, kids...would they be better off if there spiritual lives were more like ours?

If not, there's no amount of clever marketing that can fix that. Because what's in us (or not in us) will overflow and spill out. Jesus said, "A good person produces good from the good treasure of his heart, and an evil person produces evil from an evil treasure, because the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart." – Luke 6:45

Our highest value as a church is to "live from overflow" as opposed to emptiness, overwork, desperate need for attention or affirmation, brute force, duty, fear of punishment or fear of missing out. To live from overflow. Because Jesus said, I offer living water, and whoever drinks this water will find a spring inside them, gushing up into eternal life."

STORY: Stephen Colbert is a model of overflowing life with God. He's also new host of the Late Show, a well known political comedian.

Stephen is the youngest of eleven kids. When he was 10 years old, his father and two of his brothers, the two closest to him in age, were killed in a plane crash. Young Stephen was the only child still at home with his mother in the years immediately following.

He was recently interviewed about it; here's what the interviewer reported..."We eventually got around to the question of how it could possibly be that he suffered the losses he's suffered and somehow arrived here. It's not just that he doesn't exhibit any of the anger or open-woundedness of so many other comedians; it's that he appears to be so genuinely grounded and joyful...I asked him and here was his response: 'MY. MOTHER. And the world. It's so...lovely. I'm very grateful to be alive, even though I know a lot of dead people.'"

"I was left alone a lot after Dad and the boys died.... And it was just me and Mom for a long time," he said. "And by her example am I not bitter. By *her* example. She was not. Broken, yes. Bitter, no. She understood all

our suffering, ourselves, in the light of eternity. What is this [tragedy] in the light of eternity? Imagine being a parent so filled with your own pain, and yet still being able to pass that on to your son!"

The interviewer asked if he could elaborate and Colbert went on to describe a letter from JRR Tolkien in response to a priest. The priest had asked if Tolkien's mythos was sufficiently doctrinaire, since it treated death not as a punishment for sin but treated death as a gift. "Tolkien says, in a letter back: 'What punishments of God are not gifts?'" Colbert knocked his knuckles on the table. "'What punishments of God are not gifts?'" he said again. His eyes were filled with tears. "What punishments of God are not gifts?" "So it would be ungrateful not to take *everything* with gratitude. It doesn't mean you want it. But I take even the bad things with gratitude. I can hold both of those ideas in my head."

That's overflow! And it has the whole world noticing.

So, what's the answer, how do we become people of overflow?

1. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

It's not surprising that Jesus said that the fulfillment of the purpose of the whole bible is that you would "love God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind."

That is what is meant by Christian spirituality. That is the highest purpose of this church. That is the most important thing for your life. For your kids, for your money, for your free time.

That's why we worship. To point our desires away from all the messaging of this world back toward the only one that can fulfill them. Worship is like anti-marketing. It points our desires back in the right direction.

That's why we give (money). Generosity loosens our grip on one of our biggest idols.

That's why we host – by serving others not ourselves at church. We come to share in God's love for other people.

That's why we gather.

2. Continued experience of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus talks about overflow, the living water welling up to eternal life, gospel-writer John adds this: "By this he meant the holy spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

Some of that happens in church. But you need more filling and fueling than a church service can offer. You need more filling than you can get by going to Christian conferences.

You need to learn to drink on your own. And for that...

3. You need a personal training plan.

Some of us have a physical training plan. What does it take to stay physically fit? Exercises, disciplines, regimine, planning, sacrifice.

Paul compares our spirit lives to physical training. 1 Tim 4:7-8 "...train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

You've got a gym membership, maybe you've seen a trainer or a dietician. Or maybe you just wait until things get bad and see a doctor. Paul is saying, that's important, but you know what's really important? Godliness. Being like Jesus. That's worth it in this life and the life to come.

You think of all the money people spend on physical fitness, on eating a really good diet, on avoiding preservatives and pesticides, you think of all people spend on the makeup industry, cosmetic surgery. What people will endure to be physically fit and attractive.

Paul is saying, if you saw the value, you'd put way more in to spiritual life training.

Spiritual health requires some of the same things as physical health...

A health evaluation.

A new regimen. New habits.

A personal trainer.

Some workout buddies.

How much would that be worth to you? To live from overflow in your ministry, but also in your job? In your family? In your neighborhood? To be the one people come to and say, how is it you just seem so full of life? So patient? So at peace with whatever comes? So kind to enemies? So persistent? So self-controlled

You are all Vineyard leaders. People follow you. And the most important thing this church needs is not organizers or managers or cheerleaders or god-forbid critics and consultants.

Vineyard needs players. People who know the way to life with Jesus, will go the way and show the way.

Tonight we'll start with a health evaluation, we're calling it the OVERFLOW 2016: Personal Survey. We're starting with a health evaluation tonight but we'll continue addressing the this topic all year in various ways.