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**Pre-Course Assignment**

### **Section 1: Reading**

*Insight: The Surprising Truth About How Others See Us, How We See Ourselves, and Why the Answers Matter More than We Think* by Tasha Eurich (2018) - 216 pages

This resource provided attainable conversation points for unveiling self awareness and insight into the narration of your life, however, the most valuable piece of this text could be found in the appendices. Each step of “Insight” is accompanied by an appendix, or worksheet, to accompany the content of the chapter.

The seven pillars of Insight outlined in “Insight” by Tasha Eurich present a crucial foundation to understanding how we evaluate our life experiences. She lists values, passions, aspirations, environmental fit, patterns, reactions and impact as the filters by which we process and derive merit from our encounters. These metrics become the canon of the meaning in our lives.

In the appendices Eurich also provides worksheets and assessments to help you evaluate some of the roadblocks you might be experiencing. The roadblocks to life change she addresses largely stem from self-absorbed introspection. In this current trend of Enneagram revelation, I appreciate the note to check the introspection before it becomes naval gazing or rumination as these prevent progress.

I believe this check point honors the principles of surrender in our faith. There comes a point where we must let go of the unknowns and our need to know them. Without surrender we become lost in the rumination of our sin instead of the mystery of his salvation and grace. There is incredible freedom found in surrender that our culture of evangelism should be rooted in moving forward.

Surrender in evangelism is needed for both the one giving and the one receiving. The one giving must surrender the need to control the outcome and must maintain the value of the human across from them regardless of their decision. The one receiving must be brought into an environment of surrender to the transformation of the Holy Spirit. This culture of surrender models humility, trust, and honors the power of God as the absolute truth and authority.

*Changeology: 5 Steps to Realizing Your Goals and Resolutions by John Norcross (2013)*

The key insight derived from “Changeology” by John Norcross is the importance of our conversation around the frameworks of life change and our ability to have grace for failure.

Norcross attributes mankind’s ability to undergo life change to two reasons. Behavior change is possible because the elements of life change are attainable to all and humans are resilient to failure that is part of every life change. He advocates that as complex as life change is it can be boiled down to the baby steps of every day life decisions being made consistently over time. His principles of life change, psych, prep, perspire, persevere, and persist, correlate across to the basic structure of how people learn, cognitive, affective, volitional, and practical. The methodology is sound, however, in implementing the principles into a context of transformation, we must maintain space for the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

Transformation is verifiably different from life change. Life change manages behavior into a practiced approved pattern, whereas transformation renews the mind. My largest point of contention in using the principles of Changeology is the inclination to approach healing/redemption/restoration like a goal with timelines to manage and achieve. Sanctification cannot be approached the same way as behavior management, healing cannot become a goal within our power. Norcross' frameworks of life change are clear, but require an overlay of surrender to the Holy Spirit.

Using his principles within the context of surrender gives us the ability to shift his focus on human resilience to the human experience of the divine gift of grace. This shift takes the eyes off of the success, or power, of self and turns it towards an experience of God's mercy and grace through his presence and the community that surrounds us.

I do think Norcross' 5 steps could become an excellent training tool for teenagers to help structure their engagement with evangelism as an event and process in the same way that learning goals help drive the content of a lecture. The frameworks will help identify benchmarks in the process of life change cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually of the people they are reaching out to.

*Organizational Culture and Leadership, 5th Ed. By Edgar Schein (2016) - 416 pages*

Edgar Schein's textbook drew my attention to the incredible similarities between the responsibilities of a parent and of a CEO to establish culture. However, while the similarities exist, I believe there is room for redemptive work in Schein's methodology to create a culture of evangelism in youth & family ministries.

Schein labels the primary embedding mechanisms of culture as what leaders give attention to, leaders reactions to crises, allocation of resources, role modeling/coaching, allocation of rewards, and the training methodology of leaders. As I read the details of each section I could not help but draw comparisons between his instructions to CEO's as practiced methods between parents and children. Parents create the culture of their home in each of the methods presented. Parents implicitly and explicitly affirm patterns of behavior through where they give attention and what they ignore. Parents cultivate aversions towards decisions through emotional responses to their children. Parents affirm hobbies, talents, and behavior by investing in what they approve of in their children's lives. Parents coach their children through life, give rewards, and train their children to be promoted into adulthood.

If the metrics of establishing culture are that transient from business to family, then how do we cultivate an environment of evangelism within our homes?

In order to effectively establish evangelism as a process and event, ideally, the culture of evangelism should be set as a natural rhythm of the home. If we define Evangelism [through the texts we have read] as the interdependence of reform and revival driven by the cause of the gospel through the network of community, then we need to establish a culture of community, restoration, and holistic gospel knowledge and experience.

This methodology will require refining Schein's steps with practices of "centered set" parenting. Michelle Anthony writes in a few of her books [7 Key Principles of Family Ministry and Spiritual Parenting] on the practice of establishing your home as an environment of transformation.

*Identity Matters: Discovering Who You Are in Christ by Terry Wardle (2017) - 192 pages*

In contrast to “Insight: The Surprising Truth About How Others See Us, How We See Ourselves, and Why the Answers Matter More than We Think” Terry Wardle writes “Identity Matters”. His focus, as he says early on in the text “Identity is not what you do, nor is it about what you have, and it is definitely not about how others see you”, is to form your identity in Christ alone. In order to do this, Wardle highlights the importance of community.

Community is an essential component to the successful integration of life change on a personal level. Wardle discusses how the approval of the community can sway and change the “success” of an individual’s integration of who Christ says they are. Terry honors the balancing act of sanctification between individual and community as an individual decision that is refined in loving restorative community.

Relationships are often where we receive and manifest wounds of the soul. Keeping in mind that sin is a soul wound with emotional and physical consequences, the culture of evangelism moving forward must place an incredible priority on the healing power of God. Jesus came to restore all of God’s children into the fullness of who he created us to be; physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. As we move forward, the key component of being a supportive community in the culture of evangelism is to be a community that relentlessly pursues the holistic healing of all people. The community must be as invested in the holistic restoration of others as we are invested in the holistic restoration of ourselves.

*The Rise of the NONES by James Emery White (2014) - 224 pages*

The key insights I gleaned from “The Rise of the Nones” by James Emery White was the importance of cause in our evangelistic processes and events as well as the importance of unity as the body of Christ between word and action as well as in our relationships. In keeping with current trends of research in Youth & Family ministry, reform and revival can no longer operate independent of one another. We need to recognize reform and revival as interdependent in the proclamation of the gospel.

Disunity, conflict and “problems” were earmarked by White as a contending reason for the Nones to remain disinterested in the church. Arguably, the smaller reasons given can also be traced back to disunity as well. The unifying message of the gospel is being spoken explicitly, but implicitly is not displayed. The inconsistency between value of word and value of action portrays the church as untrustworthy, inefficient, and unreliable. White notes that the answer to disunity is not uniformity or unanimity, but rather oneness of heart, relational unity.

Peacekeeping training, well-practiced methods of conflict resolution, restoration and reconciliation after conflict are all tools the church has, but perhaps underutilizes within evangelism. Phil Vischer recently said, [paraphrased] that reform and revival are not mutually exclusive, but reform can be fought for before revival comes. His intention was in regard to social justice advocating for the church to join the fight for reform.

In his afterword White remarks, “This is no time to keep putting evangelism down in the name of discipleship as if spending energy on one takes away from spending energy on the other, thus falsely spiritualizing a passive approach to outreach.” [White, 180]

Discipleship, while of utmost necessity, cannot take value from evangelism in our priorities as a church. There comes with this exchange an implicit message that relationship is only valued if a conversion occurs.

White outlines the current history of the church from Willow creek in the 80's promoting the Gospel first/only in all evangelistic encounters, which lead to the community driven evangelism process of the 90's and 00's. Research indicates that from 2010 forward the desire of the "Nones" is to have a cause, or common rallying point, in evangelism.

Evangelistic processes and events now must be culturally driven by cause, social justice movements, a greater evil to confront alongside the religiously unaffiliated. This approach serves a pluralistic society similar to Acts 17 at Mars Hill.

In Youth and Family Ministry, it is especially imperative to engage in evangelism through a cause. Gen Z is more connected, more aware, and more engaged/informed than any generation preceding them due to their development alongside the internet and social media. [Meet Gen Z; Faith for Exiles; Kinnaman] Youth ministry in the 90's and 00's could be classified as an evangelistic answer to gangs, drug, and sex with Christian community leading teens to Christ; but from 2010 forward the desire for community was no longer the same. Teens were not looking to belong as heavily because their ability to communicate increased through the development of social media and smart phones.

Gen Z has more in common with their peers in other countries than they do with the people at their dinner table. Gen Z is going to fight for social justice reform and inclusion whether the church is leading the charge or not.

I believe evangelism looks more like fighting for reform than we have been trained over the course of recent history. Fighting for reform with the lens of the gospel demonstrates the value of human life from the gospel. I believe this would dispel the disunity observed between the word and action of the church. If unity is defined as oneness of heart relationally, then evangelism needs to relationally align in action with the heart of the Father.

*Key Reflections:*

Evangelism must:

1. Value cultural reform as a necessary part of revival
2. Establish a culture of evangelism beginning in the home and extending to the Nones
3. Honor the balance between an individual decision with its correlation of “success” to the level of supportive community.
  - a. The individual must be aware of their own need
  - b. Within a community of support ready to embrace failure of life change with restoration in mind.

## **Section 2: Evangelism Interview**

This was not easy to find in Rockland County or Bergen County. The churches I spoke to all expressed the interruption covid-19 had on their evangelism/outreach practices and how they were unable to measure their impact through virtual gatherings. The churches were not able to meet the 10% minimum growth from new converts in order to meet the assignment parameters.

Though outside my region I was able to conversationally connect with friends in Ohio who had planted a church about 7 years ago called Church 321. Prior to coronavirus, their yearly growth reflected 35% new converts from their city Sylvania; a suburban city on the border of Michigan and Toledo, OH. Since the pandemic they have not been able to record statistics about who is attending their virtual services, but have maintained life groups digitally and seen comparable, but slightly lower, statistics to previous years.

At Church 321 their mission is printed on every hashtag, sticker, coffee cup, and prayer card. They are “For Sylvania”. The simple nature of their mission is deeply imprinted in the evaluation of each ministry, every outreach, and the day to day life of their church body. They encourage outreach through supporting small businesses, being present and involved in the community, and offering their support in the social mission of the local community.

They offer two variants of small group ministry; life groups and Community 242, based off of Acts 2:42. Life groups are more situated towards people who are already attenders while Community 242 is more appropriately utilized as a method of outreach and evangelism. Community 242 is very similar to the open table format of outreach proposed by 3DM.

Their approach to outreach and evangelism is almost point for point identical to the framework we have for outreach and evangelism at The River. However, we are not seeing as much success as they are. I believe we could benefit from implementing a few insights I gained from Church 321.

We need to integrate our mission into our conversation and demonstrate how everything we do flows back to our mission. We currently have a 15 metric explanation of who we are and what we believe, but it can be summarized to 3 words; presence, family, and mission. However, these are our values, not our expressed purpose or mission. Our mission is to be a center of

renewal and revival in our city, region, and world. We plan to do this by training and releasing the body of Christ to do the work of Christ. I think by prioritizing the mission statement as the metric by which we evaluate our program choices we will increase our efficiency and clearly communicate our mission implicitly and explicitly.

I believe we would also benefit from hosting intentional training sessions to equip leaders in hosting Community Groups for outreach as different from community groups for discipleship. It may be more efficient to resurrect our former practice of “open tables” so to have a priority space for outreach specifically.

### **Section 3: Creative Interview**

I put out 21 requests to creative friends for answers to these questions. I received 3 responses but will probably have more come in after this paper is due. Interestingly enough, the 3 responders each represent a different demographic of creativity and faith journey. One responder has journeyed away from faith, another is new to faith, and the last is the child of a Pastor. Their responses cover fields from song composition, videography, poetry, photography, hand lettering, vocal performance, media marketing, and interior design.

Across their responses a common tone of a desire to be unique and fully known was evident. All responders expressed a desire for their work to be their mark on the world that would ultimately reveal their walk and who they had grown to be and why. Immediately, I can see how the principles from Insight could be used in unpacking their levels of self awareness. A uniform desire for unique contributions to reveal who they are and what they have learned to ultimately inspire or encourage others through their art. What I see in this group is an innate

desire to share their story, to find meaning in their life story, and to develop others into finding their own purpose.

Another interesting aspect across all three interviews was found in their process to find inspiration. Each responder identified they first look to what others have done to shape what they will do next. One responder went so far to say that “true uniqueness in art would make [his] art irrelevant. [He has] to build upon what has most recently been done so that his audience is primed and ready to receive his work.

Though it feels premature to say from 3 interviews, I believe creative people are inherently evangelists; their derivation of meaning may just be misaligned to a culture of self instead of a culture of Christ.

All three interviewees either are currently professionals in their field or recently retired. But each expressed a need for the church to adopt the perspective of sinner in their outreach instead of coming as “the saved”. Each had stories of wounds they, or their tribe, have experienced at the hands of feeling judged. Judgment in a community that values uniqueness as an identity feature is polarizing. To take on the perspective of the hurt and offer healing would be life changing. A unique response expressed the need to be unprogrammed or out of the box in our paradigm of evangelism is necessary for outreach to the creative community. Hokey measures will not attract the eye of the creative. Excellence in creativity would draw creatives in simply because they would feel inspired.

#### **Section 4: Recovery and Life-Change**

One of the benefits of corona virus was my ability to engage with Overeaters Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous virtually. Each organization has minute variances as they address the intricacies of their addictions. The similarities across the three simply revealed the transient principles of life change and how the concepts can be applied in various settings; even evangelism. The traditions are versatile and can be used in capacities beyond the original intention.

The conversations reflected crucial elements to life change, even in slight vocabulary commonalities. There was a noticeable focus is on the renewal of the mind. Reminders were issued to state truths over identity, verbal affirmations of grace, welcoming in the community, and strict boundaries for all to respect sobriety/moderation as well as anonymity. Though the principles were transient each group embraced diversity of people and uniqueness of each journey through life change and recovery.

With diversity also came a heavy focus on the importance of community. The phrase “the greatest good for the greatest number” appeared several times in written format reinforcing the idea that you were only as successful in your pursuit of recovery as the community around you was involved in your journey and you in theirs. The relationship of the group is equivalent to the success of each individual.

Understandably then, there was a focus on emotionally healthy relationships across the group and in your personal life. It was almost as though the group became the safe place for the individual to practice conflict resolution, firm boundaries, and know that restoration, forgiveness, and peace was on the other side of the conversation. They truly lived out the greatest good for the greatest number.

I made the effort to research each organization to read up on intentional policy, common language etc to see what was planned and how it was practiced. I learned there are steps, traditions, and concepts in each recovery program and each of the aforementioned have various spiritual principles associated to each step/tradition/concept.

As I looked further into the policies, procedures, and bylaws of each organization [OA, AA, and NA] it was evident without dispute their values revolved around people experiencing life change. Currently, I am also writing papers on the structure of the church for consecration. The value and priority of people experiencing life change is not as blatantly evident in the polity of the church as it is in recovery programs. I off handedly remarked to a colleague that perhaps the church should adjust our framework to become a sinner recovery program. But what if we did? What if we looked to evangelism as a process of life change; reintegrating it back with discipleship? What if we met evangelism with reform and revival? What if we married evangelism with the message of grace we are speaking of in our actions? What if we established a culture of evangelism and outreach instead of just planning events?

I believe the church could benefit from a perspective shift borrowed from recovery groups. If we could value community, our church family, as a safe place to be messy, incredibly honest, and know it was a safe place to practice conflict resolution with the promise to pursue restoration; evangelism would become a natural step in the life of every believer. Another interesting feature of recovery groups was the desire to show others how they had found freedom/ change/ recovery because of the program. Every participant had integrated the principles of recovery into their story and could help others see where the program would change their lives too. We need to be integrated the fullness of the gospel in our lives so that we can point out how the fullness of the gospel could be present in the lives of others as well.

## **Section 5: Video**

*Biological data to change our minds and incur social change.*

Immediately upon watching this TED talk I was left with this question: If media reduces the capacity for empathy and renders us socially and emotionally incompetent, how do we effectively do virtual church?

Media genomes, or imprints, seem as intricate and versatile as learning styles and personality profiles, but the use described here is intended to diagnose healing through biometric profiling to hear the perfect story.

I find innumerable red flags, concerns, and hesitations with the suggested technology, but the principle need is undeniable. People are wired, down to their DNA, personality profiles, and learning styles, to respond well to certain information as presented and poorly to other methods of communication.

Learning styles should be measured as a gradient scale knowing that most people have the capacity to learn through various styles. Personality profiles can easily be met by providing opportunities for reflection in solitary and social settings. Our responsibility in preaching is not to reduce the gospel, but to take every effort in making it attainable for our audience.

*How to lead through tough conversations*

This TED talk was incredibly helpful to my preaching tactics. I often have to be reminded that Jesus was kind and direct, so it is ok to be direct. The speaker suggests three rules of principles of conflict resolution. The first principle presented of “Leading tough conversations” is to steer into conflict. The second is to “ask questions” and the third is to “stay

quiet”. Conflict is information that if handled well brings clarity. So embrace silence, demonstrate humility, and pursue restoration.

These rules simplify conflict resolution in an attainable manner. I have used these rules in many conversations over the past month. Conflict seems to be increased lately as people are stressed from the pandemic and social restrictions. It also seems to be increased through the increase of virtual meetings and digital contact in place of face to face conversations. Intonation does not carry through written correspondence, so excellent and direct methods of conflict resolution are crucial.

### *Leading an Organization through Change*

Leading through change requires self transformation first. The speaker suggests 5 values to consider imperative when leading through organizational change and adaptation. We are “always on transformation” so we should adopt a culture that values inspiration through purpose, going all in to the change, equipping people, establishing a culture of being a student and lead inclusively.

Purpose is important when leading through change. When you are transparent about the reasons why you are pursuing change you are casting vision for your people to follow you with. Commitment to the change encourages trust amongst the people, and will encourage people to buy in to the change you are moving towards. Having a culture of learning and including others in your journey creates an environment for people to draw in. The transparency of learning creates an environment comfortable with restoring and redeeming failure as part of the process. It allows you to lead alongside your people instead of as the “floating head of knowledge”.

## *Changing the narration of our Story*

Changing the story of our life is determined by evaluating the filters we process our experiences through. This concept seems to resonate with principles of soul care. As you dismantle the lies and replace them with the truth of God's word, we are renewing our minds into the likeness of God and all that he created us to be originally. This is a coaching piece that we must preach, practice, and walk alongside people in community. The renewal of our minds is not a by product of knowing truth it is an intentional application and devotion. In the church we would call this the renewal of our minds, but with unbelievers we can use this practice as affirmations or mantras.