

**Establishing Culture and Practice  
of Outreach and Life change**

**DML970**

**Learning Experience 1**

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**Establishing Culture and Practice of Outreach and Life Change**

Establishing Culture and Practice of Outreach and Life Change is the focus of this paper. In preparation for the course, we were directed to write a paper containing five sections. In each section, I want to endeavor to discover various insights that will inform and assist in establishing culture and practice of outreach and life change. As I begin, I need to address the question of context. Having just returned to North America for an indefinite period of time from ministry in Cameroon, Central Africa, I have become keenly aware of the need of Christ followers and the church to develop culture of outreach and life change here in the North American context. For this reason, I will be making the application of these insights to a North American context.

### **Section 1: Readings**

Drawing upon the pre-course reading, I want to highlight some six insights that will inform me on how to better evangelize here in North America. Following are some of the insights from each of the books:

In ***“Insight: The Surprising Truth About How Others See Us, How We See Ourselves, and Why the Answers Matter More than We Think,”*** the writer, Tasha Eurich, confronts the lack of self-awareness that results in us not being fulfilled, confident or successful. We are told that “self-awareness is the will and the skill to understand yourself and how others see you.”<sup>1</sup> Later she writes, “True insight only happens when we process both our thoughts and our feelings.”<sup>2</sup> Being defensive is a tell-tale indication of a lack of self-awareness.

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<sup>1</sup>

Eurich, Tasha. *Insight: The Surprising Truth About How Others See Us, How We See Ourselves, and Why the Answers Matter More than We Think* “Published in the United States by Currency, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC, New York.” Apple Books. (2017, 2018.) p26

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p121

The main insight I take from Eurich would be the need of Christ followers being more self-aware. Our self-awareness will make us more approachable and cause us to be less pretentious. She even calls our self-absorption a cult. To be more effective in our witness, we need to be self-aware and Christ aware. People are drawn to authentic people who are not self-absorbed but self-aware.

In “*Changeology: 5 Steps to Realizing Your Goals and Resolutions*,” John Norcross writes in “Changeology” that our New Year’s resolutions need to be ditched. He encourages a more incremental, step-by-step approach to seeing real life change. He notes that, “More than 75 percent of people maintain a goal for a week, but then they gradually slip back into old behavior. However, research shows that almost all of the people who maintain a new behavior for three months make the change permanent; the probability of relapse after that period is modest.”<sup>3</sup> In the epilogue of the book we are reminded that, “More than 100 million Americans resolve to change their behavior every January. That’s more than one in three adults, but only a third of them succeed. What separates those who triumph from those who falter is the essence of this book.”<sup>4</sup> The author’s approach can tend to be cerebral, as there can be more to habits than just what we see on the surface.

What can we take from *Changeology* that will be of help in evangelism? Christian conversion is about change! For many believers, their initial salvation was accompanied by an area or areas of change in their life. Sometimes they later can become discouraged because some areas need to change but are not changing instantaneously. We should not lose sight of the on-going need of transformation. In one area, the Lord can bring about a miraculous instantaneous change. In other

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Norcross John, *Changeology: 5 Steps to Realizing Your Goals and Resolutions*. Simon & Schuster Inc. eBook. 1230 Avenue of the Americas New York, NY (2014) p. 22

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 373

areas, we're strengthened by identifying an area then incrementally take steps towards overcoming. I believe an effective place of witness is when a believer in integrity acknowledges their on-going need to change and struggles that are associated with it. Many want change and we need to model both instantaneous and the process of change, which goes beyond just a mere New Year's resolution.

***Organizational Culture and Leadership***, by Edgar Schein, has within it some principles that are apropos to the church. In the opening chapter he asked the question, "The concept of organizational culture: Why bother?"<sup>5</sup> We need bother because often the invisible culture trumps even the vision of an organization including the church. For leaders, understanding the organizational culture is vital. The first book we looked at in this section was "Insight," which talked about self-awareness, which is important. Now in this book, we see the importance of organizational and cultural awareness. Before we can be change agents, we must have a better understanding of its culture. It's only then that we can find our role in change and help the organization/church change.

To be affective in our witness, we need to understand the cultures of the world, the church and even our families so we can begin to discern the vision and lead to bring about change, resulting in a more effective witness.

In ***Identity Matters: Discovering Who You Are in Christ*** by Terry Wardle, he masterfully delineates the unshakable certainty of our inheritance in Christ. For believers, this is a foundation for our well-being, self-esteem, and self-worth of who we are in Christ. Embracing our identity in Christ is vital because "more than a few Christians have been taught that God wants them to be more

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Schein, Edger. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed, Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey. (2017) p. 52

than they are. They have come to believe they must, through herculean efforts, work to ascend to the high ground of Christian maturity.”<sup>6</sup> To be effective in our witness for Christ, we need to have a greater appreciation of who we are in Christ and a deeper experience in the power of the Holy Spirit. To illustrate his point of the needed power of the Holy Spirit, he interjects the story of A. B. Simpson’s experience of the infilling of the Holy Spirit. After this, “Simpson was concerned that Christians everywhere understand, appreciate, and embrace the Holy Spirit...For Simpson the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life was nonnegotiable.”<sup>7</sup>

From Wardle, I see two things that are vital for us to be effective in our witness. First, an understanding of our identity in Christ; and second, our need of the power and work of the Holy Spirit to empower us to be an effective witness.

Finally, I would like to consider the book, *The Rise of the NONES*, by James Emery White. After describing to us the growth and the demographics of these “Nones,” he reminds us of the importance of conversion growth. He writes, “Until we think about conversion growth as a way to grow our churches, we won’t make a dent in the fastest growing religious demographic in our day.”<sup>8</sup> One key to being effective in this is being like the Lord Jesus when it says in John 1:14, “Jesus came ... full of grace and truth.” “Only authentic Christianity brings together both truth and grace.”<sup>9</sup> We need to develop an effective attitude of grace and truth to reach this lost tribe of the “nones.”

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<sup>6</sup>

Wardle, Terry. *Identity Matters: Discovering Who You Are in Christ* Leafwood Publishers Abilene, Texas. (2017) p. 47.

<sup>7</sup>  
Ibid., p. 149

<sup>8</sup>  
White, James Emery, *The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching The Religiously Unaffiliated*, Baker Books Grand Rapids, MI, USA (2014) p 74.

<sup>9</sup>  
Ibid., p 121

As I reflect back on the above-mentioned insights, I'm reminded of the words of Jesus when he said to his disciples in Matthew 4:19, "follow me and I will make you fishers of men." I appreciate and have a keen insight into the statements made concerning these verses when it was said, "Jesus did not address all the people the same way. We are fisherman and we are to fish people (Mt. 4:19). In the natural, not all fish bite the same bait. Likewise, you cannot talk to everyone in the same manner."<sup>10</sup>

## Section 2: Evangelism Interview

James Emery White in his book, "The Rise of the Nones" outlines for us the different types of church growth. He sees church growth as coming from four areas:

1. **Biological Growth**
2. **Transfer Growth**
3. **Prodigal Growth**
4. **Conversion Growth:** when the church grows by reaching a person who has not entered into a life changing, personal relationship with Christ as Savior and Lord.<sup>11</sup>

The Focus of this section is to interview a pastoral staff member from a church that has successfully focused on the fourth means of growth that is conversion growth. I am presently residing in Waverley, New York, about 20 minutes west of the city of Horseheads/ Elmira, New York, where there is a church called "His Tabernacle Family Church."<sup>12</sup> After inquiring, it was

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<sup>10</sup>

Bailey, Brian J. *The Evangelist*, Zion Christian Publisher, Waverly New York, USA 2009

<sup>11</sup>

White, James Emery, *The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching The Religiously Unaffiliated*, Baker Books Grand Rapids, MI, USA 2014, 75.

<sup>12</sup>

[www.histabernacle.com](http://www.histabernacle.com)

reported to me that in this area, this is the growing church, as one person said to me, “ every Sunday people are coming to Christ.” The Pastor of the church is Dr. Micheal Spencer. Pastor Spencer was willing to be interviewed concerning his church’s growth. He said that 60% of the church’s growth is new salvation (conversion growth), 15% prodigal growth, 20 % transfer growth and 5% biological growth. He also commented that they have about a 35-40% retention rate. In the last 12 months, they had only one Sunday without salvations in the service.

Dr. Spencer said there are basically two parts to the church’s growth—first, practical and second, spiritual.

Let’s consider the things that he considers to be practical. As we spoke, it was evident that he is compassionate and passionate, but also intimately familiar with marketing and sales strategies. The church utilizes numerous marketing techniques to make people very aware of their presence and message. They are on television, radio and in various platforms via the Internet. Their focus is to get people to their facility and make sure they have a positive experience from the moment they enter the property. This includes the pastor himself standing, waving, greeting and smiling at people as they pull into the parking lot. He said he does this every Sunday except when there’s lightening. Parking lot attendants then take care of them and park them. When they enter the building, again greeters welcome them, all part of the guest relations team focusing on giving them a warm positive welcome. When they are seated, they’re placed with people of similar background, again with the focus towards giving them a positive experience. This team is trained to know if their welcome should be low key or more aggressive. After the first visit, they are contacted by a phone call, others

by letter and some by text. He explained to me how one generation would appreciate a phone call and talk freely but others would find that call creepy. The pastor is familiar with the alphabet soup of generations—X, Y and Z—and how each generation responds differently in this type of circumstance. As they identified each person, they're mindful of how to best reach them.

Above was a brief overview of how newcomers are welcomed with the end goal being that they give their hearts to Christ and are assimilated into the church. These newcomers are immediately invited and directed to become part of a foundation's class. This class is offered on a rotating basis that takes them through four levels with level One being a prerequisite to baptism and church membership. They, as a church, also offer what was described as a phenomenal children's ministry, called APEX. They also have other ministries for teens and young adults. They have recently branched into multiple sites around the region. Dr. Spencer also offers leadership training, coaching and mentoring to area pastors.

This brings us to the question, "How did they end up in church?" Horseheads, New York, has a population of 6,500 and is next door to Elmira, with a population of 29,000. The surrounding area is rural, with a few small villages nearby. Taking into account the entire region, you're looking at about 40,000 people. His Tabernacle Family Church has taken upon them to reach this entire region by mobilizing every single church member to be actively pursuing after souls for the kingdom. They have a bus ministry that reaches into some of the poorest areas and brings children, teens, and adults who want to attend. They use every means of media to make their presence known—website, social media, TV and radio. They also send out their media team on a regular basis to do "Geofencing" on behalf of the church at Walmart, large grocery stores and public venues.

**“What Is Geofencing?** Geofencing is the practice of using global positioning (GPS) or radio frequency identification (RFID) to define a geographic boundary. Then, once this “virtual barrier” is established, the administrator can set up triggers that send a text message, email alert, or app notification when a mobile device enters (or exits) the specified area.”<sup>13</sup>

Apparently, once someone has been contacted via Geofencing, for a few hours after that every Internet/ Wi-Fi or phone service that they come in contact with will replicate the church’s invitations, messages and offers inviting them to participate in a service or planned event. As Dr. Spencer said, “everything is focused on getting them in the front door and closing the back door.”

After the practical aspects of church growth, he wanted to address the spiritual part. As a church, they have set the goal that once people enter the property, they will sense the supernatural presence of Christ at work in his church. He said, “we demand the anointing, and one thing that will keep people here will be when God supernaturally touches their lives.” For him, the key is to develop a culture of outreach. He knew beyond a shadow of the doubt that God had saved him, baptized him in the Holy Spirit and sent him to establish the church that would reach this region. An intricate part of their retention of individuals is getting them into their solid rock classes that establish them in the word of God and the ways of God. They introduce them to the works and the power of the Holy Spirit and immediately instruct them they are to reach out to others.

Application to my context: As I ruminate over this interview, I find myself challenged and encouraged to seek again a refreshed calling to have clarity to know what our next step is as a couple in ministry. This church clearly had what we often call a “hyper-faith” bent. I do not want to use that as a reason to dismiss or diminish their effectiveness. Being part of the fellowship of churches

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<sup>13</sup>

<https://geomarketing.com/geomarketing-101-what-is-geofencing>

that always emphasized holiness, maturity and onward vision, I see that for most of our churches, there is very little affective outreach happening. I fear that if there is not a change of attitude including reaching the world, we as a fellowship will continue to die a slow death in the West. I'm reminded of the words of Jesus in Matthew 4:19 where he said to the disciples, "follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."<sup>14</sup> Now is the time to ask the Lord Jesus for fishing lessons. I am very mindful of my lack in this area and see the need to refocus and ask the Lord Jesus for fishing lessons.

### Section 3: Creative Interviews

Creative interviews to identify how their creativity can possibly inform evangelism efforts and initiatives.

I interviewed the following creative people:

**Rebecca Blodgett and Denise Miller** are both elementary school teachers and have written and illustrated together five published Scripture-based children's books. Rebecca also has been part of a creative team developing a puppet video series to teach children about the application of Scripture to their daily lives. Both projects have been translated into different languages and are used internationally.

**Suzanne Ying** is a Singaporean lawyer, specifically in the area of international law. She also is an accomplished pianist who is a prolific composer of a multitude of songs that have been translated into multiple languages and used internationally by many churches.

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<sup>14</sup>

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, (ESV) Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, 2016.

**Eric Gutierrez** is a public High School History teacher. He is also leader of his local church youth program, where he speaks at children and youth camps as a balloon artist. He also has been featured at various open-air community outreach events for all ages.

**Ben Waters** is a Music teacher of percussion in New York City. Unlike my other participants, he's not active in any local church.

**Question one: "Where do you go for your inspiration and what does the creative process look like?"**

**Rebecca and Denise:**

- The Lord speaking via the scripture by the Holy Spirit.
- Seeing the need to have the scripture and its application understandable for all ages and cultures.
- Researching for scriptural context of biblical customs to be able to accurately illustrate period clothing, architecture and practices.

**Suzanne:**

- Creativity of the Holy Spirit birthing a melody and then words following; or at other times the process is the reverse—words followed by the music.
- Often for her the song comes as a result time spent with the Lord where the birthing process begins, which includes worship, prayer and Bible reading.
- A release of the gifts of Holy Spirit, specifically prophecy and speaking in tongues, is the seedbed from which songs are composed.

**Eric:**

- Creativity of the Holy Spirit to take a familiar story like “the three little pigs” and make biblical application, as well as being able to imaginatively use balloons to illustrate the story.
- He believes God has gifted him and that he is able to create many things with balloons. He showed me pictures of a full-size Goliath from balloons. For his Christianized version of the three little pigs, it took him over eight hours to construct each of the balloon figures and buildings.
- He’s excited about his ability to engage people of all ages just because they’re fascinated by the thought of things being constructed out of balloons. This inspires him.

**Ben Waters:**

- For him, the inspiration comes from the music itself. He spoke freely about the enjoyment he derives from the music and how he sees the enjoyment of others observing his talent and skill.
- As a percussionist, he thinks that people in general do not recognize the complexity and hard work to be proficient.

**Question Two: If the church were to have a voice to you or your tribe, how could we reframe what we do so that it would be more meaningful?**

**Rebecca and Denise:**

- Respect and value the gifts like writing and illustrating as important gifts/talents of God to the church.

- Acknowledge the Holy Spirit as a source of inspiration, but also the hard work involved in completing.
- Recognize and respect all of the hard work involved in bringing a project to fruition.

**Suzanne:**

- Respect and appreciate that musical ability is both the result of God's gifting and hard work.
- Value the expression of this talent as more than just a prelude or sideshow before the real ministry begins—preaching and teaching.

**Eric:**

- Appreciate the creativity of the Holy Spirit to take a familiar story and bring out a biblical application, as well as being able to imaginatively use balloons to illustrate the story.

**Ben Waters:**

- As a percussionist, he thinks that people in general do not recognize the complexity and hard work to be skilled at the instruments they play.
- Need to show appreciation to those who have dedicated their life to inspire others through their music.

As I consider the answers given to me from each of the participants in the interviews, I believe for them the church should take their gifts as truly being from God and appreciate their value and that they can be affective to help advance the kingdom. Each of their creative gifts need to be considered more than a sideshow or prelude to the real ministry of preaching and teaching. When someone is skilled and talented in a particular area, this captures people's

attention and sparks an interest in their hearts. In the context of evangelistic efforts and initiatives, their expressions of creativity, empowered by the Holy Spirit, can and does cultivate the soil of their hearts to receive the seed of the Gospel.

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

The need for life-change and recovery from addictions, with a desire to gain control of their lives, sells lots of books. A brief visit to a bookstore’s “self-help” section illustrates a variety of areas that people feel their life is out of control. Relationships, food, drugs, sexual or alcohol addictions give birth to the cry of people for change. Trysh Trivisa, in her book, “The Language of the Heart, A Cultural History of the recovery Movement from Alcoholics Anonymous to Oprah Winfrey,” tells us that “The number of people who identify themselves as “in recovery,” in one way or another, is staggering.”<sup>15</sup> Trivisa goes on to describe the origins of Alcoholics Anonymous as the Great Grandfather of many self-help ideas. From their background in the Oxford Group the “founders were William (“Bill”) Wilson and Robert Smith (“Dr. Bob”) were devoted to “world-changing through life-changing.”<sup>16</sup> Wilson and Smith had both been involved in the evangelical Oxford Group, a nondenominational Christian fellowship founded by Frank Buchman and devoted to “world-changing through life-changing.” Using terms such as “spiritual sickness,” “surgical spiritual operation” and “soul surgery” was used to eliminate the desire to drink is still part of the

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<sup>15</sup>

Trivisa, Trysh *The Language of the heart, A Cultural History of the recovery Movement from Alcoholics Anonymous to Oprah Winfrey*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC, USA 2009. 3

<sup>16</sup> Trivisa, 29

DNA of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) today. This was all news to me. I was ignorant of Alcoholics Anonymous history or even current practices.

After reading about Alcoholics Anonymous and reading through some of their printed material, I was ready to attend a Zoom AA meeting. The first meeting I participated in was an open meeting that included 15 people from various parts of the United States and one participant from Europe. The Serenity Prayer, the Lord's Prayer, as well as readings from some of AA's official materials, provided a foundation from which individual members began to share their story. The participants spoke openly about their struggles with alcohol and how it affected their lives and members of their family and their jobs. The group was made up of women and men, young and old, all from varied backgrounds. For some, this was one of two or three meetings a day that they attended. I recognized five common parts in each of their testimonies:

- First, there was the recognition that their lives were out of control and that alcohol was controlling their lives. Often, they mentioned other factors in their lives that were out of control, and alcohol became a way to escape reality.
- Second, they needed to change and had come to the point in their lives where they wanted to change.
- Third, their addiction was often an indication of deeper issues related to self-image, loneliness, rejection and fears.
- Fourth, they needed to realize that only change would come with God's help, prayer, the support of their AA meetings and a sponsor.

- Finally, they were in the meeting looking for encouragement to take it one day at a time. One participant said, “I will not drink today because I can drink tomorrow, but when I get to tomorrow, it will be today.”

As each individual shared, there was a sense of safety in the context of this meeting.

Consequently, they spoke freely of their struggles, their victories and their challenges. The depth of this openness was refreshing. Having the common enemy of alcohol and the common desire to overcome this enemy gave a deep camaraderie. There was an equality of celebration, whether a person had been sober for 10 days 10 months or even 10 years. In the second meeting I participated in via Zoom, it was a monthly celebratory meeting. All the regular meetings are closed, but the last Friday of each month they hold an open meeting inviting others to observe as they celebrate together.

In AA’s “Big Book,” “The terms “spiritual experience” and “spiritual awakening” are used many times in this book which, upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms.”<sup>17</sup> For AA life change is a vital part of the program. Ever conscious of human frailties, bold statements of complete transformation are discouraged. Incremental change taken slowly, just day to day but even moment to moment are encouraged. The accumulative value of right decisions results in real life change. Having a “spiritual awakening” is an intricate part of this change.

In broad terms, it is not difficult to connect the AA’s 12 step program and Biblical principles of life change. Reading each of the 12 steps, you can see Biblical/Christian thoughts in each one. Take step One for instance, “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol— that our lives had

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<sup>17</sup>

Alcoholics Anonymous. “Alcoholics Anonymous: Big Book.” Apple Books. 958

become unmanageable.”<sup>18</sup> Simply put, life change cannot come unless there’s an acknowledgment of the need, followed by the desire to truly change. Their approach to change reminds me of the African proverb, “there is only one way to eat an elephant: a bite at a time.” One bite, one day at a time is the understanding. We often quote 2 Corinthians 5: 17 that says: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”<sup>19</sup> “Sometimes in being thus quoted, it gives quite a false impression. Listeners are apt to think that when a man is saved, old habits, evil thoughts, and lustful looks are forever done away, and everything becomes literally new in a person’s life. We know that this is not true. The verse does not describe a believer’s practice, but rather his position. Notice it says that if anyone is **in Christ**. The words **in Christ** are the key to the passage.”<sup>20</sup> As we grow in the Lord and progress, our practices need to be step by step, corresponding to my position in Christ.

As I consider some of the things I observed as I investigated the background of Alcoholics Anonymous and then observed a meeting of a group of recovering alcoholics, I would like to highlight three things that I believe add value to my understanding of recovery and life change.

First, people want to change and can change. The fact is, the church has at its disposal some of the same tools to help with life change. We, as believers, need to access this reservoir of God to personally experience life change and help others.

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<sup>18</sup>

*Twelve steps and Twelve Traditions*, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Box 459, Grand Central Station New York, NY 1952, 1953, 1981. 21

<sup>19</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17 *The English Standard Version Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009

<sup>20</sup>

2 Corinthians 5:17 *The English Standard Version Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009

Second, there is great value in small groups. It is important that groups have some key elements, including it being a safe confidential place to share your struggles and your needs. Also, having an atmosphere of grace and acceptance, not condemnation and judgment.

Finally, the recognition that answers are not found in ourselves, but in God and His word and by the power of the Holy Spirit. When I first came to Christ and became active in local church, Sunday night services included an extensive amount of time dedicated to testimonies. I heard amazing stories of people coming from varied backgrounds and testifying to the transformation of Christ. At first it was exciting and encouraging, but then in time I began to realize the repetitious nature of somebody's testimonies. Some of the same people would share about their encounter with Christ 20, 30, 40 plus years ago. I recall very well announcements of the pastor over the course of the next several weeks. He reminded the congregation of the transforming work of God in the lives of individuals in the church. Then he proceeded to explain the need of God being in the now, not just the past and not just in hope for the future. He would then ask them to share what has God done in your life in the last few days, or today? Have we become shallow in the understanding of the depth of transformation that God wants to bring in lives? I believe we have. Have we become shallow in our sharing and camaraderie as believers and lost our ability to feel safe in sharing our struggles? I believe we have.

Warren Bird in his book, "How to Break Growth Barriers," Speaking of AA, he said that people have better results when they avail themselves of "group support" and this support is a critical component. With people in the twelve-step community, the people who have made the most progress have done so through sponsorship." This AA model includes being able to say to members,

“cut the self-deception.”<sup>21</sup> “Celebrate Recovery is a Christ-centered, 12 step recovery program for anyone struggling with hurt, pain or addiction of any kind...it is a safe place to find community and freedom from the issues that are controlling our life.”<sup>22</sup> This Christian program is using AA’s effective model to help people struggling with all kinds of addictions. Their program is Christ centered.

### Section 5 TED Talks Videos

After watching the four TED talks, I would like to consider how they inform us to better communicate to people outside our faith.

In **Heidi Boisvert’s** TED Talk, she says that “I have discovered a way that mobile devices, virtual and augmented reality, were changing our nervous system and they’re *literally changing the structure of her brain*. The technologies that I had been using positively to influence hearts and minds, were actually *eroding functions* in the brain necessary for empathy and decision-making.” She is studying the DNA of our mind and how various forms of technology can be used to manipulate us. Her concern is that, “If you can design a tool (to measure the neuroscience of pop culture), but it can be turned into a weapon, should you build it?” With this, we see how we are being manipulated unknown to many. This is one of the great challenges we face in our day—how to have our voice heard in the midst of the many voices. It is clear to me from her talk that there is also a spiritual dimension to the influence of the various technologies that have become part of our

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<sup>21</sup>

George, Carl F. How to Break Growth Barriers. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, 1993. p 123.

<sup>22</sup>

<https://www.celebraterecovery.com/>

daily lives. You need to understand the challenge, confront the challenge and pray for discernment as we engage the world around us in the midst of this.

**Adar Cohn's** lecture on "How to Lead Tough Conversations" is certainly apropos for our day. His skills and conflict resolution, youth empowerment and social change gives us some insights that will help us better in being part of difficult conversations. We do not need to be in a jail, in a conflict-ridden country to find ourselves in the midst of a tough conversation. He shares three rules:

1. Move towards the conflict. I, too, do not like conflict. Fear keeps us from addressing the areas of conflict.
2. You don't know anything, and if you do know something, pretend you don't. You can, though, ask open-ended questions.
3. Keep quiet. Give time. Don't rush in.

This advice is profound. Jesus said, "blessed are the peacemakers." To be an affective witness in the mist of conflict all around us. This type of conversation creates the future. We need to stop avoiding the conversations, rushing in with our solutions but keep quiet—be a peacemaker.

**Jim Hemerling** in his talk called, "5 Ways to lead in an era of Constant Change," Rightly describes the days in which we live as being a time of constant change. He outlines for us is five ways of leading what he calls, "always on transformation." It sounds exhausting. There is no question, "change is hard." A key to being successful at this is to always put people first. I am reminded of the example of Jesus when he saw people without a leader he was "moved with compassion." Hemerling says, 1. We need to inspire true purpose. 2. We need to go all in. 3. We need to enable people to succeed in a challenge. 4. We need to facilitate continual learning and

transform the culture of an organization. 5. Finally, we need to have an inclusive vision that is open to input and suggestions from others. I feel like I am part of an organization that allows little or no input from others and somehow feels that change/transformation is unwelcome. I know that within our organization there are some who know there needs to be change, but most feel powerless to bring it about. If we are going to reach this generation, I'm convinced more than ever we need to allow ourselves to be touched and transformed.

In her TED Talk, **Lori Gottlieb** says that people can “change their story in a way that will change their life.” She also challenges the idea that circumstances shape our stories but suggests that in fact often our stories shape our lives. We believers need to listen to our own stories and begin to allow the Lord to help us to reshape and retell our story. It is then that we can listen to stories of others around us with ears to hear with clarity and understanding.

### **Conclusion**

Reflecting on each of the five areas I have considered in this paper, it has challenged me to update my understanding, approach to and practices related to my life mission. As I endeavor to walk in obedience to Matthew 28 as a follower of Christ, this call to go comes with an informed and updated understanding of the time in which we live. In my own personal life as I cultivate a culture of outreach and life change, I am challenged to influence others around me to join me in this journey.

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