

## How To Stay Effective In A New Decade

**Intro:** Out of all the uncertainties the future holds for us, one thing is for certain...rapid change! Things are changing at such a pace that it is mind boggling. It's one thing if you personally don't want to stay current with all the latest cultural trends and technology, but what about the church? As we enter a new decade, how do we stay effective at reaching people in this culture? This has been a struggle for the church since the 1960's.

- Back in 1985, I started as a youth pastor. I remember going to a youth conference with the Sr. pastor at the time. It was all about reaching students. This was back when MTV was new and it was the rage. Christian music was just coming out with their own version. They showed us a Christian music video and showed us how to use it with students. I loved it! (Explain)
- Over the years I have learned that God has called us to effectively reach people in the culture they are in. BUT, what does that look like?

### I. We Must Practice Innovation

*I Cor. 9:21-23 "When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings." (NLT)*

#### A. We must continue to be innovating in ministry

1. Look at the Apostle Paul's commitment to innovate. *"I try to find common ground with everyone...so save some."* This is the point of innovation. We have a commitment to be innovative so that we can reach people for Christ!
  2. This is a great mistake of so many churches today. There is a resistance to change strategy in order to reach people. Change is looked upon as wrong or even evil. "We've been doing it this way for 20 years!"
  3. Think about all the changes we have seen in the past 20 years? (Internet / cell phones / iphones / ipods / facebook / LCD and Plasma TVs / GPS / twitter / skype /
  4. How is a church going to reach a generation of people that embraces all the new technology if we appear to them as irrelevant and disconnected to the world they know?
  5. The truth never changes, but the methodology must constantly change with the culture we are trying to reach. Our innovative methods are the bridges that the truth travels across. Without innovation, you have no bridge and the truth is lost.
  6. You may not like all the innovation you may see at Foothills. But, that's OK! Why? Because it's not for you. It's for those we are trying to reach.
- Average age in Molalla – 33 yrs old! We must understand their world! Innovative churches embrace the mindset of missionaries. (explain)
7. Ministry leaders, I want to encourage you to be innovative this next year. Try some

new things! Don't be afraid to fail. If you're not failing at times, you're not trying anything new.

- Churches either innovate or stagnate. Innovation is messy...sometimes unpredictable...maybe even stressful...BUT it is how we stay effective!

#### B. Practical steps to innovate

1. One of the new strategies we are going to implement this year has to do with our Student Ministry. I am so excited about what they are doing...trying something new in order to reach more students.
- Sam come up and share
    2. Building project
    3. Facebook
    4. Saturday night service

## II. We Must Practice Participation

*Eph. 4:16 "He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love." (NLT)*

*I Cor 12:7 "A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other." (NLT)*

#### A. We must continue to multiply participation in ministry

1. The problem with many churches is that over time less and less people get involved serving and those who do serve, just put in more time. The church becomes filled with spectators instead of participators. It becomes like a Football game. 22 guys on the field and 60K in the stands.
2. BUT, God's word makes it very clear that the church is only healthy, growing and full of love as every part serves somewhere. Everybody doing their part. Participation is the norm...being a spectator is what is odd.
3. As God grows Foothills, the need for more people to serve just multiplies. We can't afford to think that it's someone else's responsibility. Every person must embrace the truth that God has something for them to do.
4. Every person must accept the fact that the health of the church rests partially on their shoulders NOT just the pastor. Maximum participation results in community transformation!
5. We have to constantly reject the consumer mentality if we are going to stay effective as a church. We can't continue to think about what the church can do for me. We must embrace the thinking of "What has God called me to do for His church?"

#### B. Practical steps to participation

1. Children's ministry (with the addition of extra space, this ministry will grow.)
2. Student ministry (With a new focus / new program / new facility)

3. Parking further away from the doors so newer people can park closer – explain
  4. Hospitality ministry (food prep / set up / clean up / - 25 gallons coffee each Sunday!
  5. Financially participate (Deciding to give regularly – Give towards finishing our building projects – Give towards new chairs...\$50 a chair – explain)
- Maintaining a healthy sense of ownership of the ministry God has called us to will help keep us effective for years to come!

### III. We Must Practice Cultivation

- Here is a group of people who did not continue to cultivate their faith  
*Heb. 5:11-12 “There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull and don’t seem to listen. You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God’s word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food.” (NLT)*

#### A. We must continue to cultivate a growing faith

1. This passage talks about a group of people who had stagnated spiritually. They had stopped developing their faith. They were no longer giving themselves to the ongoing cultivation of their relationship with Christ. They lost their effectiveness for the Kingdom of God!
2. We need to have a holy dissatisfaction with where we are spiritually. We have to stop thinking of ourselves as having learned enough / know enough / experienced enough / and now we’re going to coast spiritually.
3. We have to stop thinking that spiritual growth and development comes naturally like physical growth. It doesn’t! It requires our cooperation and effort. We have to make conscious choice to give ourselves to this process.
4. Spiritual growth must become a habit / a discipline / a lifestyle / not something that is optional. We must accept the fact that it’s not always fun / convenient / not always easy. BUT, the rewards are amazing.
5. It’s like going to the gym. I don’t like being at the gym at 5am. My flesh would rather stay in bed. BUT, going to the gym is good for me. I like the results. The process isn’t always easy but the payoff is great.
6. Going to the gym is not optional for me. I decided long ago this was going to be part of my lifestyle. This is why it lasts. I want a lifestyle of being in shape. This is why people who make resolutions to go to a gym don’t last. They don’t make a lifestyle decision!
7. When it comes to cultivating our faith, this has to be our attitude if we want it to last. It’s not just a habit we develop but a lifestyle. We decide that we will have a lifestyle faith / growth / and the ongoing development of our relationship with Christ.
8. The reason this is so important is that everything we do as a church flows out of our relationship with Christ. He is the Shepherd we follow. He’s the leader of this

church. If we stagnate spiritually, we no longer hear, and then we no longer follow.

- It is this commitment that will keep us effective as a church.

#### B. Practical steps to cultivate

*I Peter 2:2 “Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation...” (NLT) We need to crave the “full experience”.*

1. Cultivate a bible reading habit – set a time and stick to it!
  2. Learn to study God’s word on your own – 201 class will help.
  3. Develop friends who want to grow spiritually – you become like who you hang out with. (Tough to soar like eagles when you’re hanging out with the turkeys)
  4. Take classes that increase your understanding of God and His word.
  5. Rearrange your schedule so you can fulfill these things! Often, we sabotage our own goals by not cutting some things out in order to be successful.
6. Serve in areas that stretch you. Quit taking the easy assignments all the time. Quit taking the ones that never cause you to trust God in new ways. Be willing to risk in order to grow!
- Churches that have people committed to the cultivation of their faith stay effective.

#### IV. We Must Practice Celebration

- This is a story about King Hezekiah calling the nation back to serve God. He sent letters through the nation asking the people to come to Jerusalem to worship / celebrate.

*II Chron. 30:21-23 “So the people of Israel who were present in Jerusalem joyously celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days. Each day the Levites and priests sang to the LORD, accompanied by loud instruments. Hezekiah encouraged all the Levites regarding the skill they displayed as they served the LORD. The celebration continued for seven days. Peace offerings were sacrificed, and the people gave thanks to the LORD, the God of their ancestors. The entire assembly then decided to continue the festival another seven days, so they celebrated joyfully for another week.” (NLT)*

##### A. We must continue to celebrate the Lord together

1. I just love this passage! Here is a 2 week party celebrating the Lord together as a group of people. In fact, the first week was so good they decided to continue for another week. Wow!
2. The word “celebrate” is all throughout the Bible. God actually commanded the Israelites to celebrate. God knew how important it was. He made us with a need for celebration / rejoicing / having fun together.
3. When churches forget how to celebrate the Lord they can become a very somber / boring / lifeless / place. This focus on celebrating in the Lord’s presence keeps our attention on Him. We are celebrating because of Him. He’s the focus of the celebration. He’s the reason for our joy.

4. Therefore, since God never changes, we can always have a reason to celebrate regardless of the circumstances. We don't just celebrate when things are good, but also when they are difficult.
  5. I believe this is an often overlooked principal when it comes to the effectiveness of churches. Churches are to be fun places. Maybe if churches were more fun, we'd have less people in bars.
- We must continue to have fun together and celebrate the Lord's goodness!
  - *Neh. 8:10 "Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." (NIV)*

#### B. Practical steps to celebrate

1. I want us to get better at this as a church, but I need your help. I am not very good at this. I don't celebrate accomplishments very well. I am so forward thinking that once I arrive at some destination, I'm already looking ahead to the next one. (I drive my wife crazy with this! I need to grow!)
  2. I would love to hear about some of your ideas. We need to celebrate when this project is completed. There needs to be a party of some kind celebrating all that God has done! We need to invite people!
  3. We also need to grow in how to keep celebrating the Lord's goodness throughout the year? We don't always have to have a completed project that gives us a reason to celebrate. The Lord's goodness is reason enough. HOW?
  4. I'd like to be known as the church that has the most fun in town! I will be looking forward to your suggestions. Some of you have talents and gifts in this area. It's time for you to step up.
- Celebrating helps keep us effective for years to come.

A new decade brings with it opportunities, challenges, and tremendous change. The church is God's instrument to change the world no matter what decade we're in. BUT, it must have a commitment to stay effective. Let's make sure we continue to be the kind of Church God uses to change a community.

- Let's continue to practice innovation
- Let's continue to practice participation
- Let's continue to practice cultivation
- Let's continue to get better at celebration

Which of these qualities is God asking you to grow in this next year? Are you willing to make a commitment today to do just that?