

The Rector's Reflections

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Last month, we began discussing how worship is another evangelistic dimension of the Upward value. Namely, a parish must readily embrace God's call to manifest Christ's kingdom through worship evangelism amidst this Postmodern culture in multiple places (John 4:21-24). The Emerging Church movement understands this Biblical perspective. Gibbs and Bolger explain:

Modern culture created a secular realm and chased all spiritual things to the margins of society, first relegating them to church and religion and then to the individual's heart. What used to be a faith for all of life came to address only a small sliver of reality. To follow the way of Jesus, emerging churches address all of reality. They travel to all spheres in society and make them holy, giving them back to God in worship. . . . Emerging churches destroy the Christendom idea that church is a place, a meeting, or a time. Church is a way of life, a rhythm, a community, a movement. . . . Emerging churches hold to the uniqueness of Christ, yet they welcome all who come. Without insecurity, they place themselves in the midst of others, recognizing that there is much to learn from others,

even those of other faiths. For churches to resemble Jesus, they must include the stranger and not recognize two types of people. Modernity is a culture of exclusion. For emerging churches to look like Jesus, they must be countercultural through inclusion. . . . There are no spectators in God's kingdom. God has given all members a task, a talent, a voice to share. Worship in emerging churches is by producers, not consumers. Outcasts and sinners all get to participate. Part of God's redemptive activity involves calling creation back to God's original intent. That calling back is to infuse beauty into all things. In worship, emerging churches bring the world to God (Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*, 236).

There are several basic principles cells can apply to become decentralized missionary outposts of evangelism through worship. First, in order to reach Postmoderns, meaningful cell worship will be: interactive; experiential; celebratory;

reflective; relational; and multi-sensory. Why is this the case? Leonard Sweet, once again, profoundly explains, “The modes of knowledge in this new ‘scientific method’ are more relational (less propositional); more experiential (less experimental); more image-based (less word-centered) and more celebratory and communal (less cerebral and individual)” (Leonard Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims*, 144). Second, cell worship will be specifically “related to the needs of the group” (Robert E. Logan and Thomas T. Clegg, *Releasing Your Church’s Potential*, 6-5) and “free to worship in its own way” (Leonard Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims*, 121). Put another way, each cell discerns the needs of pre-Christians and functions accordingly to facilitate appropriate evangelistic worship. In fact, preparation for the worship experience is often a mutual endeavor involving cell leaders and group members. Joel Comiskey illustrates, “Sometimes I pick the songs, and sometimes I ask others to do this Flexibility reigns” (Joel Comiskey, *Reap the Harvest*, 112).

The initial primary goal of cell worship is to guide pre-Christians and other participants to “focus on Jesus and lead them into God’s presence” (Leonard Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims*, 121). Thus, the worship experience begins with conversational group prayer which invites the presence and direct guidance of the Holy Spirit. Next, cell leaders invite the community to “offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and our bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee” (BCP, 336).

What follows is a time of praise and thanksgiving through song.

Please join me next month as I continue this discussion.

Faithfully in Jesus Christ,

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