

Christ-Centered Expository Preaching – Tony Merida

This talk is for anyone who will teach the Bible, but especially for those aspiring to the weekly pulpit.

John Stott: **“The essential secret to effective preaching is not mastering certain techniques; it’s being mastered by certain convictions.”**

Expository preaching is a theological driven method of preaching.

- It’s our convictions about God, the Bible, the gospel, the work of the Spirit, the church, the office of the pastor, and more than drive this approach.

Read **2 Timothy 3:14-4:4. Natural progression...**

Strangely many affirm a high view of Scripture, but fail to allow it to dominate their sermon.

It reminds me of Ehrman.... Wouldn’t you want to preach it?

1. The Bible leads us to Jesus (v. 15)

- **“The entire Bible pivots on one weekend in Jerusalem about two thousand years ago.”**
- **Romans** bookends " (1:1b-3)... (16:25-27)
- **1 Corinthians 15:3** "according to the Scriptures"
- **2 Tim 3:15** "Scriptures make us wise for salvation"
- **Acts 17:2-3** - "reasoning in the synagogue from the Scriptures, proving Jesus is the Christ" **not 4 spiritual laws**
- **Acts 13** - what this might have looked like:
- **Acts 18:11, 28** “occupied with the word, testifying X was the Christ.”
- **Acts 26:22** - before Agrippa, "I am saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass that Christ must suffer and rise, and he would proclaim light to our people and the Gentiles
- **Acts 28:23** - "From morning to evening he **expounded** to them (set forth), testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the Prophets."

2 God speaks to us from it (v. 16)

- Expired
- doesn’t mean “inspired like a painter or an athlete.”
- Many unbelievers would say "the Bible is inspiring."
- My kids - mouth

3. God matures us through it (17)

- The Bible shapes our beliefs as well as our lifestyle

“preach the word.” naturally we should want to preach it!

- **Faithfully** (in the sight of God)
- **Piper adoption conference**

- **Consistently** (in season/out of season)
 - **Luther** - "I did nothing the Word did it all. Wrote/preached and taught God's word."
- **Comprehensively** (reprove, rebuke, and exhort)
 - genres
- **Patiently**
- **Theologically** (w teaching) –

The late British preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones said: **“What is it that always heralds the dawn of a Reformation or of a Revival? It is renewed *preaching*. Not only a new interest in preaching but a new kind of preaching.”**

With that vision in mind, allow me to do a bit of **“Preaching 101.”** Foundations.

I. **WHAT MAKES A GREAT PREACHER? (9 Ingredients)**

1. **Love for the Word of Christ and the Christ of the Word**

- Good Preaching is overflow.
 - We commend what we cherish
 - “Taste this”
- **“Let the word drive you to the preaching ministry, don’t let the preaching ministry be the only thing that drives you to the Word.”**
- We must guard against being the **“Sermonator.”**
- Let the Word pass through you, before it goes out from you.
- We must sit under our own preaching.

Love the Christ of the Word

Let your Motive Match the Message of the Bible: Exaltation of Jesus

You can artistically write a Christ centered sermon, without having a Christ centered heart.

- **If your ability surpasses maturity, you’re a disaster zone.**
- You need a Christ-exalting heart.
- **Our goal is this for people: What a Great Savior.”** That needs to be the posture of our own heart.
- **That should be the SUBTEXT! Not how great I am, or how great our church is!**

2. **Love for People**

- Shepherd people from the pulpit.
- **Chapell, “Love the people.”**
- **Envision/imagine listeners as you prepare** – all kinds of people with various needs.
- Preach the Bible from the heart to the heart.

3. **Gifts**

- **“I can’t put in what God left out.”**
- There are other needs! Ezra-Nehemiah

4. Experience

- Like first day of riding a bike.
- We need reps (**Platt, Chandler, Piper, etc**).
- Don't limit this to churches.

5. A Mentor

- Dead, Alive, Distant, Close

6. Models

- **“Great preachers listen to great preachers” (Akin)**
 - Carson – Skill of putting a text in the whole Bible context
 - Piper – for the heart
 - Akin- outline
 - Keller – engagement
 - Dever - speaks to unbeliever
 - Thabiti – pastoral tenderness, warmth and precision
 - HB - humility and clarity and pastoral tone
 - Acts 29 guys – evangelism and cultural engagement
- Listen during exercise, travelling, chores

7. Holiness and Prayer

- Your life and your ministry are linked.
- You can't separate them.
- My life will affect my preaching.
- All of life is sermon preparation.
- We live and minister best out of a **healthy soul**.
- We should pursue a life of communion with God and holiness before God, not only to (1) be faithful to God, but (2) secondarily because this is how you actually make up for your **deficiencies in ministry**.
 - i. So walk with God
 - ii. Read for your soul, not just for your sermons
 - iii. Talk about your sermon in community
 - iv. Take care of your body and mind with rest, recreation, and exercise.
 - v. Build in times of recovery.

8. Instruction

- On exegesis, hermeneutics, theology, and homiletics.
- Those may be new words for some of you! (**Me: College, Read! Hermeneutics!**)
- Tracing arguments, and seeing the whole story of the Bible.

9. The Sovereign Spirit of God

- A lot of mystery in preaching
- God is at work when we rightly preach His Word!

II. What is Expository Preaching?

Expository preaching is Word-driven, or Word-saturated preaching.

- It involves taking the listeners for “a swim in the text.”
- It's often associated with verse by verse preaching, but it's not limited to this approach
 - Exposition isn't a style of preaching/teaching. It's about content and substance.

Faithful exposition involves *explaining what God has said in His Word, and declaring what God has done in His Son, and applying this message to the hearts of people.*

- Letting “texts talk”
- “Re-Revelation”
- Ranting is not preaching
- **Old School, New School Ranting**
 - Dangerous doctrinally
 - Dangerous because it feeds the flesh
- Don't just be a “**Good speakers about biblical topics**”
- **We have a shortage of Christ-exalting expositors.**

III. What is the difference between preaching and teaching?

“The New Testament uses as many as thirty-three different verbs to describe what we usually cover with the single word *preaching*.” – Sidney Greidanus

Acts 8:4 – everyone is preaching

Assembly – 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Tim 4:1-4, and a few other places.

Public Preaching versus Public Teaching

- Preaching involves Exhortation
 - **Not merely transferring information**
 - **Cave 11. Teaching doesn't always exhort.**
- Preaching involves Evangelism
 - Gospel/Preaching – Euangelion, eungelomai
- Preaching involves Exultation
 - **The aim is to lead people to adoration**
 - **At some point in the sermon, they drop their pen and worship.**

Not all teaching involves preaching, but all preaching will involve some measure of teaching because you have to explain...

IV. Why Do Exposition: 9 Benefits

(special attention to preaching through books, though not limited to this)

"Let the spirit lead" - (1) he has led, (2) he does lead... "where scripture speaks God speaks"
"I just don't have a word" - Platt, your experience is fallible

1. Exposition calls for attention to biblical **Doctrine**
 - Not just a few subjects - Romans
2. Exposition, done well, is good for both **audiences**: believers and non-believers.
 - Keller, "Evangelize as you edify and edify as you evangelize"
 - **Unbelievers**
 - Don't have to water down the message for unbelievers, just assume they're present and speak **intelligibly**.
 - They actually expect us to teach the Bible.
 - Starbucks – hamburgers – be a church
 - Believers: Are edified
 - They need to see God in the Word.
 - They need to be reminded of the gospel.
3. Exposition gives **Authority** to the message.
 - Begg – Beadle
 - Why should they listen to the young guy?
4. Exposition **Magnifies** Scripture.
 - You show what you believe about the Bible by how you use the Bible
5. Exposition is **God-Centered** not man-centered.
 - We get to think God's thoughts after him.
 - We start with God's agenda, God's priorities, and God's questions, rather than what we think is important.
 - **Our job is to be "Exegetical escorts"** – taking them into the arena of God's Word so they can see the glory of the God who spoke the word.
6. Exposition provides a wealth of **material** for preaching.
 - **As long as you are preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ from the bottomless word of God, you will never run out of material!**
7. Exposition **edifies** the person delivering the Word.
8. Exposition ensures the highest level of biblical **knowledge** for the congregation.
 - It helps them to think Christianly
 - God builds his church by His Word. You can build a crowd on personality; but you can only build a church – God's people – by God's Word.
9. Exposition teaches people how to **study** the Bible on their own. (And teach it on their own!)

- a. **Nehemiah 8** – an expositional movement
- b. **Air War, Ground War**

V. What Are the (Perceived) Dangers of Exposition?

1. Dullness

- If we find it dull that's a personal spiritual problem, not the Bible's problem

2. Irrelevancy

- We don't make the Bible relevant. It is relevant. It's timeless.
- But we should seek to **show the relevance of the Bible.**
- We should show a point of **contact** and **conflict** with modern listeners.
 - You're totally depraved, desire for relentless affirmation

3. Inflexibility

- **Feel the freedom to speak pastorally some weeks when crises come up.**
- Think through your **preaching calendar** strategically.
- **You may need to look at a lot of texts to tease out a doctrine.**
- We shouldn't be a slave to form, but a servant of the text and our people.

4. Detail Overload

- You don't have to turn over every single stone in every text.
- **Give the dominant thrust of the text** and develop your sermon around it.

5. Intellectual Pride

- This is a theologically driven method of preaching.
- Those who love theology can be given to intellectual pride.
- Seek to foster humility in your life and your teaching.

6. Christ-less Sermons

- A failure to see the text in light of the whole Bible context, missing the forest for a twig.

VI. Why Do "Christ-Centered" Exposition

✓ A Christ-Centered understanding of Scripture should lead to Christ-Centered exposition.

- D. A. Carson: "The entire Bible pivots on one weekend in Jerusalem about two thousand years ago."
- Christopher J.H. Wright: The proper way for disciples of the crucified and risen Jesus to read their Scriptures is messianically and missionally."
- Jon. Edwards, "Christ and his redemption are the great subject of the whole Bible."
- Sidney Greidanus defines preaching Christ "as preaching sermons which authentically integrate the message of the text with the climax of God's revelation"

in the person, work, and/or teaching of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament.”

- To see Christ formed in our people, we should always emphasize, in our exposition, the unique person, work, and/or teaching of the Messiah.
- Graeme Goldsworthy: “It ought to be the aim of every pastor to bring all members of his or her congregation to maturity in Christ. But they cannot mature if they do not know the Christ in the Bible, the Christ to whom the whole Bible, Old and New Testaments, give a unified and inspired testimony.”

4 Reasons why we should read the Scriptures Christocentrically.

1. **Jesus** clearly saw Himself as the fulfillment of the Old Testament writings (John **Jn1:45** – **was Philip wrong?** No. See John 5:39, 46; Luke 4:20–21; Luke 24:27, 44).
 - Any time in history? **Luke 24.**
 - But we have **Acts**, Epistles, and Revelation? Stop reading it with a newspaper and read with OT! Phrase after phrase has echoes of OT.
 - **"The Scriptures are like a treasure map that leads to Jesus, the promised Messiah."**
 - Prophet, Priest, King, Mediator, Temple, Sacrifice, Second Adam, Son of Abraham, and Son of David, the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Servant of the Lord, the Messiah, the King, the Redeemer, Savior – all of this and more are fulfilled in Jesus.
 - That first promise is as old as Genesis 3:15, and the whole sweep of the OT is moving to the redeemer
2. The **Apostles** knew that the Bible focused upon Jesus (**Rom 1:1b–3**; 16:25–27; 1 Cor 15:3–4; 2 Tim 3:15).
 - See sermons in Acts: Acts 2:14–34; Acts 3:18–25; Acts 8:26ff; Acts 13; Acts 17:2–3; Acts 18:5; Acts 26:22–23; Acts 28:23
 - **This is why we have a thick Bible, and not just a pocket NT!**
 - From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is a Christian book.
 - **Sadly, many people know Bible stories but do not know the story of the Bible.**
 - **Sadly, many just moralize the Bible – e.g.:**
 - Ruth – how to relate to mother in laws
 - Noah – love animals!
 - Solomon built an opulent temple - so should we.
 - **Some just leap frog to the cross at the end of the sermon**

I am not advocating *allegory* or clever “Jesus-jukes” (also called *spiritualizing*).

- **Allegory** – Church Fathers, good instincts; flawed methodology.
 - **E.g. Gopher wood, cross, gophers in the ground, resurrection.**
 - **Be aware of authorial intent; human and divine author**
 - **Context.** Not where is Jesus in verse 1?

- **Integrating Biblical Theology:** But where does this text stand in relationship to the cross; what theme is here that runs through the text.
 - Context, bigger context

3. The **thematic** and climactic nature of Scripture.

- Carson says there are about 20 great themes in Scripture
- All of the imbedded themes of salvation converge in Him.
- Learn to look for these themes, and see how these themes escalate to until they reach their apex in the Messiah, and may you find your heart strangely “warmed” like those Emmaus disciples.

4. The Work of **the Holy Spirit**

- Consider the primary purpose of the Spirit
- Jesus: “He will testify about Me” (John 15:26) and “He will glorify Me” (John 16:14).
- The primary role of the Spirit is to shine the spotlight upon the Son of God.
- The nature of the Bible illustrates the Spirit’s Christ-exalting work.
- Bruce Ware: “For although the Spirit is primarily responsible for producing the Bible as the inspired Word of God, the Bible is not primarily about the Spirit but rather it is about the Son.”
- On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit is poured out, and Peter exalts Jesus from the Scripture (Acts 2:14–36) and people are converted.
- As the Scriptures are preached, the Spirit opens hearts of people to respond in repentance and faith to Jesus (Acts 16:14).

Implications:

- Use a **Magnifying** glass and a **wide-angle** lens. (Bryan Chapell)
- No Jewish rabbi should be able to sit comfortably under our preaching from the Old Testament. – At least in most cases...
- Make the **Hero** of the Bible, the **Hero** of every sermon.

Not “what a great sermon” but “What a great Savior!”

- You cannot preach a **Life-Changing** sermon if the Life-Changer is not at the heart of the sermon.
- Take them to the final resting place each week. **Christ-Centered preaching always offers hope – even when it’s filled with imperatives.**
- Carson: If I have learned anything in 35 or 40 years of teaching, it is that students don’t learn everything I teach them. What they learn is what I am excited about, the kinds of things I emphasize again and again and again and again. That had better be the gospel.

"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me." (Col 1:28-29)

- **Our Passion: To Exalt Jesus.**

- This is good everywhere - **New York to Nigeria!**
- Our Practice: Preaching/Teaching - prophetic, heralding, didactic
- Our Power: Christ in you.
- Our Purpose: Maturity, not just evangelism.

Won't this get old? – Unsearchable riches!

- Hearing my wife say she loves me doesn't get old.
- You've got 50 weeks if that, 30-40 weeks

We don't move past the gospel, but deeper in – Romans 1:15; Col 2:6-7

- Bonhoeffer – Last sermon
- Paul, “I want to know him”
- Brainard: “I never got away from Jesus and him crucified, and I found that when my people were gripped by this great evangelical doctrine of Christ and him crucified, I had not need to give them instructions about morality.”

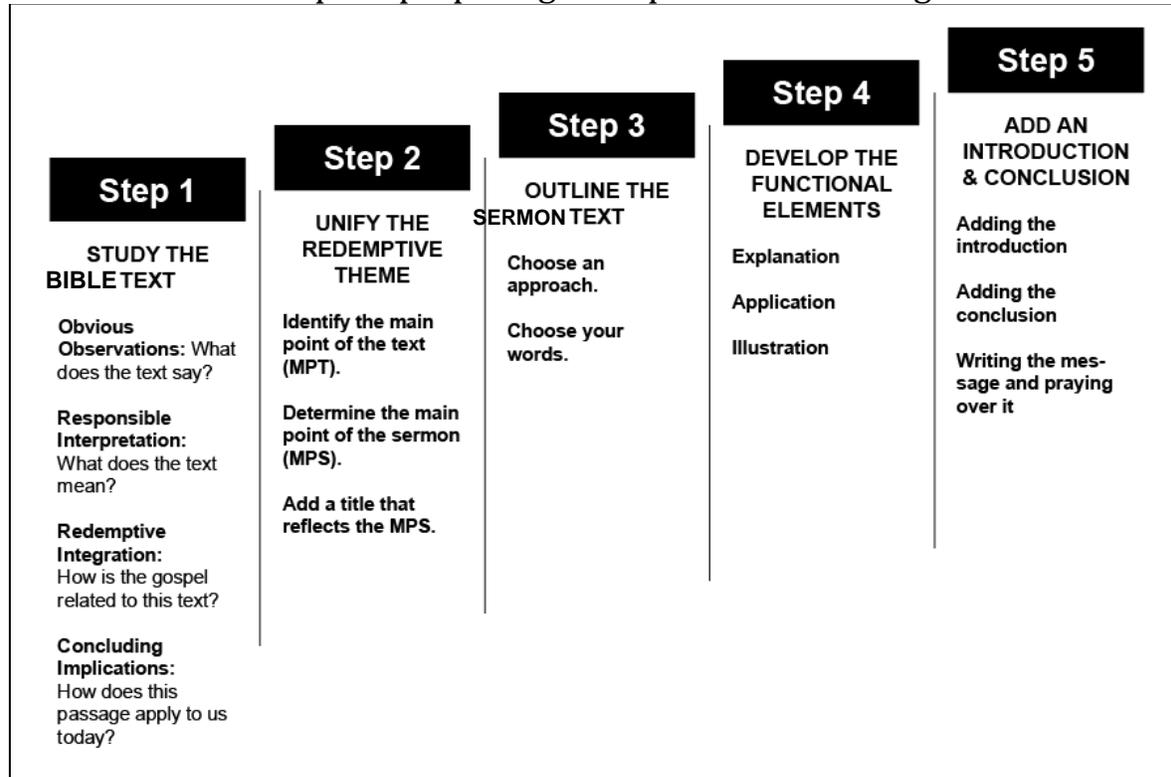
You can change your preaching!!!

- Chris – good men can preach Christ-less sermons
- Lloyd-Jones – Warning of No Atonement

How to grow: (1) read bible a lot, (2) read biblical theology, (3) listen to good preachers...

V. How do you prepare Christ-Centered expository sermons?

Overview: Five steps of preparing an expositional message



Baseball - instincts

Step 1

Observations – notice the obvious, notice the surprises, 25 observations or more. Read, re-read.

Interpretation - ?'s you still have. Look at context, commentaries, words, genre, cross-references, theologies.

Integration – wide angle

1. Where does this text stand in relation to Christ?
2. Does it speak directly of Christ?
3. Does it have theme that runs throughout the Scriptures (and points to Christ)?
4. Does the NT speak of it?
5. Does it contain a promise fulfilled in Christ?
6. Does it make a prediction related to Christ?
7. Does it show mankind's need that reveals his or her need for Christ?
8. Does it reveal the character of God who provides redemption?

Implications – begin making a list of ways it relates to our people

Step 2

- Unify the theme – Andy Stanley
- Main Point of Text (MPT) → Main Point of Sermon (MPS)

Step 3

- Don't impose an outline.
- Suitable for text and audience.
- Consider Sermon Genre
 - Key Word
 - Exegetical
 - Pure Homily
 - Hybrid homily
 - Puritan method (Observation, Doctrine, Objections, Application)
 - Question/Answer
 - Inductive (ask questions throughout)

Step 4: Develop the functional elements

Explanation – what's necessary and unclear

Application - meaning to significance

- Specific
 - Psalm 119:11, memorize Romans 8 over the next month.
 - James 1:27: *do something*
- Transformative
 - Deeper, theological, hits the affections, changes worldview
- Running and Collective

Illustration

- I get to illustrations best when I think of examples of application

Step 5: Introduction and Conclusion

- Speak to Unbelievers and Believers
- Every week at our church we have people who've never even been to a Christian worship service...
- explain as you go along...

Classical Outline: 1 Timothy 4:12-16

4 Challenges for Young Ministers

1. **Exemplify Your Teaching Personally (v. 12)**
Explanation:
Application:
Illustration: (You don't need one in every point; but don't minimize it!)
2. **Expose the Scriptures Publicly (v. 13)**
Explanation:
Application:
Illustration:
3. **Exercise Your Gift Passionately (vv. 14-15)**
Explanation:
Application:
Illustration:
4. **Examine Your Life and Teaching Persistently (v. 16)**
Explanation:
Application:
Illustration:

- Spend a bit of time on **application... can't read a commentary for this!**
- Application requires you to think **prayerfully, pastorally, and missionally.**
- **To do application well, you must walk with God, know your flock, and be alert to issues in culture.**
- **You must be culturally savvy, and pastorally attentive**

SERMON APPLICATION GRID											
DATE	TEXT						SERMON TITLE				
	MAIN POINT OF TEXT						MAIN POINT OF SERMON				
PREACHER	UNIQUE HISTORICAL	JESUS' LIFE & WORK	INDIVIDUAL	GENDER & FAMILY	VOCATION	PUBLIC SPHERE	LOCAL CHURCH	UNITY & DIVERSITY	NON-CHRISTIANS	NEXT GENERATION	DOXO-LOGICAL
	TEXTS AND POINTS										

1. You won't hit every a box each week... why is this significant for this:
2. You can do it in community...
3. You can give it to small group leaders
4. You can do a year at a retreat – manuscript study, find MPT, MPS

Colossians 1:29

Notice work ethic, his source of power.

A. Notice Paul's work ethic.

The wider use of **κόπος** means “beating,” ... and athletic imagery **athletic contest** (**ἀγωνίζομαι**).

Preaching is work. You are an ox. Not just hairy. Not glorious. Plow.

I've read several biographies of great saints. One common theme is clear: none of them were lazy.

Luther reportedly fell into the bed some nights because he was so tired; Wesley and Whitefield exhaust me just reading about them! Moody, “Lord, I’m tired, Amen.”

Why?

1. Preparation fatigue is inevitable

- The study is often thankless, often lonely, and always exhausting

2. Sermon Results are often invisible.

- "I enjoyed it"
- You can't measure actual growth because only God knows.

3. Your message is controversial.

4. People will always be critical.

- People will see flaws - right or wrong
- You are fully exposed

5. On Mondays you may feel horrible

6. You're ultimate enemy is spiritual.

Consequently

- You will encounter waves of discouragement and warfare
- Your body will wear down from preaching. See church history

B. Notice Paul's source of energy.

As in 1:10–11, the balance between human effort and divine enabling is clearly struck.

- Paul speaks of the energy that enables the activity.
- Though the work is laborious; Christ's energy is limitless.

Our strength is not in how long we've been a Christian;

- How much we know about the Bible;
- How long we've been in ministry
- It's in our union with Christ

Spurgeon (his biographers. See Piper bio)

"No one living knows the toil and care I have to bear ... I have to look after the Orphanage, have charge of a church with four thousand members, sometimes there are marriages and burials to be undertaken, there is the weekly sermon to be revised, The Sword and the Trowel to be edited, and besides all that, a weekly average of five hundred letters to be answered." This, however, is only half my duty, for there are innumerable churches established by friends, with the affairs of which I am closely connected, to say nothing of the cases of difficulty which are constantly being referred to me"

At his 50th birthday a list of 66 organizations was read that he founded and conducted. Lord Shaftesbury said, "This list of associations, instituted by his genius, and superintended by his care, were more than enough to occupy the minds and hearts of fifty ordinary men"

He typically read six substantial books a week and could remember what he read and where to find it. He produced more than 140 books of his own. He often worked 18 hours in a day.

The missionary David Livingstone, asked him once, "How do you manage to do two men's work in a single day? Spurgeon replied, "**You have forgotten there are two of us**"

That's the good news; Christ is in us - the hope of glory!

Christ is not just our grand subject of preaching, he is also the source of our energy!

**“Preach one Christ, by Christ, to the praise of Christ.
To God alone be the glory” (William Perkins)**

What a privilege to know this Christ... what a double privilege to preach this Christ.

May God give us grace to keep the Life-changer at the heart of every sermon.

Other Questions:

- 1. What does your weekly rhythm look like?**
- 2. How do you decide what to preach (series, length of text, etc)?**
- 3. How do you evaluate your preaching?**
- 4. What books do you recommend?**
- 5. How is preaching in a church plant setting different than a traditional church setting?**
- 6. What are the biggest challenges facing the church today and how do you address them in the pulpit?**
 - a. Challenge #1: Promoting Christ-Centered Holiness in a Sex-Crazed, Sex-Confused World**
 - b. Challenge #2: Cultivating Real Community in a Social Media World**
 - c. Challenge #3: Integrating Faith and Work in a Compartmentalized World**
 - d. Challenge #4: Doing Effective Evangelism in a Skeptical World**
 - e. Challenge #5: Developing Quality Leaders in a Leaderless World**