"Your Mission, Your Community

– the six critical questions of context"

Evangelical Covenant Church

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Dr. Martin Giese

- In *this presentation we'll walk through a process of asking and answering six key questions that serve to sharpen the focus of mission and bring greater understanding to their specific ministry context.*

Five Essential Factors for Effective Leadership

- character
- competency
- chemistry
- context
- cohesiveness

- Character is about heart.

- Competency is about skill.

- Chemistry is about personality.

- Context is about environment.

- Cohesiveness is about maintaining the integrity of the whole.

The Six Defining Questions

- *Why do I minister?*
- *Where am I?*
- *Who am I with?*
- *What are their needs?*
- *How, in the power of Christ will I (we) meet those needs?*
- *When?*

The Question of Internal Motive – *"Why?"*

I.   The Great Commandment – the Commandment to love, compels us.

Matthew 22:36-37

*As Christian leaders we do what we
do because love for Christ compels us!

II. The Great Commission propels us!

Matthew 28:18-20

Love is our motive. Making disciples is our mission.

*As Christian leaders, we do what we do in the world because we are propelled by His command!

III. The Spirit of Christ impels us.

John 14:12-17; John 8:29; Galatians 5:22-23

"Love is our motive. Making disciples is our mission. Spirit directed obedience is our method. Spirit produced character is our primary influence."

As Christian leaders, we do what we do **in the way that we do it because we are Spirit directed followers of Jesus – His example is our pattern!*

The Five Questions of Contextual Effectiveness for Community Impact:

- Case Study: Jesus and the Woman at the Well

- Observations from Jesus' interaction with a Samaritan woman. (John 4:1-42)

Question #1 - *Where am I?*

- *"When the Lord learned of this He left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour." (Jn. 4:4-6)*

* Each part of our whereabouts has ministry implications!

- **1) Jesus is on earth, not in heaven. Expect contextual limitations.**
  - *What are the principal obstacles to greater effectiveness in your ministry?*

- **2) Jesus is in Samaria (not Judea, not Galilee). Expect contextual resistance.**
  - Don't panic about resistance. Be alert to need.
  - *What are the most pressing needs of your community?*

- 3) At a town called Sychar. Be aware of the distinctives of place.
  - *What are the things that make your community different from other communities?*

- 4) At a historic well. Be where the people are.
  - The town well was a strategic point of contact with the people of any community. Jesus sat down by the well!

  - **Leadership in context is always about cultural penetration, not cultural isolation!**

  - *What are the "access points" to your community's "heart?"*

- **5) Jesus is tired from the journey. There are always personal factors!**

- To a great degree our credibility in ministry leadership comes from people's observation of our reaction to personal trials. Disciple making power often flows from personal pain.

- *What are your "personal factors?" How have those personal factors been used by the Lord to open doors to ministry? What other opportunities remain undeveloped or overlooked?*

Question #2 - *Who am I here with?* (7-9)

- *"When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)" (7-9)*

- Jesus is with a Samaritan. Jesus is with a woman.

- We will never be effective in reaching the world for Jesus Christ if ministry is driven only by personal cultural preference!

- **Context is non-transferable!**

- Jesus has positioned us strategically to reach a people that He loves! Reach out to the people that surround you! Don't look for a group that fits your expectations.

- **1) Be who you are!**
- **2) Minister to those you're with!**

- *What are the primary attributes of your church?*

- *What are the primary groups that define your ministry region?*

Question #3 - *What are the most significant points of need?*

- **To effectively lead in context we need to get next to people, intersect their lives, and discover their need.**

  - Need overcomes resistance! Don't focus on their resistance. Find their point of need! Learn their story!

  - Too often, a congregation will attempt to address needs that the community does not recognize and ignore needs that the community does recognize.

- Key: The "messed up" places in people's lives are often the point of access to their soul. These are also the places busy Christians are tempted to avoid – messy, time consuming, volatile…But effectiveness in ministry demands it.

- Typically, it is only when people understand that we have understood their real need that they will allow us to move the focus from the temporal to the eternal!

Question #4 – *How can I (we), under the direction of Jesus, best meet their need?*
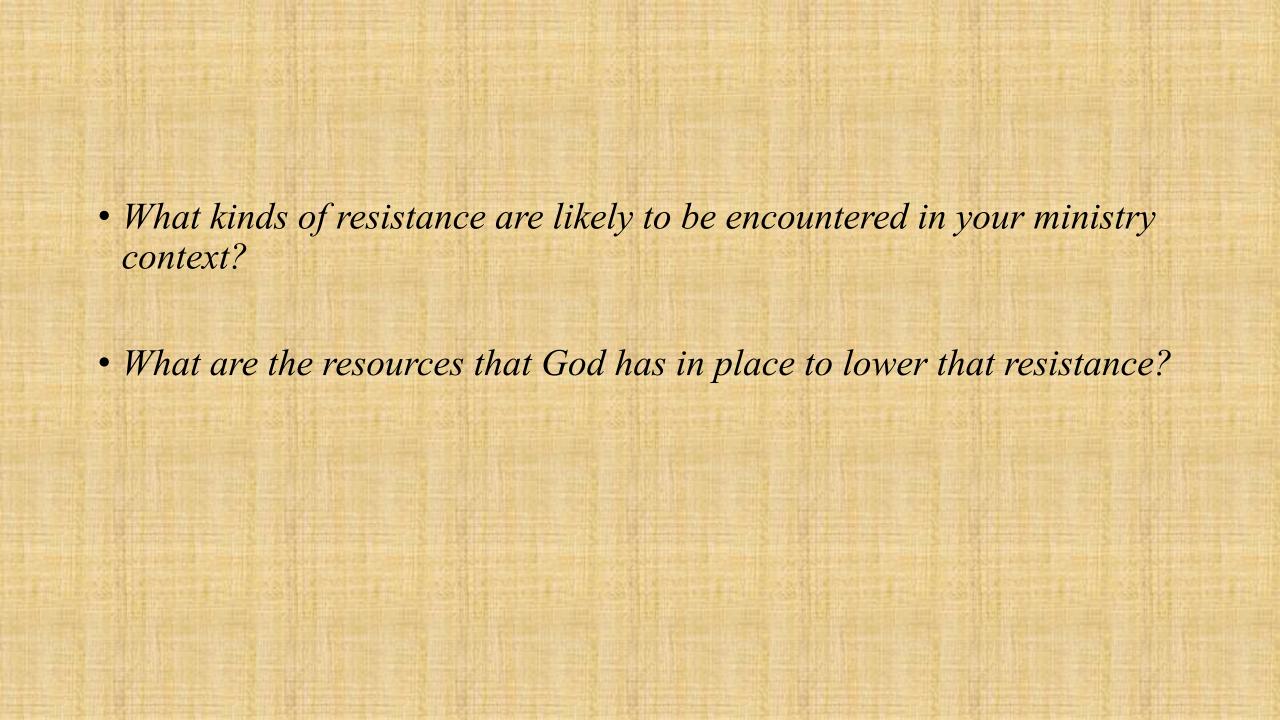
- **Caution: It is highly unlikely that we will meet their need and reach them in the same way we reached the last generation!**
  - Just as is true with your church, community context is a living environment. Access points to your community change with the changing values and concerns of each generation.

- **Caution: It is highly unlikely that we will meet their need and reach all generations using "mono-generational" approach - methodologies that are effective with a single generation.**

- **Caution: If what we are doing to meet their need and reach them is <u>not</u> working, it is highly unlikely that doing more of it will help!**

- The only time additional effort will correct ineffectiveness is when lack of effort has caused ineffectiveness.

- Good news! Effectiveness in context does not depend upon our meeting every need! Effectiveness depends upon our giving people enough connection with Jesus for them to understand that He can meet their every need!

- *"Now we have heard for ourselves, and we <u>know</u> that this man (Jesus) really is the Savior of the world." (39-42)*

- *What kinds of resistance are likely to be encountered in your ministry context?*

- *What are the resources that God has in place to lower that resistance?*

Question #5 – *When?*

- *"Am I willing to meet their needs, according to God's direction, <u>now</u>?"*

- ***"Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest?' I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." (35)***

- No ministry strategy is useful unless it is accompanied by a time-table.

Understanding Context as a Foundation for Leadership in the Church

"I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." (I Cor. 9:22a)

All Contexts are...

- Unique
  - there are no two alike

- Complex
  - the overlapping circles are more numerous and less visible than leaders typically imagine

- Non-transferable.

Exploring Congregational Identity

- Examine available documents
- Analyze history and heritage
- Recognize the bias
- Interview "Keepers of the Lore"
- Develop an historical timeline for the church
- Develop parallel timeline of community history
- Cross-check church and community data

Who am I here with?

- We will never be effective in reaching the world for Jesus Christ if our ministry is confined to personal cultural preference!

- Remember, the question is <u>not</u> "Who do you <u>wish</u> you were with?" but rather "Who are you with?"

- Context is non-transferable.

- Be who you are.

- Minister to those you're with!

Demographics

- Understanding the impact of church size on congregational behavior.

"Cat" Churches & "Collie" Churches

Concerning "Cats" (Fewer than 35)

- Small enough to never have a pastor and have survived without one.

- *Cats want an attending Chaplain* - pastoral care, not leadership.

- Pastor's organizational position - at the <u>Side</u>.
  - A major challenge in pastoring a "Cat" church is the possibility of never being granted the functional authority to lead – of being marginalized.

- Typically the incentive to change the "status quo" comes through a direct threat to the church's existence.
  - Cats are experts at survival but faced with death, they may be willing to accept the leadership of a "veterinarian."

Concerning Collies (35-100)

- Pastor-centered - expected to be involved in everything, the primary route through which everything passes. Usually a solo pastor.

- *Collies want a caring Companion - someone to feed them, pet them, take them on walks, and occasionally lead them.*

- Pastor's organizational position - at the <u>Center</u>.

- Even in a Collie church the primary concern is not for leadership, but someone who gets involved in their lives. Collie churches will tolerate some limitations in pastoral skills if they feel loved.

Other Categories

Cityvisiontc.org - John A. Mayer's Church size definitions and typologies.

- **House Church** – *(Twin City Average size 28 attenders)*

Small Church – *100 or less*

- *Weaknesses:*
    - *Stagnation – temptation to remain small*
    - *Leaders and Members often closed to outsiders*
    - *Difficult to financially support a pastor*
    - *Small Church image is obstacle to growth*
- *Needs:*
    - *To open its doors more often*
    - *a plan for growth*

Intermediate – 101-299

- *Weaknesses:*
  - *Difficult to break the 200 barrier*
  - *Often understaffed*
  - *Inadequate programming*
  - *Little evangelism focus*
- *Needs:*
  - *Additional Staff*
  - *An outward, community-reaching focus*

Medium – 300-499

- *Weaknesses:*
  - *Generally understaffed*
  - *In need of funding*

- *Needs:*
  - *Additional Staff*

Large – 500-999

- *Weaknesses:*
  - *Needs long-range planning*
  - *Pastor is often overworked*
  - *Increased bureaucracy*
  - *Less feeling of Community within Church*

- *Needs:*
  - *A strategic plan to better reach the community*
  - *Information on effective Church planting*
  - *Plan for continual church growth*

- **Mega** – *1,000 or more*

- **Giga** – *10,000 or more*

Martin's <u>Rural</u> Church Matrix

- *Small – 75 or less*
  - *Part-time/Bi-vocational Pastor*
- *Intermediate – 75-125*
  - *Solo Pastor / Additional volunteer and/or part-time staff*
- *Medium – 125-200*
  - *Two Pastors and/or equivalent paid staff*
- *Large – 250-400*
  - *3 Pastors and/or equivalent paid staff*
- *Mega – 400 & above*
  - *3 Pastors and additional paid staff*

Questionnaires & Cautions!

- Be careful about questions you ask!

- In rural culture leaders must earn the right to ask deeply personal questions.
  - I advise several months (and perhaps a year or more) of credibility building before probing the church with questionnaires. And have your church board review the questionnaire before beginning distribution.

Elements of Congregational Identity

History and Heritage

Exploring historical documents

Using the oral interview

Developing a historical timeline

Providing reflection on history and tradition

Theology and Worldview

Comparing creedal and functional theology

Distinguishing healthy and unhealthy theology

Recognizing the power of worldview

Recognizing the power of thinking systems

Exploring mission orientation

Symbols and Rituals

Examining biblical images

Observing important spaces and artifacts

Reflecting on the church year

Surfacing symbolic identity

Demographics

Accepting the realities of size

Using questionnaires

Discussing demographic portraits

Character and Values

Portraying congregational heroes and villians

Discussing visitors' comfort zones

About Town and Country Church Processes ...

- Expect that there will be limited formal description of the way things are done.

- Expect that many times people do not know why things are done that way except that this is the way we have always done it.

- Talking with people who have been around a long time is a good way to discover the logic (or illogic) behind the way things are done.

- Expect that when informal process comes into conflict with formal process, the informal process will generally win.

- If informal process is working well, it is better not to try to change it but utilize it to best advantage.

- When trying to change an informal process that is not working, it is better to help people see its problems before leading in any attempt at change.

Ethnicity/Ethnic Heritage
Who Am I Here With? Cont.

- Ethnic heritage and its significant socio-cultural dimensions have a significant impact on the core values and behavior of a congregation and its individual members.

- Often internal conflict arises from a clash of socio-cultural core values rooted in ethnicity.

(predominant cultural DISC personality types mdg)

- **Scandinavians** – *privacy, caution, unobtrusive behavior, quiet cordiality, indirect confrontation, little stratification of authority (ranking) ... (S, C)*

- **Germans** – *industry, efficiency, excellence in outcome, direct confrontation greater stratification of authority ... (D, C)*

- **Dutch** – *excellence in outcome and process, frugality, indirect confrontation, clear lines of authority (C, D)*

- **Hispanics** – *relational transparency, emotional and social freedom, verbal confrontation, some stratification of authority within the church (I, S)*

- **African Americans** – *social cohesiveness, ethnic loyalty, verbal, verbal decompression of hostility, affirm and honor stratification of authority within the church. (I, S)*

- **Asians** – *privacy, caution, unobtrusive behavior, precision, excellence (C, D)*

- [Suggested Resource: Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov, ***Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind.*** 3rd Edition, McGraw-Hill USA, 2010]

What are their needs?

What are the most significant needs of both church and community?

- Level of individual and corporate spiritual maturity?

- Relational Health?

- Communication?

- Conflict?

- Organizational integrity?

- Programming?

Programs? – Identity and Capability

- **Programs provide infrastructure**

  - *Q. Do you need it?*

  - *Q. Are there non-programmatic ways to reach the same goal?*

  - *Q. Do you have the ability to create your own?*
    - Most T&C churches do not have the available resources – time, talent, money – to create ministry programs. Large Church example – "NorthPoint, Atlanta – *"Think Orange"*

Current Identity Edits Historic Programming

- *Why have a "Harvest Festival" when there are no farmers in the congregation?*

- *Is 11:00 A.M. a good time for Sunday morning worship? (The roots of this tradition come from dairy farming.)*

- *Is the obligatory annual "pie auction" for missions appropriate when most of the women in the church work outside the home and no longer bake pies?*

- *Is "Homecoming Sunday" a wise expenditure of energy when the majority of the people in the congregation and community have few long-term roots in the church?*

- *What is the current purpose and observed effectiveness of ...*

  - Vacation Bible School
  - The mid-week prayer meeting
  - Sunday School
  - Missions Conference
  - Women's missionary prayer fellowship
  - Volunteer work-days

- *What is the current purpose and observed effectiveness of …*

  - *Weekly "Concert & Movie"* – multi-site simulcast
  - Coffee Shop
  - Media use
  - Concerts
  - Etc

How can I (we), under the direction of Jesus, best meet the needs?

- The formulation of **strategies** takes place here.

- Once you have established pastoral credibility and affirmed congregational identity you can begin to honestly engage the congregation in identifying needs and brainstorming about strategies for meeting those needs.

- **Caution: It is highly unlikely that we will meet their need and reach them in the same way we reached the last generation!**
  - Context can best be regarded as a living environment. It is an ever-changing entity - fluid, not static – reactive, not inert. Effective strategies seldom have a "shelf-life" beyond one or two generations.

- **Caution: It is highly unlikely that we will meet their need and reach all generations using "mono-generational" - methodologies that are effective with a single generation.**

Question #5 – When?

- *No ministry strategy is useful unless it is accompanied by a time-table.*

- *No time-table is successful in a T & C church unless it has a measure of flexibility.*

Questions?