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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

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TOOLBOX

EVANTELL'S

FALL 2018

THE HEART OF GOD FOR A GODLESS CULTURE

At EvanTell's 45th anniversary dinner, Dr. James Emery White (pastor of Mecklenburg Community Church in Charlotte, North Carolina) talked about 200 leaders from the Old Testament tribe of Issachar who understood the signs of the time and knew the course that Israel should take.

Comparing it to today, White said: "Knowing the signs of the times and from that how to then live has to be the most pressing challenge facing any life and certainly any ministry, particularly now."

White believes the church today is living in a pivotal moment, possibly even the beginning of a new era (cf. Christopher Dawson's treatise on identifiable ages in the Christian faith), with the doctrine of humanity being one of the most pressing issues of today.

In America, one out of every four adults identify with the label "none." In other words, they have no religious affiliation. Among young adults the percentages are even higher.

White said, "The heart of this is a functional atheism. Rather than rejecting the idea of God, our culture simply ignores him. People are not rejecting religion, they are not thinking about it."

This is particularly true with Generation Z, which encompasses those age 25 and under. It is numerically the largest generation in modern history and by 2020 will constitute 40% of all consumers.

"Generation Z will not simply influence western culture; they will be western culture," said White.

But perhaps more importantly, White argues that Generation Z is the first generation in the United States to have been raised in a post-Christian context. Many of them still believe in the existence of God, but "barely." Most don't go to church and by in large are biblically illiterate.

White describes them as a "lost generation—without even the memory of the gospel" leaving a spiritual vacuum in their lives.

White urged attendees to think about how to make a difference in the lives of people all around us, saying:

"What makes the maximum impact on another human's life is when you are involved with bringing about the intersection of their life with the living God through Christ in such a way that the entire trajectory of their eternity is altered."

White shared that 90% of believers in America will never share their faith with anyone in their life time, making the support of EvanTell even more crucial.

In his concluding words, White asked: "How do you change the world? Win it."

To hear the full message, go to: evantell.org/anniversary45



WHEN EVERYONE DOES WHAT IS RIGHT IN THEIR OWN EYES

The book of Judges concludes with “everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (21:25) That one sentence summarizes God’s commentary on the people of that day. However, it is also the commentary on any generation of people that leaves God out of their lives, including those in our day.

Left on our own, our minds are self-focused, not God-focused. Our standards are just that—our standards, not His. We do what is self-centered rather than others-centered. Romans 3:11–18 explains that every part of our lives has been affected by the depravity of our condition, concluding: “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (v. 18).

So how does God want us to respond? Here are several attitudes to cultivate:

WE CALL OUT SIN, BUT LOVE THE SINNER.

If we act in a hateful manner toward anyone, we’re doing it wrong. Yes, call sin what it is, but treat sinners for what they are as well—people loved by God and made in His image.

WE REFLECT WITH HUMILITY. Scripture emphasizes that ALL have sinned (Rom. 3:23). Recognize that were it not for the grace of God, we would be in the same boat—sinners separated from our Creator. Reflecting on this truth has a way of enhancing our compassion toward non-Christians. If not for grace, our lives would be a hopeless mess.

WE PRAY. Unbelievers need our prayers more than our gossip. Only God can change their condition. We should talk about them to God, not to others.

WE ADDRESS THE PROBLEM, NOT THE SYMPTOMS. The problem is not the particular sins they are involved in or the idols they worship. Individuals not engaged in one sin will practice another. Satan does not care what we worship as long as we do not worship God. Ultimately, it is the fact that they are separated from God that is the problem.

WE SPECIALIZE IN GOOD NEWS. People apart from God need to know about sin and separation from God. But they also need to know that despite their sin, Christ died for them: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

God loves undeserving, rebellious, “do what is right in our own eyes” people. There is no one beyond His reach. He can save a person who engages in petty thievery or one who has been a mass murderer.

In response, we ought to ask ourselves, “Am I as zealous to get the good news to them as I am to criticize their sin and evil?” They need our Christ much more than our criticism.

LEADING THE UPCOMING GENERATIONS TO CHRIST

G.I. Generation. Silents. Boomers. Gen X. Millennials. Gen Z... Six living generations exist in America with numerous books and articles analyzing their characteristics.

Knowing how best to reach each group offers many benefits. Sometimes, though, we overcomplicate things so much that we forget the simplicity of the gospel message.

Feel free to adapt your method to fit the situation, but keep these keys in mind for reaching upcoming generations for Christ:



1 WHEN YOU EXPLAIN THE GOSPEL, EXPLAIN IT CLEARLY.

The things children and young adults must understand to come to Christ are the same three things everybody must understand:

- 1 Our sin separates us from God;
- 2 Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead; and
- 3 We must trust Christ alone for salvation.

2 LEAD THEM TO CHRIST: DON'T DRIVE THEM.

Recognize that people mature in their spiritual understanding at different speeds. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead. Don't try to force an issue on someone who isn't ready.

3 MAKE THE ISSUE TRUSTING CHRIST.

The Gospel of John was written to tell us how to obtain eternal life (see John 20:31). The apostle repeatedly used the word believe, which means “trust.” Regardless of age, everyone must understand Christ died for them and rose again and trust in Christ alone to save them.

4 BEWARE OF CONFUSING JARGON OR PHRASES:

“Give your heart to Jesus” or *“Invite Jesus into your heart”*— In particular, young children tend to think literally (understanding the heart as the physical organ inside their bodies), so this terminology doesn't always make sense to them.

“Give your life to God”— This concept may unsettle children because they might wonder, “If I give my life to God, will my life come to an end?”

“Would you like to pray to receive Christ?”—Young people and adults need to understand that saying a prayer does not save. Trusting Christ saves. Prayer is how we express to God what we are doing.

5 WHEN GIVING ASSURANCE, EMPHASIZE FACT, NOT A DATE.

Focus on what Scripture emphasizes. John 3:16 says, “Whoever believes in Him,” not “Whoever believes in Him and remembers the date.”

6 DON'T PLACE ANY CONDITION FOR SALVATION ON BEHAVIOR.

Adult Christians in the New Testament misbehaved (see 1 Cor. 6:1–8; 11:17–22). Understand that children and young adults who become Christians do the same. Don't expect or require perfect behavior. Salvation is by faith alone.