

How to Develop a Missional Mindset

When we hear that someone is a missionary, we typically think of someone overseas who is living among people of another culture. We also know that before a missionary goes to another country, they prepare themselves by learning about their culture.....their language.....their customs.....their dress.....their religious beliefs.....their food.....the list goes on and on. Ultimately, the hope is that these missionaries will be able to share Christ and see conversions.

But typically, we don't view ourselves as missionaries. If we have no desire to go to a foreign culture, we just live out our Christian lives within our culture and sub-cultures. For those of us that are Christians, the sharing of the gospel takes place in the church, not the mission fields. But more and more, unbelievers are coming less and less to church, which means we are seeing less people coming to Christ in the church.

Unfortunately, this pattern will continue unless we begin to see ourselves differently. We live in a time when we must change our perceptions and view ourselves as the missionaries to our culture. What that means is that we must learn more about our culture and be proactive when it comes to investing in unbelievers. We have to see ourselves as the possible last link for others to learn about Christ. Today, I want to talk about some steps we can take to developing a missional mindset. I want to study Paul's experience in Athens. He was simply waiting for his companions to arrive in Athens.....and as he waited he decided to take a trip throughout the city. The first thing we learn from his encounter about developing a Missional mindset is to be sensitive to the Spirit.

1. Be Intrinsically Affected by the Lost

16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

As Paul surveys the culture, he is grieved in his spirit by all the idols. In the Athenian culture the city was filled with alters statues, and temples that represented the multitude of gods they believed in. There were temples filled with prostitutes that they believed promoted fertility in child births. There were idols and temples that people worshipped because they believed it would bring about a good harvest. There was even a temple dedicated to alcohol, which I suppose was very popular. Everywhere you looked, there were idols carved for the public to see, and smaller ones people purchased and took home for themselves.

Here Paul saw a lost culture and it so grieved his spirit, he took the initiative to share about Jesus.

The interesting thing here is that he encounters two kinds of people. He reasoned with the people in the synagogues. He also reasoned with those in the marketplace. The first group consisted of religious Jews that would consist of going through the Old Testament teachings and the writing of the prophets. The second group would be those that lived in Athens, unfamiliar with the Jewish Scriptures. He would have to share his faith in a way that they would understand. In order to do that he needed to know about their culture.

This is helpful because it allows us to see what works with one group does not necessarily work with another. If a person comes from a religious background, quoting Scriptures may be the common denominator. If the person has no knowledge of the Bible, quoting Scriptures will not promote the opportunity to engage in a spiritual conversation. We have to discern who we are talking to and find the common denominator to build our testimony off of.

But before that happens, we must see our culture as lost and have a heart to reach them with the gospel. We have to allow our hearts to be in agreement with what is important to God. We must think of ourselves as a missionary to our culture. As this mentality begins to emerge, we must pay close attention to how the Spirit prompts us. We must listen intently to what is being said in our conversations with the lost and find bridges which will allow us to move the conversation into the spiritual realm.

In my experience, the reality of the lost does not grieve Christians like it should within their spirit. Many Christians are unaffected by the lost. In most cases they are ignored. There have been times where Korban is so focused on what he wants he does not hear of care about what his dada wants. If Korban wants a cookie, he does not care to engage in a conversation about eating his dinner first. He is only concerned at the moment what he wants. At that time, he has no concern for his dada's wishes.

It is easy to live life like that when it comes to unbelievers. It is easy to be concerned about what we want and not what God wants. Scripture teaches us that God's desire is that all mankind be brought to repentance.

Our culture in Corvallis is very much like Athens. There is a heavy emphasis on the power of education. There is a major university where people are taught about life. There is a resistance to Christianity in the sense that it is for the weak and simple. There is promiscuity galore. For some, nature is worshipped.

What this is does is typically bother us to the point we refuse to be involved in the lives of others or we simply go about our life with no sense of burden for the lost. Thankfully, there are Christians that carry the burden for the lost, but we need more. We honestly need to view our culture from the perspective of a missionary. Paul was grieved in his spirit to the point where he said I have to engage this lost culture.

2. Be Willing to Share Christ

18 Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbling wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. **19** And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" **20** For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." **21** Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

The second thing we need to be willing to do if we are going to develop a missionary mindset to our culture is be willing to share Christ. Here, Paul is teaching Epicurean and Stoic philosophers about Jesus and the resurrection. The Epicureans were those that held to the belief of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. For them, the gods were not really involved in the affairs of mankind; instead their focus was on what they could get out of life for themselves. We have a lot of Epicureans in Corvallis. In contrast, the Stoics believed there were some emotions that

were destructive passions, like greed and envy. The key to life was to avoid such emotions and just accept fate. We have those in Corvallis as well.

These different schools of thought invite Paul to the Areopagus, a place where people shared their latest philosophies because they did not have other things to do apparently. A bunch of men with no jobs explaining to each other how they have discovered the key to life.

But despite the differences in philosophy, Paul has a desire to share Christ.

One thing that is worth mentioning is that Paul had a certain window of time before he left for another region. Consequently, he quickly got down to business and discussed Jesus and the resurrection of Christ.

With us, we will most likely be here for a while. Consequently, the thing I desire is deepening our relationships with unbelievers. Spending time with them over coffee, lunch, dinner, a football game. In doing so, my desire is that we will be able to engage in some spiritual dialogue.

I have gone to the Red Horse for coffee for over two years. I know the people there and it has always been a desire to share Christ. The owners and baristas have a good relationship with me. But I want it to grow deeper so we can engage in some spiritual dialogue. So as I sat in the coffee shop, I became aware that their coffee is very good. Then it hit me like a ton of bricks. Why don't we bring their coffee to Northside? This will allow me to have me to have not only a customer relationship with them; but also a working relationship. Because I have been a regular, the owner agreed to pass on the products at cost.

I then asked him if he would be alright with us having a Sunday School class at his coffee shop in hopes that I can reach those who would not normally come to church. I told him we would keep it down. He said, I don't care about how loud you get, the thing I ask is that you behave. So that is what we are going to do. We will begin another Sunday school class to reach the lost at the Red Horse on Sunday mornings. Terry will be handling the Sunday school class at Northside. Machele will also be involved with me. Our hope is to eventually have these folks become a part of Northside and most importantly become Christians.

So today, the coffee you are drinking is the good stuff from Red Horse. Our culture in Corvallis is not really into Folgers, but into more contemporary coffees. I hope you also enjoy the coffee. But again, the purpose is not to drink their coffee; the purpose is for those at Red Horse to find Jesus. The coffee shop will be my market place evangelism. I have to think of myself as a missionary and share Christ.

3. Be Familiar with Your Sub-Culture

22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. **23** For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. **24** The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, **25** nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. **26** And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, **27** that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, **28** for

" 'In him we live and move and have our being';
as even some of your own poets have said,

“For we are indeed his offspring.’

- a. **An Effective Missional witness speaks the language of their culture**
- b. **No Bible “thumping” because there is no common ground for understanding**
- c. **Note: Paul quoted the cultures poets, not the OT**
- d. **He was aware of what they held as important and transitioned it with God the Father**

4. Be Motivated by God’s Judgment

29 Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. **30** The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, **31** because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

- a. **The reality is that people will perish without Christ**
- b. **View the lost through the lenses of God while engaging. It will keep you focused**
- c. **We need to have that 1st century church mentality that God could come again, any moment**
- d. **We are not promised tomorrow; so let’s live like today is the last day.**

5. Be Prepared for Different Responses

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” **33** So Paul went out from their midst. **34** But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

- a. **Some will mock you; some will respect you; some will disagree; some will believe**
- b. **Continue to engage, don’t let rejection, suspend or terminate your efforts**
- c. **Your faithfulness must be to God and for the love of people**
- d. **Even unbelievers would try to save people if they could lose their life**
- e. **In the end, one soul is worth a thousand rejections.**