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Effectiveness in Context

*Understanding and Responding to the Unique
Distinctives of Your Ministry Context*

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Introduction:

- *The foundation for all Christian leadership and ministry – for all that we are and all that we do – is Jesus Christ!*
- *Upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and His Word, effective Christian leadership expresses itself in five interdependent components: Character, Competency, Chemistry, Context, and Cohesiveness.*

- In order to create the best opportunity for vibrant growth and maximum fruitfulness in a garden, the gardener must give careful attention to five essential factors: air, water, soil, seed, and husbandry.
- In order to create the best opportunity for vibrant growth and maximum fruitfulness in a local church the leader(s) must give attention to five essential factors: *character, competency, chemistry, context, and cohesiveness.*

- Character is about heart. Competency is about skill. Chemistry is about personality. Cohesiveness is about oversight. Context is about ministry environment.
- *Neglect of any of these interdependent elements will lessen (and in some cases nullify) the biblical purpose(s) of leadership.*

- Ministry never takes place in a vacuum.
- It always takes place “in context.”
- *We will never reach our potential effectiveness as leaders unless we are aware of the context...*
 - *within which we minister* (socio-cultural setting)...
 - *and the context from which we minister* (motivation).

The Question of Internal Motive – Why?

- Ultimately, our effectiveness in ministry arises from our relationship with the living God!
- If we are to be truly effective, we must do what we do because we have been called, commanded, and constrained by Jesus Christ!

Why do we do what we do?

I. The Great Commandment compels us! *Love* is our motive.

Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second (greatest commandment) is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.'" (Mt. 22:36-37)

*The Loving God and making disciples are inseparable. But loving
God is foundational!*

Why do we do what we do?

II. The Great Commission propels us!

“Making disciples” is our mission.

“Then Jesus came to them and said, `All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’” (Mt. 28:18-20)

Why do we do what we do?

III. The example of Christ impels us! *Christlikeness* is our method.

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

Love is our motive. Making disciples is our mission. Christlikeness is our method.

* Effective leadership in context is not possible unless the heart context of the leader is right before God.

Are you willing?

- Effective leadership is never about the leader alone.
- All effective leadership and ministry is contextual.
- *“I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.” (I Cor.9:22a)*

Five Questions of Contextual Effectiveness

- Illust. Jesus & the Samaritan woman
 - Jn. 4:1-42

Question #1 - Where Am I?

- Geographic location
- Time and place in History
- Socio-cultural setting

- *“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.” (John 4:4-6)*

Where is Jesus? (John 4:4-6)

- 1) On earth
- 2) In Samaria
- 3) At a town called Sychar
- 4) At a historic well
- 5) Tired from the journey

Jesus is “on earth”

- Expect contextual limitations

List your contextual limitations.

What are the principal obstacles to greater effectiveness in your ministry?

Jesus is in Samaria

- Expect contextual resistance
- Don't panic about resistance - be alert to need!
- Human need breaks down resistance

- *In a fallen world, it is never long before need overcomes resistance in the heart of the lost. Too often, though, Christian leaders are focusing so much on overcoming resistance that we fail to see need.*

- *What are the most pressing needs of your community?*

Jesus is at Sychar

- Be aware of place.
- Understand that in most ministry contexts, *they* are “at home” and that *you* are “not from around here.”

What are the things that make your community different from other communities?

Jesus is at the well

- Be willing to be where the people are!
- Jesus has called us to cultural penetration, not cultural isolation!

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

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.

- *“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.)” (John 4:7-9)*

Question #2 – 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 not “Who do you wish you were there with?” but rather “Who are you there with?”

- Context is non-transferable.
- Be who you are.
- Minister to those you're with! (Jesus took the initiative.)

- The most productive approach to ministry is to focus upon the needs of the people that surround you – not to look for a group that fits your expectations.

- *“Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.’ ‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?’ Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’” (John 4:10-14)*

- *“The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.’ He told her, ‘Go, call your husband and come back.’ ‘I have no husband,’ she replied. Jesus said to her, ‘You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.’” (John 4:15-18)*

Question #3 – What is their point of need?

- Get next to people
- Intersect their lives
- Learn their story
- Be alert to their need

- The messed up places in people's lives are often the point of access to their soul.
- When people understand that we understand their need, they will allow us to move the focus from temporal to eternal.
- Remember that the goal is always to reveal who Jesus is.

- *‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.’*
- *Jesus declared, ‘Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.’” (John 4:19-22)*

- “ ‘*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.*’
- *The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah’ (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’*
- *Then Jesus declared, ‘I who speak to you am he.’” (John 4:23-26)*

Question #4 – How can I (we) best meet their need?

- ** It is highly unlikely that we will reach them in the same way we reached the last generation.
- ** If what we are doing to meet their need and reach them is not working, it is highly unlikely that doing more of it will help!

- Throughout history churches have struggled with confusion between the *Message* of the Gospel and the *methods* used to share the Gospel.
- The *Message* never changes lest people be lost for eternity!
- The *methods* must change (adapt to context) lest people be lost for eternity!

Good news!

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

- *“Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?’... Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I ever did.’*
- *So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, ‘We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.’” (John 4:28-29, 41-42)*

The Final Question: “When?”

- *“Am I willing to meet their needs, according to God’s direction, now?”*
- No ministry strategy is useful unless it is accompanied by a time-table.

Great works of God always begin in a context.

• *Let it begin in our churches!*

• *Let it begin here!*

• *Let it begin in me!*

Contrasting Realities

Rural

- Few people
- Small institutions
- Independence valued
- General practitioner
- People often work alone
- Low verbal communication
- Cooperation for survival

Urban

- Many people
- Small institutions
- Interdependence valued
- Specialist orientation
- People often work with others
- High verbal communication
- Cooperation for achievement

Rural

- Cooperation among equals
- "Single tier" management
- Group decisions by informal consensus
- Homogeneity seldom attainable
- Small churches/institutions

Urban

- Multilevel cooperation
- Multilevel management
- Group decisions by formal process
- Homogeneity often attainable
- Large churches/institutions

Recurrent sources of dissonance include:

Rural

- Event orientation
- Non-crisis orientation
- Spend time/save money
- High uncertainty avoidance
- Goal aversion
- Indirect relating
- Decision making “tortoise”

Urban

- Time orientation
- Crisis orientation
- Spend money/save time
- Low uncertainty avoidance
- Goal “addiction”
- Direct relating
- Decision making “hare”

Appendix - Brown, White, or Blue?

(The Color of the Collar makes a difference.)

- One of the significant contextual factors influencing ministry has to do with the peculiar mindsets arising from vocation.
- The realities and presuppositions that accompany our vocational niche deeply affect our worldview and the presuppositions and expectations we bring to church.
- Sweeping differences in worldview exist between Agrarians (Brown collar), Professionals (White collar), and Tradesmen (Blue Collar).

Collar Color Cont.

Brown Collar

- Success = Passing Down Farm/small bus.
- Achievement = Autonomy (influence assumed)
- Opposition = The weather
Gov't intrusion
Bureaucracy

White Collar

- Leading the Company
Company profits
- Influence (salary/benefits assumed)
- Gov't intrusion
Competition
Unions

Blue Collar

- Maxing out the potential pay scale
- Salary/Benefits (autonomy and influence not expected)
- Management
Downsizing
Obsolescence

Collar Color Cont.

Brown Collar

White Collar

Blue Collar

- Chief Enemy = Weather Big Gov't Management
- Needed Allies = Weather Workforce Big Gov't
Markets Limited gov't Co-workers
- Status = Acreage, Homes/locations Free time
Quality of Scope of travel quality of “toys”
farm machinery
Pickup Truck

Collar Color Cont.

Brown Collar

White Collar

Blue Collar

- Assumptions

Autonomy

Authority/Influence

Power struggle/
powerlessness

- Attitude toward
Authority

“We’re all equal.”

“We have it.”

*“We wish we had it,
don’t have it and
are suspicious of
those who do have it.”*

- Accomplishment

Do it.

Get someone
to do it.

Tell us what to do.

Collar Color Cont.

	<u>Brown Collar</u>	<u>White Collar</u>	<u>Blue Collar</u>
• Conflict	Avoid it.	Deal with it.	Recruit to it.
• Leadership	Walk alongside	Cast the vision	Give assignments
• Expectations	Approachable	Competent	Directive

Collar Color Cont.

Brown Collar

White Collar

Blue Collar

• *I want a*

Church that is ...

Personable

Well run

Responsive to
my needs

Stable

Effective

Busy

Peaceful

Productive

Programmed

What Generation are They?

- The Era of Values Formation makes a difference!

20's, 30's *Depression Gen.*

- Most have passed away. However, their influence remains very strong among rural “Builders.”
- key word – Survival
- key issue - "*How do we hang on?*"

30's, 40's “*Builders*”

- key word - Suspicion, security
- key issue – “*How do we preserve our cohesiveness?*”
- Sincere anxiety about relationships

40's - 60's ***“Boomers”***

- key word - Self Identity
- key issue – *"How do I make a mark in the world and achieve personal prosperity?"*

60's - 80's ***“Gen X,” “Becomers”***

- key word - Self Indulgence
- key issue –
 - *“How do I avoid boredom and constricting responsibility?”*

80's, 90's “*Gen Y,*” “*Millennials,*” “*Bridgers*”

- key word - Self Expression
- key issues - “*How do I avoid being labeled?*”
 - Fragmentation - (“*Don't categorize me.*”)
 - Demanding - (an endless list of options is assumed)
 - Highly interactive - (social media)
 - Extreme - (free soloing, base jumping, wing-suiting, etc.)

2000 + “*Gen. Z*”, “*Post Millennials*”

- key word – Stretched
- key issues – the struggle to identify and accept boundaries

Nine Insights

(Sean McDowell, Ph.D. professor of Christian Apologetics, Biola)

- 1) Digital Natives
 - *“No memory of pre-internet, teens connected nearly every waking hour...”*
- 2) Entrepreneurial
 - *“72% of older Gen Z’s want to start their own business...”*
- 3) Diverse
 - *“This is the last (American) generation that will be majority white...”*

- 4) Less Religious Identification
 - *“Not necessarily less religious, but certainly less religiously identified...”*
- 5) Blurry
 - Very few distinct *“lines”* concerning historically defined boundaries, categories, and relationships.
- 6) Overwhelmed
 - Caught in a vise between the possible and the sustainable. *“School work, social media identity management, global concerns, career choices, social issues... 68% feel overwhelmed by everything they need to do each week.”*

- 7) Lonely

- *“Increased anxiety and depression... across virtually all demographics – Suburban, Urban, and Rural.”*

- 8) Progressive

- *“Most... plan to marry, have children, buy a home – although perhaps later than previous generations... Less likely to drink, smoke, and use drugs... but holding more progressive views of moral issues, legalizing marijuana... same sex marriage.”*

- 9) Individualistic

- Accustomed to *“having everything personalized just for them...”*

- <http://www.thegoodbookblog.com/2016/dec/02/9-important-insights-about-generation-z/>

Questions?