


INDIANA  
SPIRITUAL STATE OF THE UNION



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THE UNION

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BY JOHN PAPPAS



**Yes,  
America  
Is in  
Decline**  
By Fareed Zakaria

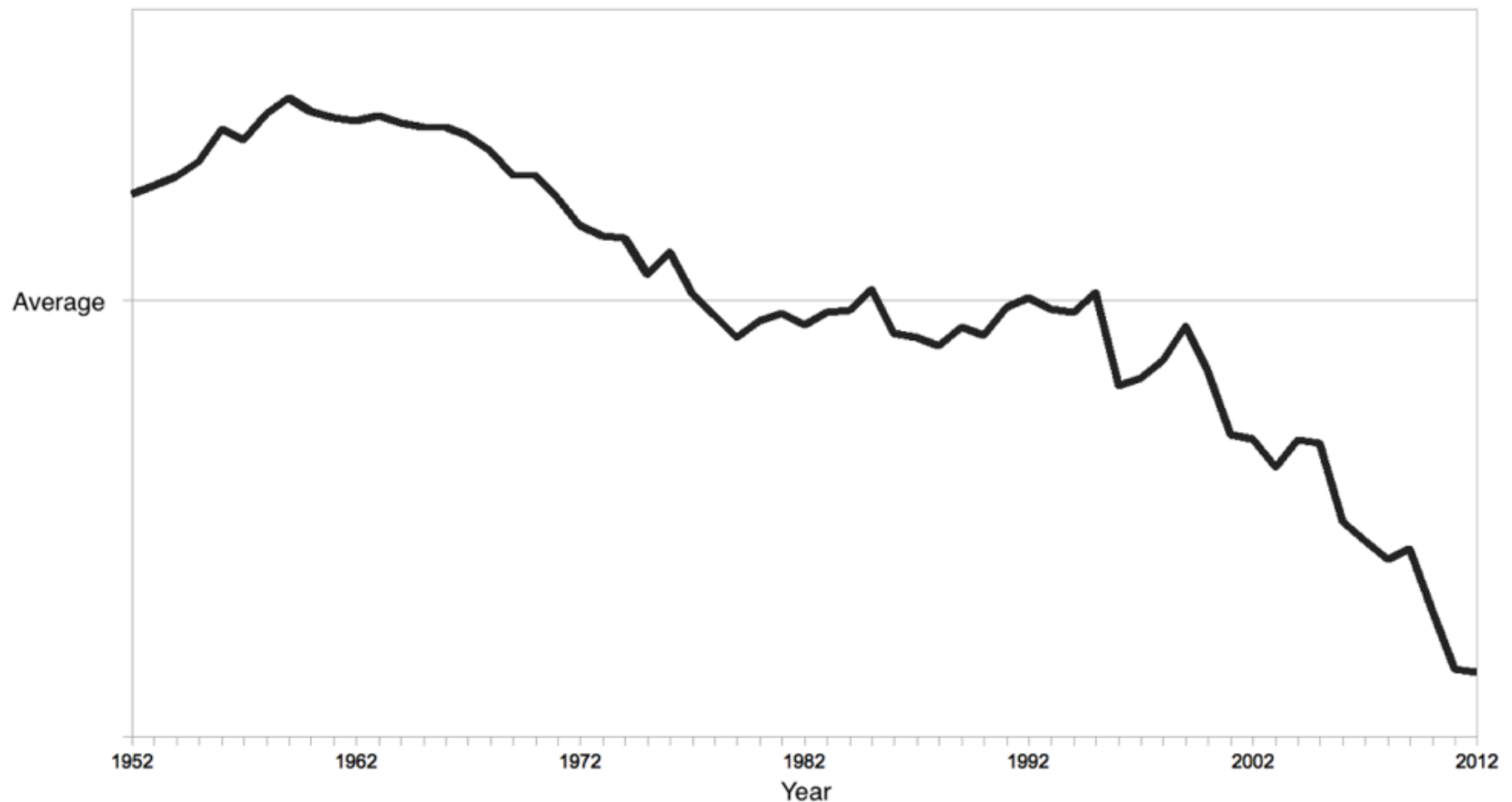
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## INTRO: THE BIG PICTURE

Since 1960 there has been a steady transition happening in the America Culture that is increasingly pushing us into a postmodernization. The trend of decline of American values is quickly spiraling out of control.

## The Great Decline: 60 years of religion in America



Graph by Corner of Church & State, a Religion News Service blog  
Source: Aggregate Religiosity Index, J. Tobin Grant. *Sociological Forum*.

The decline of religion, meaning the decline of Christianity, is something many of us leaders have casually become aware of in the last decade or so. However, the process of post-Christianization in the United States is now upon us. I suspect that deep in our spiritual gut majority of Christian leaders in the field feel the cultural shift that is now upon us.

According to the Pew Research Center, the number of Americans identifying themselves as Christians declined from 78.4 percent to 70.6 percent of the population between 2007 and 2014. In that same period, the number of Americans practicing non-Christian faiths grew by 25 percent, from 4.7 to 5.9 percent. The number of religiously unaffiliated Americans grew by 42 percent, from 16.1 to 22.8 percent. Given that 34 percent of “Older Millennials” (b. 1981–1989) and 36 percent of “Younger Millennials” (b. 1990–1996) are religiously unaffiliated,



the trend of post-Christianization is going to gain rather than lose steam in the coming decade.

Prophetically, as throughout history, God had raised up men from the fringes of the church to give voice to leaders and to God's people to make them aware of what was happening. Those voices still ring out today.

C.S. LEWIS

"ABUSE IN SCIENCES  
COULD PENETRATE  
INSIGHTS INTO HOT  
BUTTON ISSUES OF  
OUR TIME"



Men such as C.S. Lewis who framed Christian belief for us to address societal ideologies. Who warned of the impending dangers and abuse that the sciences could bring to hot-button issues in society.



FRANCIS SHAEFFER

"HOW SHOULD WE  
LIVE IF THERE ARE  
NO ABSOLUTES?  
SOCIETY SHALL BE  
OUR ABSOLUTE."



The Prophetic voice of Francis Schaeffer whose words cried out to God's people warning us of the philosophical underpinning in academia and how they would play out in society if they are not addressed and debated.

Francis Schaeffer once prophetically proclaimed, "Christians have largely shut up their spirituality into a small corner of life, Sunday church or Bible Studies instead of realizing that the Lordship of Christ is to permeate the whole spectrum of life. They have coasted along complacently often serving up such dogmas as 'you can't mix religion and politics,' or 'you can't legislate morality' or 'we need to pray and witness to people' - when in reality what we really meant was we don't want to be disturbed. They were content in their comfort zone."

These men were among the first to question the current structures in modern church with prophetic eyes bringing to light not only to underlying philosophies beneath the surface of politics and academia that gave credence to social values we now see but the effectiveness of Religious Christianity on its culture.

The question we need to address in this Indiana Spiritual State of the Union has the Church in 2017 in Indiana headed the religious warnings of the past heralded by men such as those. Are the Religious trends of America the Religious trends of Indiana? How is the Church of Indiana affecting Indiana?



# Study: Belief in God declining among Hoosiers



A crucifix that was carried through the streets of East Chicago last Good Friday waits for the stations of the cross to begin. (Jim Karczewski / Post-Tribune)

By **Javonte Anderson**

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## ADDRESS

On March 26, 2018, the Chicago Tribune came out with an article that published a pew-research study concerning Religion in Indiana. The article was entitled, “Belief in God declining among Hoosiers.”

In this article, there were two lines from the author that stuck out to me. First, the author said concerning Hoosiers and God, "The waning belief in God is



evident." And Secondly, the author ended the article by saying, "I can't think of a single study that shows traditional religion on the rebound."

## INDIANA STATS FROM 2014-2007

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- 63% of Hoosiers say they "absolutely" believe in "A God" down from 76%.
- Belief in the Christian God is down 7%
- Belief there is no God up 6%.
- Importance of Religion is down 7%.
- Church Attendance is down 7%.
- Belief in the Bible as the Word of God down 7%.
- Belief in Heaven down 4%.
- Belief in Hell down 5%.
- 63% believe that Morality is relative.
- 36% believe Religion is a good source of Moral Guidance

According to the Pew Research Center concerning God in Indiana:

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- Belief in the Christian God is down 7%
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- Importance of Religion is down 7%.
- Church Attendance is down 7%.
- Belief in the Bible as the Word of God down 7%.

- Belief in Heaven 4% decrease.
- Beleif in Hell 5% decrease.
- 63% believe that Morality is relative
- 3% believe Religion is a good source of Moral Guidance

**OTHER STATS**

- **Abortion increase 1%.**
- **Support for Homosexuality up 8%.**
- **28% believe in Evolution.**
- **38% believe in Creationism.**
- **45% approve of Same Sex Marriage**

Other telling Statistics of Church Effectiveness in Indiana are:

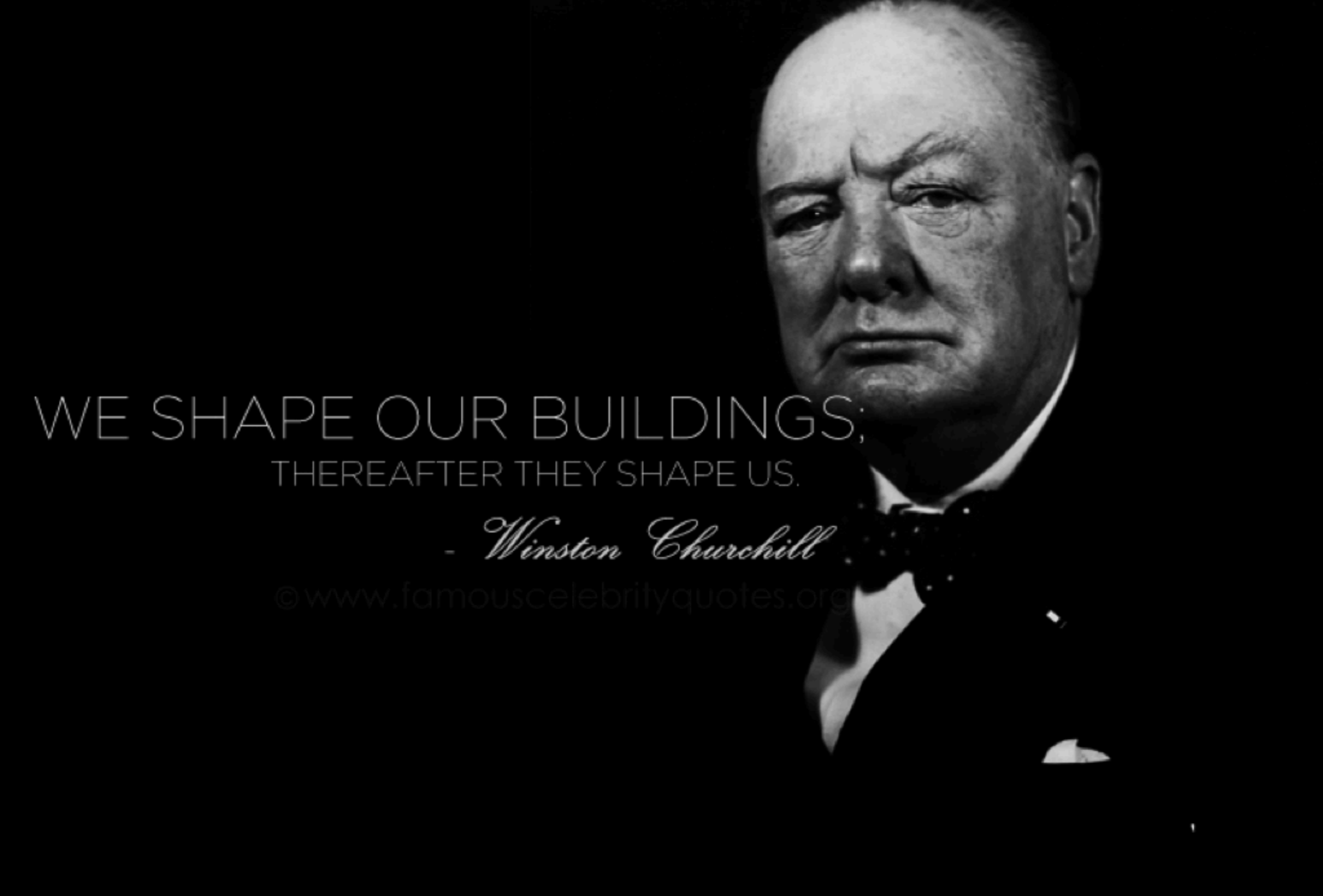
- Belief in abortion increase 1%.
- Support for Homosexuality up 8%.
- 28% believe in Evolution.

- 38% believe in creationism

So what are we to make of these statistics? How can we begin an assessment that will give us a foundation to create a movement? There are many more statistics we could implement to add to our current understanding statistically. However, I think this is enough for now to give us an overall big picture understanding of church effectiveness of what is happening both in the West and here in Indiana.

Therefore, I want to address two specific areas of understanding that deal with our big picture understanding of where we are at as a church today that will reveal how we got in this situation. These are our inherited form of church and how it has played out in modern church goers.





WE SHAPE OUR BUILDINGS;  
THEREAFTER THEY SHAPE US.

- *Winston Churchill*

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# ASSESS

In this part of our assessment of the statistics, we have to get real for a moment and understand that we are perfectly designed for the outcomes we are getting. Therefore, we will have to come to terms not only with the downward trend of what the statistics reveal but also with the fact that everything has to be on the table. Our thinking of sacraments, ordinances, as well as church cultural traditions, cannot be beyond criticism.

This means the kind of thinking that got us where we are will not solve the problem we have moving forward. It will have to be different from the thinking that created the situation we are in. With that said, the first notable problem we have is our inherited concept of church. Let Me explain.

After Christ ascended into Heaven, he had prepared and commissioned his disciples to reach the world. This initiated a new Apostolic era from which the



church arose. This era happened during one of the most active times of persecution in church history lasting from about 32AD - 313AD.

It was during this period we see another significant shift in church History. Constantine came to the throne of the Roman Empire. With the rise of Constantine came the freedom of worship for Christianity. It what seemed like an instant, historically speaking, Christianity moved from the fringe of society and was put directly in the center of the empire. it was official Christianity was now a religion. With the Edict of Milan, the age of the missional apostolic church was over, and now a new ERA was born. The ERA of Church and State.

From the 5th to 10th centuries Christianity grew from infancy to adulthood all throughout Western Europe emerging in the 11th century as fully grown and in control of the culture. By the Middle Ages, the church-state relationship was formal-





ized, institutionalized, and interdependence between the pope and the Roman Empire was official and effectively remains throughout Western Europe today. That institutional partnership between church and state changed the social behaviors and religious patterning of Europe forever. During this period of Christendom, that church found itself in a privileged state culturally. The church was at the heart of cultural all across Europe.



Understanding this cultural privilege, Christianity had by being at the center of European society is really important for us to understand as Americans. Although America did not want to the marriage of church and state, even as our boots hit the shores, Christianity was front and center as our National Identity.



Much like Europe, members of society were assumed to be Christian by birth rather than by choice. Christianity was THE official part of the established culture in America. To be American during its founding times was essentially the same as being a Christian. So from this, we not only inherited our concept and consciousness of what church is, but we inherited the privilege of Christianly being at the center of society.

So Why the History Lesson? Because America has deep roots that come out of a privileged situation. Deeply embedded in our understanding of church is the entitlement of the church being front and center in American culture. Therefore, the way we do church and understand church was mostly formulated in an ERA that no longer exists AND in the same way most of our theology comes from this same era.

This has caused us to have a culture within the church, that is deeply rooted in a certain understanding of religious practices. More importantly, in the Christendom ERA Ecclesiology defined Christology, but in the early Apostolic ERA, Christology defined Ecclesiology. The problem then is while we do have a certain religious privilege culturally in the U.S.A and in Indiana, the culture has dramatically shifted on us. Our understanding and concept of Church still comes out of a different context from a different ERA. This means our understanding of church, discipleship, and religious practices comes out of an era based where the church was the center of Society.



ex-

Much of our inability to translate the Gospel into our current cultural context is because our current understanding of church and structures are created for an ERA, and a cultural context that does not exist anymore. A great example of this cultural shift is seen just outside our own

windows. Just look at cities like Hammond, Gary, Indianapolis, Forte Wayne, Terre Haute. South Bend, and Evansville. These cities are very different cities than they were just 50 years ago and I would suggest it is much harder now to communicate the Gospel in these and others cities all around the state. The big point here in Part 1 of our assessment is that we still think of church and its mission in terms of Christendom, and we have not comes to terms that we now live in a Postmodern, post-Christian context.



As Missiologist Alan Hirsch said, “It seems Constantine is still the ruler of our imaginations.”



What once was a system of imitation, inherited from Jesus to his Apostles. Became institutionalized. It moved from a priesthood of believers to a priesthood. Christianity moved from being a dynamic, revolutionary, social, and spiritual movement to being a religious institution with its attendant structures, priesthood, and sacraments.

However, maybe if we dig in and do the same things, just better, it will change over time? I don't think the same thinking that got us in this position



- By 2019 they will makeup the biggest part of the population

- Largest Generation ever to come from single parent and divorced homes
- Their Parents, called Gen, X, largest group to ever leave religion

**MILLENNIAL**

- Largest unchurched, unaffiliated generation in American history

**CHURCH IS NOT SOMETHING THAT IS EVEN ON THERE RADAR.**

will be what bails us out. Why would doing the same thing create different results when the statistics show it is not working? It is here where we can see just how deep this problem goes.



Consider the millennial generation.

The Millennials
By 2019 they will makeup the biggest part of the population.
They are the largest Generation ever to come from single parent and divorced homes.
Their Parents, called Gen. X's, were the largest group to ever leave religion.
Millennials are the largest unchurched, unaffiliated generation in American History
Church is not something that is even on there radar.

By 2019 they will makeup the biggest part of the population. They are the largest generation ever to come from single parent and divorced homes. Their Parents, called Generation X, were the largest group to ever leave religion. All of these statistics put together tell us that the Millennials are the largest unchurched, unaffiliated generation in American History.

This generation did not grow up traditionally in fashion, socially, culturally, or even religiously. Almost half of the entire generation has never even been to a church. It is not something that is even on there radar. This gives a clear forecast of what is happening and what we will be faced with in the upcoming decades.

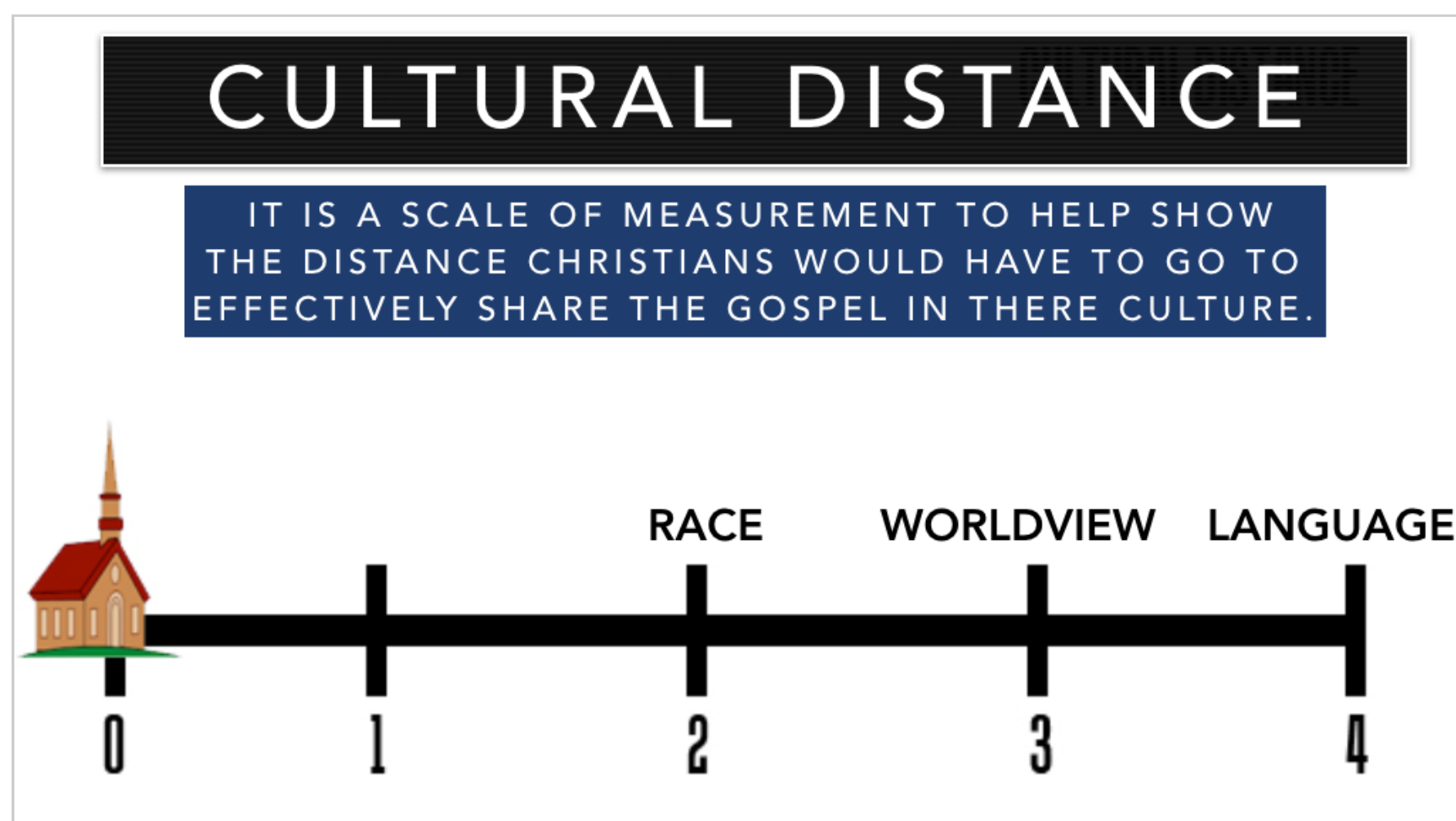


It is why missiologists predict that church attendance will be cut in half by 2030 and possibly again by 2050. If our current thinking doesn't change why would the downward trend change?

I hope you can see that because of these

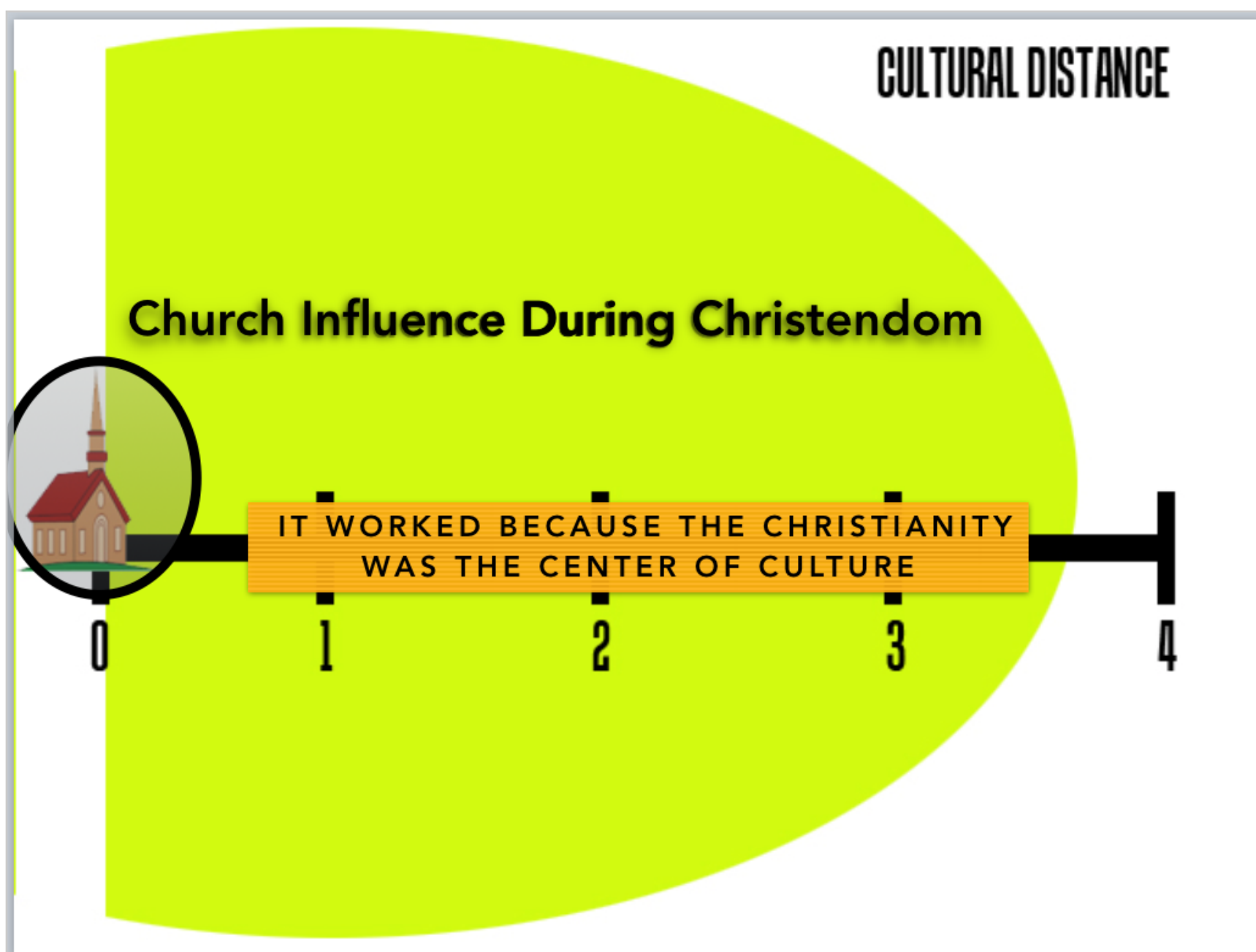
statistics it doesn't matter the size of your church, the denomination of your church, or even personal victories from within. If we only measure our successes we not only have a false metric by which we measure, but in a sense we live in denial of the what is happening all around us.

Culturally all of us are in the same predicament. All of us have to ask if we are prepared for the missionary context of American culture? With the drastic change in culture in just the last 25 years and a church consciousness rooted in Christendom, we can ASSESS our current structures themselves and see how we got here. This is Part 2 of our assessment. Let's take a closer look.



The graphs above measure cultural distance. It is a scale of measurement to help show the distance Christians would have to go to effectively share the gospel in there culture. As we see in this graphic the scale is a measurement from the church, represented by segment 0, outward into the culture all the way to segment 4. Each segment from the church then represents a significant barrier one would have to overcome in order for the Gospel to take root.

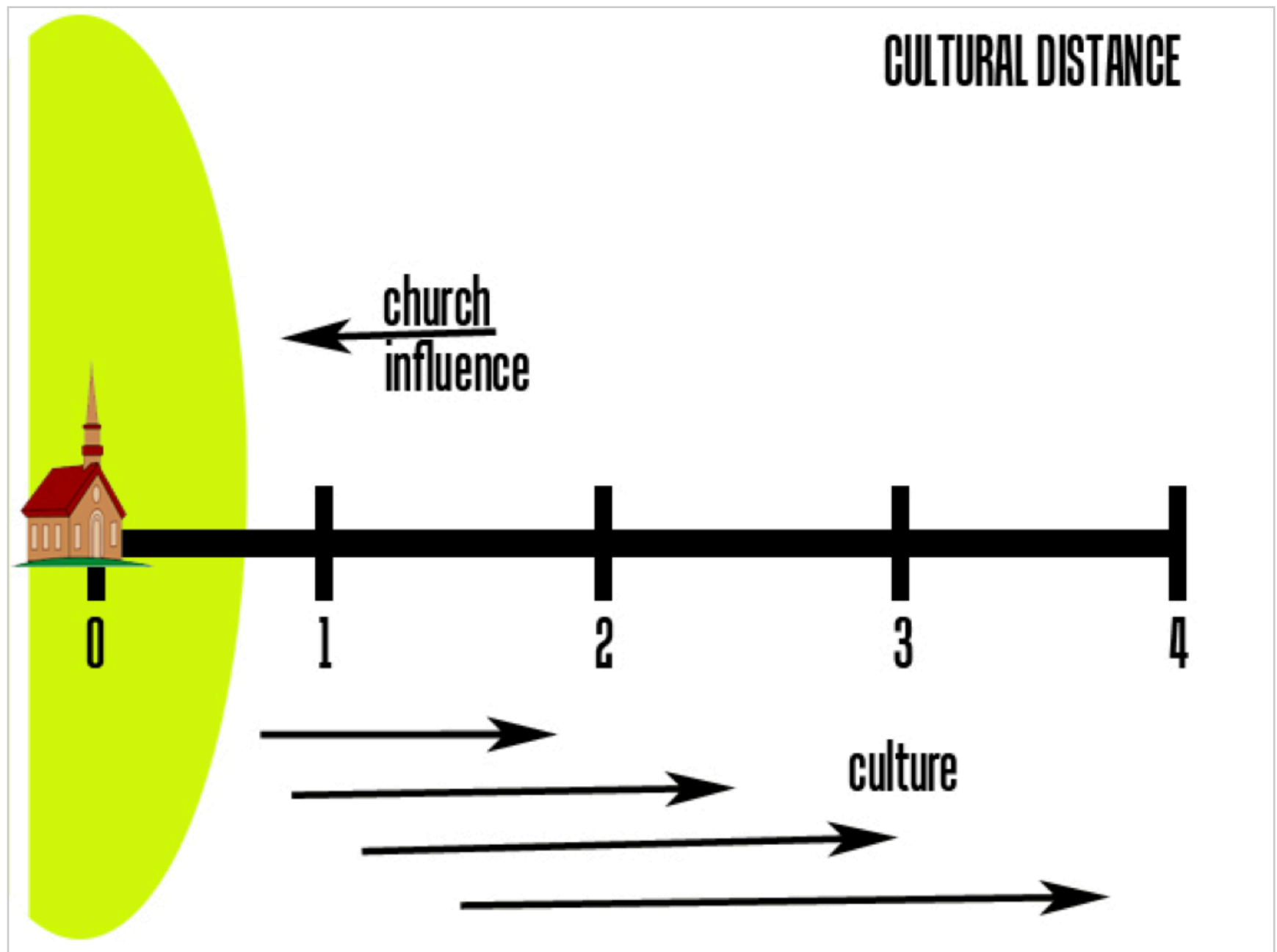
Obvious cultural barriers would be race, world view, and language. For example, it makes it significantly harder for someone to share the gospel to a people group if that individual must learn a new language.



As we have been discussing earlier, culturally Christianity was privileged in America. Its influence shown by the yellow area was significant. During this time it was significantly easier to share the gospel because Americans self-identified as Christian.

That meant there were not the same barriers that would normally occur in a missional environment. Therefore, building a building in the center of the city, hierarchal infrastructures, and having an attractional-event driven ministry made

sense. For a long time, it worked because the church was within a culture where Christianity was the heart of society. For the most part, everyone shared the same values.

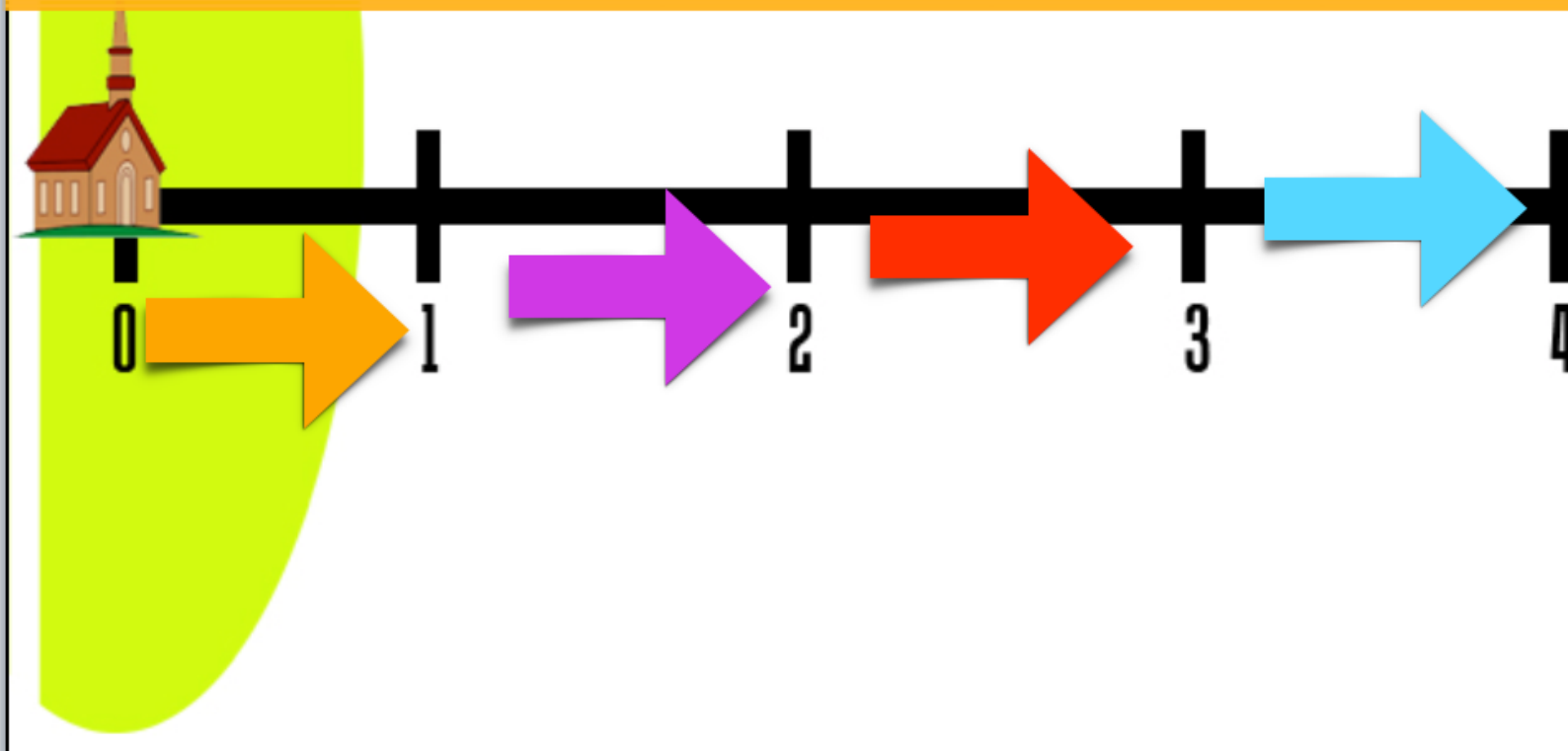


But slowly since the 1960's A social, economic, political and religious shift has taken place before us. This has caused the influence of the church, represented the yellow circle, to be pushed out of the center of society. The church has been pushed to fringes of society and effectively categorized in American culture. While at the same time our culture has become vastly secular.



## CULTURAL DISTANCE

THE SEGMENTS HELP US UNDERSTAND THE TYPE OF DISCIPLESHIP REQUIRED TO EVANGELIZE OUR CULTURE.



With the shift in culture and church now on the fringe, the segments on our line become increasingly important. They measure the barriers we have to overcome to communicate the gospel effectively.

Right now in America, the cultural influence of the church is shown by the yellow area, from segment 0 to almost segment 1. This means that majority of its structures and evangelism reach those who are already attending or once attended.

The segments help us understand the type of discipleship required to evangelize our culture.

Segment 0-1: represents the type of evangelism where the church does not have to reach outside of its own boundaries. For example, evangelism from a pulpit. Greatest focus is on wayward churchgoers and personal decision for Christ.

Segment 1-2 represents the type of evangelism that does take place outside of the church to a degree, but to people that share much of the same values. Family members, co-workers, backsliders and people angry at the church.

Segment 2-3 represents cross-cultural evangelism. It is evangelism to a specific people group that might share some values but have different backgrounds. Here there is a need for the Christian to be aware of his own cultural and biblical practices so as not to hinder anyone coming to faith. His greatest focus is not on bringing people to the church, but to seed the Gospel where they are.

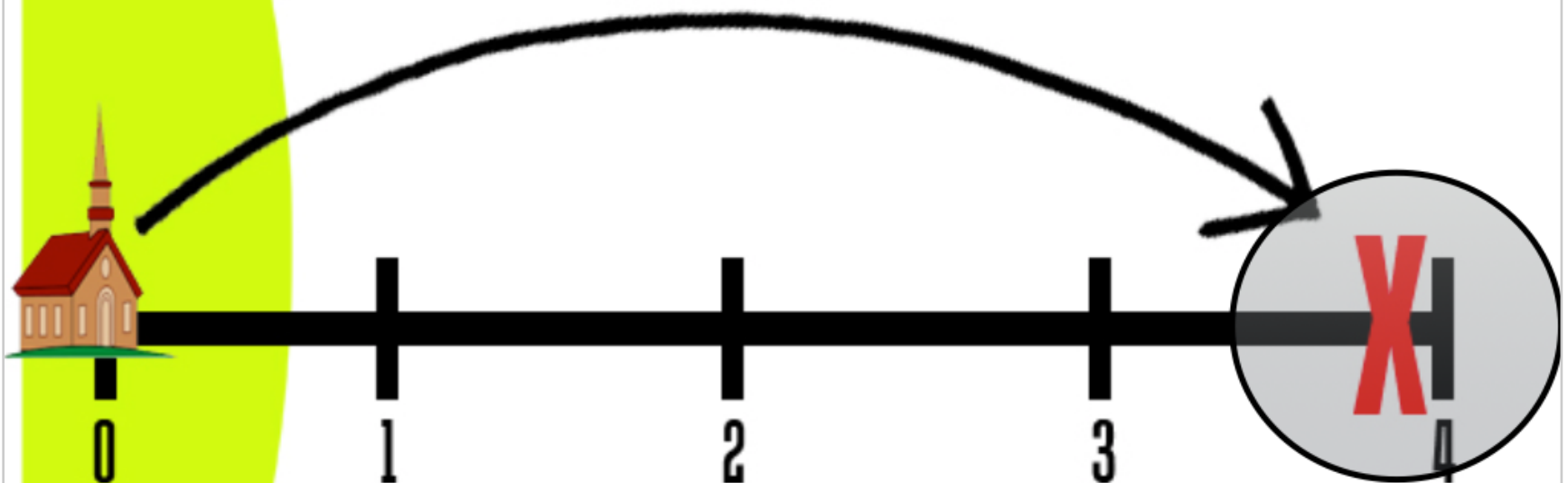
Segment 3-4 represents evangelism into specific people groups, with different worldviews, race, religion or non-religious views, backgrounds and possibly languages. Here there is a need for the Christian to radically strip off his own culture from the Gospel message and identify the barriers, gaps, and bridges to faith that exist in the unreached person's culture. Its focus is exclusively on bringing the Christ to a new place.

Beyond Segment 4: unreached, people group I remote spectrum of the earth.

Right now most people groups in America land somewhere between segments 3 and 4. Most churches are still operating structurally for a different culture. Statistically, the majority of churches NEVER go beyond segments 0-1 evangelistically. They are still operating in a way that is attractional, meaning come to us.

## CULTURAL DISTANCE

DO YOU HAVE STRUCTURES AND DISCIPLESHIP THAT IS ENABLES PEOPLE TO SEED THE GOSPEL IN AN SHIFTING AMERICAN MISSIONARY ENVIRONMENT?

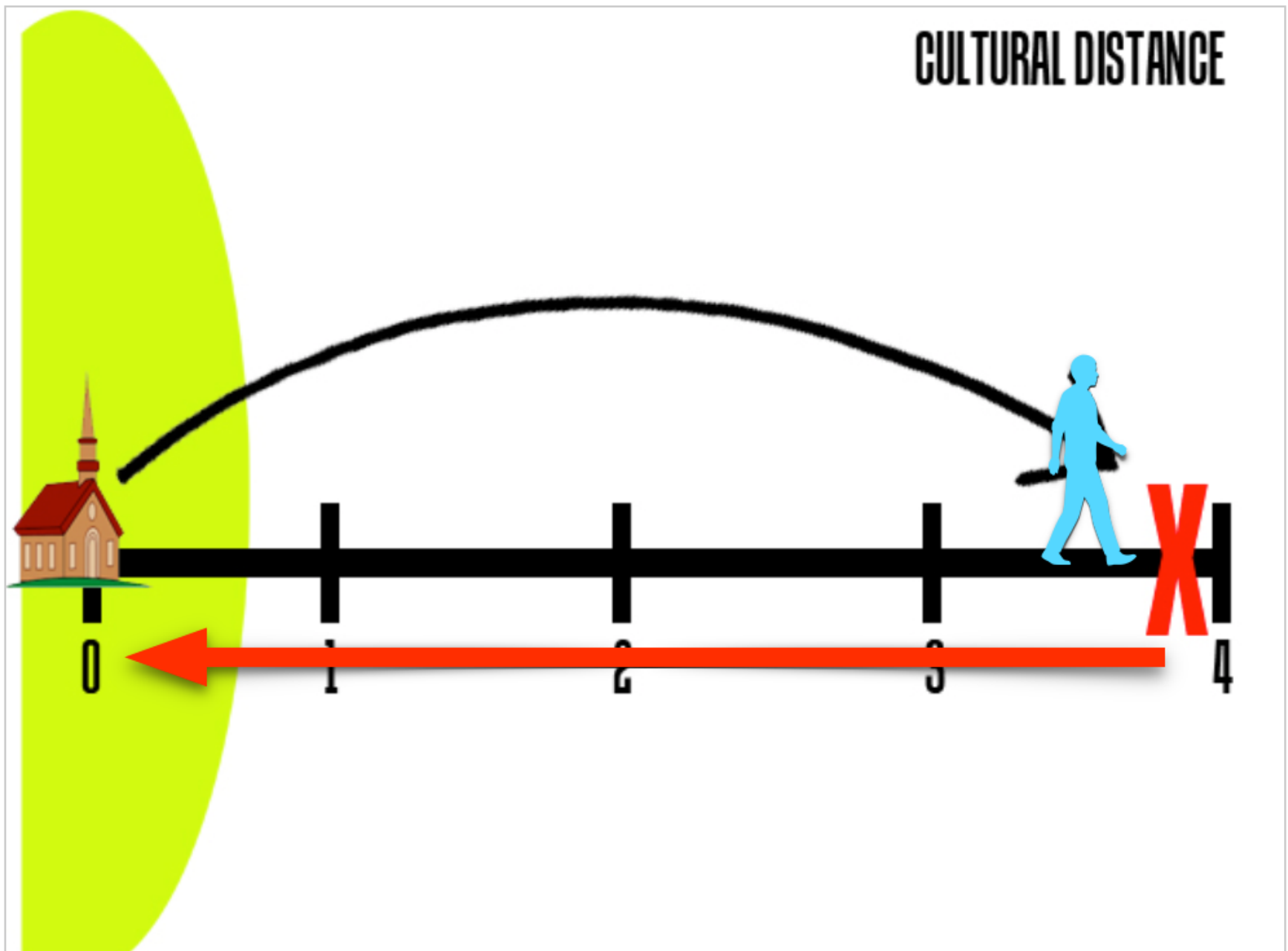


MOST CHURCHES ARE STILL OPERATING STRUCTURALLY FOR A DIFFERENT CULTURE.

THEY ARE STILL OPERATING IN A WAY THAT SAYS "COME TO US."

With this understanding now is a good time to ask. Do you have structures and discipleship that enable people to SEED the gospel in a shifting American missionary environment?

Finally, I want to walk us through one more assessment. This assessment is going to assume your current understanding of evangelism and structures work. Let see how this plays out.



In this example, let play out a scenario of typical evangelism in the American church, we are going to do an evangelistic event in our culture. We are going to have an Easter EGG hunt, and we are going to assume it worked and reached someone. What you will find that is this is really about the distance a non-christian has to travel, instead of the Christian taking a missionary posture. Let's walk through it!

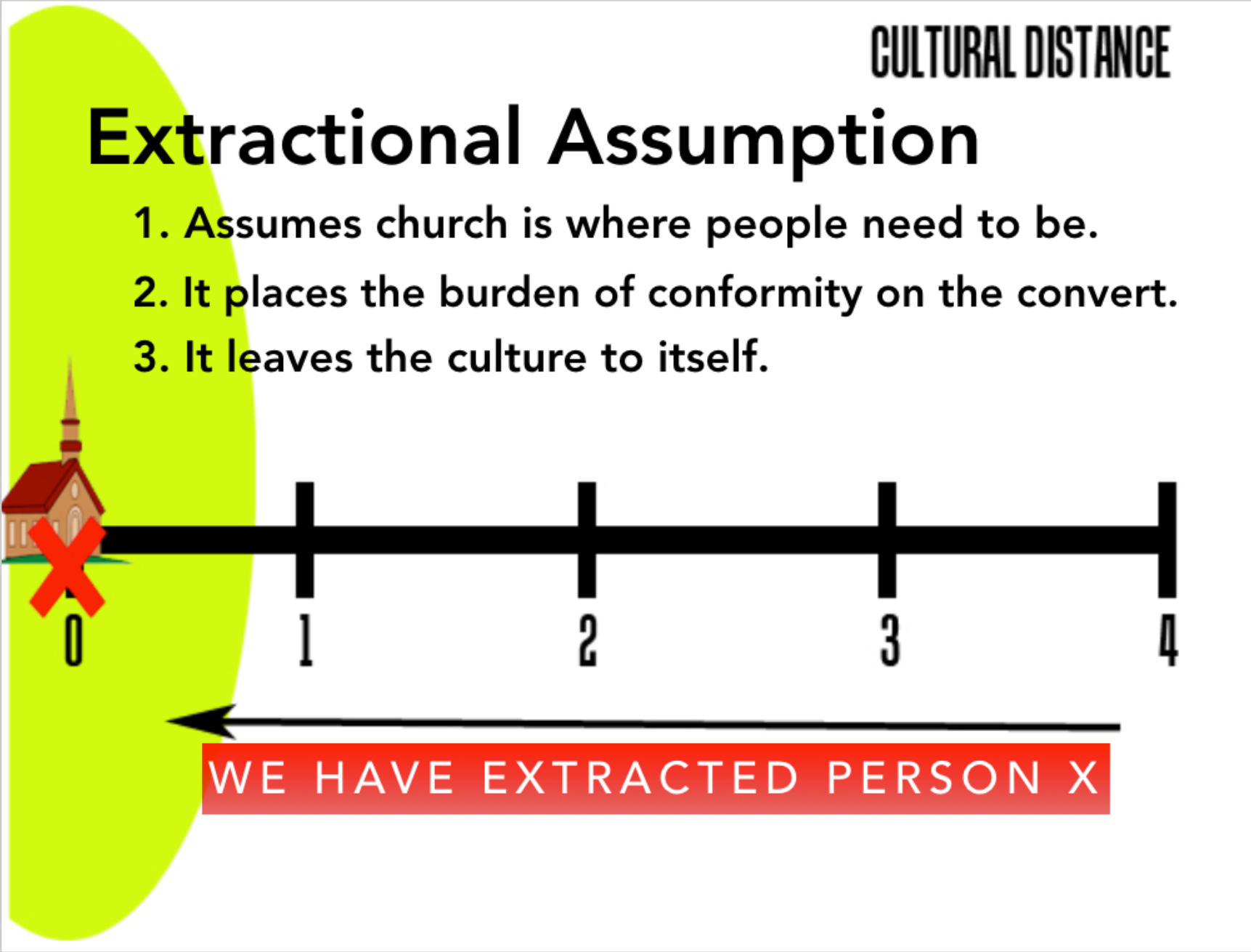
In the graphic above we have a church member stepping out of his church culture and doing evangelism outreach, by putting on an Easter egg hunt. In this case, the outreach works, and they reach a man from the cultural zone of segment 3-4. Where most American live. However, the man they reach is as far



away from church culture as any Muslim in Saudi Arabian. He is a Jewish homosexual. He accepts Jesus into his heart.

The natural next step for the member of the church is to invite this person back to the church. An environment he is completely familiar with culturally.

When the church member gets back to the church, he tells the pastor what happened. The Pastor is so excited the Easter egg hunt worked that the next Sunday from the pulpit He announces the success of the outreach event. A Man got saved. Everyone who gave there time and money to the event claps and everyone is happy.



But let's take a closer look at what happened. Effectively what has just happened seem good, and we have extracted this man from his context and now invited him into our church culture. Extractional Church evangelism brings with it some huge assumptions concerning evangelism and how to influence culture for Christ.

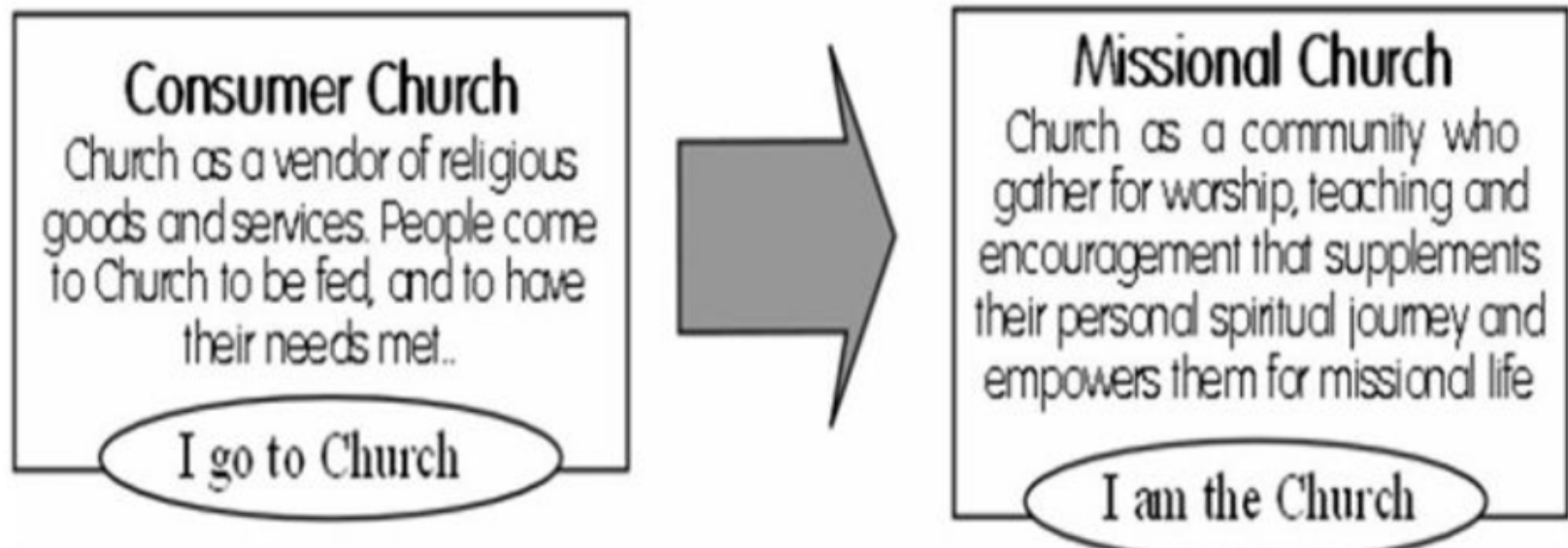
First, it assumes that the local church culture is where people (of God) need to be. The assumption, and therefore the underlying consciousness of religious people, is that when it comes to evangelism, the church is where all people need to be. It assumes assimilation over intentional discipleship (incarnational discipleship).

Second, It places the burden of conformity on the new convert. There is no conscious thinking of seeding the Gospel where the person is. We have an expectation for that person to assimilate into our culture, activities, and social standards. In essence, our roles have reversed, the convert acts like a missionary, and the Christians comes back to where he is safe. We place the expectation and burden of conformity on the convert.

Third, It leaves the culture to itself. The assumption of extracting a new convert and bringing him back to our church comes with it a massive flaw in our thinking as far a spreading the Gospel. It seeks only to gather a man and not redeem the culture from which he came. Thus, there is no opportunity to multiply the kingdom.

Therefore, it is easy to see why attractional-extractional, event-driven evangelism brings with it some very problematic assumptions.

# “Does the church have a mission or Does God’s mission have a church?”



This type of evangelism, attraction and extraction evangelism, might have been fitting when Christianity was at the center of culture. But now statistically is rapidly showing its ineffectiveness. This brings to light some major presumptions we as church leaders are making.

First, It brings to light our concept of the church comes from an ERA that not longer exists in our times. Second, therefore our majority understanding of grace gifts and structures are for a different ERA. It could be argued that much of our religious practices (such as evangelism) we have been redefined to fit our current and inherited structures.

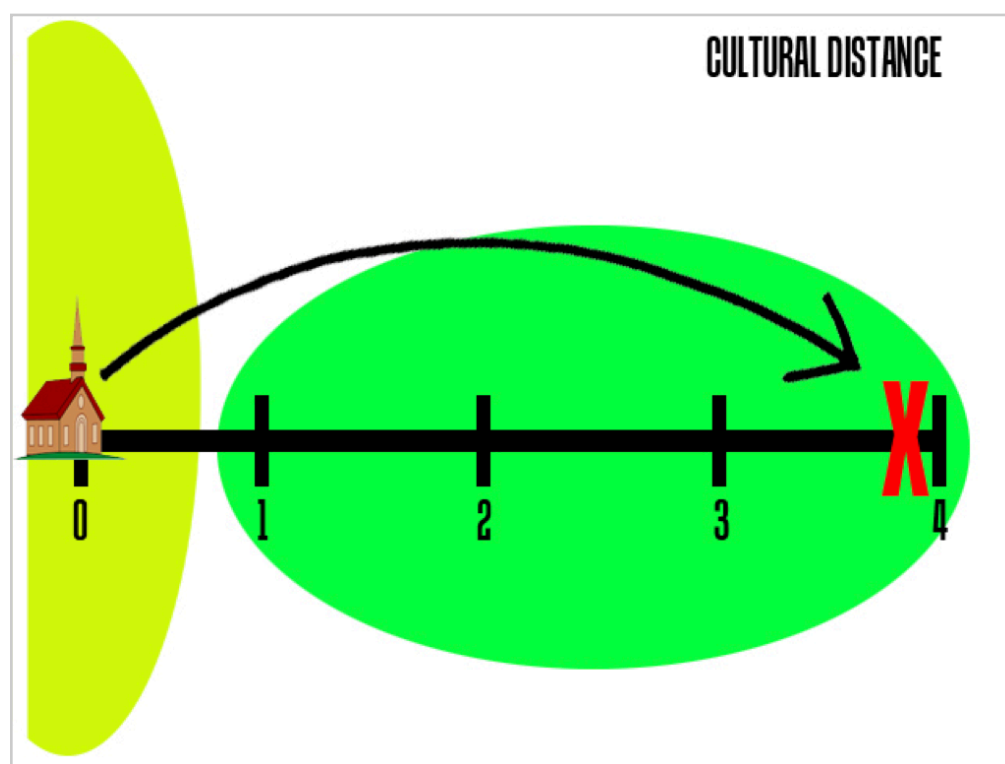


There is much more that could be said on this topic, But I think this gives a genuine assessment of the position we find ourselves in as a church. This has to be taken seriously and therefore, we have to ask ourselves a simple question but a very profound question as leaders.

**“Does the church have a mission or Does God’s mission have a church?”**

How we answer this questions decides what we will be. Will we be seen as a vendor of religious goods and services, where people come to be fed and have their needs met? Or will we be a church who gathers for worship, teaching, and encouragement supplements the journey God has put his body on that is empowered for their missional life?

These are deep and real questions that have to be answered. Everything we do within and without the four walls hinges on how we answer this question. Have we set up the church has a place to go or as a place to have mentored people through a process where people are God’s church on mission?



As we close out this assessment and we will move to a place of suggestions for solutions, take a look at this graphic. The yellow represents the influence of the church in our culture, the green represents the dramatic shift of secularism in our culture, and the X represents where the majority of Americans live.

Do you think you are prepared as a disciple of Christ to seed the gospel in a missionary context? If you are a leader ask yourself if your current structures are developing disciples for this current missionary environment? Is it come to me or go and seed? Does your church have a mission or does God's mission have a church? With that said let us move into some suggestions for a solution.

# 1. Addressed Statistics

- A Rapid Decline of Christianity
- Church is NOT having a Cultural Impact
- Millennial generation tells us what is ahead in our culture.

# 2. Assessing the Statistics

- We have an inherited form of Church
- We have an inherited theology
- We inherited structures

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## SUGGEST

In the first part of this presentations, we have addressed statistics of belief in Indiana. We have looked at them from a broad perspective of believing in A God and religious institutions, a narrow perspective of beliefs and religious practices concerning Christianity, and from a generational perspective.



From this, we learned there is a rapid decline concerning every area of belief in Christianity and God, and the church is NOT impacting its cultures as we desire. Furthermore, the Millennial generation tells us what is ahead in our culture, and it is not good. Their statistics show us a continuing downward trend towards, God, religion, and specifically Christianity as the millennial generation becomes the largest people group in America.

In the second part of our assessment, we have learned that we have an inherited form of the church from a different cultural ERA along with an inherited theology from a different cultural ERA. Therefore, because of this in the modern church, we have inherited structures for a different cultural ERA. The current structures we have are not fit for the cultural change that has now overtaken America. We not only have a structural dilemma and a theological dilemma, but we also have to come to terms that America is now a missional environment.

This goes to the heart of the church. We have to decide who we, why we exist, what we exist for? So as I move forward I challenge you to think through and answer this question one more time? Does your church have a mission or does God's mission have a church? This is the haunting question of our time because it will determine our posture in this world.

A wise man once asked a really profound question, If a can opener no longer has the capacity to open cans what is it? This goes to the heart of the church. We have to decide who we, why we exist, what we exist for? So as I move forward I challenge you to think through and answer this question one more time? Does your church have a mission or does God's mission have a church? This is the haunting question of our time because it will determine our posture in this world.

As daunting as the statistics are, and as shocked as maybe you might feel at this moment. I want to encourage you to allow yourself to feel the truth of our situation, but also not forget there is much hope because of Jesus.

I believe Jesus has embedded in the DNA of his people the full potential of revival and renewal. This awakening won't be like revivals of old; it will be actualized as the priesthood of believers are released and activated and step into the people they were called to be.

This potential has been largely untapped, redefined, and latent within our people, but it is the very nature, power, and purpose of Jesus. Because of the inherited form of church, these potentials have been cast off. But revival is possible in this missionary environment if we take on the identities God has given. Scripture puts it this way.

Ephesians 4:11-13 is the revelation of Jesus's ascensions gifts to his body. Through these gifts it moves our conscious of motivation from, this is what God did for me, into activation and purpose of how we now should live. In other words, this is what Jesus wants to do through me. This scripture is Jesus passing on his genes. It is his nature and potential brought about to the body of Christ to complete his mission. It is God's means to fulfill God's mission, through God's church

The five-fold Gifts of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd, and Teacher, from which at this time I shall now refer to as APEST, *THESE* were given for the commission of God's Church. I believe the APEST gifts, which have to be clearly defined yet, are the key to this and every culture.

This is good news because in the fullness of Christ, Jesus has placed the capacity to meet any cultural need into the the body of Christ. The implication is

that if we reactive these gifts into the body, they are a direct expression of Jesus and his continued worship to the Father.



To understand the power of the APEST giftings individually, means that each Christ follower has the potential and capacity to be God's church anywhere & at anytime. It moves the game from being a top down hierarchy to a team game. It moves people out from participating under the Priest/Pastor, into their Christ imitating potential, empowering them to be the "priesthood of believers." Everyone has the spiritual DNA to share in the expression of Jesus's worship and work in this world now.

I believe because of the inherited structures of the church the APEST giftings have been for the most part dormant and the stats prove it. By in large the function of the church organization has revolved around the Shepherd and Teacher. These gifts are great, but they have an inward focus. These were front and center because the church in the past, didn't have to extend much outside itself. It was in the center of the culture. However, without Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist gifting within the body, you effectively remove all ability extend the mission of God.

## THE BEAUTY OF APEST

RE-ORDERS OUR PURPOSES

FULLNESS OF CHRIST

EQUIPPED

**CHRIST AT THE HEAD**

MATURITY

HARMONY AND UNITY

STRENGTHENS OUR THEOLOGY

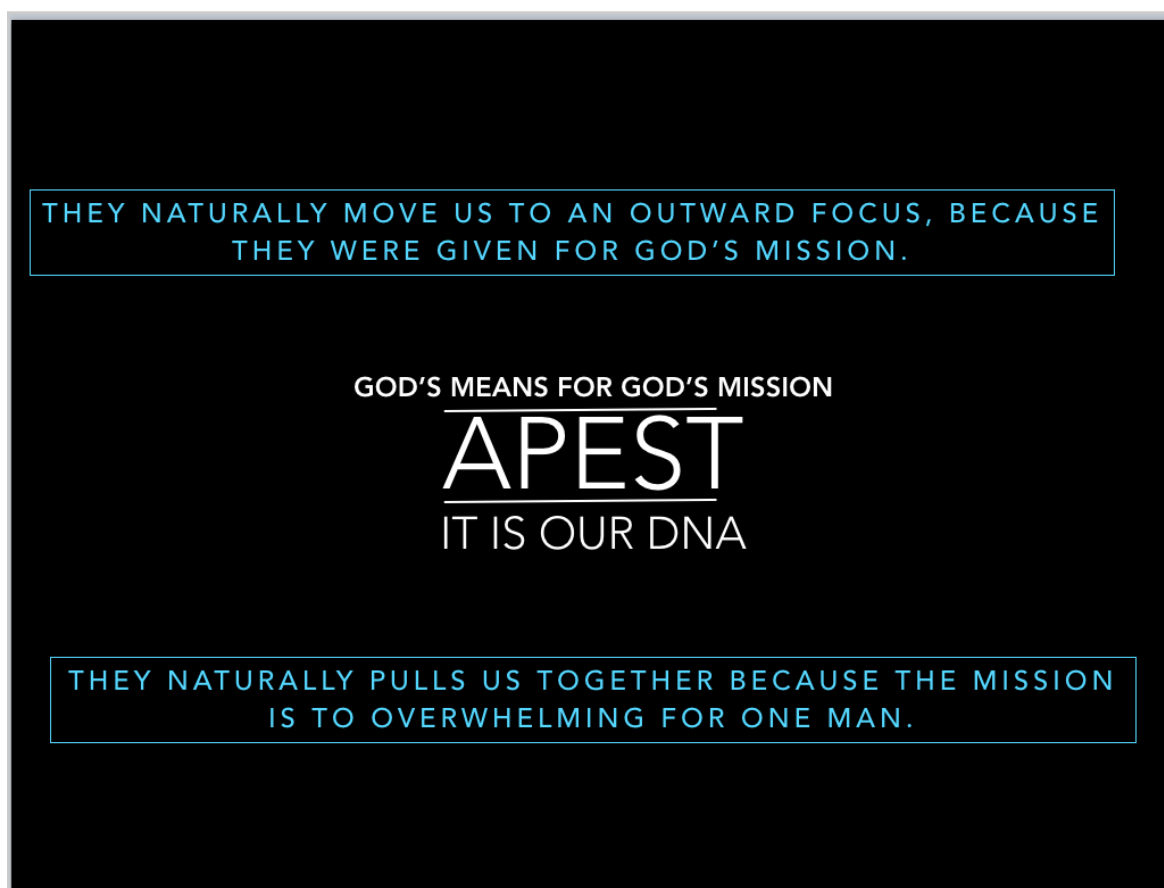
The beauty of APEST is the reactivation of the priesthood of all believers and as the scriptures says, as God's people operate in their grace gifts the body of Christ is equipped, it grows into maturity, it attains the fullness of Christ, it brings harmony and unity, it strengthens our theology, it rightly re-orders our purposes to his purposes, and placed Christ at the head.

Now before we talk about personal and organization suggestions concerning APEST, I want to mention a very important observation concerning Pastors and leaders. First, I love these guys and appreciate them so much. Pastors, in many ways are my heroes, and because of the dormancy of the APEST gifts within the



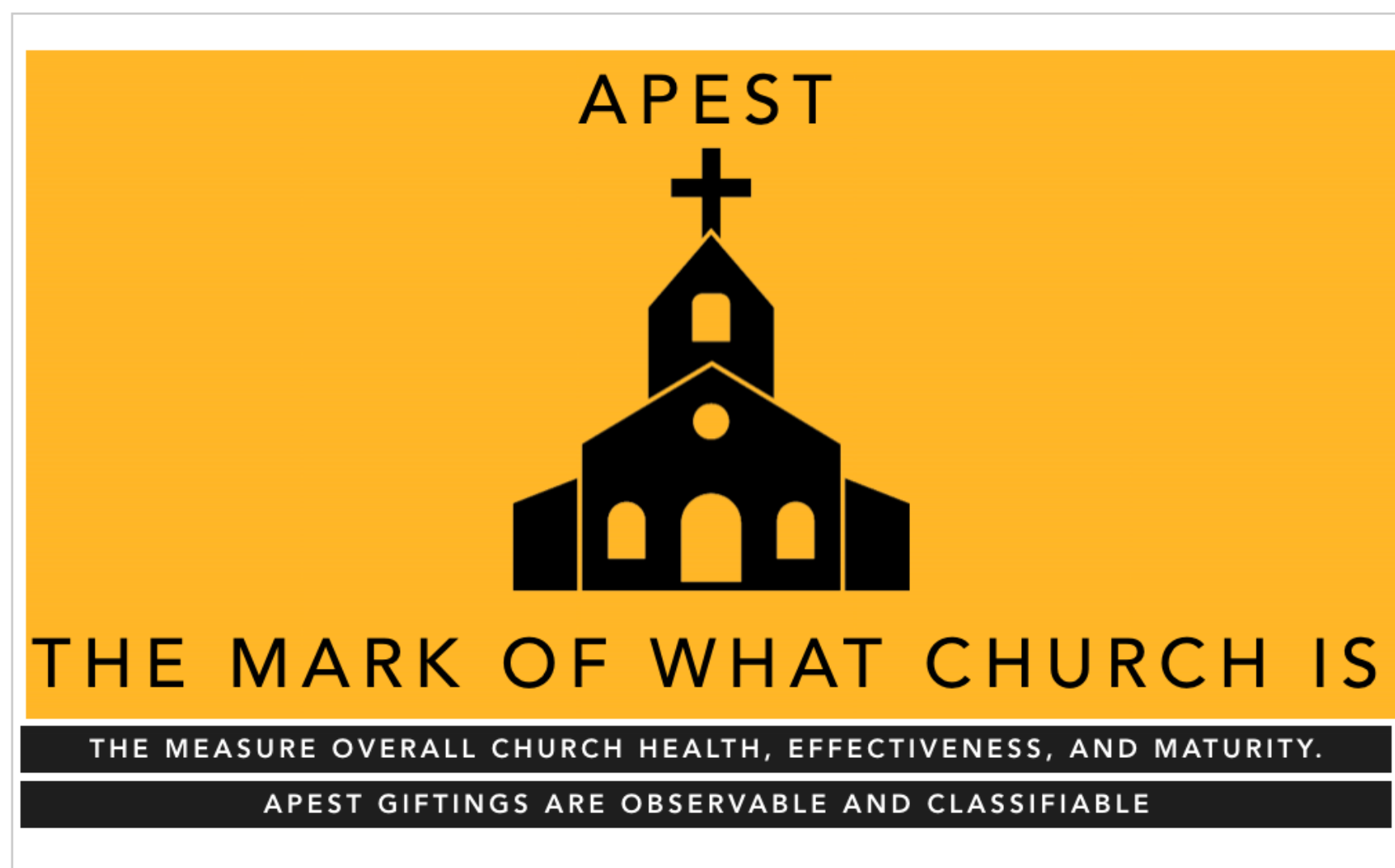
church and its structures the burden on Pastors have in many ways been overwhelming. Only Christ was meant to run the church. It is way to much for one single man. Christianity is a team game. APEST is God's gifting to his team. There are many Pastors who are hurting and beat up and trying to recover because of the inherited understanding of the current church along with its structures have turned a team sport into a solo performance. Ask yourself could Lebron win the championship by himself, 1 on 5? Even right now, as I am writing this March madness is on.

The beauty of march madness is is it foreshadows God's intentions. It reveals the journey a team, a band of brothers and sisters take, together towards the victory that awaits the trials there in at the moment. The APEST gifting creates unity because its a shared experience where each member operates as intended and the body functions as Christ true expression. However, it doesn't exist for itself. When a team is at its best its is operating in unity awards a specific goal. In this case we are saying the APEST gifts are functional gifts of operation on God's mission.



Ephesians 4:11-13 is the revelation of Jesus's ascensions gifts to his body. They naturally move us to an outward focus, because they were given for God's

mission. They naturally pulls us together because the mission is to overwhelming for one man. This scripture reveals to us that APEST is Jesus passing on his genes to his children. It is his nature and potential brought about to the body of Christ to complete his mission. Therefore, it is our DNA. The ascension gifts are God's means for God's mission, through God's church.



It is my opinion, THAT APEST, is not only the potential existing in God's people not presently realized. BUT I believe APEST should be the MARK of what church is. APEST could BE the measure overall church health, effectiveness, and maturity. APEST giftings are observable and classifiable, and therefore, we can test to what degree they are functioning within the Body of Christ. APEST is specifically designed for God's mission and therefore, can be developed within church culture, structures, discipleship, and leadership.

To help us understand Defining Marks here is a quick story told in Alan Hirsch's book 5Q: There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way. The older fish nods at them: "Morning, boys, how's the water?" The two young fish swim on for a bit, and then one of them looks over at the other. "What the heck is water?"

The moral of the story here is that: The fish is blind to its own wetness because it has never lived anywhere else; it has nothing else with which to compare its own experience.

We need to be aware that there are defining MARKS of the church in America. These marks are deeply rooted in religious peoples conscious. This has caused people to think a certain way, and therefore, behavior a certain way. For example, the defining marks of the Protestant Church are Correct Preaching of God's Word and Correct administration of baptism and the Lords Supper. What this tells us is that when we see these activities it MARKS for us that what we are seeing is the true church of Jesus Christ. You may think this is underwhelming, but ask yourself is it true? Are these the defining MARKS on the conscious of people?

Unfortunately, this is precisely what almost all people think the church is buildings, clergy, rituals, and programs. Unfortunately, this is the message we have been sending for quite some time. In fact, sadly enough this is exactly what non-believers think church is also. This thinking is deeply embedded in the American cultural understanding of church.

Barna recently reported that over half of America is unchurched with more Americans becoming what the called "de-churched." This tells us that a lot of people really like Jesus, but do not like church. 41% of them called themselves non-practicing Christians. So there is fruit it be had. However, with these defining traditional cultural Marks concerning church, are we like the fish blind to its

own witness because it has never lived anywhere else? Will we go to where the people live?

APEST as Quantifiable MARKS
(AM) Apostolic Mark - How does the current church body live out its sent-ness in your current context continuously
(PM) Prophetic Mark - How does the current church body stand up for covenantal justice and call for covenantal love in there current context.
(EM) Evangelistic Mark - How does the current church body demonstrate and be a witness of the good news in there current context.
(EM) Evangelistic Mark - How does the current church body demonstrate and be a witness of the good news in there current context.
(SM) Shepherding Mark - How does the current church body build relationships like family, nurture faithfulness, and reconcile its people back to its community within its current context.
(TM) Teaching Mark - How does the current church body share its wisdom, insight and knowledge of God in practical and meaningful ways communicating truth in this world
* Table taken from 5Q by Alan Hirsch

SO how can APEST serve as quantifiable MARKS for our current Missionary Environment? Well the first thing is that the true authentic church must have all APEST marks visibly and demonstrable present. So lets look at what these 5 marks are.

The 5 Marks are:

1.(AM) Apostolic Mark - How does the current church body live out its sent-ness in your current context continuously.

2.(PM) Prophetic Mark - How does the current church body stand up for covenantal justice and call for covenantal love in there current context.

3.(EM) Evangelistic Mark - How does the current church body demonstrate and be a witness of the good news in there current context.



4.(SM) Shepherding Mark - How does the current church body build relationships like family, nurture faithfulness, and reconcile its people back to its community within its current context.

5.(TM) Teaching Mark - How does the current church body share its wisdom, insight and knowledge of God in practical and meaningful ways communicating truth in this world.

I believe these are the MARKS of an authentic church that are partnering with Jesus on his mission. It gives the church room to contextualize these functions within different communities, and empowers a holistic approach for the “priesthood of all believers” to have missional impact. Furthermore, APEST



MARKS give us a definite tangible measure through visible demonstration that can be a measure overall church health, effectiveness, and maturity.

APEST moves us from an inward focus toward a missional alignment that is meant to have a social impact.

Our Desired Impact through APEST is That it would:

- (A) unify purpose within, by seeding the Gospel without,
- (P) bring covenantal presence within, and social presence without
- (E) be grace forming within, and grace demonstration without,
- (S) build Gospel Family within, be reconciling family without
- (T) give a holistic worldview within, by applying Kingdom knowledge without.

As organizations create a holistic APEST approach Organizationally and individually through their MARKS, by reactivating its people and re-structuring for God's mission.

### DANGERS OF NON APEST MARKS

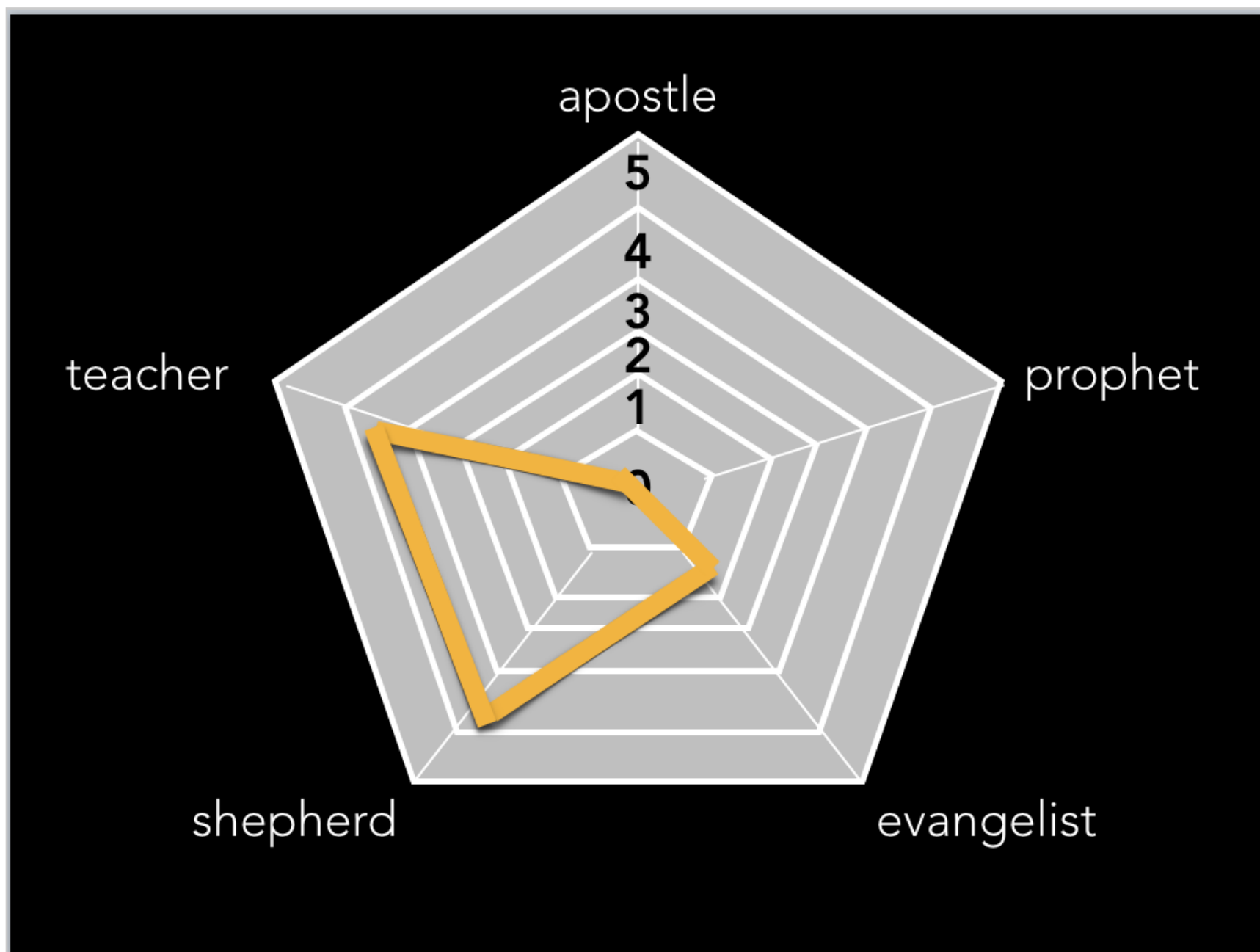
- ✘ it fails to transcend its own culture.
- ✘ it fails to express God's justice, inside & outside.
- ✘ it redefines proclamation, no recruiting.
- ✘ it fails to bring healing & dem. of the gospel.
- ✘ it fails to bring a holistic worldview, God's wisdom.

While it is clear how APEST MARKS align us and activate us in our context. What are the Dangers of an Organization that do not have these Marks? When the church lacks the Apostolic function within the community it fails to transcend its own culture. When a church lacks the Pro-

phetic function it fails express the God's justice within and without and speak truth to power. When A church lacks the Evangelistic function it redefines proclamation and there is no gospel presence and recruiting outside of itself. When a church lacks Shepherding it fails to bring healing and demonstration of the gos-

pel to a community. When a church lacks Teaching it fails to bring a holistic worldview into a community, along with wisdom for daily living.

APEST Marks keep us active, aware, and accountable to ourselves and God's Mission. With that Said I want to look at a Diagnostic Tool, invited by Alan Hirsch for APEST strategy.



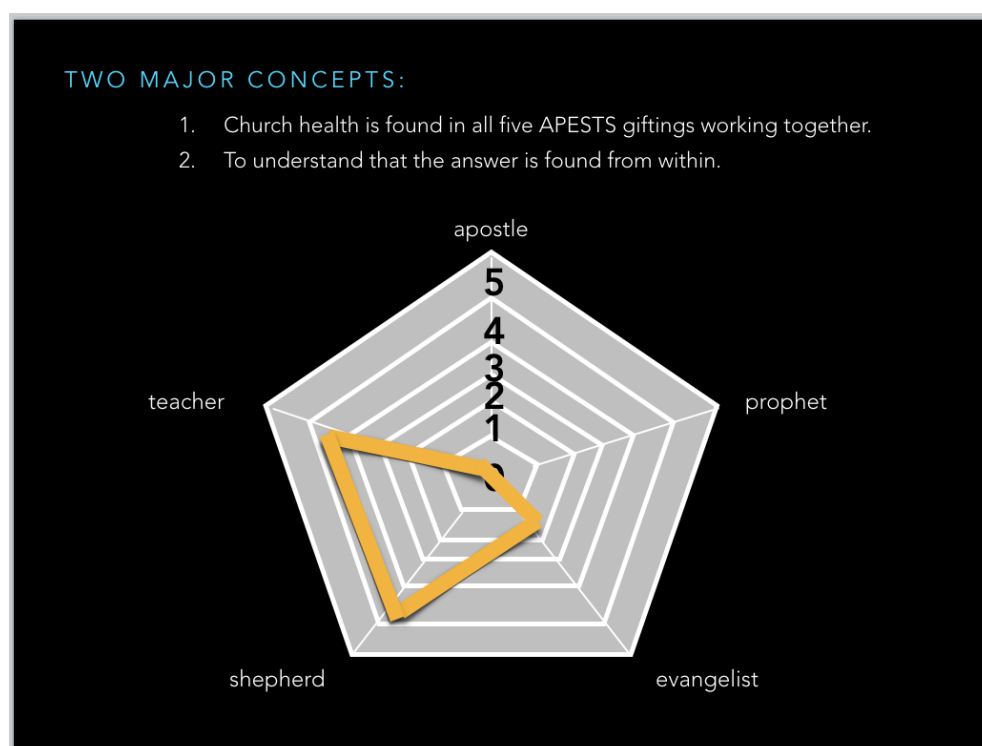
Up front I want to mention that APEST diagnostic calls for a common understanding of calling among God's people. It also calls for leaders to reconfigure church accordingly. With the graphic above, we can get a diagnostic profile of organizational and personal APEST strengths and weaknesses.

If APEST is truly the MARKS of our church organization, then they will be by definition visible and observable. As we look at our graphic, the scale of visibility measures from 0 to 5. Five being a really strong function of the church operating in a particular APEST gift, and 0 having no observable function at all. All we have to do is or identify your organization's strengths and weaknesses.

For example: Lets take a look at a random church

1. They are very gifted in Teaching.
2. They are also great at caring for there own church community.
3. However, they little to no evangelism that I can visibly recognize going on consistently.
4. They also have almost not reproducible systems that reach into the community to seed the gospel and no strong incarnational witness outside of it-self.

From this diagnostic tool, we see obvious strengths and weaknesses. It is important when using this tool to realize two major concepts:



1. Church health is found in all five APESTS giftings working together.

2. To understand that the answer is found from within.

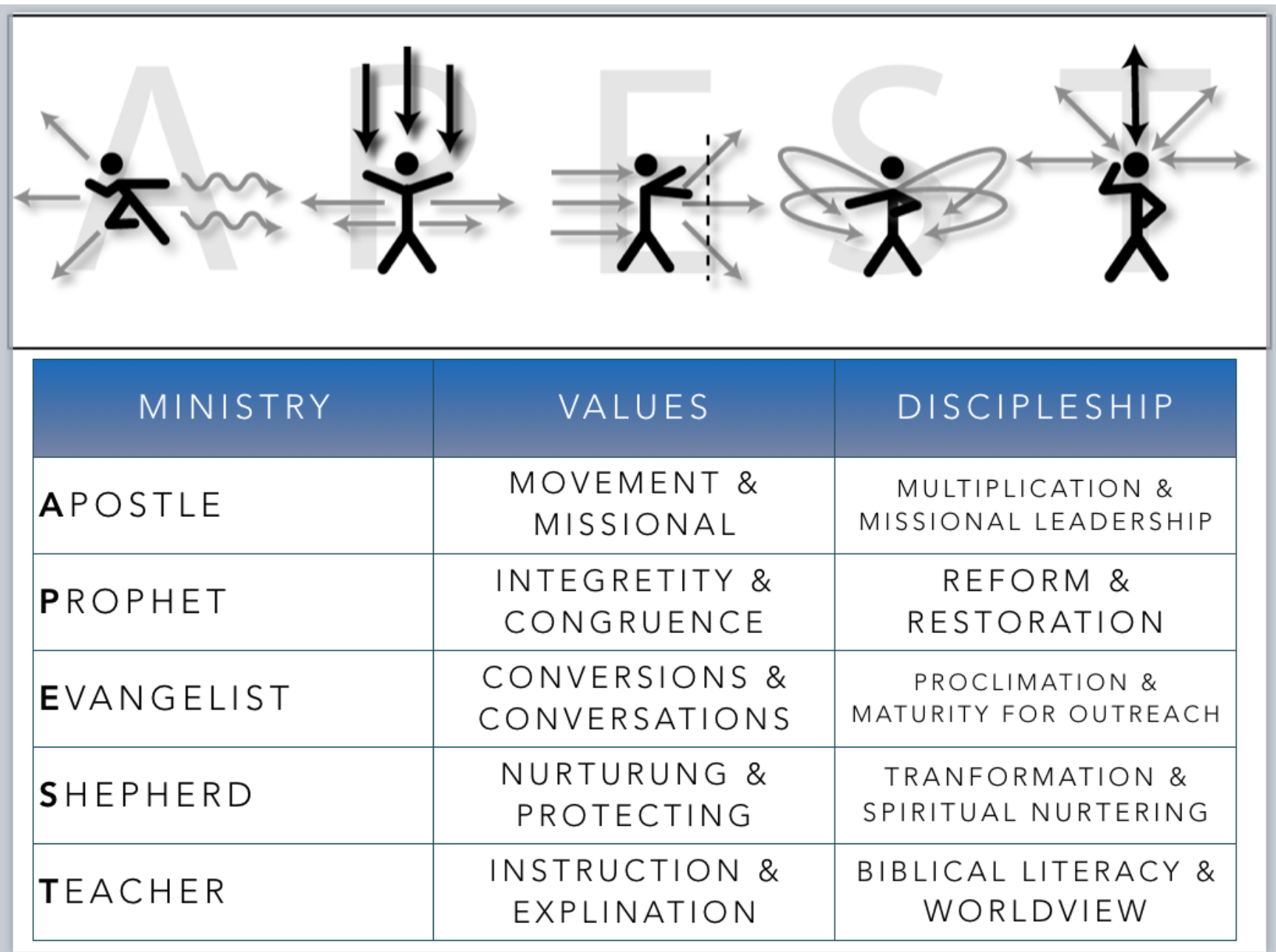
Jesus has coded into his people these APEST gifts and therefore given us everything we need to operate in the five-fold categories. The answer is hidden in



plain sight!

In this section of my presentation, I have tried to make a case for APEST as the authentic Marks for any organization. AND.. I also tried to provide a diagnostic tool to measure strengths and weakness of any organization based on APEST.

In the next and final section of this presentation, recognizing that majority of churches are going to be heavy in the shepherding teaching gifts, I want to give some structural suggestions to begin a process of a more holistic approach to ministry that meets the culture where they are at.



When it comes to APEST, our problem isn't that we don't have God's potential within the body, but that we have forgotten how to access it and harness it. In a real sense, we have demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit toward non-missional versions of Christianity. Therefore, we have to create structures in our organizations based on the marks of APEST to activate the body of Christ.

This means the people need to be aware of their personal APEST gifts. These need to be clearly defined. Here is just some simple definitions, values, and focuses for discipleship given through Alan Hirsch and 5Q. Understanding these values and functions help us to know what to build as we move toward suggested implementations. Please pause for a moment and read the table above.

The habits of that we have inherited through European formulas are from a different template than the we see in the Apostolic Era, the Book of Acts, and in Ephesians 4. Christendom churches have basically inherited in essence a top-down Preacher-Teacher - Bishop/Priest model. With the inheritance of the our idea of church came much of our theology.

## **IDEOLOGY**

1. Every Conversion is a Commission.
2. Be Good News People.
3. Re-Think Discipleship.

## **STRUCTURE**

1. Gather to Scatter - start a M.C.
2. Get Out - Pick a People Group
3. Get In - Live There Rhythms
4. Get Alongside - Proximity
5. Get On With it - Be the Good News

Therefore, we need to re-think and re-new our minds building off what we have towards activating a missional mindset for missional ministry. Here is a few structural and Ideological changes I suggest.

### **Ideology or Theological:**

1. **Every conversion is a commission** - we are all the sent ones of God. Mission is identity as well as an action. This means we are looking to create a

culture of mission in all of life.

**2. We are Good News people** - We need to embrace Good News as a delivery mechanism in a missional context and be people of Good News. Justification by Faith is important, but only a portion of God's Big Gospel. Justification by Faith was good news during a time when men were afraid of God and God seemed to be distant to them. Mid Evil Christianity made this very clear. It was really good News in Luther's time when men fear God and thought him to be distant. I wholeheartedly believe justification by faith is great for personal discipleship and breaking down idols, but terrible as a missional message. Justification by Faith is not the only Gospel tool in the box and understood immaturely can create horrible obstacles culturally to overcome from within that work against God's mission. For example, improper understanding of holiness and seeing the world as sacred and secular, us and them, and having to bring bad news in order to share the good news. Good News people are focussed on living in a way that displays Lordship by direct influence of bring Good News.

**3. Re-think Discipleship** - is all of life. It is not JUST information exchange. It applies to all spheres of life culture, worldview, entertainment, work, education, science, and politics. It cannot be limited to "coming to church" and participation in building based programs. Discipleship has to be a commitment to put ones lives in the service of God in everyday life for God's family both saved and lost. Discipleship without mission is a concept re-invented within the inherited church form. The great commission isn't a evangelism text it is a discipling text.

These are just some theological language to think about as you create a culture for God's mission. Now let us suggest some structural suggestions.

## **Structural:**

1. **Gather to Scatter** - Gather people in your institution that want to start a missional community. Help them know and understand their APEST giftings. Plan them M.C.'s to scatter across the community - think 10-15 people in a MC. (or you just have small group). 88% of church plants fail without a team.

2. **Get Out** - Pick a People group. The obligation as God's sent ones is not for them to come to us but for us to go to them. Think of areas you can create the biggest impact (smaller areas). small changes create big impact.

3. **Get In** - Live there Rhythms. John 1:14 in the message Bible reads, "And Jesus moved into the neighborhood." His incarnation isn't just a doctrine it is an example. Yes we need to Get out of the church in a M.C. but that means we need to move into a particular people group and begin to identify with them so we can speak into there experience. There are a ton of subcultures in a community which provide opportunities for connection. Focus on meaningful connections. In order to take missions serious you have to take the culture seriously. We need to be incarnational. Research indicates that 90% of Christian have no meaningful relationships beyond their church community after 2 years. So we got to get out and we need to get in.

4. **Get Alongside** - proximity. location, location, location. Jesus became part of the experience and part of the people. He lived with them for 30 years before his ministry started. You want to live in proximity and be where you want to serve. You have to know the people be able to bump into them and share in there everyday life experiences. We want to be able to translate God into everyday life. Think Luke 10, go to them.



5. **Get on with it** - don't be afraid of a different culture, but think of the mission to bring Good News and look for ways to redeem the things outside of common grace. Bring life! Get on with it.

Rhythms not short terms initiatives. For APEST to be affective it has to be Active. The challenge will be to find regular rhythms that transform regular life-style. Think Missional Practices rather than life groups.

In this presentation we have Addressed the statistics, Assessed How we got here, and Suggested some simple solutions that can happen right now. The heart of this presentation is to see a movement of God, to bring awareness of God's given potentials to his church, and to re-activate missions in our local churches. I hope to activated the imagination of church again toward the the priesthood of all believers and to the people in our community. I want to say I am aware of how great or leaders are and how much they deserve our love and respect. My heart is not demean all they have accomplished, but to start a discussion.

If you have felt like your organization is in a rut, overwhelmed by the task a before you, or simple don't have a great grasp on how to engage the culture before you I pray that this will be a resource for you and your team.

**Resources used in my own journey which I deem to be priceless.**

1. The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church by Alan Hirsch and Michal Frost

2. 5Q: Reactivating the Original Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ by Alan Hirsch

These men are leaders in the current church movements whom I have seen live, participated with in cohort, and have seen in many conferences. The ideas I express here have been formulated through these men, there books, teachings, videos, and mentorship. They effectively have put into words what I have felt

and could not. They deserve the credit for their courage to stand up and to call for activation.

Resources below found on amazon.com.

