

ReFocus 2019

How To Get Rid of Boring Christianity

What are the tracks that we need to stay on IN THE Christian LIFE?

- ROOTS, BRANCHES, FRUIT - Psalm 1; John 15

Deep roots- ongoing growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Everything else flows from that. While we do have a relationship with the church and the people, the primary relationship is VERTICAL

Branches- Significant Community. The Christian life can't be done alone. It takes a church to raise a Christian. Along with that is our Natural sphere of influence - job, neighbor, family

Fruit- Salty lives: not just "clean" living but living in a way that can only be explained by the Holy Spirit and creates a thirst for God. A life that catches people off guard so that others are blind-sided by grace. Fruit is anything that represents the tangible outflowing of the indwelling Christ. It is His life spilling out through us before God, others, and the world.

Here's a thought that made sense when I heard it...

The Christian life is not exciting until it becomes salty. Too many Christians are bored. Why? They aren't seeking to live salty lives.

The Christian life is not compelling until it becomes salty

Luke 3:10-14- John preaches repentance and the crowd responds- "what shall we do"?

Three groups listening:

- To all John says, "Take risk to be generous : give to those in need" - the poor had to have their tunic returned to them each night; we take food for granted, they didn't
- To the Tax Collectors, John Didn't say, "get a new job", but where you are, live a new way. Collecting too much was part of the job, like a bribe for police in some countries
John called them to a new way of living in their natural sphere of influence. Surprising response.

EX: Keith Green concert - no ticket price, but passed the plate for offering - "if you are here and need money, take from the plate, don't give." That got people's attention in the music world.

Avoid trying to simply be safe rather than being "dangerous" in the job God has given you. Living in honesty with integrity in many jobs can be threatening to others on the job.

You may take some flak for it, but when others are in difficulty, guess who they'll come to?

Soldiers ask, "what shall we do?" Be surprising- don't bully others and be content with wages. Live in a way that those around you will be surprised.

We all have a natural sphere of influence.

Where does your passion intersect the needs or interests of the world around you?

What does maturity look like - 6-E's

DEEP ROOTS LEAD TO 6-E's - ROOTS, BRANCHES, FRUIT

(see full version at the end of sermon notes)

Use this as a PTL for God's grace. Any fruit is evidence that God is at work, and "he who began a good work in you will complete it."

EMBRACE - A Heart That Trusts And Treasures Christ John 12:1-8

EXALT - A Heart Response of Faith Toward God Luke 17:15

EQUIP – Learning To Be A Disciple Lk 11:1-4; Heb 3:12-14; Col 4:1 4

ENCOURAGE – Learning To Love Others And To Be A Part Of The Body Of Christ- Heb 10

EXPRESS – To Communicate The Reality Of Christ Through Word And Deed- Col 4:4-6; 1 Pet 3:15

EXHIBIT – Life Changing Transformation Is Becoming Evident - Gal 5:22

MATURITY = The Word + consistent application + time

There is no 'one size fits all' set of steps. People move in and out in different seasons. Ministry is NOT paint by numbers because we're dealing with people. It's not an assembly line, but we do need to have some structure.

ORGANIC vs Program (dirty word) – VINEYARDS IN FRANCE; the human body is very organic, but it has structure. Think of it as a trellis and a vine (popular book).



The vine grows organically, but it also needs a trellis on which to grow. I never saw a vineyard where the grapevines were just laying around on the ground.

The parable of the four soils shows us that DIRT MATTERS –i.e. the culture of our hearts – individually and corporately matters.

WE'VE SPENT SEVERAL WEEKS ADDRESSING ISSUES OF OUR ROOTS, BRANCHES, AND THE FRUIT OF OUR LIVES AND OUR COMMON MISSION.

TODAY WE'LL LOOK AT SOME ACTION POINTS.

<https://www.challies.com/book-reviews/the-trellis-and-the-vine/>

FOUR KEY ACTION POINTS (how to get rid of boring Christianity)

KEYSTONE ACTIONS STEPS

Connect, Serve, Invite, Give

FOUR KEY ACTION POINTS - how to get rid of boring Christianity at Highlands

This is what engagement looks like – this is the Trellis for our vineyard. In a sense the concepts are both trellis and vine. There is a structure to Connecting, Serving, Inviting, and Giving, but those are also practices that enrich our lives – spiritually, relationally, and corporately.

If you will keep your roots in God and use the trellis structure for support, then you are giving yourself the best opportunity to grow.

CONNECT

There are numerous ways to connect, planned and spontaneously, but connecting is so important that it requires intentionality.

One of the things that Linda and I picked up from our very early visits with Highlands is the reality of HPC as a place for healing and brokenness.

You may not recognize it, but this is a beautiful thing as you engage with people.

Do you / we do this perfectly? NO. But it is part of our dirt that fosters growth.

To experience and benefit from this YOU MUST CONNECT. You must be willing to get outside of your comfort zone and be willing to trust God and others.

You've heard it before and we'll not stop saying it: Say it with ME...
"WHEN IT COMES TO CONNECTING CIRCLES ARE BETTER THAN ROWS"



Small groups, community groups
Praying for those who need to know the grace of Christ.

222 Mindset

Attending groups or becoming a disciple? Turning every group into a D'making context – use the 222 questions

222 Ministry Principle :

2 spiritual MENTORS – Holy Spirit + 1 other person –
How are you taking spiritual steps?

2 Sp Friends – friend or partner in ministry/ spouse – someone who knows you
How are you more aware of God's presence?

2 Sp disciples
Young believer and non-believer
How are you investing your life into others?

SERVE

If we were to start over, what would we establish as our organizational behaviors that reflect our values?
These are the behaviors for staff and leaders that help keep us in the guardrails of our missions and values.

1. **Make it better** – constantly look for ways to improve. Always be asking, "What can I do to help us improve organizationally? How can I make this area better"? Evaluate success, not just failures.
2. **Take it personally** – believe in what we're doing so that we engage in what we say we value as a church. Don't just work in your area, but also show that you value the whole of what we're doing. "How am I personally engaged in our mission and vision?" (connect, serve, proclaim, give)
3. **Collaborate** – synergy- sometimes it is 'all hands on deck'. Be willing to loan yourself to another area of ministry. I'm not too proud to ask for help or too busy to lend help when needed. "Where am I leveraging the talent and skills of those outside my primary team?"

4. **Replace or reproduce yourself** – "Who am I empowering or handing responsibility to?" 2 TIM 2:2

DOUGLAS HYDE

From Dedication and Leadership – Douglas Hyde pdf

I remember some years ago talking to a man from Indo-China who had fought with the Communists at the great siege of Dien Bien-Phu. I met him at Hong Kong. He was a Catholic from North Vietnam who had been conscripted into Ho Chi Minh's army.

Our Western Press had been full of the glory of the French army which had put up such tremendous resistance, at what was to prove to be its last ditch stand against the Communist-led assault. The French held on to the fortress for weeks on end, enduring all the immense suffering that a protracted siege entails. We did not, however, hear much about the men and the experiences on the other side. How about the people who were fighting against the French?

Besieging a fortress is a difficult and bloody business too. I asked my Catholic from North Vietnam: "What sort of briefing did they give you before they sent you into action?"

The briefing they were given was this: (Imagine this as part of our New Member Class)

"You will almost certainly die. Already, even to get within gun range, you have to clamber and slither over men's rotting bodies, the bodies of your own comrades. The probability is that you will die, just as they have done. If you do, you will not just be dying in the fight against French colonialism. You will not just be dying for Vietnam. You will be dying for suffering, oppressed humanity all over the world. Your death will help to make the world a better place."

The Christian life IS DYING TO SELF.

INVITE

We could see great things in terms of relationships in the church, people growing and no one would complain, but if we aren't seeing outreach and conversions would we care?
WE Should!!

If we as believers are not fishing and engaging with the unchurched or dechurched, then our churches will wither away.

Even IF NO ONE COMES TO FAITH, isn't the Gospel of Jesus Christ worth sharing with the whole world - starting with our corner of the world?

Prior to inviting is a key word - NOTICING

"God Space" p. 38 ff Doug Pollock

When we start to notice others with our Jesus glasses on, something happens inside us... His compassion melts away the coldness in our hearts. Our callousness toward others is replaced with a genuine concern.

THREE "NOTS"

Pray for SIMPLE outreach opportunities by simply listening to those around you.

Listen for the 3 "NOTS"...

..... when you hear someone say...

- "Things are not going well right now"
- "I was not prepared for this..."
- "I'm not from here"

This means that WE MUST Prepare for visitors / guests- No one should walk into this church and think, "They're not expecting visitors and they don't care that I'm here."

(make it better, a more welcoming church, a friendlier church)

GIVE

Take a faith step on the giving spectrum.

Non-giver —First time giver—

Punctual giver — Regular giver—

Priority Giver

<https://moneywise.org/articles/how-to-start-giving>

World and everything Olasky interview 9/5/19

Christians with biblical motivations give at a far higher rate than secular people.

1. Giving calibrates us to the heart of God, the ultimate giver. There is a command to give because it reflects the very nature of God.
2. Giving breaks the power of money.
3. Giving allows us to participate with God in His work.
4. Giving binds our hearts to God's work. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

If spiritual growth doesn't impact our giving, then it's not impacting our hearts.

Jesus spoke a lot about money and its connection to our hearts.

If you want to feel more engaged and connected – give more.

Where your money is, there will your heart be also.

HOW IS THIS GOOD NEWS?

Our engagement is with a Person before it is manifested through Connecting, Serving, Inviting or Giving.

That person Jesus lived out all of those ideas for us

He came in the flesh to connect with us

The Son of Man came to serve and not be served

He invites us to believe in Him so that we might be saved

He Gave Himself for us. We can't out give God.

It all begins with DEEP ROOTS –

A growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Everything else flows from that. While we do have a relationship with the church and the people, the primary relationship is VERTICAL

This Table is a way to cultivate our spiritual root system.

Come to the Table

“6 E” Self- Assessment as A Maturing and Equipped Follower of Christ

PRAISE GOD FOR ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS AS YOU FEEL THEY EXIST AT THIS POINT IN YOUR LIFE.

EMBRACE – A Heart That Trusts and Treasures Christ John 12:1-8

- I have a credible profession of faith
- I **enjoy** a regular practice of scripture reading/memorization and private prayer
- I have a lifestyle that reflects growth in repentance, humility, joy and thanksgiving
- I say yes to some things out of love for Christ
- I say no to some things out of love for Christ.

EXALT – A Heart Response of Faith Toward God - Luke 17:15

- I engage my head and my heart in regular corporate worship
- I have a personal life characterized by a practice of the presence of God - gratitude, thanksgiving, contentment, and humility
- I seek to live in a way that points others to Christ, not to me
- I live in a way that indicates that Christ is my treasure, not the praise of men and the accumulation of things.
- I feel secure that God is in control of my life and the world
- I am not ashamed for others to know that I worship God.

EQUIP – Learning To Be A Disciple Lk 11:1-4; Heb 3:12-14; Col 4:1 4

- I regularly “preach the gospel to myself” and us it in my own life
- I know that God loves me, and this gives me joy, energy, confidence, & security.
- I am seeing growth in struggles with temptation through faith in Christ.

- I’m also becoming more aware of sinful attitudes, thoughts and behaviors in my heart and life.

- I’m believing that God is at work in my worst moments as well as in my best moments.
- I have a growing sense of walking in the Spirit and seeing the fruit of the Spirit in my life.
- I can find my way around the Bible.
- I can explain to someone else the main points of Christianity.
- I can explain to someone else the biblical distinctives of my church
- I could defend my beliefs if challenged by a non-Christian.
- I consciously walk by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit

ENCOURAGE – Learning To Love Others And To Be A Part Of The Body Of Christ- 1 John 5:1-5

I am growing in my faithfulness to what the Bible teaches about family relationships with my spouse, children, and parents

- (if married) I am loving and serving my spouse as God directs.
- (if a parent) I am leading and loving my children as God directs.
- (if single) I am content with God’s plan for me and am building relationship with others in the body of Christ.
- I am honoring my parents.
- I am pursuing Biblical principles of sexual purity

- I am faithful to my church membership vows.
- I'm more willing to risk getting close to others by building authentic relationships.
- I'm regularly involved with a small group of believers who are getting to know me and who could fairly fill out this assessment on me.
- I pray for and with others in the church on a regular basis
- I practice Priority Giving – I regularly give my “tithes” and offerings from the front end of my salary, not the back end.

EXPRESS – To Communicate The Reality Of Christ Through Word And Deed- Col 4:4-6; 1 Pet 3:15

- I know my spiritual gifts in ministry.
- I am engaged in ministry that utilizes my gifts
- I see my neighborhood and workplace as my mission field.
- I glorify God by working hard at whatever I do.
- Can I say (with Luther) that when I do my work (commercial, industrial, agricultural, corporate, household, education, etc.) that God is at work in the world through me?
- Do I treat with dignity the clients/customers/patients that I serve and see myself as God's servant to them?
- Do I see my work as a gift from God and a means of my growing in grace?
- I have taken steps to be equipped / prepared to make a defense for the hope I have in Christ.
- I am praying regularly for specific people to come to know Christ.
- I have unchurched friends that I am seeking to influence for Christ.
- I share the plan of salvation with lost people that I meet.

EXHIBIT – Life Changing Transformation Is Becoming Evident - Gal 5:22

- I am investing my time, talent, and treasure in a way that honors God and His eternal values.
- I'm growing in Christ centered love for other believers and the lost – John 13
- There is evidence that the fruit of the Holy Spirit is growing in my life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control
- I take the initiative to be reconciled in relationships.
- I realize that I have a continual need for a heart posture of repentance
- I'm less defensive than I used to be
- I'm more compassionate than I used to be
- I'm more forgiving than I used to be
- I don't boast or try to build my record before God and others as much as I used to.
- I'm more apt to see my sin in relationship to others and to seek forgiveness than I used to.
- If you tend to avoid conflict are you growing in gospel boldness?
- If you tend to enjoy conflict are you growing in gospel humility?
- I am less inclined to base my relationships on status and what will make me look good.
- I am more involved with loving and serving the poor and marginalized

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