

US Coalition of Apostolic Leaders

Apostolically Led - Prophetically Influenced



The 4R Vision by Bishop Joseph Mattera - Convener

There is a seismic shift taking place today in the marketplace and the church. We need to understand how to respond if we are going to bring systemic transformation. This talk deals with how the church should apply the gospel in response to cultural shifts.

First of All,

it is a mistake to believe that the culture will shift because of a church revival or a societal awakening. Often, we as believers think the key to societal transformation is to convert masses of people. But the truth is that everyone is led by the decisions of the approximately 3-5% of people who make up the cultural elite in a society. Thus the only way to affect cultural change is to convert the elite who formulate culture in every sphere of society.

Second,

it is a mistake to think that political victories will bring transformation. For example, abortion was legalized in 1973 yet the fight still rages on; same-sex marriage has been legalized in several states in the Northeast but the battle will never stop; homosexuality has been normalized by art, media and entertainment yet the rank and file of America still reject it.

The truth is that politics is only one expression of societal power. We need to influence the other mind-molding sectors of society if we are going to dictate the direction of culture. For example, we need to influence, infiltrate and control the Ivy League universities—especially Harvard, Yale, and Princeton—to change public policy, education, science, views on economics, etc. We need to influence major news outlets like the New York Times, CNN, MTV, etc. and not write only for Christian newspapers and appear only on Christian television stations like TBN.

Hence, we need to train the ekklesia to take the lead, not only in church but by actually being professors, board members and chief executives of leading elite entities in art, music, entertainment, education, media and public policy (for example, the Hoover Institute and the Manhattan Institute).

We need to distinguish between merely just assembling together which is to synagogue (episynagoge) as found in Hebrews 10:25 (which is the common function and conceptual view of most church leaders) from the Ekklesia which in its classical and biblical usage means to come together to rule sort of like the parliament or congress of the kingdom under the king of kings (tis is the way it was used in acts 19).

Having famous athletes and entertainers getting saved and giving testimonies is not nearly enough. We need revivals and multigenerational strategies to place our leading thinkers and practitioners in the highest levels of highbrow culture—like God did with Daniel and the three Hebrew youths in Babylon—if we are going to see societal change (read Daniel chapter 1).

Third,

we need to nurture and/or convert those who are part of the emerging “creative class” who comprise between 12-30% of the population but have by far the most wealth producers and will drive the economy for generations to come (read Richard Florida's book *The Rise of the Creative Class*). Those in the creative class used to be considered mavericks and non-conformists but are now part of the mainstream and part of a movement that has radically shifted the future of business and culture! Some of the characteristics of this new creative class-driven economy are:

Businesses are moving towards creative urban centers such as New York City ,Seattle and San Francisco. Thus geography is essential because it is moving from corporate driven to people driven; companies are moving to where the most creative people live, not just where there are tax incentives and highways.

Typical hierarchical structures are fast becoming a thing of the past. New companies accommodate creative people who like to be self-managed, set their own hours, and are free to think, create, and dress informally. Autonomy, diversity and self-identity are valued more than conformity, conservatism, and group think. These people like to play at work and work at play; the lines between work and leisure are becoming fuzzier.

Top-down autocratic leadership, which expects people to just follow orders and not think on their own, is no longer effective. Companies are now encouraging creative people to join their ranks who are semiautonomous and self-managed with leverage to set their own hours.

A person being loyal to one community and one company for the rest of his or her life is a thing of the past. People are now moving from company to company every several years based on new opportunities to accommodate their interests, increased skills, need to meet new friends, creativity, and desire for change and advancement. (Because of the information age we are in, there are now also virtual communities with much information changing and being exchanged every day. This is making it harder to have cohesive communities and set societal norms which results in fragmentation and postmodernism.)

Diversity is in; conservative values are respected but not the norm. Only 23% of the families in the United States are nuclear families. Alternate family structures are now becoming the norm.

How Should the Church Respond?

The church should build authentic communities to model the city of God before we attempt to transform the city of man. We have to honor unity, family, and kingdom unity with churches in our regions before we can transform the pagan systems and cultures around us.

World-changers need to experience creativity, leadership, covenant, unity, purpose and kingdom power in the church community (ekklesia) so they can be adequately disciplined to recreate these things in the secular arenas to which they are called.

Senior leaders need to transition away from top down autocratic leadership style approaches if they want to attract the creative class to their church. We need to start investing a good portion of our monies towards educating and cultivating the most creative people in our churches and place them in every leadership sphere of society starting with the Ivy League schools. Consequently, we need a multi-generational approach.

We need to recapture the classical meaning of Ekklesia as used in Athens and in Acts 19 when it referred to assembling together for rulership as contrasted with merely assembling like the word to synagogue. We have to understand that prayer, fasting and revival only among masses of people will not shift the culture, similar to how the 1857 Prayer Revival, the Azusa Street Revival in 1906, and the numerous Voice of Healing, Toronto Blessing and Pensacola revivals have not shifted culture.

Only when revivals affect cultural thinkers who prove influential like Marx, Lenin, Freud, Darwin, and Gates will culture shift. (This is not to say that prayer, fasting and revival are not important. Of course, reaching and renewing masses of people and Christians is important to spread the gospel and save souls, but In this article we are discussing how to truly experience societal transformation).

1. Even as we examine the Scriptures we see that God has used people that were already in high places of authority and/or culture before a nation was transformed.
2. As we do a quick review, we find that Moses already was a prince in Egypt before he was called to confront Egypt and deliver the people of God out of slavery;
3. Daniel was serving as a top political advisor to the King of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) and later as a prime minister in Persia which positioned him to speak truth to power and transform culture;
4. Nehemiah was the cup bearer of the King of Persia which enabled him to receive the favor necessary to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem;
5. Samuel was the first in a line of great Jewish prophets who also served as the political judge of the nation; David his protégé may have been a great psalmist but he also became a king.

Finally,

All the great prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Ahijah, Amos, etc.) did not just prophesy to small crowds of people in the temple or synagogue; they had access to political and cultural elites, even to the highest political office of the land. (we need to cultivate kingdom prophets who speak truth to power outside the four walls of the church).

Even church history reiterates this. For example, it took the conversion of Roman Emperor Constantine to legalize Christianity, placing it in a position to transform the whole empire. St. Augustine was first the professor of rhetoric for the imperial court, the most visible academic position in the Latin world, before converting and becoming the Bishop of Hippo, which platformed him to become the greatest theologian and thinker of his age. In 800 AD it was Christian Emperor Charlemagne who laid the groundwork for the first cathedral universities, which were the forerunners for all modern universities. Both primary leaders of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther and John Calvin, received educations that included vast knowledge of the classics, not only the Bible. (Calvin at one point actually considered becoming a lawyer.) The two leaders of the First Great Awakening (which saved England from the destruction that France suffered later in their revolution, and was also the impetus for the American Revolution), John Wesley and George Whitefield, not only knew the Scriptures but graduated from Oxford. Thus they were already positioned to have the respect of the top decision makers of society. Furthermore, Whitefield's American counterpart Jonathan Edwards was a graduate of Princeton and later became the president of Princeton. The abolition of slavery in the British Empire was affected by the Clapham Sect which included William Wilberforce, who was a parliamentarian and a close friend of William Pitt the Prime Minister of England and many other cultural and political leaders. The Second Great Awakening in the United States was led by Charles Finney, a capable lawyer whose preaching was able to relate to many lawyers, judges and top decision makers in culture. He affected the course of our nation which led to the abolition of slavery, the implementation of child labor laws, women's suffrage and many other things.

As we have already stated, the Azusa Street Revival and other 20th century revivals did not have significant cultural impact because they primarily converted masses of people without touching the cultural elite and top decision makers of society.

We must understand the delicate balance between infiltrating and engaging the cultural elites and high-brows of society without losing our souls and becoming elites in heart and purpose. The "Be Attitudes" of Matthew 5:7 teach us how to interface with others in our communities.

The church needs to learn how to avoid the extremes of the Christian Right, Christian Left, and the pietists who avoid cultural engagement altogether. The Christian Right thinks the answer is only political. This approach

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thinks the answer is only political. This approach clothes the gospel of Christ with a particular political party and pits us against people in the world who we are trying to save. This results in us trying to exert power and control people through legal means and changing laws. Although I believe the laws of a state should be based on the Ten Commandments, and that the law is a school master that brings conviction of sin (and is an emblem of what a particular society values), that in and of itself the law is a very weak line of defense because of the vicissitudes of democratic elections.

This approach also smacks of Constantinianism. Although Christianity became the favorite religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th century, this resulted in weakening the church from within because unconverted pagans joined the Christian community without abandoning their lifestyles and core beliefs.

The Christian Left

only accommodates the gospel to the prevailing culture which results in losing the biblical distinctions of salt and light. A church that recognizes same-sex marriage and values the environment more than the Ten Commandments has already lost its soul and reason for existing as a Christian community.

The pietists or Anabaptists take the approach that the church should only build alternative sub-cultures that don't engage or affirm the prevailing culture.

The kingdom alternative is to take the approach of the Celtic Church in the 6th to 8th centuries. They incorporated the Anabaptist strategy of building an alternative community that was a model for the pagan communities they lived among. However they also recognized God's favor upon His created order (God blessed His creation and called it good) which many theologians refer to as common grace. Thus their communities of faith embraced the non-believing communities, loved them, and won them to Christ by demonstrating the gospel in everyday life.

The Church is Called to Build

what James Davison Hunter, in his book *To Change the World*, describes as communities of faith that both affirm the good in their surrounding societal structures (hospitals, art, police, transportation, commerce, music, science, education, etc.) while also demonstrating the antithesis against that which is sinful and corrupt, not necessarily only in word but how we live our lives as Christ followers. Davidson also calls this approach having a "faithful presence" and bases it on what God prophesied to the Jewish exiles in Babylon and Persia in Jeremiah 29:4-7. In that passage God told the exiles to build houses, build families, settle down and live normal lives, seek the welfare of the city they lived in, and pray to the Lord for those around them, because as the city was blessed they would be blessed.

The church must also maintain a balance between honoring the traditions of the church and relating to contemporary culture. We are also called to model the power and blessing of the traditional nuclear family and marriage if we are going to be the antithesis to the fragmentation and curse of the alternate family structures of the present pagan world system.

We also have to repent for separating the gospels from the epistles in our approach to evangelism and discipleship which has resulted in attempting to change the world outside the master plan of Jesus for world evangelization - which is the local church (this is why the culture is continuing to decline in the united states in spite of the fact that the united states has 33 percent of the population claiming to be evangelical as well as more mega churches and gospel proclamation in its history!)

The master or methodological plan for evangelism is not found in the gospels but in Acts and the Epistles! The gospels were written after the epistles were written to give context to the churches for the gospel story - not the other way around!

Thus Acts 1:1 teaches us that all Jesus began to say and do was to be fleshed out in its fulness by the creation of kerygmatic (or proclaiming) communities that would be responsible for converting the Roman Empire in three hundred years . This is what Jesus planned all along!

In the New Testament there was no separation between missions, evangelism , helping the poor and nurturing disciples from the local church as you can see from reading the epistles.

Thus planting simple local churches that participate in complex apostolic networks that function as kerygmatic communities in every community of the world ,that trains, and utilizes commissioned elite (special forces) marketplace ekklessias that function as a shadow government in every elite sphere without being disconnected from the local church is the key to world transformation.

Where you have complex apostolic networks you have less need for para church organizations that are not rooted in the local church because local churches that band together to train leaders and do missions can compensate for each other's lack.

In summary: If we are going to transform culture we need to engage and shift the influencers toward biblical values at the highest levels in every major sphere of society. We cannot only reach masses of people and change political elections. If we don't reach the 3-5% who are the decision makers, then we will never reach our goals of societal transformation.

We also need to bring back the centrality of the local church that function as kerygmatic communities in association with complex apostolic networks.

As we think about the Scripture in Jeremiah 29:4-7 we realize the most important thing we are called to do is to live exemplary lives that are good witnesses to our surrounding communities. We need to embrace, serve and love our cities and communities, while at the same time train our children and those with the greatest potential in our churches to take the lead at the gates of every sphere of society. The battle for transformation is a multigenerational battle!