

How to Build a Gospel Culture (Scotty Smith and Ed Norton)

The phrase **“Gospel Culture”** describes the impact the resurrected Jesus has as he lives and reigns in and among those he has come to save. Gospel Culture is rooted in the *shalom of Eden* and anticipates our coming life in **“the new heaven and new earth.”**

To build a Gospel Culture involves...

- Knowing, loving, and serving Jesus with hope, between his resurrection and return.
- It’s to participate in the New Creation reign of Jesus. 2 Cor. 5:17 – “If anyone is in Christ, **the new creation** has come: The old has gone, the new is here.” It’s to be shaped by “the goodness of the word of God and **the powers of the coming age**” (Heb. 6:5).
- It requires closing the gap between the **“tell and show”** of the Gospel—recognizing and repenting when our aspirational culture is contradicted by our actual culture. The wider the gap, the more Jesus is robbed of glory, and the more the world will dismiss what we are telling them about Jesus.

The Local Church is the foremost context where the Gospel we proclaim is to be the Gospel we demonstrate. Each congregation is to be the **“tell and show”** of the Gospel—offering the light of the New Jerusalem and the first fruits of the Day of “all things new.” A local church cultivates a Gospel Culture (ethos) as it is transformed by the truth, goodness, and beauty of Jesus. As in...

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” – by Charles Wesley

Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heav’n, to earth come down, fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown. Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art. Visit us with thy salvation; enter ev’ry trembling heart.

Finish, then, thy new creation; true and spotless let us be. Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee. Changed from glory into glory, till in heav’n we take our place, till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in **wonder, love and praise.**

Three Primary Elements of a Gospel Culture

I. WONDER – The truth, goodness, and beauty of Jesus permeating the lives of believers, and the shared life of a congregation.

The Gospel informs our minds and enflames our hearts. Gospel literacy (theology) and Gospel vibrancy (doxology) go together. We must not separate the lyric and music of the Gospel. See Jer. 2; Rev. 2:1-7; Ps. 73

2. LOVE – “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself in love.” (Gal.5:6)

This is where our vertical relationship with God intersects with our horizontal relationships. It’s the relational ethos and eco system the Gospel creates—our aroma, “spirit,” and the first thing “outsiders” recognize about believers and a church.

Jesus calls us to as he loves us—this is both radically glorious and radically sobering. When the Gospel is in play, the “double cheer up’s” become more a reality, and less a cliché. When we believers live with an equal sense of our brokenness and our “in-Christ-ness,” the Gospel becomes beautiful and believable.

Some of the **primary markers** of a healthy Gospel ethos are welcome, acceptance, care, humility, curiosity, kindness, forgiveness, joy, and hope.

3. PRAISE – Not “praise” as in “I love your church’s worship band.” But as in, Psalm 117:1-2 - “Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!”

The Gospel compels and propels us outwardly with hope. The lyric, music, and dance of the Gospel go together—dance being both Luke 15 and Rom. 16:20. A Gospel ethos is neither ingrown nor stationary. It is beautifully centrifugal. The Gospel will deepen and broaden our welcome as a local church, and it will compel us to live and love outwardly with hope—locally and globally. A Gospel culture is the best garden and fertilizer for offering a redemptive presence in one’s community and city. Church planting, local church renewal, and global partnering become like central, not marginal.

**Who are the primary architects and gatekeepers of a Gospel culture?
Leaders... pastors, session, and staff.**

When pastors, sessions, and staff are growing in grace—learning, worshipping, praying, repenting together, and encouraging one another... the gates of hell tremble, angels in heaven rejoice, congregations get healthy, non-believers are intrigued, and the aroma of the new earth breaks in.