

Radical Church

October 16, 2009

Overview:

1. Risk-taking mission
2. Radical Hospitality
3. Passionate Worship
4. Transformational Discipleship (Intentional Spiritual Formation)

The Start: Psalm 40:3 → New Song

1. Risk-taking Mission

Our mission strategy has been based on Acts 1:8 since our start in 1998. From the time we were only a small core group of 20 people dreaming about a church that would think, feel and act different all the way to the present, we have tried to sing a New Song. Our mission field is sick and tired of the old song of irrelevance and boredom in church. They're looking for something authentic, interesting, relevant, refreshing, fun to be a part of, significant, life enhancing. So God says in Isaiah, "Behold I am doing a **new** thing. Do you not see it?" We just said "yes!" And like Paul, God gave us a mission to reach the unchurched. In fact, we believe the church exists on earth for that primary purpose. Everything else the church does we will do in heaven forever, except evangelism. That's why we are all here. That's why evangelism and outreach is not a committee in our church, it's the point. Or else we're saying to the lost, "you can just go to hell as far as we're concerned." No, evangelism is the point because a non-reproducing Christian and a non-reproducing church is a contradiction. Call it a morgue, museum or cemetery but you cannot call it a church because Jesus said that's what you call a people who are "making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and teaching them to obey all I have commanded you." That's the church. Honestly, we have a lot of whitewashed tombs and not enough churches. Think about it. Why did Jesus curse the fig tree on His way to the Temple and then call it dead on the way back? It was a warning and a statement to the people of God that we are called to bear fruit. We are called to reproduce, or there's no reason to exist.

Now, let me ask you this, how many of us have worked tirelessly to prepare a nursery for a child on the way? Why? Because they matter; because the environment needs to be designed for their benefit, not ours. They come first. You will sacrifice and put yourself out so your baby can have the best possibility of health and growth; and we wouldn't even think of putting our preferences in front of theirs.

Are we missing something? What Jesus was saying? Our churches are nurseries for those Jesus called us to reach. Yet we typically don't think twice about making sure that facilities and methods and styles of ministry are to our liking, our preferences. Are we robbing our babes in Christ of their best environment for health and growth because of our selfishness?

Radical risk-taking mission forces us to examine the motivations behind the ministry. And usually they are self serving. But what if they weren't? What could God do through to reach one more for Jesus? This is what drives New Song more than any other thing. So for us, we intentionally go into our community wherever the church is usually not. If churches usually do it, we don't. So you'll find us on the streets doing random acts of kindness, at local festivals, city parks, secular radio stations, T.V. stations, print media, the Gulf coast (Florida to New Orleans) hurricane recovery, OCC distribution center, knee deep in the rocky red Honduran soil building a habitat house, serving meals at the soup kitchen, stocking cans of food at the Salvation Army,

etc. God loves people like crazy and so must we. We take risks that others won't take that we might reach some and help them sing a New Song.

For example, last year we held Easter Service at the Riverfront Convention Center where 1,000 people showed up, 30 received Christ, and 20 were baptized. 20 right there in a baptismal pool we had set up. Most still attend New Song and are in a small group growing and serving.

That kind of passion for the lost started from the beginning. In the summer of 1998 (July) the Core Group began meeting in my living room. In September, we made 7,100 phone calls to introduce ourselves to the community, sent out 25,000 pieces of mail, newspaper ads, T.V. commercials like "Got Jesus", had a booth at Mum Fest in downtown New Bern, and conducted surveys at the mall.

Marketing 101

Principle: Saturation + **Synergy** = **Success**
Flood/Own the Market (Frequency) Scope (multiple channels at once)

There was lots of advertising. Then, we organized ourselves into teams in preparation for LAUNCH, Saturday November 1. Set-up team, welcome team, worship team, children's team, follow-up team and administration team. We built up great expectations in our advertising, so we had to deliver. That's key. *If you say it's going to be something, it's got to be better than expected. Do it with:

Driving PRINCIPLES: Creativity, Ingenuity and Excellence

No "We Can'ts" Find a way.

This was the first day:

259 present including 40 professions of faith.
Second week and following = 200.

The set-up machine → 40-50 people doing set-up each Saturday PM; 75-100 doing tear-down and pack-away after Sunday Service. The fellowship of serving together made strong bonds. A shared focus on others created a real feeling of family that led to taking care of each other like a family. Isn't that really what evangelism and outreach is, bringing people into the family of God?

2. Radical Hospitality.

Driving PRINCIPLE: Risk Happens – "Everything's an Experiment"

Which is why we consider this important reality. Our church... your church is reaching exactly who and how many that the systems in your church are designed for it to reach right now. Not reaching? It's systems problem. And probably the most important system is how your church meets, greets and treats those who visit. Like it or not, you are in competition for Sunday morning. Standards are skyrocketing. The competition is not other churches it's the business and service industry. Hotels, movie theaters and malls are defining how we will build a relational bridge with the guests that come through the doors. Those who are entering are entering not as worshipers but as consumers.

This is what we've learned. We've got 7 minutes from the time they drive onto our property to win them or lose them. Somewhere between the restroom and children's check-in are, a typical family has already decided "Wow! I'm Impressed!" or "This is going to be interesting." Seven (7) minutes before the music and message ever has a chance, our church's signage, facilities, atmosphere and friendliness have already won them or lost them for Jesus Christ.

PRINCIPLE: First impressions really matter.

This has more to do with people than facilities. Friendly, warm, knowledgeable, helpful people who embody God's acceptance starting in the parking lot all the way through helping people find children's check-in and then going into the Auditorium or Sanctuary. We identified our workers with "Guest Services" lanyards. Then, there's facilities support. They are important too. We established a "Guest Services" center that provides information, gift (mug with goodies) to all our visitors. I know of one church that couldn't figure out why they couldn't reach and keep families with children. Then someone pointed out, "Well you know you don't have a working bathroom in the church. And if it did work, the only way to get to it is to walk right past the platform so everyone can see you. No thanks." Perhaps now you can see why your systems are already determining who you are or are not reaching. We've just generally forgotten to put the "Service" in our worship services. Perhaps we need to go by the Hilton, Starbucks, Wal-Mart and walk in with fresh eyes and discover what guest services really means.

That's why we also provide a simple array of breakfast items like a pastry, donut or granola bar and fresh coffee in nice dispensing carafes. And get this: You can take them into the service. It's OK; we'll replace the carpet when it gets messed up. It's the new standard and it's expected. I don't want the church to be known as being cheap. Practical? Yes. Functional? Yes. Cheapskate? No! This is excellence and it communicates God is worth it and people matter.

PRINCIPLE: Excellence communicates value to those we would reach and Glory to God.

Steps to Radical Hospitality:

- 1 – Train your heart with these principles and values; the details will follow.
- 2 – Select a First Impressions Team.
- 3 – Teach on the Power of First Impressions
- 4 – Reinforce your Church's mission, vision, values (show the interrelationship between first impressions and mission success).
- 5 – Remember what it's like to be a guest (drive up and walk in with first time eyes, ears, nose and visit another church).
- 6 – Modify facilities (.to meet the needs of guests in an excellent way).
- 7 – Systematize hospitality (Greeting, welcome center, refreshments, sign-in, etc.).
- 8 – Create a relational environment. Use the HELLO principle.

H is for "hello" (acknowledgement)

E is for "Engagement" (eye contact, introduction, question-answering, information giving).

L is for "Listen" (appropriate eye contact, relaxed open posture).

L is for "Listen Some More" (Active listening – articulating what you understood them to say).

O is for "Offer Assistance" (personal assistance, it's better to escort them to their destination.

End with "Is there anything else I can help with, because I have time.")

- 9 – Branding (the Church's logo should be identifiable and worn by the team members).
- 10 – Don't Clone (discover what makes your Church special; what creates a warm, welcoming feeling and leverage it)

Matt. 7:12, "Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior. Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them." That's Radical Hospitality.

3. Passionate Worship

No aspect of our ministry exemplifies New Song's values and mission as much as the experience of worship. We really do attempt to create experiences that are; Real, Relevant and Reaching (our CORE values) that seeking people may have the opportunity to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ (our mission).

Real, Relevant, Reaching.

We are so tired of church being about who's wearing or not wearing this or that. We're sick of superficial church. Can we just get real with each other and God? I often hear visitors who stay with us say later when asked what kept them, "I just didn't know God could be so real. He's not just an institution." That's often the sentiment of our predominant group that we reach – Catholics.

So often church is the one place you go where everything is outdated as if to say, (no, scream), "God is so.... yesterday. The God of Back Then and Back When, but not Now." We believe the gospel requires relevance for the culture it's trying to reach. That's why worship is not prescribed in scripture. It's left very vague for adaptability. So, what you will find in our worship experience is recently released music, practical teaching, and creative arts that all work in concert to point our hearts toward the Living God. Relevant worship considers what's on television, radio and theaters today. Relevant worship gets their attention and keeps it. Irrelevance bores people and makes them embarrassed to bring their friends. We believe church was never meant to be boring.

We also believe worship isn't just about Sunday. It's a lifestyle. God is constantly reaching for us. Therefore, we are certainly reaching for people through weekend worship. It's our primary mission station and evangelism venue. Every insider (member) is no longer a customer, but a strategic ministry partner. Their role is mission-critical in making our purpose to be God-connectors for people a reality. Whether it's serving in Kid Song or being a section leader by seeing your area of seating on any given Sunday as your responsibility for greeting visitors and making them feel welcome. We are all counting on each other, that when we finally get our unbelieving husband or friend or classmate to go to church that Sunday, that everything comes together so they might believe and receive the gospel of Jesus Christ. All week long our ministry partners are inviting the people whose souls they care about to a church they're proud of. That's Reaching. That's ministry partnership in Passionate Worship experiences.

So let me give you a sampling of some of the original or creative things we've done to create these experiences. Most of these are of a light-hearted nature to make the experience relevant and anything but boring.

[Worship Sampler video or pics]

Now we also utilize a good deal of reflective, silent and serious experiences and especially tie those to communion. The goal is to make it as interactive as possible, sometimes nailing our struggles on slips of dirty cloth to the cross and take a pure white one in exchange. Cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. We try to integrate a physical object as a tangible take-away from the service as often as they can (a nail, stone, piece of cloth, magnet with Bible verse, mini mirror, etc.).

Our hope is to end the service and the first response is “WOW.” It’s sort of embarrassing sometimes, but it’s common for applause to follow the Benediction or Prayer.

God is Real, Relevant and Reaching and so must this church be in its primetime venue, Sunday morning, 11:00 especially.

Transformational Discipleship (Intentional Spiritual Formation)
Children & Family Ministries

Kid Song – Core values:

1. God Loves Me Like Crazy (high evangelism)
2. Jesus Wants to Always Hang Out With Me
3. The Holy Spirit Will Steer Me Straight

L.I.F.T. – Live Interactive Family Theatre (high evangelism) Kid-lead worship

Small Groups:

First Step (ages 5-7)

Step Up (ages 8-11) These venues are both insider oriented.

Spring In, Summer Slam, Fall Out, Winter Blast (high evangelism)

Movies, summer VBS camp, camping trips, beach events.

Student Ministries:

Xtreme – 6-8 grade Sunday morning

Elevate - 9-12 grade Sunday night

Small groups

Student-lead worship & praise band

Missions (local & trips)

Ski retreat

Ichthus, AtlantaFest

Rock Camp

Adult Ministries:

Small Groups are the heartbeat of New Song (our Sunday School). More than 50% of our regular adult worshipers are in small groups. We currently have 28 small groups with approximately 8-11 people in each group. We adhere to a 12-3-1 strategy – increasingly smaller groups for accountability & growth ultimately leading to intentional apprenticeship. Discipleship’s point or goal is leadership.

Simple Church

Core Discipleship Steps:

C1 – Connect to God

C2 – Connect to Others

C3 – Connect to the World

Then, MP4 – Ministry Partnership

The journey starts with Connecting Point (overview of process)

The Deep End (variety of Bible study classes & topics)

Men's Group

Women in Touch

PRINCIPLE: We're Better Together & Spiritual Formation is relational more than it is informational.

Radical church shouldn't be radical at all really. Should just be "church."

As a new church, we've had to step out in faith constantly. I don't know the situation of the churches you come from. We have 500-600 in worship weekly. But 11 years ago, you had more than we did...we had zero. You had more and better facilities, and money, etc. The point is: God created a brand new thing, a New Song. And He can do it where you are...if...if you'll learn something...and this is key:

Commitment Precedes Provision (unconditional surrender to whatever God before you know the what, how, when, where.) Say, "Yes, Lord. Now, what's the question?"

Get so far out on a limb with God, that if He's not holding it up, it would snap.

Attempt great things for God. Expect great things from God.