"Deep & Wide"
Andy Stanley
Notes: Dave Kraft

We know that the best performers usually build the biggest churches but not necessarily the healthiest ones. From day one we've rejected the classroom model as well as the sequential-curriculum approach to spiritual development. My dad and his team took a tremendous chance empowering us the way they did. They put their reputations in our hands. To their credit, they funded the project without micromanaging it. They told us to reach our new community and then gave us complete freedom to dream, design, and create. So we did. In the beginning, the church was a gloriously messy movement with a laser-focused message and a global mission. The church needs leaders who are willing to do whatever is necessary to ensure that we hand it off to the next generation in better shape than we found it.

In both secular and sacred literature, ekklesia always referred to a gathering of people united by a common identity and purpose. Tyndale had the audacity to actually translate the term ekklesia rather than superimpose the German term kirche. Instead of church he used the term congregation. If that wasn't offensive enough, the Greek text led him to use elder instead of priest, and repent instead of do penance. Throughout the New Testament, he correctly reflected the Bible's original emphasis on church as a movement rather than a location, on people rather than a building, and on the message of the gospel rather than traditions, liturgy, and hierarchy.

We are not mistakers in need of correction. We are sinners in need of a Savior. We need more than a second chance. We need a second birth.

If you want to know what people mean by what they say, watch what they do.

We don't believe classes create mature believers. Classes create smart believers. That's different.

We have never approached spiritual formation as a cognitive exercise.

I don't feel like it's my responsibility to fill anybody's cup. But I am responsible to empty mine.

Big faith is a sign of big maturity. We concluded that the best discipleship or spiritual formation model would be one designed around growing people's faith

The Five Faith Catalysts:

- Practical Teaching
- Private Disciplines
- Personal Ministry
- Providential Relationships
- Pivotal Circumstances

CATALYST #1: PRACTICAL TEACHING

Jesus taught for a response. He taught for life change. He didn't come to simply dispense information. Practical teaching that moves people to action is one of the primary things God uses to grow our faith.

Here's something else you should know. Unchurched and unbelieving people are attracted to communicators who have here's what to do next tacked on the end of their messages. People are far more interested in what works than what's true This first faith catalyst explains why we do several things in our churches. It underscores why we are so adamant about our content being helpful, not simply true.

We are constantly asking our preachers and teachers: What do you want them to know? What do you want them to do? What can we do to create next steps?

CATALYST #2: PRIVATE DISCIPLINES

As mentioned earlier, one of our most important ministries, Starting Point, introduces seekers and returners to the importance of self-study and prayer.

Here are a few other things to ponder: In your model, at what age do you begin teaching the importance of private spiritual disciplines? How and how often is this value reinforced with your students? What devotional and personal Bible study resources do you make available, and how accessible are they? How difficult is it for people in your church to get a Bible? When is the last time you did a weekend message on spiritual disciplines? How could you use the weekend to reinforce this value on a regular basis? What could you do to prioritize this in the mix of everything else you are doing? Are spiritual disciplines a priority in your life?

CATALYST #3: PERSONAL MINISTRY

A little fear is a good thing. Keeps people teachable, flexible, and dependent. How easy is it for new people and nonmembers to get involved in ministry in your model? Does your approach to equipping and training keep people out of ministry environments longer than necessary? Are there steps you could shorten or eliminate altogether? Are there areas where nonbelievers could be encouraged to serve?

CATALYST #4: PROVIDENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS

We decided not to leverage adult groups as a growth engine, but rather to do everything in our power to create authentic community. Our entire ministry model is designed to move people into groups. We believe circles are better than rows. We don't have new members classes. For those who are exploring or returning to faith, we created Starting Point. We market Starting Point as a conversation rather than a class

We do not offer premarital counseling. Instead we have a program called 2 to 1 Premarital Mentoring. Engaged couples are assigned to married couples and typically meet together eight times to go through a series of lessons. The relational nature of these sessions makes it more mentoring than counseling. Once a couple is married, they can always call their 2 to 1 mentors if they have questions or unexpected challenges. Does your model have easy, obvious steps into community? Is it easy for nonbelievers to find their places? Are you classing people to death? What can you do programmatically to create more relational connection opportunities in your ministry model?

CATALYST #5: PIVOTAL CIRCUMSTANCES

But if you secretly wonder whether people are actually changing or simply listening to sermons and attending classes, then I want to urge you to consider adopting the five faith catalysts as a framework. Like you, I don't want to build a church full of people who simply know the Bible.

By the time I stand up to deliver what is traditionally considered the message, everybody in our audience has already received a dozen or more messages. Many have already made up their minds as to whether they will come back the following week. As time went by, however, "Relevant" didn't seem all that relevant. So we transitioned to the term irresistible. Our objective was to create irresistible environments.

What matters is that you provide your ministry leaders with a simple tool with which they can evaluate the effectiveness of all your ministry environments — not just the environments they participate in.

Embracing an agreed-upon standard of excellence is how you create a culture. More specifically, it is how you create a culture of excellence. In time, the cringe factor becomes the same for everybody.

We've identified three things that are mission critical when it comes to creating great environments. We refer to these as our three essential ingredients

QUESTION #1: IS THE SETTING APPEALING?

I'll be the guardian of what once worked but works no more. That is, unless I've empowered and chosen to listen to the next generation to modify and adapt our environments as we go.

QUESTION #2: IS THE PRESENTATION ENGAGING?

All I'm saying is that in most communication environments, it's the presentation that determines interest, not the content. If your system depends on your staff and volunteers being proficient in two or three of these disciplines, you are always going to get mediocre results. If you create a system that divides these disciplines, you are going to recruit a different kind of volunteer. But more to the point, you will have a system that frees your engaging presenters to make engaging presentations.

We've gone to great lengths to create a system that frees communicators and content developers to do what they do best. live preaching or teaching may be one of the least-engaging forms of presentation.

Never assign a task that is gift-dependent to a staffing position. Never. Assign responsibility, not tasks. If we had assigned Kevin Ragsdale with the task of teaching our students, he would have failed as the student director. Actually, he is smart enough that he never would have taken the job to begin with. We assigned him the responsibility of making sure the students were taught well.

Create a culture that has a low tolerance for less-than-engaging presentations.

QUESTION #3: IS THE CONTENT HELPFUL?

Is the content helpful? We assume it's true. But is it helpful? By helpful we mean useful. Will the audience find it useful? Will it change the way people think? Does it offer a fresh perspective? Will the audience know what to do with what they've heard? Is it actionable? For content to be helpful, it must accomplish at least one of three things: Help people think biblically. Help people behave biblically. Help people contextualize biblical teaching. In other words, it's useless to know something if you don't know what to do with it. Or more to his point, it's useless to know it if you have no intention of doing anything with it.

As Howard Hendricks often says, "Biblically speaking, to hear and not to do is not to hear at all." Knowledge alone makes Christians haughty. Application makes us holy Our mission statement captures it well: to lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ

As you develop the filter through which you evaluate your content, let me suggest four questions to add to your arsenal: Is the content helpful? Does this content offer a potentially new and helpful perspective? Does this content provide handles, applications, or next steps? Is the content age- and stage-of-life specific?

So those are the three filters we use to gauge the irresistibility of our environments. We evaluate setting, presentation, and content. Of each ministry environment we ask: Is the setting appealing?

Is the presentation engaging? Is the content helpful?

If your stated purpose is at odds with your approach, you will never accomplish what you have purposed to accomplish.

Here's a question your team should wrestle to the ground: What's the win for your weekend services?

Our goal on the weekend is to create a setting so appealing, a presentation so engaging, and content so helpful that unchurched people would not only want to come back the following week, but that they would be both comfortable and motivated to invite a friend.

Does that mean we tailor the content to non-Christians? Nope. We tailor the experience to non-Christians.

Whereas our weekend experience is designed with the unchurched in mind, our message content is designed for life change.

Once you've determined your win for the weekend, the next step is to create an approach or template that supports the win.

In light of what we've established as our win, is this really the best approach? Does your approach facilitate your win? We are crazy-committed to creating an experience that brings first-timers back and moves people toward maturity.

At the macro level our goal is to engage the audience, involve the audience, and finally challenge them.

If you want to create a church that unchurched people love to attend, you've got to think like an outsider.

As I stated earlier, you certainly don't have to adopt our template. But you can't afford not to develop one of your own.

If you've been called to reach this generation of unchurched people, then you must adopt an approach to ministry, and communication in particular, that advances that calling.

When people are convinced you want something FOR them rather than something FROM them, they are less likely to be offended when you challenge them

GUIDELINE #1: LET 'EM KNOW YOU KNOW THEY'RE OUT THERE

GUIDELINE #2: BEGIN WITH THE AUDIENCE IN MIND… not your message

The tension in a text is usually found in the answer to one or more of the following questions: What question does this text answer? What tension does this text resolve? What mystery does this text solve? What issue does this text address?

GUIDELINE #3: PICK ONE PASSAGE AND STICK WITH IT … … everybody will be glad you did

GUIDELINE #4: GIVE 'EM PERMISSION NOT TO BELIEVE … … or obey

GUIDELINE #5: AVOID "THE BIBLE SAYS" … … because it doesn't

GUIDELINE #6: ACKNOWLEDGE THE ODD … … it would be odd not to

GUIDELINE #7: DON'T GO MYSTICAL … … unless you want a new car

BECOMING DEEP AND WIDE Transitioning a Local Church

The catalyst for introducing and facilitating change in the local church is a God-honoring, mouthwatering, unambiguously clear vision. Shared vision is the key to bringing about change. Vision is the place to begin every discussion pertaining to change.

Tell me in one sentence where you're taking your church. Describe the future. Paint me a word picture." In 100 percent of the cases, the leaders who can't get their people to change can't articulate their visions either. The best place to begin any conversation about change is the future. What could be. What should be. Perhaps what must be! If you make people discontent with where they are, they are likely to loosen their grip on their current way of doing things. But if you try to pry their fingers off, get your resume ready.

So once more, what's your church's vision? What are you hoping to accomplish? What could be and should be in your community? Until you know, there's no point trying to change anything.

New ideas are good ideas as long as they don't require anyone to actually do anything new. Ministry models that don't support the mission of the church eventually impede the mission or become the mission.

When a church fails to distinguish between its current model and the mission to which it has been called and mistakenly fossilizes around its model, that church sets itself up for decline.

The best way to think about programming, and perhaps the best context for discussing programming with your leaders, is to think of each program as the answer to a question beginning with the phrase, "What is the best way to_____?"

Along with a clearly stated vision, helping your team understand the dynamic relationship between mission, vision, model, and programming is critical to introducing change.

The primary reason churches cling to outdated models and programs is that they lack leadership.

Pastors, preachers, and teachers who are not gifted in the area of leadership default to management

Change requires vision. Sustained vision requires leadership. Leadership is a gift. Can you become a better leader?

Change requires vision. Sustained vision requires leadership. Leadership is a gift. If you have it, Paul would tell you to lead diligently. If you don't, discover the gifts God has blessed you with and lean into them with all your heart.

Let's be the generation that models for the next generation what it looks like to marry a God-honoring mission while staying mildly infatuated with our methods and models.