

WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

Making Disciples Amidst the Idols of *Our* World

¹⁷ *The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.*

– Revelation 22:17 –

Revelation 22:6–21

The World in Which We Live

The Need for 'Thickness'

- What is thickness?
- How do we 'thicken' the church?

***BUILT ON THE WORD: A Theological Vision of Scripture, Church, and Ministry* - D. Schrock** **Anthropology – The Role of the Heart in Discipleship**

Ideas

- You will become what you worship
- Thinking Things (Rene Descartes) vs. Loving Things (Augustine of Hippo) – Jamie Smith

Biblical Texts

Psalm 115:4–8

Ephesians 2:1–3

Ephesians 4:17–18

2 Corinthians 4:4–6

Our salvation experience is not like Figure 1 but like Figure 2.¹

Figure 1

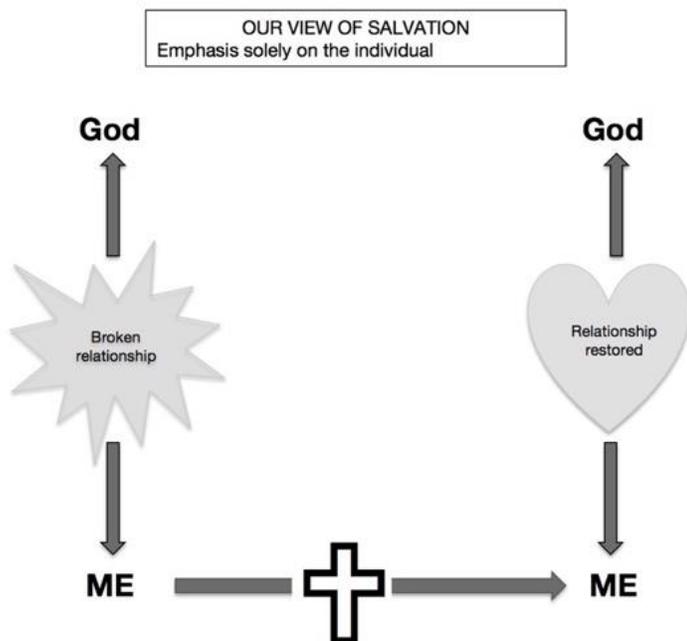
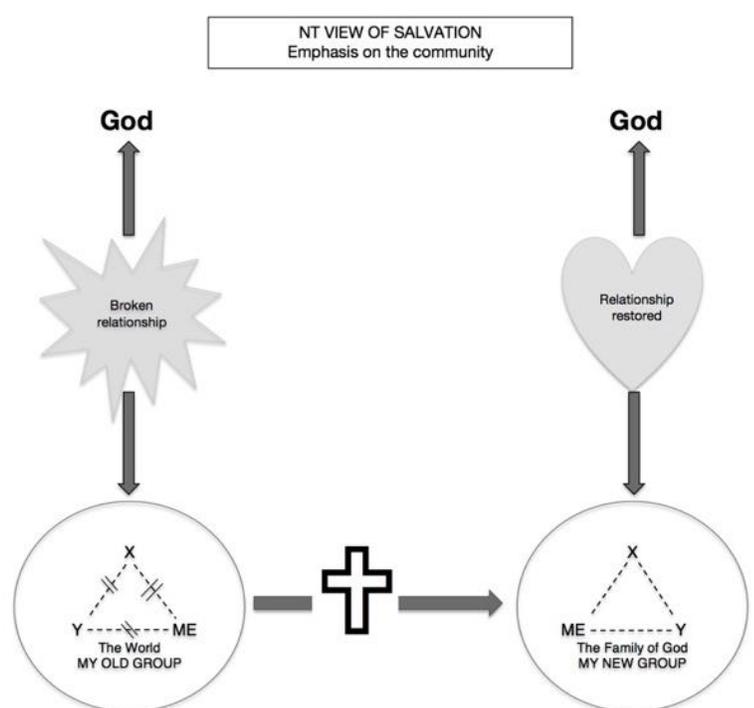


Figure 2



¹ These diagrams come from Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Community* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2009), 126–27.

***BUILT ON THE WORD: A Theological Vision of Scripture, Church, and Ministry* - D. Schrock** **Sociology – The Role of Associations in Discipleship**

Key Ideas

- Disenchantment – The modern ease for people to *not* believe in God
“If I don’t have to believe this, why would I believe it?” (Rhett McLaughlin of Rhett and Link)
- Social Imaginaries – Charles Taylor (followed by Jamie Smith, Kevin Vanhoozer, many others)

A social imaginary is not how we think about the world, but how we imagine the world before we ever think about it; hence the social imaginary is made up of the stuff that fund the imagination—stories, myths, pictures, narratives. (Jamie Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 66)

“A social imaginary is the picture that frames our everyday beliefs and practices, in particular ‘the ways people imagine their social existence’” (Kevin Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers*, 8)

Key Texts

1 Corinthians 3:9

1 Corinthians 1:9

Philippians 1:3–5

An Illustration of Social Imaginary’s Power: Tim Keller’s Gay-Anglo Saxon Warrior

Imagine an Anglo-Saxon warrior in Britain in AD 800. He has two very strong inner impulses and feelings. One is aggression. He loves to smash and kill people when they show him disrespect. Living in a shame-and-honor culture with its warrior ethic, he will identify with that feeling. He will say to himself, *That’s me! That’s who I am! I will express that.* The other feeling he senses is same-sex attraction. To that he will say, *That’s not me. I will control and suppress that impulse.* Now imagine a young man walking around Manhattan today. He has the same two inward impulses, both equally strong, both difficult to control. What will he say? He will look at the aggression and think, *This is not who I want to be,* and will seek deliverance in therapy and anger-management programs. He will look at his sexual desire, however, and conclude, *That is who I am.*

What does this thought experiment show us? Primarily it reveals that we do not get our identity simply from within. Rather, we receive some interpretive moral grid, lay it down over our various feelings and impulses, and sift them through it. This grid helps us decide which feelings are “me” and should be expressed – and which are not and should not be. So this grid of interpretive beliefs – not an innate, unadulterated expression of our feelings – is what gives us our identity. Despite protests to the contrary, we instinctively know our inner depths are insufficient to guide us. We need some standard or rule from outside of us to help us sort out the warring impulses of our interior life.

And where do our Anglo-Saxon warrior and our modern Manhattan man get their grids? From their cultures, their communities, their heroic stories. They are actually not simply “choosing to be themselves” – they are filtering their feelings, jettisoning some and embracing others. They are choosing to be the selves their cultures tell them they may be. (Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 135–36).

Ecclesiology – The Role of the Church in Discipleship

In addition to the surrounding culture, American churches have pursued their own endometriosis by thinning the church so that the church is no longer fertile for growing healthy disciples.

Seven Ways (and Counting) . . . We Have Thinned the Church

1. **Revivalism** . . . and new methods of ministry (e.g., altar call, revivals, etc.)
2. **Racism** . . . especially the division of blacks and whites after the Civil War
3. **Modernism** . . . that led to the division of conservative and liberal churches
4. **Non-Denominationalism** . . . that divided modern churches from their historic forebears
5. **Dispensationalism** . . . that innovated a new way of reading the Bible and gathering the church
6. **Business models of ministry / church** . . . that trusted in man's plans (pragmatism) over prayer and the Word
7. **Postmodern Appeals to Feelings and Individual Expression** . . . placing the feelings of the individual as the greatest good and authenticity as more important than biblical authority
8. **What else?**

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1 Corinthians: A Letter to a Thin Church . . . Calling for Greater Gospel Thickness

What does the Bible say to help us magnify Christ in a world of competing social imaginaries?

1. Re-Enchant the Church

1 Corinthians 1:1–3, 9

1 Corinthians 10:32

2. Make Disciples and Preach the Gospel with Imagination

1 Corinthians 2:2

Acts 20:27

3. Make the Ordinances Great Again

a. Baptism – 1 Corinthians 1:14–17

b. Church Discipline – 1 Corinthians 5

c. The Lord's Supper – 1 Corinthians 11:17–34

= Meaningful Membership – 1 Corinthians 10:32

4. Worship Services with Intentional Gospel Liturgy

a. When you come together – 1 Corinthians 10:17, 18, 20

b. Hebrews 12:22–24

c. Ancient Creeds, Other Churches, Missions, Etc.

d. Prayers of Confession, Lament, Praise

e. Expository Preaching that strives for beauty, theology, the heart

f. Music that sounds different than the radio

g. Gospel drama lived out in the church

Two Final Words

1. Ephesians 3:10–11

2. 1 Corinthians 3:11

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What Can You Do in Your Ministry Area to Make the Gospel Visible?

How Can You Thicken the Church through Your Ministry of the Word?