

Welcome to our One Life 5 minute Leadership podcast.

The question I have been asked to deal with today is: “How do you change the culture of a church?”

We all have cultures, whether we got them deliberately or we got them by accident. Some churches have a culture of friendship and fellowship while others have a culture of mission, a culture of defeat, a culture of being the victim, a culture of pioneering or a can-do attitude.

We've all heard the stories of sports teams that had the introduction of a new coach who turned the team totally around. Generally speaking, we don't turn around a sports team or any environment with only strategy - we develop a *culture*. The culture of a team is basically its way of thinking, values, vision and *modus operandi*. It is this tapestry which is woven together that shapes how they do things and think about things. This can happen by accident or you can shape a culture.

Jesus shaped culture. We can be victims of culture, we can be seduced by culture and carried along by culture, or you can be a culture-changer - which is what Jesus was.

When Jesus wanted to bring the culture of the kingdom to Israel what did he do? He sent in an opinion leader ahead of him - John the baptiser. What did that guy look like? He probably had a wild afro hair style, veins popping out his neck when he screamed and shouted “repent for the kingdom of God is at hand!” He was a wild leader that people flocked to go and follow.

Firstly, if you want to shape a culture, pick your leaders well. Pick your opinion leaders well. These are people who you give your microphone to, who you give authority to, who you promote, who you put on the front line - they are going to shape your culture. Your strong leaders shape your culture. If they are pessimistic everyone will be pessimistic. If they are filled with faith everyone will be filled with faith.

The second thing that Jesus did to shape culture was that he used repetition. He wanted the church to have a culture centered around the cross. So what did he say? He said that every time the church gathered together they were to take bread and break it, take this cup and drink it all the while remembering him. We may ask why we do these things again and again and again? Jesus says: remember the cross, remember I died, remember I did it for you. Remember that.

Baptism is another one of these repeated actions. We do it again and again and again. Haven't we dunked enough people? That message of death, burial and resurrection is the one we gather around, so we do it again and again and again. We are never going to get a missional culture just by preaching about mission once. We will never get a relational culture by preaching about it once or mentioning it once a quarter. We have to hit it from every angle constantly.

Thirdly, what you celebrate you create. Jesus applauded various things. Remember when the 72 came back in Luke 2. He said, "Don't rejoice because the demons are submitting to you, but rejoice because your names are written in the Lambs book of life." Rejoice that you are saved; that's worth getting excited about! This is what lit Jesus eyes up and created a culture of anticipation and people surrendering and becoming believers in Jesus.

Fourthly, we have to be able to articulate the culture we are after. We have to be able to reduce it to a few words. We've been part of a movement and had slogans like 'friendship before function', 'supernaturally natural and naturally supernatural'. They articulated the culture we were trying to set.

In conclusion, we can be a victim of culture or we can set it. Our opinion leaders, what we repeat, what we celebrate and what we articulate is going to shape the culture that we create.