

DRISCOLL: 18 'OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM'

Lecture at St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney, NSW on September 1, 2008

a summary by Natasha Percy

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At Monday's ministry intensive in St Andrew's Cathedral, Mark Driscoll presented 18 points which he says are "obstacles to effective evangelism" in the Sydney Diocese. Below is Natasha Percy's summary of his challenge.

Mr Driscoll introduced these points asserting that, if we are seeing no fruit from our ministry, rather than doing more, we have to ask what we are doing wrong. He also asserted that "pruning" must precede "harvesting". This pruning could involve such things as people and programs.

"You need to cut that which is taking energy away from evangelism," he said.

Mark Driscoll asserted that these 18 points were coming from a "friend", as he asked all present to consider whether their ministry was doing "all" that it could to ensure people were "meeting Jesus" (1 Cor 9:22).

1. The Bible guys are not the missional guys, which leads to proud irrelevance (Ministers are) less aware of the context of their ministry and more aware of the content of Scripture. It's not enough to just be the faithful, you must be the fruitful.

2. Your culture struggles with a lack of entrepreneurialism, due to the influence of Socialism and Great Britain. Socialism brings the concept that everyone must be taken care of, with resources given to the weakest pastors in the weakest churches rather than pruning. This means you are neglecting

to send nourishment to new buds and branches in the name of socialistic equality. The British are not an entrepreneurial people – they play by the rules and operate within existing structures. This has caused Aussie culture to not be very entrepreneurial and new things are not highly embraced.

3. There is a lack of merit-based reward in denominations. In the United States there are far more entrepreneurs. I'm not saying your culture is bad and my culture is good. I'm saying your culture is bad and my culture is bad differently. People are rewarded for tenure but not



for fruit. Men can't be demoted or thrown out of ministry for more than stealing money or falling sexually. Just because you're doing ministry long-term doesn't mean you should be guaranteed of a job.

You all know that some churches are being led by men who are not the best men for the job.

4. Christian Australian men are immature. There is a lack of entrepreneurialism and a system which discourages the ambition of young men. Men are living with their mother until 25, getting married at 32, delaying the taking of responsibility for as long as possible. The fact is, there is not a denomination in the room that I'm qualified to pastor in. I planted a church at 25 – could I do that with you? The answer is 'no'. What if there is a young man who wants to be responsible and plant a church... is there a system built

to accommodate? The longer you delay responsibility, the longer you delay masculinity. Being in a Peter Pan lifestyle indefinitely is a sin. Jesus Christ had atoned for the sins of the world by the age most men become associate ministers. There are good godly men in their 30s leading big churches overseas, and you are flying them in to preach to you because you don't have them in your system.

5. Church planting is not widespread or welcome. The skills required of a church planter are very different. There is not widespread opportunity for young innovative men in this area. Young men who want to plant a church are left with a terrible dilemma – innovate and destroy the church or live within the parameters of the system and negate God's call on their life. No less than 300 men have walked up to me and said 'I want to plant a church and I can't. What do I do?' They need to be assessed and trained and only those who are fit should be released, but they have to be released.

6. You suffer from tall poppy syndrome. Through preaching, people must realise this is a sin. Having a church of 1000 as a high-water mark is unhealthy. You don't want to rise up because people will think you're proud – the fact that you're thinking of yourself means you're already proud. This is a sin. We should celebrate if God would allow a church to grow. My elders give 10 per cent of our money to church plants. Having a big church is not bad – it all depends on what that church believes and what they do.

7. Your teaching lacks three things: apologetics, mission and application...

(i) Anticipate the objections of your hearers and answer them. This will also encourage people to bring their friends. (ii) Ask the church what is our mission and how are we to live that? This is application for the whole church. (iii) Offer personal application for individuals, It's not just enough to give doctrine. Application needs to connect life and doctrine.

8. Many of you are afraid of the Holy Spirit. You don't know what to do with Him, so the trinity is Father, Son and Holy Bible. You are so reactionary to pentecostalism that you do not have a robust theology of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit calls people into ministry. He also empowers people for ministry. You don't have to be charismatic but you should be a little charismatic, enough at least to worship God with more than just all of your mind. The word charismatic here means prosperity, excessive, bizarre. In London, it means you're not a liberal. Don't get hung up on all the terminology. Do you love the Holy Spirit? Jesus says the Holy Spirit is a 'He' and not an 'it'." Ministry cannot be done apart from the Holy Spirit – I think that is in part leading to the lack of entrepreneurialism and innovation, because if it's not already done and written down, you're suspicious of it.

9. Many of you are Anglican. The parish system works for some, not all. Less than half of those who live in this city own their own home and do their social networking online. People have three places, where they work, play and live (the place where they play is the place they really like and would live if they could afford it). So what place is theirs? The parish model says we've drawn boundaries... but this makes evangelism

in this society very difficult. People no longer organise themselves by geography, but by affinity. People are moving all the time. The parish system also makes church planting very hard. And the overseer may deny it.

10. Denominations are built on an old paradigm that young men don't understand. This is a paradigm of control – we control your benefits, your income, your tenure, we control you. Young men operate under influence – some young men are disrespectful towards authority and need to be rebuked. Not all young men are disrespectful, but they operate through influence – this comes through relationships and mentoring. “Influence comes up close and control can be maintained at a distance”. They need to be given encouragement and responsibility. Young men will increasingly avoid a system that's built to control them and will increasingly work around the system to make their freedom.

11. There is a propensity to call the trained rather than train the called. People need to be tested and proved by church leaders but ministry needs to begin with a calling. There should be an innate sense of desire, rather than going to college, then being trained, then being called into ministry. Colleges that have alternative delivery systems, for example part-time options, will be more effective in training the called. Four years in college without sufficient practical experience can lead to idealism and self-righteousness, where young men critique older men who've done something. That then gives the young men the false impression that they themselves are doing something. Pastor

Driscoll said Mars Hill had grown to 8000 by the time he finished his Masters degree in Theology. “Sometimes you don't know what you don't know until you're doing ministry – and then you're more teachable than ever.”

12. Churches need prophets, priests and kings, according to 1 Peter 5 where Jesus is chief shepherd, leaders are undershepherds under Him. Prophets do preaching and teaching, priests look after people (for example, hospital visits), and kings are concerned with systems, policies, procedures, real estate and the like. Most churches in Sydney are filled with priests and there's a deficit of prophets and kings. There is a limit to how many people a pastor can care for... pastors can't do all three. Kings are discouraged by systems that are already built.

13. There is a lack of missiologists. A missiologist evaluates the culture and uses discernment to find the idols, “so missionaries can be employed and churches can be missional”. “Theologians defend the truth of the gospel and missiologists then take it to the streets.” When you stack the team with theologians and not missiologists... lots of people still don't know Jesus.

14. There is a proclivity to try to raise ministers before making them husbands and fathers. Many men delay marriage and children so they can enter college and ministry. They need to learn to be good husbands and fathers and shepherd a little flock. If they are not good husbands and fathers, they are not going to be good ministers. “In fact... being a husband and father trains you more for ministry than any college.” You should really press young men to take

responsibility early, be good husbands and fathers, and then encourage them into ministry. Otherwise their priorities end up being God, ministry, wife, children, rather than God, wife, children, ministry. If you delay marriage for ministry, you are organising a paradigm that is dangerous.

15. There is the doing of evangelism but not mission. Evangelism doesn't belong just to the individual Christian, evangelism is something that belongs to the Christian church. Are we using all the resources at our discretion? Don't ask, 'what would a faithful minister of the gospel look like?'. Ask 'what would a faithful missionary of the gospel look like?'.
16. There are a lot of No 2 guys in No 1 slots. Number 1 guys are preachers, teachers, leaders, innovators. A No 2 guy isn't bad, but he's not the right one for the job. This is part of the issue of having a system based on tenure rather than meritocracy. No 2 guys need to have the humility to step back as John the Baptist did with Jesus – which is good to preach but hard to practice. When a No2 guy is in a No 1 slot, the church will survive, but it will not multiply.

17. There is not a great sense of urgency "I believe God has a sense of urgency for planting churches, and releasing young men" but this urgency is not evident. You're not seeing a lot of conversions, and everywhere I go I'm having guys come to me and complain that they have no permission to plant churches. Urgency shows itself with new services and new churches. Lack of urgency shows itself with a lack of innovation. Not everyone is an

innovator or entrepreneur - but is there room in the system for those who are? You can allow innovation without taking away from what is good.

18. Movements have become institutions and museums. A movement is where God does what He always does, but in greater depth than we normally see, for example the Puritans, Methodists, Charismatic movement.

Defining variables of a movement are:

(i) Young people are often at the centre of a movement – everywhere but Sydney. I'm an older guy where I'm from - but here, I'm young. Young people are often at the centre of movements – most of the Methodists were guys in their 20s, Billy Graham was 19 when he first started preaching.

(ii) "Statistically I think one of the reasons your church is so small is that your young men don't get to lead them until they are old" – and they run out of gas before they get there. You say, 'but the young are irresponsible' – of course they are! Young men say and do stupid things, but it's good to get the losses out of the way early.

(iii) Movements are marked not just by birth, but by new birth. New churches have to be planted and you need new leaders so there can be new churches.

(iv) A lot of movements are completely unaware of their influence – "I was shocked by the number of Aussies who download my sermons."

(v) Movements have supporting organisations, such as theological colleges and publishing houses.

(vi) Usually, new movements come into existence when there's new technology. For example, the Protestant Reformation happened at the time of the printing press, Billy Graham used the advances in amplification and radio at the time he was preaching. Today, we have the internet. Old systems were based on control, but today, there is no control. "You can sit on your Macbook and even if no leader approves of it, you could communicate to the world. That changes everything." People spend more time looking at a screen than a human being. Mark Driscoll's sermons are downloaded more than 10 million times each year. "That's crazy – we could never have a meeting with 10 million people, we'd call it a country."

(vii) The movement leader embodies the values and then tells the story of the movement so that the movement has integrity into the future. They are attacked and maligned and usually not appreciated until after they're dead.

(viii) Movements become organisations, which become institutions. Innovators don't go into or come out of institutions. Institutions are marked by a fear of failure and a preservation of previous wins. "Eventually, young leaders realise that it is too cumbersome to get anything done and they leave."

(ix) If an institution doesn't come back to being an organisation or a movement, it becomes a museum. "A museum exists to tell the stories of when God used to work." A museum doesn't exist to call future leaders. So you need to ask: 'Are we a movement, an organisation, an institution or a museum?' Do the best and brightest entrepreneurial young men want to

partner with you, or are they unwilling to walk with you because they don't want to be controlled by you?"

Five ways you've gone off track:

1. Doctrinally, you have too much or too little control. You define the world so tight theologically that you don't give much flexibility.

2. Relationships – people love each other and don't want to walk away from the relationships they have with others in leadership – so the love of relationship means all seats (of opportunity) are taken.

3. Organisationally, you have too much or too little control – too much, and ministry becomes too complicated, too little and people who don't have good doctrine or character can come in.

4. Pride or 'Not invented here syndrome' – not adapting something unless it was created by someone on your team. Your worship and service structure is painful and slow and frustrating – you need to have humility to learn from other people in other denominations and discernment to know what not to implement.

5. Failing to honour founders and future. Issues of succession are difficult and significant. The key is to honour both your founders and your future. You need to do some things differently, and you need to be innovative in what we do.