

Proceeding into Mass Communication

By: Craig Detweiler

[00:00:00.190]

Hey, what is a missionary? That's what I want to know. What is a missionary? Anybody? Bueller. Bueller. Anybody? What is a missionary, sir? Oh, he just volunteered. Oh, you're pointing to someone. What does that mean? Somebody just got pointed out as a missionary. Why is that? My friend, you're the one doing the pointing. Goes out into the world, spread the word of Jesus Christ. What do you think, folks? Boo. Okay, who's got a better one? What's? Missionary, sir? Okay, an ambassador for whatever faith they are. Now that's an interesting question. So, what are you implying, my friend? There are Mormon missionaries. All right? Anybody? Any other kinds?

[00:01:22.570]

Hari Krishna's, Jehovah's Witnesses. Anybody in here from Japan you know about Sokagakai, right? That's like the most aggressive Buddhist missionary organization. Sokagakai. So, all right, an ambassador for whomever or whatever. An ambassador, that's pretty good. What else I saw more hands? Yes. Okay, different culture. So, they're border crossers. Is that right? They cross borders. They're transgressors. They transgress. They cross over. That's pretty good. What else?

[00:02:15.730]

I mean, you've already listened to like 8 hours about this. So, somebody's got something you've learned. Do we cover? Is that pretty good? You're satisfied? So, what do you think? Can we put all those three things together? An ambassador for whatever faith they are. They cross different

cultures, they cross borders. If you happen to be a Christian missionary, then you might go out into the world spreading the word of Jesus Christ. It's pretty good. It's pretty good.

[00:02:49.540]

So, what the heck am I doing here? I'm confused, why was I invited to speak? You may be wondering the same thing, right? Somebody made a big mistake. What am I doing here? Why didn't they get a real missionary in here? Right? Y'all are thinking that's rhetorical. What am I doing here? Is it too late to leave? You guys just got your credit. You'd be happy if we all walked out. There's an answer. Oh, no, don't tell us. Hey, say all that loud. Say all that loud.

[00:03:44.030]

(Student: There are more borders than national borders. There are borders of ideology within a culture.)

[00:03:49.120]

Lots of borders within a culture. Fair enough. There are more than national borders. I'll buy that. More than national borders. Let me see. I got a couple of other missionaries I want to talk about. Who's on the left? You all got to know your own heritage. That's Michelle Burford. English major, Biola University. Why is she up there with that picture of Oprah in Oprah magazine? Yeah, she's like the features editor. Decides what, about 60% of the content the magazine is going to be probably, Michelle Burford, Biola graduate. Is she a missionary?

[00:04:41.430]

Is she? Somebody says yes. Why? Sir, she's crossing an ideological boundary. Is she going into a foreign land? Is she? I don't know. Who's this cat? Scott Derrickson. Where'd he go to school? Biola? What's he do? Director directs feel good movies like Exorcism of Emily Rose, Hellraiser Inferno, writes things like Urban Legends 2, all the good Christian movies. Is this dude a missionary? I know what you think. I want to know somebody else. Is this guy a missionary? What do you think? Yeah.

[00:05:37.890]

Who said it? Omar. He's like, I didn't say it, my friend. Why is this man a missionary? Is this man a missionary? What's his mission field? Okay, his mission field could be the world. Because certainly this film played around the world. It just opened in Japan about a month ago. He could be a global missionary. What's his particular mission field? Hollywood. Hollywood. It's about 25 miles by 25 miles wide. It's actually pretty close to us. I don't know. Some of you have heard of it, few of you been there. Anybody? Yeah. You drove through it on your way to school once, resolved never to go back. Yes.

[00:06:33.950]

I got to tell you, I was a missionary, folks. I was also a missionary, and I made a little film about it. And let's look at the first couple of minutes of it. It should give you a nice little laugh. All about bringing the laughs. I don't want to resume play from last stop. Probably I'm just having a hard time even getting it to show up. Push stop, stop. Okay? And then push play. Thank you. All right, this will work. All right, so, see, we answer that question. What is a missionary? I don't even know, what the word? How to pronounce it? Missionary. So, let's see what we got here.

[00:07:37.820]

(Shows film: What is a missionary? What do you think? Its elements, grass huts, preaching to the natives. Over 2000 years of Christian history, the word missionary has acquired plenty of baggage. It's associated with colonialism, paternalism. Yet we often forget about the contribution of schools, housing, medicine, food. What does it mean to be a missionary in a pluralistic, postmodern world?

[00:08:22.030]

What is a missionary? I was a missionary 20 years ago. [inaudible 00:08:33] I decided to follow. I sought to communicate the love of God, my fraternity, and my roommates to the entire world. At graduation, a friend invited me to attend her banner, a missions conference sponsored by Inner Varsity. I connected with the most professional looking group [inaudible 00:08:51] Language Institute for Evangelism. They were sporting khaki, blue blazers, perfect for that [inaudible 00:09:00].

[00:09:01.070]

They suggested that I could be a missionary but what could I offer? I spoke loudly Spanish, and I had almost no marketable skills. I discovered that as an American abroad, I had a certain attraction and fascination, especially in Japan, the center of all things hip, trendy and Western. I didn't need to speak Japanese because they wanted to speak English with me. And with only one half 1% of the Japanese following Jesus, there was a more strategic or open experience.

[00:09:35.260]

In 1985, we opened the board of the English Language Institute. Doug Birdsall, president of Life Ministry, directed our efforts [inaudible 00:09:43]. We went from an empty classroom to 100 students. My Japanese students took me to all kinds of values. We taught sports, politics, movies, and religion. Several of my new friends decided to follow Jesus. We started at the church.

[inaudible 00:09:58] Christian fellowship. 20 years later, I'm eager to retrace my steps to find out what God has been doing to get a picture of the future of missions and missionaries.)

[00:10:19.810]

All right lights up. I was a missionary. How about that? In fact, that's the first thing I did when I graduated from college. Went overseas to Japan, taught English for two years, helped plant a church. That's what I did when I graduated. One of the best things I ever did. Learn so much from the Japanese people, learned so much from the Japanese church, learned so much about myself, learned so much about God. I thought I went there for the Japanese; it turned out I think God wanted me there for me to understand that I was loved and didn't have to perform for him and a whole bunch of other things that I learned along the way. But I got this missionary thing in my blood. It has never left me ever since then. Although this is the first missions conference I've spoken at since then.

[00:11:14.910]

So today what I want to talk about is what it might look like to be a missionary in your own culture or actually anywhere in the world. And if I can just get that slide thing to work. There we go. Okay, can we turn the light off on the, that's pretty good. Great. So, the title of what I'm

going to talk about today, I'm calling it Listening in, coming alongside the chariot and the culture.

[00:11:50.050]

Lovely book called Material World: A Global Family Portrait. This is a photographer who went around the planet and just took pictures of people and their stuff. He'd find a group of folks, he'd go to their house, and he'd say, hey, I want to take your picture. Could you bring everything you own out in front of your house? And let's just take a picture of it. So, at the top, you see a family in Texas taking up almost the whole neighborhood. And down below you have a family in Bhutan. And he just sort of did this. Traveled around the globe, took him at least a year. Went to Mali in Africa, went to Guatemala, went to Brazil, went to Iran, went to China, Japan, Russia, Albania, Mongolia. What do you notice that people tend to have in common?

[00:12:58.750]

Television. Television. Television. That's what unites people. That's what crosses borders. It's translated into native tongues, right? High definition, DirecTV, TiVo, 7.1 Dolby digital surround sound, iPod, blogs, downloading, uploading, broadband, Myspace, Facebook, Google, the Net, the Web, the information superhighway. The digital revolution will be televised 24/7, like it or not. Coming soon to a home theater near you. Television. What's our primary export in America, right? What do we export? Huh? What do we export? Baywatch. Playing in more countries than any other syndicated show. That's right. Just letting people know how we roll in America. Just another day in LA. Wearing my skimpy bathing suit. Lovely portrait of America.

[00:14:10.940]

What network covers more continents than any other? MTV. Got it in every continent on the planet in its own language, with their own rock stars, with a little bit of our stars mixed in, right? It doesn't matter. Korea, Latin America, Europe, Asia. MTV, baby. It's worldwide. Now, there's been a lot of speculation about why we were attacked on September 11. A lot of people said, well it was our freedom. They despise our democracy. They just can't stand it. They hate us.

[00:14:53.130]

I wonder to what degree. It isn't that they despise our democracy. It's that they despise our Baywatch. It's that they don't want our MTV. We expect it sport a whole lot more than democracy around the globe, right? We ship our French fries around the globe. We ship our soft drinks around the globe. Even the Colonel. Now, of course, the trade winds blow both ways, right? Blows both ways, right? Mexico, Spain, right? Oceania. She's playing Mary. She was just cast as Mary in a new feature film called Nativity that's going to come out this Christmas. So, this is the new Mary, interestingly enough. From Oceania, from South Pacific.

[00:16:20.510]

I don't know if you saw the games, but the American pastime, we didn't even make the Final Four. Didn't even make the Final Four. Japan, Korea, Dominican Republic, and Cuba. Who wins? The Japanese. I knew I shouldn't have gone over there. I gave away all my secrets, taught them how to play. And look at the stars, right? They're from Australia. They're from South Korea, Venezuela, Japan, Cuba, Puerto Rico. America's pastime, played by everybody but us, of

course. The world's biggest basketball player from China. From China. He's got a billion fans following his every move, all seven foot seven of him.

[00:17:14.170]

Now, these cultural shifts, they tend to make people a little bit nervous. We sort of haven't really been here before in America at this time. We stand at this kind of weird crossroads with all of this electronic media coming our way and going everybody else's way. I think this cultural engagement question is a huge issue on this campus, right? How many filters are set up to decide what you can and can't see and when you should see it and how you're able to see it, right? Big question. How to help students processing this onslaught of electronic inputs from movies, music, and TV.

[00:17:54.190]

So, this afternoon, I want to look at an overlooked missionary, one we never talk about, really, and his radical approach to listening in to the culture of his day and coming alongside those already on spiritual search and completing what God had started a long time ago. Is that cool? All right. In the acts of the apostles. Acts, chapter eight. Philip, the famous Philip, who we don't really know much about and didn't really show up much in the Scriptures other than maybe in Acts chapter eight. Crosses cultures.

[00:18:41.630]

What had happened right before Acts chapter eight? The church was struggling to define its mission. It felt attacked, it felt embattled by the culture. They were trying to find the parameters,

figure out who is the Gospel for? How do we take it to them? What's okay, who's in, who's out, who do we like? Who do we not like? Are we Jewish? Are we Gentile? Do you have to become Jewish first? How does this whole Christian thing work? So, all this pluralism that we're dealing with already been dealt with. Already been dealt with. Now, most of the cultural discussion, this idea about engaging with the arts, you've heard this sermon I know, based about Paul on Mars Hill. Anybody ever heard one of those, right, about the, look, he celebrated their altar to the unknown God. He dignified their art. And he said, look, your art is on the right track, and we should connect with your art. I've heard that sermon. And we act like Paul invented cultural engagement, but the person who actually started it, other than Jesus, is Philip.

[00:19:49.230]

So as Act chapter eight opens, Stephen has just been stoned to death. First martyr, first Christian martyr just happened. He spoke a little too strongly on three sacred topics. He talked about the land, he talked about the law, and he talked about the temple, and he said, hey, you lovely Jewish people, I got to tell you what, it ain't about the land, it ain't about the law and it ain't about the temple. And so, what do those lovely Jewish people do? I got a big old rock; you got a rock? I got a stick; you got a stick. I got a BB gun. Took him out, stoned him to death. We don't like that kind of talk around here.

[00:20:36.490]

Now, you're Christians in Jerusalem and you're going, I don't really like the looks of this. And so particularly if you're a Hellenist Christian, what did that mean? What kind of people were those? Greek people. Greek people who are sort of, they're interested in the Jewish thing, they're open to

the Jewish thing, but they're not Jewish. So, they're kind of grandfathered in. They're like, you know what, I don't really want to be here for this fight because it's going to get really ugly. So, I'm going to just go somewhere else for a little while till things calm down in Jerusalem. And so, Philip says, I got an idea, I'm going to hike it up to Samaria.

[00:21:13.150]

What do we know about Samaria? You've heard the Good Samaritan, right? Not the favorite group of the Jewish people, not the favorite group. They had a lot of race mixing, there's a lot of misogyny going on and you can't tell, are they Jewish? Are they Gentile? Are they white? Are they black? Are they Middle Eastern? I don't know, man. They're mixed. We hate mixed. Keep it pure. Don't like mixing other races. And as soon as you start mixing the races, now we're mixing religions and cultures and language, it just gets messy. Can't we keep it clean? Hated those Samaritans.

[00:21:53.330]

Philip goes up there, says, hey, I got to tell you what, folks, there's a new king in town. His name is Jesus. And this messiah doesn't care what you look like, doesn't care what you've come from, doesn't care what you believe, as long as you honor him as Lord. Then it's cool. Massive crazy stuff breaks out, exorcism, signs, healings. And the scripture says, great joy. Great joy, in town. Now, when we're persecuted, right, when the culture is pressing in on us, there's very natural reactions. One thing we can do is hide. We can get into a bunker and just wait it out. And that's one way that many Christians are going to choose to respond to this postmodern moment. It's going to get a little ugly. It's going to be too messy. I can't handle it. So let me circle the wagons.

Let me bring it in tighter. Let me be with the people I think like the people who look like me, the people who talk like me. Circle the wagons, get into the bunker. It's safe. Just wait for the second coming.

[00:23:07.890]

Second thing you can do is take up arms and say, I'm going to fire back. I'm loading my guns, baby. I got a Sony right here. I got a Panasonic right here. I'm coming to get you with my avid. And many people will say that's our job is to become cultural warriors, to fight back hard, dirty, sneaky. Sneak it in there. Don't let them know. Slide it under. A little Narnia action, right? See, he's a lion, but he's really Jesus. Bunker mentality or aggression? How do we defend ourselves in our faith? What does Philip do? He takes this persecution as an opportunity to reach out to those who have been dispossessed just like him.

[00:24:23.310]

Do you dig that? I'm being persecuted, so you know what I'm going to do. I'm going to look for some other people who are persecuted because we've got a lot in common, and I'm going to build some bridges because I know how they feel now. Now that I'm being persecuted, I'm going to find some persecuted people, and I'm going to tell him about Jesus, because he understands, dude understands. In fact, he was kind of persecuted himself. Let's see what the next slide is.

[00:24:53.860]

Ah, yes, nice. So, in my book, A Matrix of Meanings, which unfortunately isn't for sale, but you can get it on the Internet. You can get a used copy that was sent by somebody who took my class

two years ago. They're cheap. In my book, *Matrix of Meanings*, I suggest kind of a third way, equally biblical, long history of it in the church. I suggest listening in and looking closer because I believe we can discover God in pop culture. Working even amidst the most debased elements because he's always done that. He's always chosen impure people to do amazing things. He reveals himself through crazy stuff. Man burning bushes. That's a dumb idea.

[00:25:48.610]

Donkey. Talk through the donkeys. You won't do it. I got some stones that'll come in handy. Cyrus, King of Persia. He'll be fine. I can use him. Don't need Christians. I can talk through the rocks. So of course, he can speak through Jim Carrey if he can talk to a donkey, right, which is a form of ass, then he can perhaps talk through Jim Carrey talking out of his donkey. Right? I know it makes no sense. Why in the world would God do that? Crazy talk. It's the way he rolls.

[00:26:32.270]

So, my book suggests we can locate the sacred within the profane. So, for the second half of my talk here, I want to focus upon pop culture, about coming alongside what people are watching and listening to and seeing what we can discover. So first and foremost, other than Wycliffe, which does amazing things with Bible translation, no one goes to better lengths to translate their message into native tongues than Hollywood. They'll translate things into their native tongues of the people. They'll do what they have to to get their message out. They'll change posters. They'll change titles. Super Ordinaire, less indestructibles.

[00:27:21.490]

Here's the poster for Bruce Almighty in America. The Germans, well, they're a little bit edgier, so we do it like that. A lot of nudity in Germany. They don't really care. Not a problem. Not a problem. In Germany. Nobody listens to audiences more carefully than Hollywood. They listen carefully to what people want. They do the research. They listen, listen, and then say, okay, I think I can do that. I think I can create that. I think I can craft that now. I think movies respond to the culture in time. But the fastest snapshot about what's going on is television. Because that's every week. That's every week. I need a script tomorrow. I need a script tomorrow. I need a script tomorrow. So, television is the window into our soul. I do believe it's a snapshot of who we are, of where we are. It's the most immediate barometer because there's new programming every day, every week.

[00:28:39.050]

So where are we, folks, post 9/11? Could be, I don't know, we might be living under a fear factor. We might be living under fear. We might be afraid. We might have been through things we never thought we'd have to go through. Like watching buildings fall or having to eat little grubby worms. I don't know. We might, at the end of 9/11, be feeling like survivors. Survivors. We're the ones left. We're the ones left here. Even on Survivor, which is about, like kill or be killed and outsmarting and out foxing and social Darwinism. There's still love. Rob and Amber, finding each other in the jungle, sweating together on that raft as they try to outsmart each other to that million-dollar pot, that Rob now has half of.

[00:29:44.770]

So, all this reality TV, half of it is about kill or be killed, right? How I'm trying to survive. The other half of it is I just want to be loved. I just want to be loved. If anybody can give me a clue how to find a mate, I'm an average Joe, I'm just a bachelor. I'm acting like a millionaire. Now we'll see if she really loves me when she finds out I'm an out of work actor. Advice, advice. Television is a constant dating game, isn't it? Isn't that your biggest overriding thing? Your professor is trying to make you care about 1 Samuel, chapter ten. And you're just going, did she email me? Did she email me? I got a Gyrad. What am I going to do? I got to get a date. What am I going to do?

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Facebook, Facebook. Got to get in the Facebook, Myspace, how many friends? How many friends? Did I get any more today? Did I get any more? Got to get some friends got to get some friends everybody wants to be a star. Everybody wants to be a star this show is pure genius. This is the greatest show in the history of television. I love this show. You got a clear villain, right? Right. You got two cheerleaders beside him. What's up, dog? Love that show. Then you got this show, right? Also, a competition. But this is all a little bit different, right? It's about somebody else standing in judgment over you and people lying and backstabbing and cheating. So, we love our winners, and we hate our losers. Get to see all that stuff played out.

[00:31:35.830]

Now, as a church, it's very trendy to knock off pop culture, right? We know all the eyeballs are focused on pop culture, so we tend to do this kind of thing. We take something like this, and we Christianize it, right? You've probably done this. You were in charge of summer camp last

summer. You did this. You had Survivor Week preparing for The Ultimate Boardroom, a nine-week series on The Apprentice. Who are you an apprentice of? The Master teacher. Christian Survivor. Out witness, out pray, out fast.

[00:32:25.450]

That is not the kind of cultural engagement that I am advocating. No, because Philip, he listened carefully. He listened carefully. He listened first to God and then he listened to the culture. So, what kind of cultural artifacts, what do they suggest today? Right? We can look at this. You watch Desperate Housewives. What are some things you could conclude about America? Sex obsessed. Is that what I heard? Sexually obsessed. Fair enough. A lot of cheating, a lot of sleeping around. Look at the title. What's the title? Desperate, desperate housewives. It's just telling you we're desperate. We're desperate as a people. We'll do whatever we have to. We're desperate. We're desperate. What's this show tell you? Kill or be killed, right? We will do what it takes. Doesn't matter. Ethics out the window. Survival. Kill or be killed. I'll compromise anything to protect my family, my friends. I don't care.

[00:33:43.790]

Probably the best window, about what the war in Iraq has been about, right? Just perfect. Just perfect. We'll torture people. If that's what it takes, not a problem. We'll lock them up for four years without any reason. Not a problem. Any means necessary. Jack Bauer. Love it. Love it, Jack. Give it to him. We love it. I take by that reaction that this is maybe the best snapshot of where we are. The best snapshot of where we are. Yes. We had a national tragedy three years ago. We're left in with the ashes, trying to rebuild a civilization. We got every color, every creed,

every belief. We got widows, orphans. We got Buddhists, we got Christians, we got Hindus, we got drug dealers. We got drug addicts. What do we know about every one of these people? For sure.

[00:34:55.510]

They all have something that they did, something bad. Everybody's hiding something. Everybody's got a secret. Everybody's got something they regret. Everybody has something they need to be forgiven for. Everybody. Did you see echoes episode earlier this year? Was that strong? Was that strong? What happened on that episode? Jason, tell me what happened on that episode. Is that your name? Jordan, tell him what happened on that episode. (Student: [inaudible 00:35:25] And his brother took his place basically took his place in being killed. And he became a priest.)

[00:35:36.190]

Drug dealer whose brother is a priest. Priest takes the bullet for him, and he says, fine, I'll be the priest. Can't get any clearer than that. Cannot make the gospel any clearer than that on network TV. So, what can we learn from all this? I'm talking about Philip, right? Philip. How would Philip deal with the situation today? What would Philip do? Check out the rest of Acts. Chapter 8: 26 to 40.

[00:36:14.710]

It says, an angel calls Philip to rise and go. Isn't that what you said? A missionary is? They go out. They go out. He heard God. He was quiet enough for long enough to hear God. God says

rise and go. What's he finds? An Ethiopian eunuch returning from Jerusalem. If you look at the text, it says he was, like, the treasurer for Candace, Queen of Ethiopia. Important job. Counted all the money for the Queen of Ethiopia. What's he doing in Jerusalem? What do you think? Went to Jerusalem to worship. He said he went up there to worship. He was trying to become a Jew. Trying to become Jewish. Ethiopian eunuch. Really into God. Really into God. On a spiritual search. What is a eunuch?

[00:37:14.820]

What's a eunuch, sir, okay. Yeah. He was surgically altered. Surgically altered so he wouldn't be a threat to the queen. He can work with her all the time because nothing's going to happen because we took care of that. Surgically altered, sexually ambiguous. He's reading the prophet Isaiah, chapter 52. Chapter 52. That's all that stuff about this suffering servant. It's all these things about this guy is going to come and it's going to be awful, but he's going to take it on and suffer for us and with us.

[00:38:13.550]

Spirit says to Philip, go over and join this chariot. Again, with the listening. Go over and join the chariot. All right, I can do that. God, I can do that. Goes over and it says he just sort of sits beside the chariot and listens. And the dude is reading Isaiah 52. And so, Philip just says, hey, do you understand what you're reading? Do you know what that's about? Interestingly. It was almost like a riddle or like a joke. The Greek is (speaks different language) just kind of like messing around. Hey, (speaks different language). You got any idea what you're reading, fool?

[00:39:00.450]

And what's the dude say? How can I unless someone guides me? Deep, deep, deep, deep, deep, deep, deep. Got any friends who ever watched Donny Darko? Yeah. Got any friends who ever watched Magnolia? Got any friends who ever watched The Matrix? Got any friends who ever watched any freaky deaky movie and said, what the heck was that about? I don't know, but it was cool. Hey, buddy, (speaks different language) the Matrix, (speaks different language) Narnia.

[00:39:50.590]

How can I understand unless someone guides me? Answers my question. So, Philip opens his mouth, tells him the good news. Dude likes it. He's into it. He's into it. Now, I don't know how many folks are reading Isaiah 52 today, maybe a few in this group. But say you go up to the coffee shop on the corner here in La Mirada. How many folks reading, sitting around, just reading Isaiah, hanging out in their chariot, reading Isaiah? What are people reading? What are people reading? Newspapers. Newspapers, magazines, flyers. What else? What did somebody say?

[00:40:34.670]

Harry Potter. How about this? 40 million copies. 40 million copies. Who's read it? All right, so there's about eight of you who are prepared to come alongside those 40 million. This book raise any questions in your mind? This thing is a theological can of worms, didn't it? This thing is a mess. It will jack you up, mess with your head. 40 million copies before the movie comes out. Before the movie comes out. What a mess, man. What a mess. It hasn't been in paperback yet.

It's 40 million hardback copies. They're bringing the paper back out about a week before the movie comes out. Nice timing.

[00:41:38.970]

The cultural conversation on this thing has barely started. It's barely started. If you want some answers, you want to figure out how Christians might engage this, go to a site called the Davincialogue.com. The Davincialogue.com. Lots of Christians talking about it in there. Now, it's easy to just say, well, the Da Vinci Code, that's full of lies, are 40 million people that deceived. They're reading it because it's full of lies. I want some lies. I'm going to pay \$22.50 for some lies. Can I get some lies, please?

[00:42:19.670]

Maybe you say yes. I think in that case, we're the ones who are deceiving ourselves. I think this book is hot because it raises ancient, timely questions about church authority, formation of the canon, where the Bible came from. Jesus' humanity. Jesus is divinity. Same questions people had in the year 300, they've still got the same question. Just because we settled it doesn't mean it's over. 1700 years later. All those ancient questions we thought we dealt with in 325, back on the table in the postmodern era, raises questions about the role of women in church history. Have women been systematically kept out of leadership? Do we still have some work to do in that area? Yeah.

[00:43:19.810]

Another thing people are reading is film, particularly edgy, independent films. And that's why we took 25 students to the Sundance Film Festival. That happened this January. We wanted to join a spiritual conversation that was already occurring on screen and in the coffee houses. So, we had a chance to meet filmmakers, to talk with them directly, to ask them questions. Why are you saying this? What are you doing this? We saw these strange, weird, and wonderful films like Adams Apples from Denmark, about a neo-Nazi who was assigned as his prison release program to go and hang out with a pastor.

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First thing the neo-Nazi does when he gets there is take the picture of Jesus, take the cross off the wall, put up a picture of Hitler right on top of it. Pastor comes in and goes, oh, is that your father, just messing with him just, neo-Nazi beats him half to death, just beats him to death, almost. Pastor gets up and says, well, I'm going to the emergency room. Do you need me to pick up anything for you? Dark, dark comedy. It's the Book of Job turned into a movie. Brilliant, brilliant, brilliant.

[00:44:49.530]

Saw a guide to recognizing your saints, about heroin addicts trying to survive in New York City in the 80s. This won best directing. A film called Son of Man, about a black Jesus. What does Jesus look like in South Africa? Nobody bought the film. They just said, there's no market for that. Nobody wants to see that. They said nobody wants to see that. All right, well, you five need to go talk to somebody. You need to call up some people in South Africa and say, bring that thing on over here. They said America didn't want to see that. Not interested.

[00:45:29.170]

Film at the bottom. Forgiven. Forgiven. About a white district attorney who has unknowingly convicted a black man without justice, without just cause. Both are Christians. Both are Christians. Now he's running for Senate and the district attorney has a chance to save his life, admit his mistake. And he's like, you know, I got this Senate thing I can't do that, might cost me the election. Now you got Christian on Christian. Both of them at a crossroads, deciding what to do. Two more documentaries. The first one is called Integrate Silence. It's 3 hours in a German monastery. It was sold out the whole festival. You couldn't get tickets. Everybody's like, man, I got to see that. I got to see it. The movie is like a silent movie. And everybody's like, man, I got to go get 3 hours of silence in that monastery. How do I get that? I got to get in that screening. I need that.

[00:46:35.590]

God grew tired of us, about refugees in Sudan. Won best documentary. A little film called Forgiving the Franklin's, the harshest anti-Christian satire I've ever seen, just rips on us. Cute little Christian family on their way to church, hit by a car, have a near death experience with Jesus. Jesus dressed as a well, anyway, Jesus, holding an axe, is chopping down a cross, saying, man, this is a stupid marketing idea. I got to get a new campaign. Hate this thing. Reaches into the back of their head and pulls out an apple, a bloody apple, and says, that should make you feel better. Go on back down there. They return to earth. No sense of guilt or shame. Shame free living. So, the husband and wife suddenly become highly experimental in the bedroom. They're like, you know, I've always wondered about this. You want to try that? Yeah, that sounds

interesting. Film shows it all. Invites you to enjoy their experimentation. They go back to the community. Somebody says they're having their relationship with husband and wife's kind of troubled. Well, have you ever tried this? It's kind of a secret thing. I just tried. You might want to try that. They're just talking sex in front of all these Christians.

[00:48:07.540]

They go to church, sermons kind of boring. And they just say, do you feel like leaving? Yeah, let's go. Let's walk out. Everybody's like, you can't do that. You can't leave church. Well, why not? It's not doing us any good. Rips on the Christian community. Their son starts having an affair with his football coach. The family says, I think that's great. I'm so glad you found love. Just tremendous. Christian community is freaking out. What are we going to do? They go to a Bible study. A woman says, all right, we'll read the Bible. We'll figure out what it is we're supposed to do. Next day, a cake shows up on their front door and it says, we forgive you. And they're like, oh, that's so sweet. They take in the cake. They eat it. This is delicious. That's so sweet. I wonder who did this.

[00:49:02.050]

It's poisoned. It's poisoned. Christian community kills them. Kills them. Football coach commits suicide. Happy ending. I wept, people. I wept at this portrait of the Christian community. And the audience, gave it a standing ovation. They just said, Thank you. Thank you. This is so great. This is so important. Thank you for sticking it to the Christian community. Thank you for showing the Christian right that they're wrong. And the cast and the crew were there, and the applause just went on and on. And thank you, filmmakers. And it turns out the filmmakers from

North Carolina, just like me, turns out his dad was a Sunday school teacher in a Baptist church and was kicked out of that for having too much humor in the church. So, when he decides to make a movie, this is what he decides to make.

[00:50:11.910]

So, I'm crying. I'm crying. I'm crying. And I'm also feeling like God wants me to say something. I'm feeling like the spirit says, Move. I don't want to say anything. I got nothing to say. I don't want to say anything. But here I am, right beside the chariot. So, I stand up and I say actually, they say, two more questions. And I realize it's now or never. So, I'm going to speak. I got to speak now. So, I say, right here. Right here. All right? I stand up. I'm way in the back, and I say, Jay, I want you to know I'm from North Carolina. I'm a filmmaker, and I'm an evangelical Christian. And you could have heard a pin drop because the whole room is like, uh oh, it's going down right now. It's going to happen. It's going to get ugly. It's going to get fun.

[00:51:13.970]

I started crying, and I just said, I want to apologize on behalf of the Christian community and anything anybody's ever done to you in the name of God, I'm sorry. And he was ready to fight. He was ready to fight. He was prepared for that. He was not prepared for me to say I'm sorry. It ruined his day. He told on me afterwards. I threw a complete wrench in his plans. My student's kind of caught the vision, and they went up to the cast and crew and said, hello, and thanks for the film, and we appreciate what you said, and we're sorry for anything you've ever thought about Christians and stuff.

[00:52:02.950]

People came up to me, hugging me, kissing me, gay couples, just like, if this is true, if this is who God is, we want to believe. I mean, just craziness, craziness. We invited the producer and the cast to come and talk to us. They came the next morning into a church to talk to 50 Christians about their movie. That's the producer there. This is one of the actors, two of the actors in this next slide. This guy said he'd never been more nervous in his entire life than to walk into that church that morning. He was weeping after the welcome that we gave him. They had such a good time. We said, well, we got to go. We've got other things. We're going to lunch. And they said, can we go to lunch with you?

[00:52:57.910]

They came to lunch, just hung out with us. When we got back from Sundance, the producer sent me an email, and he just said, I want you to know, whenever we talk about Sundance, we talk about that screening that you guys were at, you standing up and speaking, how your students responded, coming to the church, and going to lunch with you guys. And by the way, we're going to the south by Southwest Film Festival next weekend. Do you know any Christians like you there? Cultural engagement.

[00:53:29.850]

All right, so back to the eunuch. Back to the eunuch. What happens after he hears the gospel? What's he say? What's his first question? What prevents me from being baptized? Any reason why I can't be baptized here? Why do you ask that question? Why did he ask that question? Was there anything preventing him from becoming a Jew? In fact, he was a eunuch. He's scarred. You

can't have scars. And coming to the temple. Temples too pure. You're not allowed to become a Jew. You're cut up, man. You're sexually confused. Not allowed in the temple.

[00:54:25.290]

So, I got a question, Philip, before we go any further. What prevents me from being baptized? Any conditions here with this Christian thing? I like what you say about Jesus, but I'm not sure that I'm qualified under the rules. What's Philip saying? Well, I got some water right here, so let's do this thing. Let's do this thing. How about now? Why don't we just baptize you now? In Samaria, Philip just trounced on all the ethnic prejudice. He trounced on the religious prejudice, and now what's he do? The first non-Jew to be converted in the Bible, in the history of the world is a sexually ambiguous black man. That's some border crossing, folks. That is some border crossing.

[00:55:31.530]

So, what's the application for us? I think we're living in a lost world, right? We're living in a lost world. Desperate people, desperately lost people, full of broken, confused people. Is God's grace sufficient for them? What prevents them from being baptized? Are we as open to hearing from the Spirit of God as Philip? Are we dialed in that tight. I chose this passage to talk to you guys here today before I knew the Equality Ride was coming to town. I was just here to talk about cultural engagement. No agenda, no gay agenda. In my heart and mind, I'm just reading the Bible, and this is what I discovered. I was just intrigued by Philip's sensitivity to others spiritual search and how he welcomed the outsider. And so, in my exegesis of the passage, I discovered why this eunuch asked, what prevents me from being baptized.

[00:56:30.850]

I think the other thing is he was reading Isaiah. The dude knew the Scriptures. He knew the Scriptures, and so he'd read not only Isaiah 52, he'd probably read Isaiah 56, which says a few strange things, like, don't let the foreigner join to the Lord say the Lord will separate me from his people. I'm all about foreigners. I love foreigners. I like outsiders. If you're out, then you're in with me. All outsiders. Come on in. I got room. In fact, to the eunuch who keeps my Sabbath, I will give them an everlasting name. Dude, read it. Isaiah 56. Look at that. What a great God. If I keep the Sabbath, he's going to give me an everlasting name.

[00:57:16.320]

I'm into the temple. Oh, I'm sorry, you're not welcome here. But Isaiah 52, no, you're not welcome here. Isaiah 50 no. He just wanted him to do what the Bible said. It was a simple request. He believed it when he read it. Temple said otherwise. But here's the kicker. Isaiah 56, final verse. My house should be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Thus says the Lord who gathers all the outcasts of Israel. It's pretty broad. It's pretty broad. I'm not sure where the border ends right there.

[00:57:59.130]

As far as all outcasts, I'm not sure which outcasts are in and which outcasts are out, but that's pretty broad. I'm disturbed by this scripture. I really am. I'm disturbed. Philip, missionary to the outcast, listening to God, listening to culture, breaking cultural barriers, initiating a house of prayer for all peoples. For all peoples, every tribe, every race, every color, every creed, and

maybe, just maybe, sexual preference. Questions. Plenty of time for questions. Yes, ma'am.

(Student: asks question) No idea. (Student: asks question) Say it louder because I can't quite hear you. (Student: asks question)

[00:59:39.370]

At this point I have finished speaking, so I will be the guide on the side rather than the sage on the stage. So, I think you've asked a great question. I'd love for somebody else to make a comment or respond or whatever. His comment was about choices. He said that Jesus seemed to give people choices and he feels like maybe the Christian community today is making that choice for other people. Is that a fair summation? Yeah. The question is, what kind of choices are we talking about? Stand up so we can hear it clearly. Sorry, I'm not giving you a choice on that.

(Student: asks question) Good question. Where's the choice happening? When? Yes, ma'am.

(Student: asks question)

[01:01:59.370]

Go ahead. Right here and then Lauren. (Student: asks question) (Student asks question) Yeah.

Lauren and then Jordan, stand up. Stand, follow, just so we can hear you. (Student: asks

question) Abe? And then my man. (Student: asks question) (Student asks question) Maybe one

more comment or so. Yeah, go, Andrew. (Student: asks question) Well said. One thing I did not

talk at all about, but is sort of woven in here, is that as a filmmaker, I actually went out and

looked at the world and made a movie for a mission's organization. And I think I want to

challenge you as a journalist, as a public relations person, whatever. You can serve the church in

all kinds of tangible ways by just doing your craft and telling God's story and talking about people.

[01:09:07.760]

This is a 45-minute film called Pub that was made by a church project called the Veracity Project. And they just went to Ireland with singers and did a pub ministry and made a movie about it. Just beautiful stuff. Of course, you know, Rob Bell's stuff like this kind of stuff that his church is making very interesting short films I want to close with. I'm going to show you A Prayer for Japan, which is something we did. What my job is as a filmmaker, as a storyteller, is to just pay attention. It's to just listen. You see, that was Philip's first job, is to just pay attention and listen. Listen to the spirit, listen to the culture, and answer the questions. So, I think that's the message I'm trying to say. Y'all, just listen. You think we've been misjudged? Could be. Why don't you talk to some non-Christians and find out if we've been misjudged. Ask them if they feel judged by the Christian community. Then, you'll know, you feel misjudged. Okay, well, ask some people. Listen, and then we'll see.

[01:10:15.590]

So, I'm going to just show you this prayer for Japan as sort of a prayer for all of us to end on. It's just a lovely little piece. That one of the guys on the mission trip with me. Lights, please.

[01:12:36.470]

Dear God, thank you for the privilege we've had of being together. Thanks for a whole week, or at least half a week to think about your world that you love so very much. Thank you for

crossing so many borders thank you for crossing the border from God into humanity by becoming one with us, by becoming one of us. Thank you for crossing the border of sin. Thank you for crossing borders of race and culture and creed. Thank you that you're able to listen simultaneously to prayers around the world to sort it all out. Thank you for your heart that sees us in our pain, in our brokenness. You see us as desperate. You see us as lost. And you love us. Love us. Love us. Love us. Love us. Help us to develop your eyes and your ears towards the planet, towards your people. May we be good listeners. May we have clear vision. May we learn like Philip to listen to your spirit and then rise and go in Jesus' name, amen. Man.