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CHURCH IS RELEVANT



**Reflections on the how and why to be
the Church today**

Prologue

One of the big questions I hear over and over today is “how is the Church still relevant?” These 4 reflections first appeared on my blog: www.revryanstratton.com as thoughts on what it means to be the Church and how the Church is still relevant today because we have the message of Jesus Christ.

The final reflection (Reaching our Cities for Christ) was first a paper for one of my seminary classes then published to my blog.

I pray you can see the power of God working through the Church today. I pray you can sense God’s calling on, in, and through your life. I pray, together, we will see the incredible kingdom of God expand to the ends of the earth.

1

The Church is Still Relevant Today

I have to believe in the Church. It is a vessel that has been used by God to do incredible world transformation since it's beginnings. The Church is also still around, even though it seems like it should have died a long time ago.

At the time of this original writing, I was in the middle of a sermon series for the season of Advent called, "Prepare the Way." As I was working on, reading the scripture, and definitely praying about this week's message (God Finds Favor in Us - Luke 1:39-59), I kept having a nagging feeling tugging at me. I have not been able to focus on the message at all this week.

God seems to be up to something.

When have you felt JOY when you have been with other believers of Christ? How long did that joy last after you departed your friends or family? What would make this joy return and stay rooted in you?

I still believe in the power of the Church. I still believe in the power God gives his people. I still believe God is at work in this world even though it seems as if more and more hatred, crime, indifference, gossip, you name it, seem to be running rampant.

I still believe in the power of God through the Church. Whenever I come across Christians, I tend to find there are a few different responses about God's power: 1) some people expect it, 2) some people think God still has power today, 3) some people think God's shown power was at the time of the original apostles, 4) some people will think God does not have any power, that it all depends on the people. Where do you fall in those categories?

I find whenever things are going really good, my faith seems to rely more on what I can do. Whenever things are not going well, I find that's when I cry out to God for help. I wonder how many of you can relate to this?

What would happen, what would change, if we took the time to truly cry out to God, not just speak out minds, but really cry our heart out to him and sit still so we can listen to him? God is still in the business of making the impossible possible. There is nothing God cannot do.

I'm not calling for us to ask for whatever we want. Through prayer, we find our hearts, minds, and intentions are beginning to get aligned with God's heart and mission for the world.

Do you ever feel like your prayers are not being answered? Like you're just talking to the ceiling? Like you haven't experienced God's power in your life?

I encourage you to block out as much time as you can and be patient on God. He is already with us. Be patient to hear from him because, we may not understand or realize how much junk we have clogging our ears and hearts that muffles his voice.

As you sit and be still before the Lord, pay attention to how you begin to feel. Pay attention to what seems to be calming down. Pay attention to the still small voice that is constantly speaking to us, and we tune out much of the time because we get busy with "our lives."

I still believe in the power of God through the Church, but I wonder how much of God's presence and power we are missing and not living out because of all the junk we have clogging our spiritual lives.

Do you believe people can really be changed by the power of God?

Do you believe our communities can be transformed by the power of God?

Do you believe our state and nation can be transformed by the power of God?

Do you believe our world can and will be transformed by the power of God?

If not, why?

The longer I walk with Christ, as my Lord, the more I realize I do not know. The more I realize how much I

depend on my abilities, my talents, my power, my personality.

If we want to see the power of God move more, in our lives, in the world, we should expect what we do not expect to witness. We should also be unashamed to share the full message of Jesus Christ. His life is where the power is and lives are never the same after encountering Jesus Christ.

How would you react if there was someone who came in off the street and joined us in worship on Sunday? What if this person smelled, was on drugs, just finished a night of “work”, did not have a nice home? What would we do? Could we love this person as we know God loves us?

God still does miraculous things in our world. Let's open our hearts to pay attention. Then let's also be the people of joy, a joy that the Holy Spirit uses to fill us so we can spread this joy out into the world.

Next, if we haven't experienced the power of God lately, how many people are we not encouraging to do what God called them to do? How many do we put on hold because it doesn't line up with our agenda? How many people need to be encouraged to live the life God has called them to live, even if it seems impossible?

I have seen people get crushed when another person says the dream is not right, or gives false information about not having enough to do the work. God will always provide what we need to accomplish his mission. If we haven't experienced the power of the Holy Spirit lately, how much

are we getting in the way of God working in and through other people?

Everything I have just written has been what's convicting me lately.

I know the power of God is so strong that you will experience a miracle either in your life or to/through someone around you. This is God's favor. Grace for us so we can show his love and power in the world.

This is the message we always need to hear and be reminded of. God came to earth to demonstrate his love, power, and grace for the world. This power is still alive and is still making a difference.

Are we open to this power? Are we ready to experience and witness God do incredible things all around us?

I am. I pray you are too.

2

Leaders are Learners

How's it going for you this year? Are you feeling productive, or do you feel as if you are in the same routine, the same way of thinking, feeling like nothing as changed except the numbers on the calendar?

I would like to offer this question, “If, for you, everything seems the same, what are you learning?”

What's interesting to me is how many times I ask this question and get a similar response, “I don't have time,” or my favorite, “I'm too old”/“I have a hard time learning new things.”

Many people have god intentions to follow through with new year resolutions. I know I have, in the past. But then something seems to happen. There seems to be a new stressor, a new amount of pressure, that is causing us to change or to follow through with what we said we wanted to do. Change is hard. After all, it is said the only people who like change are babies with a dirty diaper.

So if it is change we really desire, what can we do to make it happen? The underlying truth we all have to realize is, if we are going to have a better life (a deeper life in Christ for those who are Christian), we have to seek and live into ways that help produce change.

How many of you have said you want to lead other people? I typically hear it like this, "I'm a good leader." My question, then, is how many people do you have following you? Then we have to look at what makes a good leader. The truth is, real leaders are constantly learning something new, and improving what they already know and do.

I have heard that CEO's of businesses read an average of 60+ books a year. Do you think this is something you can do? Why/Why not?

If the goal is to improve ourselves so we can do more, for our family, for the world, for our lives, then where can we begin?

I would recommend starting with something you already love. If you like to play golf, take a few lessons to help improve your swing. If you like to play other sports, play them more and ask people for pointers. If you speak for a living, ask people to constructively critique the messages. If you like to garden, seek someone who can give you some advice. If you have a desire to read, or say you don't like reading, begin with a short audio book or podcast. This list can go on and on.

Part of the reason we do not follow through on new routines or change, I believe, is because we try to do more

than we can manageably accomplish, then get frustrated when we do not get the desired results (if we have thought about results) within a week or two.

Leaders are learners. If we want to see our lives really change, and do great things, then we have to find ways to learn something, even if it is something we see as small. It is amazing how many things, business and world leaders can learn from attempting to master a golf swing.

I am a pastor and I firmly believe that real change does not happen on our own. I believe we do not possess the power and ability to change within ourselves. We do have access to channel the Source of all Power and Grace in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit, given by Jesus Christ, and directed by God. So, if you are a believer, have you sought out how God is asking you to be different?

Have you followed his voice to undergo the process of transformation?

If you are not a believer in Christ as Savior and Lord of your life, his mercy is available and ready to aid you in achieving so much more than you can ever imagine.

The point of all of this is, what are you learning? Start small. It is never too early nor too late to expand our minds and watch the power of God flow in and through us to make lasting change in the world.

Oh, and it never fails to have some people with you as you learn something new: people to share ideas with, and to

help hold each other accountable. God works well in those relationships.

3

Doing More & Church Growth

If you ever wanted to know the strategies about how to grow a church, there are many resources available to help pastors and church leaders. These resources will tell exactly what you should do to grow your church.

On the other hand, I hear many people with a similar question presented, and also a statement which says what we should do in order to gain more members. The statement was simply that we, church members need to “do more.” And the question was, is the church doing anything wrong because visitors do not seem to be coming?

WHO’S CHURCH?

I have an idea to help answer to the question and the statement; but we have to look at something very important first. We have to settle the notion of who the church belongs to. If we continue to use “my church” or something similar, we can be caught into the trap of not

allowing new ideas or people to come in because it is not “their” church. Think about that for a minute.

The church actually does not belong to us. The church is God’s. The building we worship in is simply that, a building that is set apart for holy use. The church is the people that make up that particular community of faith. Since the church is God’s, we are always being called to step out of our comfort zone to “seek the lost” and bring them into the fold. We are also supposed to see people as God sees them.

This is challenging work, but Jesus sent the Holy Spirit so we could be filled with his power and presence to do the impossible tasks we are called to do.

The church belongs to God. Since the church is not ours, the power of God will sustain and keep the church existing, even in the roughest times.

JUST DO MORE

Now, to the statement above, “we have to do more.” My thought on this is “Yes, kinda.” By that I mean, I think God is calling us to have the same kind of zeal and charisma we had when we first became believers. We had incredible passion for stepping out in faith and telling people how Jesus has come into the world to redeem the people. We have incredible energy for doing mission and outreach work as well. Somewhere along the way, many Christians have just run out of energy to continue the work they had done before.

I think a large part of this is we have not been refilled and refueled with the Holy Spirit and have allowed our zeal to

dwindle down. So, we stopped doing the good works God called us to simply because we allowed our life to get in the way. This statement may sound a little harsh, but think about it.

When was the last time you remember being involved in work that was doing good for the Kingdom of Heaven, outside of the church building walls (volunteer at a soup kitchen, homeless shelter, local pregnancy center, etc.)? I know many people still do incredible work, but I am thinking about those who have become sideline Christians and pew potatoes. This can happen to any of us. So, the answer is YES, we do have to do more. But, we also have to ask who is the “we”. It is too easy to say “we have to do more,” and still assume someone else will do the work.

So, what did God call you to do when you first became a believer in Christ? Are you continuing that work? If you are not, why did you stop? Maybe God is calling you and I back to the work we were doing when we first became followers of Christ? Pray about it.

GROWING A CHURCH

Now, to a question that many people are seeking answers to, “how do you grow a church?” The reality is, we can have every gimmick in the book and do everything exactly right, but we could still be missing something. We could be missing out on what the community of faith is supposed to be involved in: relationship building.

This is much more than just inviting people to worship with us. This involves spending time with them in their messy, every day life so they can see the value God has for them.

When was the last time you looked at someone and said something like this:

“I love you. Why? Because God loves you. I want you to hear how much value you have in the sight of God Almighty, the One who created every part of you. I know your life is not easy. I, too, have scars from life. But Jesus has helped to heal me. He has healed me through his power and presence (through the Holy Spirit) by bringing people alongside me to help me experience his love and grace in incredible ways. I would love for you to join us in worship this coming Sunday and we can talk more about how God may be working in your life.”

This is what we are called to do: share life with each other, especially the messy parts.

Another side to the question of church growth is thinking about what it is we are praying for. What do I mean by this?

I mean, are we truly asking God for, and seeking, a real movement of the Holy Spirit? Or do we ask for a band aid fix by asking God to just fill the pews and the plates? Take time to assess what it is you're praying for.

We should also see what we are controlling that is preventing a movement of the Spirit to occur. In other words, where do our preferences matter more than the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit?

I hear many people say the church is in trouble now. I think they are right, when we focus on just finding warm bodies instead of seeking to make disciples for Jesus Christ. Unless

we take the time to revive and use the power of Christ, then everything we do will disappoint us and we will not see the desired results.

If we, however, seek the movement of the Holy Spirit, expect something powerful to happen. Also be patient because the Spirit may just be doing a powerful work in the people who may be blocking any movements God wants to do.

I firmly believe the best days of the church are still ahead of us. Let us hold firm and fast to the prompting and leading of the Spirit who will accomplish more than we could ever imagine. You just might see incredible miracles you never dreamed possible.

Let us pray Ephesians 3:20-21, everyday and watch God move:

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

4

Reaching Our Cities for Christ

Christopher Wright said it well, “We argue about what can legitimately be included in the mission God expects from the church, when we should ask what kind of church God expects for his mission in all its comprehensive fullness.” (Wright, 534) Alongside this line of thinking, another way to look at this is “I may wonder what kind of mission God has for me, when I should ask what kind of me God wants for his mission.” (Wright, 534) To find any “success” in ministry, that thought is very important. To be effective, we have to allow the Holy Spirit to shape, mold, and transform us into the instruments and vessels he wants us to be. Otherwise, we are doing ministry for our sake instead of for the sake of the Kingdom of God. When looking at cross-cultural urban ministry, Wright’s questions help us put into, better, context what the Apostle Paul writes, “I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.” (1 Corinthians 9:22 NIV)

So what does this look like? Is there a way to be effective in the way Paul was? Yes. Whenever Paul went to a new area, he made sure he went to the city centers. “[Paul] concentrates on the district or provincial capitals, each of which stands for a whole region...These ‘metropolises’ are the main centers as far as communication, culture, commerce, politics, and religion are concerned...Paul thinks regionally, not ethnically; he chooses cities that have a representative character.” (Bosch, loc. 3259-3274) Why did he do this? Because this is where Paul knew the most effective way to communicate to the regions was located. When he did this, he was able to “shift” his speeches and explanations of Christ to show the people he understood them and was willing to do life with them and guide them to come to faith in Jesus Christ. Paul knew how to be the kind of person the people needed, without giving up on who God created him to be. All of this helped to equip the people to carry on the ministry after Paul left and continued on his missionary trek.

At the same time, Paul knew he was not doing his own work but, rather, the work of Jesus Christ in the world, empowered by the Holy Spirit. He practiced incarnational ministry and did it well. “The significance of incarnational ministry is that ministry belongs to God and His work, first and foremost.” (Buckman, 181-82) This is one of the reasons Paul was successful, he knew he was doing the work begun and continued by the Holy Spirit. He was confident in his calling and did not waiver in the message he proclaimed. So it should be with us. Do we know and have the confidence Christ has called us and given us purpose in this life? It is because of this confidence that we can handle what we go

through. “The pastor...who enters a new culture, no matter how hard he or she tries to identify with the people, must expect to suffer, both out of longing for what is left behind and because of resistance to what the people are being called to accept or become.” (Wingeier, 38)

One of the interesting things about cross-cultural ministry is the opportunity to learn more about another culture. “Since most multicultural communities in the United States consist of the dominant (powerful) culture plus at least one other less-powerful culture, justice issues need to be paramount in any cross-cultural ministry, not relief, not charity, but what the New Testament calls righteousness.” (McConnell, 592) This means that opportunities are available if we take the time to learn about different cultures and how people live. “Henri Nouwen teaches us that a powerful ministry occurs with people of a powerless culture when we demonstrate a capacity to learn from them and a willingness to show our gratitude for the gift they thus offer.” (McConnell, 593) The gratitude we experience comes from the knowledge of the blessings God has bestowed upon us. As the cliché goes, “we are blessed to be a blessing.” “‘Be a blessing’ thus entails a purpose and goal that stretches into the future. It is, in short, missional.” (Wright, 211) This brings us to contextualization.

Contextualizing the Gospel message to any culture is important. “Contextualization begins in those areas where the biblical context overlaps with the contemporary cultural context. One often talks about certain parts of culture in abstract terms like ‘collectivism,’ ‘honor/shame,’ ‘patronage,’ or cyclical vs. linear views of time. After all, no one today existed in the time Scripture was

written. That distance creates an unavoidable degree of abstraction. The critical point at this stage becomes finding how we move from abstract categories to their concrete modern expressions.” (Wu, loc. 1686) There are ways of communicating, here in the United States, that would not fly overseas, like an area such as Saudi Arabia. What is the goal of the missionary? “We desire for people to see all that is good in the gospel. However, this takes time. Thus, we must take steps so that people can see, as much as is possible, what is good in this news. By drawing from the entire Bible, not simply our favorite texts, we gain a balanced perspective on salvation. By not developing a ‘canon within a canon,’ one identifies the major themes or motifs that God uses to explain salvation.” (Wu, loc. 1530) When we do this we communicate the full scope of the Gospel. Jackson Wu says it well, “In a word, the gospel is the message by which sinners are saved. Naturally, evangelism in its fullest sense requires we talk about sin in some form or fashion. This story is not complete without making clear God’s reaction to sin.” (Wu, loc. 1514) He also reminds us “judgment has a positive side. In judging his enemies, God brings salvation to his people and righteousness to the earth.” (Wu, loc. 1522) What about the cities?

Cities, urban areas, are very important. As we have seen, the Apostle Paul utilized the cities to spread the Christian message of Jesus Christ to the outlying areas. He was strategic in where he went and who he spoke to. We should do the same and realize how quickly the landscape is changing within the cities. “The rapid growth of urban populations is well known and has been well documented. In 1800, for example, less than three percent of the world’s

population lived in towns of more than 5,000 people. By the year 2000, half of the world's population lived in cities of more than 100,000 people. As cities have grown, they have become more diverse with respect to culture and class, as well as professional and residential differences, and almost endlessly multifaceted.” (Buckman, 183) Allan Buckman goes on to say, “Moreover, the City has enjoyed a reputation for being welcoming and hospitable toward immigrants and refugees...In other words, the considerable flow of New Americans into the City will almost certainly continue into the foreseeable future.” (Buckman, 183) What does this have to do with contextualization? For starters, this means there is a diverse group of people all in one place.

Different groups (cultures) may live in certain pockets within the city limits, but they are still gathered and lives intersect with others. As Jesus says, “the harvest is plentiful...” (Matthew 9:37 NIV) so there is an incredible opportunity to reach different people. “In the city can be found pockets of small village-like communities where people live as much as they did before they migrated to the city. Within that community they shop at family-owned stores where personal ties are important. They discussed choices with their neighbors. Outside the neighborhood, however, they learn to make decisions as city folk do, and this begins to change their community.” (Hiebert, 179) This makes strategic movements within the city very important. We cannot just go in and start something new, we have to take time and follow any “chain of command” there is, whether it is stated or not. “When attempting to develop a ministry or program among members of these communities, one must always receive some kind of

approval of one or more of the community leaders. If a ministry is to be developed in a manner meaningful to the ethnic community you are trying to reach, it is obligatory.” (Buckman, 186)

One of the challenges with cities we should be aware of is migration. People come from all over the area just to live in the city, but refugees also come from other countries to live in the cities. As ministers/missionaries we have opportunities to reach these people as well. “According to the United Nations Population Fund, there are 214 million displaced people in the world, which is 3% of the total population.” (Wingeier-Rayo, 19) How we live our life affects this group of people also. We may even have to step out of our comfort zone to aid and support and minister to any person that is displaced. “Jesus has crossed geographic, linguistic, cultural, ethnic, gender, religious, and socio-economic borders.” (Wingeier-Rayo, 30) To illustrate this point further, Philip Wingeier-Rayo goes on to say, “[Jesus] left his comfort zone in Galilee...He identifies with the people of his region and shows solidarity with them...” (Wingeier-Rayo, 31) Ready to leave the comfort zone? To do this, we need to make sure we are sensitive to the culture and background of the people. Urban areas provide opportunities to come in contact with a diverse group of people. “This increased cultural and ethnic diversity demands that we attend to and respect the gifts of the various groups now represented in our society, church, and institutions. It also requires us to develop intercultural sensitivity and skill. Most importantly, it asks us to reexamine our understanding of ministry, which can be seen as a way of bridging different ‘cultures.’” (Wingeier, 35) How we communicate the Gospel matters.

Dr. Hiebert writes, “Communication of the gospel across the chasms of cultural differences rests upon the quality of interpersonal relationships between human beings—between missionaries and the people they serve.” (Hiebert, 147) As we communicate, we have to know how to speak to the people. This is where it is important to live a life free of reproach so the message we proclaim is heard from words and actions. “[T]he mission in the church, according to Peter, includes both vertical proclamation and ethical living, and the impact of his tight argument is that both are utterly essential.” (Wright, 390) The context in which people live is important. Context really is king, especially when proclaiming the gospel. “We face a very practical question. When it comes to preaching the gospel, which context is king? The ancient biblical world? Literary context? The interpreter’s culture (or subculture)? How about the cultural context of our listeners? If we are honest, finding an answer is far more difficult and sobering than one might expect.” (Wu, loc. 266) Taking time to understand the meaning of the scriptures and how to communicate them, in any setting is essential. This creates a unique challenge within urban settings. You have to know who you are talking with, and at least some of their background, to be able to understand how to communicate with them the core of the Gospel: Jesus Christ is King. Proclaiming this fact can be done in any setting.

“Contextualization, if done well, keeps in perspective for us the fact that Jesus is King of every context.” (Wu, loc. 671) Before continuing, we have to realize we may not be called, by God to try and reach “everyone.” But we are called to go

to different people. It is these people, and this culture, we can immerse ourselves in and learn how God is speaking to them today. This will help us to be flexible in the manner in which we proclaim the Gospel yet remain firm in the core message. “Christians need a contextualization method that has both flexibility and firmness...The gospel does not change. On the other hand, biblical writers clearly present the gospel in contrasting ways. Even within the Bible, there is no single prescribed way of preaching the gospel. In addition, the world’s cultures are diverse and ever changing.” (Wu, loc, 1363) For example, a person in China is more likely to respond to communication about honor and shame versus guilt and punishment. “A person in America may not use words like gaining or losing ‘face,’ but they might talk about ‘people pleasing’ or ‘trying to look good in front of others.’” (Wu, loc. 1391)

Now no matter what context we serve, there will always be the truth God “desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4) In urban areas, there are multiple places and venues and ways to find “a truth” that fits the individuals, even what will fulfill the desires each person faces. This raises the reality of other “false gospels” that people will buy into to be justified in the lifestyle they have chosen. “A culture’s false gospels also answer the four questions mentioned above. Thus, we first could ask, ‘Functionally, who is the savior-king in the culture?’ Personally, one asks, ‘Functionally, who is the savior-king figure in my life?’ Second, ‘What has this savior-king done in the past?’ Again, the answer to this second question clarifies both what kind of a person the “savior” is as well as his significance. Therefore, it matters that one knows about this savior-king’s character and power.” (Wu,

loc. 2944) In Acts 2, Peter was speaking to a large crowd. They were in the city of Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost. It is possible some people were searching for a relationship with Jesus Christ. Then, when Peter got up to speak, they found what they've been looking for, in the mighty works of God through Jesus Christ Peter spoke about. The same is true today. To help people see why God is vital and is enough, we speak about what he has done. We do not have to be fancy with the language we use, we just speak about God. "When talking about God, we need to highlight his works in history in order to explain what God is like. We do not merely want to say he is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. This is how systematic theology describes God. Rather, we seek to emphasize how God demonstrates his character and attributes." (Wu, loc. 1245) This is a great undertaking but well worth it. The works of God include the person of Jesus Christ and his atonement for the sin of the world, as well as the personal sin of the individual.

When we present the Gospel, especially to people who can find their pleasures fulfilled on a whim and find purpose in their jobs and people they hang around, there are going to be some questions that will need to be answered when giving a Gospel presentation. "The biblical gospel answers four key questions. I'll review them briefly. There is a clear logic to the order of the questions. (1) 'Who is Jesus Christ?'...(2) 'What has Christ done?' This question aims to show what kind of a person he is. (3) 'Why does Christ matter?' In other words, why is Jesus significant to us? This point largely deals with salvation. Traditionally, evangelicals have laid the greatest stress on this aspect of the gospel message. (4) 'How should we respond?'" (Wu, loc. 2925)

Now, the challenge will be avoiding syncretism, especially when a concept sounds close to one the person has known before. In the urban areas, even cross-cultural settings, it is possible to keep certain traditions, customs, and way of life and still think they are living as a Christian. One of the ways to combat this is to fully immerse ourselves in the setting. Many call this “incarnational” ministry. The point is to become involved enough in the culture and community to gain the respect of the people. Relationships matter. “If the success of missions depends largely upon the quality of the relationships between missionaries and the people to whom they go, the parent/child relationship model is not biblical. The biblical model is that of incarnation. To bridge the cultural gap between heaven and sinful earth, God became human and dwelt among us, eating our food, speaking our language, and suffering our sorrows, yet without giving up his divine nature. Incarnation is identification, but it does not deny who we originally are. It is, in fact, a bicultural or by personal state. Just as God became one with us in order to save us, we must become one with the people to whom we go in order to bring them to message of salvation.” (Hiebert, 158) Only when living life, on some level, with the people will trust begins to develop and the mission and proclamation of Jesus Christ will be heard and lived out by the people we serve. This is truly only possible with the presence and person of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who guides as he did for the Apostle Paul by sending him to Macedonia (Acts 16:9).

Following the leading and guidance of the Spirit prevents us from proclaiming our own culture and ideas. The Spirit

helps us proclaim the full gospel. This is what is important in urban centers and any kind of cross-cultural ministry.

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About Ryan Stratton

Ryan is a local pastor in the United Methodist Church in Texas.

For over twenty years, he has been teaching children, teenagers, and adults. While he was a teenager, he practiced TaeKwonDo and continued practicing and teaching the art form for fifteen years. After receiving a call to Christian ministry and leadership, Ryan is now in full time vocational ministry beginning with youth ministry then becoming a pastor. His priority in life is to help people see and experience life beyond themselves and the purpose God has for them.

He has a Bachelor's of Business Administration Degree from Stephen F. Austin State University and is continuing his education through Asbury Theological Seminary.

When not leading the church, studying the Scripture, speaking, writing (www.revryanstratton.com), or participating in community missions and outreach, Ryan is found spending time with his wife and four children.