**Society of Mentors Meeting**

May 3, 2022

**Theme**:

This call centered on ideas for preaching on the mission field.

* What or how are we preaching that might hinder our church's spiritual and numerical growth?
* How to learn to prepare the message and then deliver the message!
* What special hindrances might a cross-cultural preacher face?

Guest speakers were Austin Gardner and Chris Gardner.

**Introduction: [4:13]**

I am going to talk with Chris Gardner. Chris is very good at the language, at connecting with people when he preaches, and at being able to get a point across. So I want to share with you all about how to connect, how to preach, and how to do the job on the mission field.

**Update on Lighthouse Baptist Church, Arequipa, Peru: [6:00]**

It was truly amazing what God's done there, and it just shows you that the work is God's because I never dreamed the church would look like it does. So many times we focus on the fruit, when we should just be focusing on the seeds that we plant. I did a lot of planting, and it was just amazing to see the fruit that God has put there.

**[10:12]** The most important thing we do is preach the Word of God. That's how people get saved, and how lives get changed.

The pastor at El Faro, Juan Pacheco, he's been a friend for almost 30 years. Chris was instrumental in him getting saved, he actually pulled a knife on Chris, as a drunkard. Now he pastors that church, and he's a very highly respected preacher traveling all over South America to preach. So God has richly blessed.

**[10:58]** So knowing the Bible, living the Bible, and letting it be lived out in your life, those are the most important things.

We want to talk about preaching on the mission field. We have to start with the most basic. So let's start with the language and why this is important.

**[12:36]** You mentioned the Bible is first and foremost, and absolutely, that's true. No matter how many years you've been preaching make sure you make much of studying scripture. Make much of the Scripture; make much of the Bible.

After that, language learning is of vital importance.

If you're a missionary, and you're thinking of or wanting to go to the field thinking that you can preach in English, you need to understand that preaching in English is not the answer.

You need to speak to people in their heart language. They have to know that you understand them, and that the scriptures apply to them. So make much of language school. Learn the language very, very well.

**[14:34]** Do you want a foreign god with a foreign Bible who can’t speak your language? Do you want a foreign God with a foreign book and a foreigner teaching you about a God who didn't care about you enough to put the Bible in your language, to learn your language, or to speak your language?

I want you to consider that Jesus spent 30 years becoming totally Jewish.

He's God and can do anything he wants to do, but he purposely showed us the importance of not cutting corners. He could have been born of a virgin, grew into total manhood in one day, walked out, and started preaching. He could have gotten it all done in three and a half years. He could have just been born and died on the cross. But there's a lot more to learn about what we do through the life of Jesus than simply he lived and died.

A foreign god who can't speak your language, writes a book you can't read, and has a guy that is not from your culture teach you about God because God doesn't love you enough to speak your language.

**[16:37]** One of the things that I tell missionaries all the time is that if you have Logos Bible software, you need to buy a package of commentaries in the native language of where you are working.

When you communicate scriptures, it is obvious you're taking an American/English commentary, and trying to translate it in your really poor ability to translate. So I tell people as they're preaching, that it is not just about the languages, it's about the words, concepts, sentences, structure, and flow. One of the best ways you can do that is to read books in your target language.

It's difficult because there are not as many commentaries in other languages or they're not as widespread. I know that in many of your countries, the commentaries aren't even available. However, when you study and prepare a message, don't start in the King James Bible, unless you are in an English speaking country. You need to start with the Bible in the language of the people.

It's not just a word. It's a construct, sentence, paragraph. We have to learn to say things in the way they say things and can understand.

When we say things differently than their Bibles say it, we choose to say that their Bible is wrong. I think too often you want to go to English, but we have to speak in their heart language.

Jesus didn't speak in a heavenly language. He spoke in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. When he spoke, he spoke in terms they understood. He understood their culture.

Word order changes, but you won't know that if you don't learn the language and start in the Bible of that language.

If they don't have commentaries, read books that are very well known in their language, read books that their people consider to be great books of great communicators.

Therefore, if you will study, read, and learn how they put things together, it will help you in your preaching.

If you have a commentary, you have a big advantage over everybody else, because you have a commentary in the language.

If you don't have a commentary, take their books, watch their movies, read, figure out however they take in information, you need to take that and learn from it. So you need to make sure that you always understand what communicates to them, and once you understand that it helps you.

**[25:52]** As soon as you get somebody saved, or know of someone that is saved, take the books that you highly regard as commentaries, and begin translating them into the target language, whether through using Google Translate or if you translate them yourself. Get material put into people's hands.

**[30:00]** Hire a translator. Your people have no materials. You are not going to the field to pastor a church, you're going to the field to see men saved, train them how to do ministry, and give them the tools to do the ministry. It’s men, media, and materials. So you can make a difference by helping them get more materials in their language.

Learning the language is such an easy feat in comparison to cultural adaptation. Once you have the words down, you need to make sure that you're focusing on truly understanding the differences between the cultures. Remember that culture shifts too. You need to understand the culture in general. The culture of the entire country, culture of your state/region, culture of your actual church.

Understanding their culture communicates with people that you make much of what they think much should be made of. Make sure that you learn to enjoy and learn to like the things that they like.

Some of the best people you can watch if you want to be a good communicator in any language are comedians. Comedians understand timing. They know how to make things hit, they know how much time to wait, etc.

**[34:26]** You can get away with a superficial emotional way of preaching for a little while until people know you. Then they want to know that what moves you emotionally moves them emotionally. So just becoming a student of it is vitally, vitally important.

Always adapt, always learn, and always understand that it is vitally important to understand the culture that drives the language.

Making references that they don't understand makes it impossible to preach.

**[38:11]** Stop the shortcuts. Some of you have put your desire to start a church around your neck and it's like an anchor.

Because you're so busy doing what you think is great church work, you don't learn the language well. Because you're winning souls, you don't learn the culture well, and you don't fall in love with the people. You can't start another church because you are so busy working on this church. You went to the field thinking you were going to be a leader training missionary, planting multiple churches.

The Bible says in Proverbs that a wise man prepares the work in the field before he worries about the house.

Jesus is God. He knows everything, created everything, is in complete and total control of the world, and the one who holds it all. However, when he came to the earth, he took 30 years, except for one break of two or three days, when he was 12. When he started speaking, they said, “who is that guy? Isn't that Mary's boy? Don’t we know his brothers and his sisters? Where do you get all this info? Where do you learn all this? Because when he started talking, they knew.

Learn the language, learn the culture, learn what's going on around it.

**[41:27]** The biggest danger of all of this is that people will become what you praise. If you're not careful, you begin to praise your own messages. We deal with major problems of confirmation bias, and you literally have decided that this is what you think.

So it's a confirmation bias world and you'll be preaching and they'll be that's a great message, whether it is or not. Then you start training a young man, and the young man tries to model himself after you. I've watched nationals become Americanized.

How in the world do you become so disconnected from your own culture, that you do that?

So if you're not careful, you will not only not preach with cultural relevance, but you'll also teach your disciples not to preach or deal with the cultural relevance. So make sure that this part is a very, very important part of the field that you understand when you're teaching, when you're preaching the Word.

**[42:51]** You just might have rebelled against his term of cultural relevance. You might have said that you’re more worried about biblical relevance. The Bible was written in the language of the day. The Hebrew Bible was written to the Hebrew people. The New Testament wasn't written in Hebrew, because the world had become a Greek world, so it was written in Greek. Then part of it is in Koine Greek, which is the word for common language, street language.

Jesus had the Holy Spirit of God. I believe God wrote the Bible, and he put that in there.

We have a job to do. Put in the hours to learn the culture. I would rather you start a church slower than rush into a church.

You want to have a ministry that reproduces and accomplishes things. Speaking the language is no guarantee. Having money is no guarantee. So there's this connection that has to be formed.

**[45:26]** When the people saw Jesus, they said that's a carpenter's son. That's how well he fit in. So make sure that you understand what that means in your language and where you're at. Make sure that you make much of understanding and being part of the culture.

**[45:58]** All preaching must be expositional, but that doesn't mean it needs to be sequential.

I have worked at being an expositional preacher all of my life. I was told when I was on deputation, you don't preach like we do. Where did you learn that? He was taught to say what the Bible says.

Preaching expositionally, or saying what the Bible says, but not necessarily sequential.

Many times we strive and we want to have something hidden or to have something that we know that nobody else knows. That's the sin of pride.

So expositional, always expose the truth of the scriptures. That's what it means you're exposing the truth of the scriptures. Regardless of the passage you are using, you need to expose the truth of the scriptures.

What does the Scripture say? That is what we say; nothing more, nothing less. We expose the truth of the scriptures.

**What kinds of messages shall I preach starting this church for the first year? [48:33]**

I believe in sequential preaching, but at the very beginning, you need to remember that you should have goals. You want to see people saved. So preach a lot of salvation and you can do that in any kind of message. You can always put it in there. “Make a run around Calvary, before you finish.”

Teach the people: Why would he be a Baptist? Why would they get baptized? How would they get baptized? Why didn't their previous baptism count? They need to attend church faithfully, which is in Hebrews 4. They need to learn how to give and support the local church, learn how to share their faith, learn how to live separate from the world. I find he doesn't need to be a missionary. You don't want to preach a deputation message on the first service because he is not saved yet.

**Write down the characteristics of what a believer is going to look like: [50:54]**

First of all, he's got to be a believer, to be obedient, and to be baptized. He’s learned about the Lord's Supper, how to read the Bible for himself, how to pray, how to give, and how to share his faith. He needs to learn how to stay out of the whore house, the bar, or wherever it is his lost world used to take him. He needs to learn how to stand for the Lord Jesus when there's criticism, he needs to learn how to deal with persecution.

So you need to get your checklist, and I can't tell you what you do in your country. However, in Peru, everybody's a Christian. Vivian Bonds told me, don't ever use the word Christian for Christians use the word believer. She said that she asked a lady one time, are you a Christian? The lady responded, what do you think I am, an animal? Of course, I'm a Christian. That's cultural relevance.

**[52:47]** One of the best things you can do to know what to preach about when you first start is to get a good discipleship book. So if you take a discipleship book, they are going to talk about salvation, about baptism, etc. You can do expository messages, but it would be a very good way to start.

Topical is a topical but expository, but that's what systematic theology is. When you read a systematic theology book, it doesn't start in Genesis, it says, let's talk about God.

The discipleship book that I use has 15 lessons. I could probably easily do an average of five messages each lesson. So that's 75 messages that would give me a starting point.

A discipleship book is a great place to start because it's the beginning part of a person growing. To begin with, you're going to be discipling in mass, and then little by little, you can actually dive deeper into it with your disciples and the people that are around you. I That'll help you with the structure of what to preach and how to preach.

**[54:40]** Illustrations are extremely cultural. Stop getting illustrations out of a book or out of your American news feed, and get them out of life. Pay attention to things going on around you.

Then I honestly believe that where you stamp the American flag on your preaching more than anywhere else, is through the illustrations that you use. So just make sure that you grab illustrations from life and from things happening around there. Illustrations are so easy to come by if you listen to what's going on around you, because people are going to tell you stories.

You are a student of the culture, you're a student of what's going on around you. Then you pour that into your messages, and that will help them connect. It is impossible to do that unless you get out of your house. You're going to have to go out and sit down in their living room. You have to get out and get amongst the people. Go down and eat the meal of the day where the poor people are eating. Take some people with you, sit there and talk, and then you've got to ask questions.

When you first start that church, maybe a week of meetings or a month if you just do regular services, very few people are going to get saved in that five second presentation of the gospel you do. They’re going to hear the gospel over and over again and then one day the Holy Spirit will speak to them.

So let me give you some ideas on how to know what meetings to go to. The meetings that you think are stupid, are probably the best ones to go to. When you're a flower on the wall and not the center of attention, that's when you can truly begin to understand culture. So go to places where you're not the center of attention. When you're the center of attention, you're going to get the answers you want, and you're going to ask the questions to get the answers you want, which is confirmation bias, and something that all of us deal with. So I would encourage you to make sure you go to meetings where you're not the center of attention.

Those are the kind of meetings that will help you get the culture when you're not the center of attention, and when you're not asking questions. You cannot get the culture by asking questions. It's impossible to ask a question that will teach you culture. You have to be in the culture to get the culture and to understand what's going on. You also have to not be the loudest guy in the room. You have to be the guy that's listening, paying attention, and being a student of what's going on around you. Where you're not the center of attention, where you can just be a fly on the wall, that's when you can pay attention, and that's when you can really learn the culture.

So I do think you can learn from asking questions, but the way you can ask questions is when they're inobtrusive; when they're just part of a conversation. So you are going to ask questions, but they're not going to be authoritative questions. They're going to be conversational.

**[1:07:17]** We're just getting started in our church. What are we preaching?

I would take the discipleship book, that's exactly where I would start. Grab the passage, study it, and preach it.

So what are the next points to preach? Preach digestible amounts of truth and scripture. You don't want to do a systematic theology lesson when you're preaching on sin. You will, but how do you eat an elephant? You eat it one bite at a time, and it needs to be a digestible bite. So in preaching, in America, we have become so academic and so heavy, that you want to get up there and give them every verse in the Bible on sin. It's just too much.

Pick out three points about sin. From that discipleship book, or soul winning plan, maybe you would use Romans 3:10, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:12, and you could close with Romans 5:8.

So break it up and make it simple. One man said in regards to preaching, get a point. You have one main point that you're going to preach. Start off with a great opening, have a great closing, and keep them as close together as you can.

This idea of dragging out the preaching probably won't interest them. So you're gonna need those illustrations, but make it a digestible amount. They don't need to go home the first time with 900 verses on they are a sinner. Let the Holy Spirit use a sword, not his Gatling gun, and stab him one time. Then, the next week they come back, and there's another verse about that.

Make sure that when you're doing that you're exposing the truth of the passage, but exposing the truth of the passage is only one thing. The next thing is to connect it to the people.

If you're starting a church where there has not been a lot of gospel witnesses, it's like talking to a five year old, and you've got to make sure that they understand what's going on. You're introducing them to brand new thoughts that they've never had; that they've never considered. So just be very, very careful that you connect it to them well.

**Textual, topical or expository. Which one do you give preference to the most? [1:11:32]**

Whatever you are doing, it needs to expose the truth of the scriptures. Textual, topical, everything needs to expose the truth. So definitely I prefer expository but even with your topical messages, make sure that you're exposing the truth of the scriptures.

I believe exposing the truth of the passage always matters, and I believe for new believers probably the best thing you can do is to make sure that you keep it as much as you can in one central location, to where they can find it.

All passages have a topic. So expository preaching of a passage will be a topical message, though it may stay in that passage.

For example: you are preaching Romans 3:10 through 3:23. The topic there is man is a sinner. So that passage is a topical message, an expository message on one topic: man is a sinner.

I'm not a very big fan of a textual message, unless it's a text you're going to expose and when you do that, you're going to have to have a topic. It doesn't matter as long as you're exposing the truth of the passage. That's the key to everything, expose the truth of the passage, and then connect it to the people.

**[1:15:10]** In that discipleship book that you'll be using, you're gonna have salvation, eternal security, baptism, Lord's Supper, security of the believer, surrender to God, serving God, stewardship, separation from sin. They're going to learn how to be soul winners, how to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. So every one of those would be an expository, topical message based on one of those themes that's coming right out of your discipleship book, or the basic discipleship.

Now, if you're in a country where you're getting a lot of believers from other churches, that may change a little bit, but I'd like to warn you. That's dangerous. They come in with baggage, Pentecostal baggage, charismatic baggage. They want to correct the preacher. It is so much better to work with new people, and help them with the gospel and with the Scripture than it is to be trying to correct the others.

I want to make my entire ministry by seeking out 15 to 25 year old young men. I can go up to 30 or I could go down to 14, but I want 15 to 25 year old men. You ask where the families are? Don't worry. You get them, you'll get the family. The family will come. However, if you start your church and you're working 40 years olds and above, none of them are going to become the pastor of that church, in any South American country. So I want to reach them while they are young.

**[1:19:00]** You are God's man. You're not answering to me. You're not answering to the society of mentors. You're not even answering to your local church, if you're totally honest. God called you. The apostle Paul was of all men, the bravest, boldest, and said not of men, nor by men. I'm an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In other words, he was saying, Peter didn't call me. The church didn't call me. God called me. So you're not answering to me. So you sit down and pray, and take what you've heard us say, and filter it.

In my opinion, if you start out with a lot of salvation, eternal security, obeying God, following God, and you work with it, eventually, you'll probably start preaching through books.

You won't start a lot of churches, if you decide that you want to preach expository yourself through the entire Bible. You'll stay at that one church. Don't let your local church become an anchor around your neck. Because a church will take all the time you'll give it. All of a sudden, there's no time for training men, no time for preparing materials, and you're going to be stuck.

I would also tell you to know what book you're going to preach out of first after doing the discipleship book, even if you are going to do expositional and sequential. There are books that are very heavy in the different doctrines that you've been teaching them, and it will actually help them cement the foundation of what they believe.

You're not preaching for yourself, because you like a book or because you found a good commentary. You're preaching because of the need of your people and the need to help your people grow and understand the Scriptures.

Start with good messages that expose the Scriptures. Then, after that, make sure that your first book to preach sequentially out of. Starting a church is one form of preaching. It's always expository and topical, and maybe that discipleship book, but you will have to transition. It will be when you have the kind of people that are slowly learning.

I do think you want to model expository, sequential preaching because that's what the new pastor is going to do. We’re there as evangelists to get them saved, trained, and to get them grounded and ready. Even if we stay in the same church for a long time, we're still out all the time trying to get new stuff.

If you don't have a foundation, nobody appreciates it. Some famous preacher said:

“It takes you 20 minutes to deliver the message, it took God 20 years to prepare the messenger.” Zig Ziglar said, “Selfish thinking and thinking about yourself destroys everything around you.”

Another man made the comment. Too many preachers say (after preaching), how did I do? Was I a blessing? You're thinking about you. It’s egotistical, selfish preaching when you ought to be saying, I gave them the Word of God, I pray God will deal and work in their lives. Why was your focus on what people think about you? Your focus ought to be on what they think about Jesus, the passage, and not on what they think about you.

**What books would you say are good on this subject of preaching or cultural adaptation? [1:28:08]**

On the website, society of mentors, you will find a recommended reading list.

I have a whole section on good books about preaching. I have a section on cross cultural understanding.

Everybody needs to be spending at least one hour a day, five days a week of just personal growth; not to prepare for a message and not devotions.

Katie and the ladies have put together recommended reading for the ladies and is also listed on the society of mentors. So please check the website for those recommended reading lists.