

Conscious Culture

The missional visionary is also a cultural architect. One of the basic foundation principles of Church Unique is the assertion that each church has a unique culture. While walking through the Vision Pathway, we emphasize the importance of close observation and listening in order to better understand the surrounding culture, and of unlocking the past in order to unleash the future. The leader shapes the culture with the Vision Frame, informed by the Kingdom Concept. Transforming the future is made possible because the cultural perspective is held in conscious view.

The starting point of developing a conscious culture is contained in the following three principles.

First, remember that the **Scriptures reveal God's signature**.

Whatever the leader draws attention to and rallies support for, he must show the signature of God behind the appeal. The Vision Frame must be squarely and repeatedly illuminates with God's Word. The visionary must always point back to the Original Visioneer .

Look for the passages that fuel your passion, enlarge your own vision, inform your values, and distinguish your strength as a church. Master the exposition of these texts. Then look for opportunities to ooze the vision through the pages of Scripture everywhere you go. Whenever and wherever the vision speaks, your job is to make sure God's voice is heard.

Second, use your congregation's **folklore to tell the story**.

The leader who shapes culture understands that not all stories are created equal. Folklore is a special class of story – stories that speak so fundamentally and clearly to the church's vision that they have to be told, retold, and told again.

Life is narrative. As humans, we are hardwired to live from and respond to the stories of our lives. Story is an indispensable tool for communicating on a heart-to-heart level; for communicating things like values, passion, convictions, history and vision.

All preachers are familiar with story as either an illustrative tool or message construct for the preaching event. But it is also important to view storytelling on a broader level as a tool for creating culture. Creating culture requires the identification and development of special stories or folklore that serve as foundations, identity-shaping stories within the leadership culture. The texture and color of the culture is then painted artistically by the telling and retelling of these stories.

Finally, understand that **symbols mark defining moments**.

A symbol is a visible sign of something invisible. The term literally contains the idea of "throwing together" – associating something intangible with something concrete. A lion for example, is a

concrete and visible way of representing the invisible, intangible idea of courage. For the leader, expression of old familiar symbols and creation of new ones can shape a culture.

One of the reasons new symbols are so important is that they cultivate a shared memory. As your vision unfolds and you see God's work, let the use of symbols mark the moment and foster a shared memory. This memory glues the community together and multiplies the values defined by the memory.

As the leader lives the vision and speaks into the church's culture, symbols – visible signs and symbolic acts – become powerful tools. What is the most important symbol? Does the identifying mark of your church open a door to tell a story.