

The Church as Creature of the Word, Part 2

*Part 2 of a conversation with authors Eric Geiger, Matt Chandler, and Josh Patterson about their recent book, *The Church as Creature of the Word*.*

This post features Eric Geiger, vice-president of the Church Resources Division at LifeWay.

Eric is putting forth a leadership challenge about the atmosphere and culture of your church.

Opening illustration: The culture of mountain climbers at Mount Everest. It takes weeks and months of planning and preparation. The mountain-climbing culture turned bad. A man, David Sharp, was hiking his way back down from Everest, through the “death zone.” He sits down to rest in Green Boots Cave (named for a man who perished there with green boots). 40 mountain climbers making the ascent, seeking to achieve their dream, pass by David Sharp, who is dying. All 40 passed by him, but left him to die in order to not abandon their journey. The mountain climbing community was riveted by the events. Some blamed systems (lack of evacuation plans, rescue teams, etc.). But the founder of Everest mountain climbing said it was the *culture* of the mountain climbing community that was wrong.

You can tell what is of first importance, not by looking at the confession, but at the culture. **It’s not your confession of faith of your church, but the culture of your church that reveals what is of first importance.**

There’s a difference between simply believing the gospel in your confessional statement and standing on the gospel in your church culture.

Culture is massively important. It’s the overpowering alpha male in the room. If there is a conflict between your confession and your culture, the culture typically wins.

If your confession says the grace of Jesus is big enough for any issue or any sin, but your culture is closed and cold and looks with disdain on people who open up about their struggles, then people needing grace will not find it.

If the confession says we will live as missionaries, but the culture of the church determines success by how many events take place at the building in a week, then the culture will trump the confession.

“Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” – Peter Drucker

Your church’s culture is your church’s personality. **It’s the values and shared beliefs that drive the behavior of your people.**

The church in Galatia is a good example. They drifted from their confession in their culture. Any time we seek to supplement the grace of God, we supplant the grace of God. They moved toward a culture of creating “levels of righteousness.”

A true, healthy church culture has alignment between the confession and the practice of the people.

You've got to inspect your church, to see if the gospel has made its way into the fabric of the church. An example: Budgeting season. Discussions about giving are good. Is the gospel impacting that discussion? If people are not being generous, then perhaps the culture is drifting from our confession that "though He was rich, He became poor for your sake."

Another example: You need volunteers for children's ministry, etc. You can do a campaign and a ministry fair. But what if we should first ask, "What's the culture of our church?" Have we brought people back to the reality that God stepped onto this earth, grabbed a basin and a towel, and served us by washing our dirty feet?

The need is to come back to the gospel in order to influence the culture of the church.

The culture is always teaching. We need more than a confession immersed in Jesus. We need a culture immersed in Jesus.

Read Part 1 of this series [here](#). To read Part 3, go [here](#).

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