

Can You HEAR ME NOW?

By Bill Burchit



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I hate dropped calls on my cell phone. It happened just the other day. I was driving back from an appointment and talking with a friend on my cell phone when I drove into a dreaded “dead zone.” The funny thing is I didn’t realize the call had dropped, so I kept right on going for what seemed like 15 minutes before I figured out I had been talking to myself. It was a good conversation. I covered some really important stuff. The problem is my friend on the other end had no idea what I was saying. It didn’t matter how important it was or how loud I was saying it. Without a connection between the two of us, nothing could be heard. The signal had been lost.

It made me wonder how often within the church we find ourselves in a similar predicament. We have very important, life-changing information to convey. We have even rehearsed how we’re going to say it. The issue is we forget to look up from what we’re doing to see if anyone can hear and understand what it is we are trying to say. When’s the last time we checked the signal strength on our conversations? Without doing so we may find ourselves stuck in a one-way conversation. We keep talking. Unfortunately no one on the other end is listening.

George Bernard Shaw wrote, “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

In our present culture, more easily accessible forms of communication exist than ever before. With the advancement of technology we can instantly chat with people from one end of the globe to the other. It’s an amazing time to be alive. Yet with all these options for communication, are we truly connecting with each other any better than we have before?

So too, in order to reach the people around us we need to be able to convey the truths found in God’s Word in the language our listeners can understand. And using the right language is not necessarily about the words we say or even about the creative elements we use within our services. It’s entirely possible for a church to use

“seeker sensitive” language, have great dramas, excellent music, and well produced videos – and still communicate an irrelevant message that un-churched people cannot understand.

Tim Stevens, in his book, *Pop Goes the Church*, states, “Speaking the right language is about understanding filters.” One of the most overlooked and misunderstood filters is the pop culture.

Pop culture is simply defined as the elements popular within the social context. It can be broken down into areas such as entertainment, art, and mass media. Pop culture is largely reflected in what people look at, read, listen to, surf, buy, play with, drive past, browse, eat, or touch. But people are not just listening to or watching these elements. These elements are shaping their values. Pop culture is a language that reflects what is current within the culture and helps influence the direction of things ahead. It acts as both a mirror and a spotlight.

In order to engage people outside the church we have to listen in on the spiritual conversations that are happening within our pop culture. We

need to understand people’s needs, frustrations, hopes, and desires. We need to seek to understand the people we’re trying to reach more than we seek to be understood. When people know you care enough to listen to their story, their hearts will open up to hear the truth God has for their lives.

What would it look like if we took the time to truly connect with the people around us? What could happen if we really began to listen and when we spoke we used language others could understand? How would our churches differ if we began to leverage pop culture without compromising the message of God?

It’s time we look up from our desks and pulpits and look into the eyes of those for whom Christ died. They are hungry for God. They are looking for truth. And they sit in the shadows asking the question, “Can you hear me now?”



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