

# Mark Driscoll: Emerging Church

Sunday, 24 February 2008

Religion Saves & Nine Other Misconceptions

Ask Anything Question: Number 2

Pastor Mark Driscoll

Mars Hill Church Seattle

## Full Transcript

*I did this unofficial transcript by hand so I could more closely look at what Mark Driscoll had to say. Any errors are mine. Audio and video of this talk is publically available at [www.marshillchurch.org](http://www.marshillchurch.org). I don't have any affiliation. grace - Chris Ridgeway; <http://chrisridgeway.blogspot.com>*

## [Start]

[00.21] Well, howdy Mars Hill.

Good to see ya - if you're new, my name's Mark, uh, one of the pastors here at the church. And uh, we usually go through books of the Bible. Right now we're doin' kinda a peculiar series where we let people post questions online and then votes - we got 893 questions, five and half thousand comments, and 343,000 votes. We chose the top nine, uh, questions that were voted upon. We turned 'em into a series we're calling Religion Saves.

Today is on the question of the emerging church - which probably if you go to Mars Hill you have *no* idea what the means and you don't care. And, uh... I apologize in advance because the sermon has nothing to do with you. So I'll get through the questions, spend the last half - in the *Bible*, which is all you really care about.

Um

As far as this topic goes as well, I'll put a blog up this week - it'll have a link to an article I did for the Criswell Theological Review, it'll have a lecture I did at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary on this issue, it'll have a link to the Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches book I contributed to - I do some of this, stuff, on this issue. And you can pray as well, I've got an article coming out for the Christian Research Journal - I think it's the cover story of the magazine - this summer on the emerging church - this issue - which is an extension of Hank Hannegraff - the Bible Answer Man's Christian Research Institute - and his radio program. So.

I'll go ahead and pray and see if we got anything here that's of benefit to us... and uh, glad to have you all with us, and for more information again, just check the blog at [marshillchurch.org](http://marshillchurch.org) this week.

Father, we begin that acknowledging that you're a great God. That you've loved us well; that you've pursued us, and you have found us through your son Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus, as we talk about your church, it is always my prayer that the church would be a second priority and that you would be the first priority, and that really that the church is nothing more than the people who have met you and are thrilled to belong to you and want others to come experience that same joy. And so as we study Father, I do ask that you would send the Holy Spirit to illuminate our understanding of your word and empower me to do a good job teaching something that, uh, that I normally wouldn't teach at Mars Hill, but in your providence I believe it is appointed for me to teach this, and I thank you for the pastors who are joining us early for the conference - I pray this will be of help to them as well as the people who call this church home, so Holy Spirit, I ask that you would help us to learn and in Jesus good name, amen.

[2.46] Well, here is the, uh, question - I'll start by telling you this: there's the internal ministry of Mars Hill Church - our six campuses, our sixth campuses opening shortly downtown - and you can pray for

pastor Tim G? They had their morning, sorta rough launch this morning and then they have their evening service tonight. They officially launch on March 16th, they were running cable through his office for the computers this week, and a cracked pipe fell through the ceiling tile and broke on his desk, so that pretty much tells you where we're at with our downtown campus. It was an old club with go-go dancer tables and the whole thing, and so, you know, pray for pastor Tim - he's going to have an exciting testimony, and pray he doesn't get anything.

[laughter]

Lot of hand-sanitizer in that campus.

Our internal ministry is, you know, scattered across our six campuses. Our external ministry includes and online audience that is about 10x the size of Mars Hill - so every week I'll preach and 10x the number who hear it at one of our campuses listen online. That includes books and conferences and church planting and other things we do externally, and I preach in the church about 40-42 Sundays a year, and about the same number of sermons that I preach here I preach outside of the church - at different conferences and churches around the country and around the nation.

And so what happens is, when we opened up this Q&A session, many of those people who are pastors and leaders and are interested in what's going on in the global church - they're the ones who really came up with this question, and my guess is no one at Mars Hill Church actually voted for this question, because we don't use language like "emerging church." People come in and they'll say, "Oh, are you an emerging church?" and our people are like [pitch change] "I dunno. I have a *Bible*. It's awesome. [laughter]. And, uh.. Jesus is alive! What team does that put me on?" That's all we really care about. That being said, I'll apologize to all the Mars Hill people.

[4.35] But here is the question, and we're answering it for all of our online friends, including those who are part of the pajama hadim - all the bloggers. So, here is the question.

What can traditional or established churches learn from "emerging churches?" What can be learned?

Well, I'll start by defining the teams. I'll tell you that a traditional or established church I define in my book *Confessions* in a couple different ways, but, simply put - these are some of the hallmarks of a traditional church. The first is that missions isn't something you do in your city or in your country: missions is overseas. So you send Americans to Africa, or Americans to China - so missions is over *there*. And we believe its both here and there, but the traditional church sees it as over there.

[5.20] Secondly, the culture that they worked in was primarily modern, and it was the result of a thousand year reign of what we'll call Christendom. And for much of this nation's history - most people were raised with some experience of church, most people went to church, and furthermore the culture was primarily Christian in value if not in belief. So - people were heterosexual- they'd get married, they'd have kids. Sex outside of marriage was generally frowned upon culturally speaking. Sunday - you know, businesses were shut down because that's a Christian day and people don't need to go to businesses - that's a day of Sabbath, and people would put on their best clothes - Dad would put on his best suit, Mom would put on her dress, and the kids would all get dressed up... Sunday was "goin' to church-meeting" day, and the day was devoted to the Lord. And that was the general world.

So the result was - most people, when you said "God" - they knew something about the God of the Bible - when you said Jesus they'd heard about him, if they didn't already know him. And the expectation was that we're basically a Christian nation, and people are supposed to go to church. And that was the context in which the modern church was built - and then, when you would go a church service, the building was generally considered sacred and holy - it's a special place, so you'd take your hat off if you're a guy, you'd dress up in your best attire, you don't come casually, and it's going for a formal meeting with God. And you'd have - sometimes the pastors would wear a robe, uh, which, I don't, unless it's a black Jedi knight one - I think that would be kinda cool, I'd actually go for that.

And sometimes there'd be like a hand bell choir - if you're at Mars Hill you're like - I don't know what you're talking about - me neither, but this is what I've heard from those who were alive in those days. [laughter] Additionally, there'd be a choir - you'd sing from a hymnal. Older, musical style from... I dunno what era. Sometimes an organ would accompany - but you wouldn't get drums or anything like that - although that's very very very controversial - that's sorta the traditional church with certain modifications... uh

[7.25] eh... take an excursus with me and then I'll come back to the topic - here's my story: I didn't grow up in Protestantism at all. I grew up Irish Catholic - my dad was a union drywaller named Joe, and like Jesus' daddy Joe, my dad swung a hammer for a living, so - I grew up in south Seattle. I was born in Grand Forks, ND. As soon as my parents could afford a full tank of gas, we left ND and we came to WA - and I grew up in south Seattle, going to an Irish Catholic kinda church. And, I went until 5th, 6th, 7th grade, and I also went from public school to catholic school - which if you've been to catholic school - I'm SORRY. It's not fun at all. Ahh... there's, nuns, who, uh - they, they beat you. [laughter] It's scary.

[8.12] I went to Catholic school 5th, 6th, 7th grade and I was actually an altar boy - I'd accompany the priest with mass and all that - and I didn't have a bad experience. I just got bored with it - didn't care, and so I begged my parents "please send me back to the public school" - and I refused to go to church any more. And sometimes my mom, dad - she really loved me - still really does, and we get along great - If you're here Mom - hi - my mom, though, she'd say "Marky" - she always calls me Marky - she still calls me Marky - uh, don't do that - but my Mom does, and she can, because she's my Mom. But my mom would say "Marky, you gotta go to church," cause she was afraid I was going to hell, and the reason she felt that way was cause I was goin' to hell. [laughter]

[8.47] And uh, and so occasionally I'd go with my mom basically out of guilt. Like, "alright mom, I love ya - it's a good place to take a nap, I'm feelin' tired - let's do it." So occasionally I'd go with my mom and I'd take a nap during the Catholic church service, and eventually I just stopped going all together. Fast forward - 17 years of age in high school, meet a cute gal, aaand... really like her, and so she bought me a Bible - her daddy was a pastor. And so fast-forward to college - I'm reading that Bible, and it dawns on me - I'm really not a Christian and, I uh, God saves me, right? If you're a *Calvinist*: God saves me. If you're an Armenian, "I gave my life to the Lord at the age of 19, while in college." [laughter] However this works. So I became a Christian in college at the age of 19, and then, uh, God called me into ministry and spoke to me and said, marry Grace, this woman - moral of the story is, she buys you a Bible, you buy her a ring - call it a deal. [laughter]

So, God said: marry Grace, plant churches, train men, and, uh, preach the Bible. So okay, that's what I'm doing. Grace and I got married at 21, graduated at 22, moved back to Seattle, worked at a church as a college intern for about a year, year and a half, and then started a small Bible study in a rental home in Wallingford? And uh, decided this would be Mars Hill Church.

And I'd never been a member of a church; I'd never been a pastor in a church; didn't go to Bible college, didn't go to seminary - I preached once in a church - it didn't go very well - some people got up and left halfway through the sermon - some things never change [light laughter] - so I felt, well, with this breadth of experience it's time to start at church at the age of 25. So, Grace and I started this little bible study in our home - we say it started about the size of a Mormon family - there's about 10-12 of us gathered together, and pretty soon it kinda outgrew the living room, so we moved into a church and we had a bible study at night, and it kept growing and became Mars Hill Church.

[10.30] Well, we started in October of 1996, and it was around that time I got a call from an organization called Leadership Network - they're still friends to this day and I love them very much - and they said - could you come speak at our conference we have for young pastors? I didn't know there were pastor's conferences - I'd never been to one - so I said, "sure, whatever," so I went down to Mt. Herman, CA, nice conference center, and the topic was "generation X" -

which is a ridiculous topic, because the assumption is that all people born between this year and this year are exactly the same. Which is not true - people are much more complicated than birthday - they way they think, their experience, their culture - it's way more complicated. I mean, it's just a weird way to break a church down - you may as well choose height. You know - I mean you could pick random, abstract - ohlp - you're over six foot - nope, you're a Baptist [laughter] you're under six foot? you're an Episcopalian. Sorry - it's like the rides at the fair: you've gotta be this tall. And it just - it's weird ways to divide people that didn't make any sense, so, I got up and lectured on postmodernism, and the shift from the modern to the postmodern world, and I did my philosophical undergrad on Cartesian epistemology: Descartes and his theory of knowledge, and - lo and behold - it was interesting because, again - get this - this is 1997 - all of a sudden now it's really a big issue ten years later - because Christians are always about ten years late. Always, right? I mean, we're gonna be into glam rock pretty soon - almost there, you know?

[12.01] uhhh, so what happened then is the phone started ringing off the hook, and now I'm in to the evangelical subculture that I have no experience in. I'm not in a denomination. I'm just a guy planting a church. And at this point we're running maybe sixty, eighty people - I don't know. It was not impressive. Most of them were drunk indie rockers who still hadn't finished rehab. No one was tithing. The whole thing was a goat rodeo. It was just an absolute nightmare.

And then I start getting these calls, "Hey, could you come consult for this denomination, speak at this conference, do this television interview, do this radio interview, and I'm at home - literally - because we have no office, no secretary, and the phone rings to my house. And we don't have a church line and a house line cause we can't afford both - so there's one line at my house, and I answer the phone, "Uh, yes, could we" - this is the calls I'm taking - "could we schedule and interview for Pastor Mark with this radio station, or this television..."

"well, hold on let me check"

[lower voice - imitating himself] "hello?" [laughter]

Just weird. :) uh. And I'm not making any money for like three years, and I'm working for free - so I start taking these speaking gigs to make ends meet. So I go on the road, and we get this little team of speakers together. And Leadership Network is hosting it.

And then they hire a guy named Doug Pagitt to run it. Chris Seay is already a guy on that team - pretty soon, uh, there's a couple guys loosely connected - a guy named Spencer Burke, a guy named Dan Kimball. Then a guy gets brought on... loosely affiliated is another guy Tony Jones, and... Andrew Jones, and then another guy named Brian McLaren gets put on the team. And we're kinda travelling and speaking together.

[13.32] And we go out to dinner and have these "conversations" - what is now the big Conversation was actually a little conversation years ago. And I just decided at that point - "I'm out." They left Leadership Network - started something called Terra Nova. Then it morphed into something called Emergent Village, which you may have heard of. There's a lot of controversy around that organization. Most of those guys are still involved, and that's when I got out.

For a couple reasons. One - immature, arrogant, mouthy, cursing, bad temper - I just had to go home and grow up, and, learn and change and repent and grow in humility. I wasn't ready to tell everybody how to do everything.

Secondly, my church was such a wreck, right? I remember standing up before a large denomination, and one of the pastors said, "well, how do we do church like yours?" And I said "don't do it like mine." Mine... nobody gives; everybody's living together"

"Why are you up there?"

"Good question - amazing question I have no answer for." Whatever you do - don't do what I... I realize, I don't have a church that's exemplary in any way - I got nothing to say.

Thirdly, my wife was giving birth to my oldest daughter Ashley, and I need to go home and be with my wife and my kid. The church needed my time, energy, and attention - it was a total mess. Young, messed up, goofed up church plant.

And lastly, the theological discussions we were having just really frustrated me - to be totally frank with you. We'd be eating dinner and they'd be like [more effeminate] "All right, let's *talk*. Let's have a conversation." And don't get me wrong - I like conversations. I have a wife, I've got two daughters - I have them all the time. [some laughter] uh...

[15.01] But these are bad conversations. These are the kind of conversations - like Genesis 3 where Satan comes and asked "Did God really say?" I don't like those kind of conversations - especially with PASTORS. They're asking questions like, uh "Is it *wrong* to be gay?"

Yeah. Like, are we voting? Like are you serious? [laughter] Like... I thought this issue was settled, like, and - I'm getting a room by myself tonight. [laughter] You guys all scare me - I don't know what we're doing here.

Questions like - I still remember eating dinner one night and they're like, "Alright. Do we *really* believe in hell?" I'm like, "Hell yeah! We do!" I mean, what the? Why are we talking about this? I thought we're all Christian pastors!

So, I, I left, and I came home to do my own thing and started Mars Hill. Well, what started out as a little conversation - sorta a couple guys on the dirt path saying, "where are we gonna go with the church?" - has led to a multi-lane highway.

I'll tell you what we all agree on. One is that the world has changed, right? That heterosexual people that grow up in church and have a lot of kids and go to church on Sunday by rule - that's the norm any more. Alright? I mean - it's just not. We live in a world where half the people are single in our country. So it's not just family friendly. Most people are living in the city, not in the suburbs. Most people didn't grow up in the church - they don't have any church background. Especially in cities like Seattle, it's not even post-Christian - it's still PRE-Christian.

[16.24] So the world is changed. Secondly, that older ministry methods don't work. They just don't work. I mean, I know a church, not too long ago spent 3.5 million dollars on a new *organ*. A new organ. Not like a hard or a long? Something you really need - you know - a different kind of organ. And I asked one of the pastors, "why did you do this?" and he said, "well, our attendance is down." - and I'm like, "That'll fix it right there, that'll help. [laughter] You're gonna want some guys to park the horse and buggies too." I mean you gotta think all this through - you know? I mean, what the? Uhhh....

And and and - the old ministry methods aren't working, and additionally - what we all agree on is that, uh, the church needs to assume a missionary posture. That it's not just other nations that are lost and have bizarre culture that don't know Jesus and need missionaries: that's here too. If you took statistically all the non-Christians in America, they would comprise - some would say - the fourth largest nation on the earth. Alright? There's plenty of non-Christians in our own culture.

[17.27] Now here's where we disagree. What I will use is two hands. And I believe doctrine/belief goes in one hand. And practice, or methodology, goes in another. The problem with fundamentalist Christianity is that everything goes into two hands. We believe the bible and Jesus and everybody's a sinner and apart from Jesus you don't go to heaven and he's our great God and Savior - if you don't believe in Jesus you're gonna go to Hell -- They put all the doctrine in the *closed* hand, which I say "Great!"

But then they put the methods in the closed hand, so it's... just really inflexible, rigid, outdate, old school, no fun. They call themselves "fundamentalists" which is a lie. 'Cause they're no fun at all. And

everything goes into those two hands.

Now liberals come along and they say, "well, we're very open with our methodology, and style and music and how to love people and be involved with the culture... and they're also very open with their doctrine: "oh! We're not sure if the Bible God's word, we're not sure if Jesus is God, we're not sure if anybody's going to hell - we're not sure about much of anything."

And our approach has always been two-handed. What we believe is timeless, and what we do should be *timely*. That we need to be very strong with our Bible-believing doctrinal convictions, and very flexible - meaning wherever the Bible gives us freedom, we need to use it. So I use the language that we're theologically conservative and we're *culturally* - I didn't say politically - culturally liberal. Meaning, there's a lot of freedom here.

[18.444] And we don't agree on these things because many are two-handed - oh let's do new kind of church and also let's invent new kinds of Christians. Say - no, no, no... those are called "cults." right? The "new" Christians are *cults*.

We're supposed to be *old* Bible-believin', Jesus lovin' Christians that Christianity doesn't change. Now the way its expressed and culturally demonstrated *does* change.

Now all of that is my introduction to the four lanes on the highway.

The first is the "emerging evangelicals" - By evangelicals I mean that doctrinally they believe that the Bible is God's word, we're sinners, Jesus was born of a virgin, lived without sin, died on a cross, rose for our salvation, and there really is heaven, there really is hell. The big issues. And the emerging evangelicals tend to do hip-cool church, and church within a church, and church planting... and guys that are in this lane are like Dan Kimball - who's a friend - and Rick McKinley, who's a pastor and a friend - and John Burke who's a good guys and a friend, and Donald Miller, who wrote the book *Blue Like Jazz* - kinda blew up on him - he's a good guy, and a friend, uh... and these guys are just trying to say, "well, we're not trying to change all of Christianity - we're just trying to make church and Christianity more relevant - more applicable to people who otherwise have no interest in Jesus or church. We would disagree with them on a few things: a lot of them have women pastors and such, but for the most part that lane's fine - we're not gonna do any drive-bys. We love them. It's cool. All's well.

[20.05] Alright, now the next team is the "house church evangelicals" and again doctrinally they're Christian brothers and sisters... we would disagree on a few minor things, but no reason to run their car off the road. Um and the house church thing is "let's get rid of pastors and building and preachers like me" To which I say: no. But anyways, and they would say that and they would say, "let's stop having big church - let's do little church. Let's meet in houses and coffee shops and let's just do 10, 20, 30 people max." They would say, "it works around the world," and I would say yeah, it tends to work in countries like China where Christianity is outlawed and it has to go underground... I don't think it works best for this culture. And the would say, "well, it's Biblical" and I would say, "well - the early church in Acts 2 - they met from house to house to be sure, and they met in the temple courts for large meetings - and I would say Mars Hill's built that way. We do our large meetings on Sunday. We meet in homes - basically house churches with meals, and Bible study and prayer and care and share and love and community and relationship... during the course of the week. And they're not trying to change what we believe, they're just trying to innovate a new *style* for church.

Thirdly, the "emerging reformers." This is my team, so obviously this is the right one - so I'll explain it to you in great depth [laughter]. These are people who believe all the evangelical distinctives and are trying to find a way to make the church more relevant, accessible, culturally connected. A lot of us are involved in church planting - that's our Acts 29 network that we're privileged to be a part of with some great guys. Uh, this includes, uh, like Dr. Tim Keller's in New York, and Sovereign Grace with C.J. Mahaney - uh, we love the reformed theological tradition. So we love John Calvin and Martin Luther

and the Puritans and Jonathan Edwards and Charles Hadon Spurgeon - one of my personal favorites. We like the early founders of evangelicalism 50 years ago: Billy Graham, John Stott, J.I. Packer, Francis Schaffer. Present day, we love missiologist like Ed Stetzer, preachers like Dr. John Piper. We love theologians like Dr. Wayne Grudem and Dr. D.A. Carson - I'm privileged to really know all these guys, they're wonderful guys by the way. And, uh, that would be our team.

[22.12] We believe what the evangelicals believe, and a few more distinctives, we tend to only have male pastors. 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1 encourages us in that direction. Um, the emerging house church guys, they're led by a guy like Neil Cole, who wrote the book *Organic Churches*, and Frost and Hirsch - two Australian missiologists - this team, this lane I should say, I'm kinda in it. Matt Chandler, who's here to preach this week, and my buddy Darin Patrick - these guys are both friends - this is kinda our lane. This is kinda where we're at. And uh, it tends to be different than older Reformed theology in that worship is pretty free, and we tend to be charismatic. Meaning - all the gifts are for today: speaking in tongues, healing. We believe in all of that. And we tend to be a little more loose about it.

And what happened is, in September 2006, Christianity Today wrote an article saying the two hot theologies among young pastors are this "emerging reformers" - our lane. And the "emergent liberals" - the lane that I was, uh, somewhat connected to, and, left. And I would say that my problem with this team is not they are trying to find innovative ways to do church. But they're all calling into question many Christian doctrines which should not be questioned. Particularly by those who claim to be pastors. So, "we're just asking questions. We're asking questions, 'Is Jesus fully God?' 'Did he die on the cross in our place for our sins?' 'Is anybody really going to Hell?' 'Do you need Jesus to go to heaven?' 'Is sex outside of marriage - including homosexuality - sinful?' Many of these issues they won't answer the questions. Now, the leaders in this lane are men like, Brian McLaren - who I love. And I know *all* of these guys except for Rob Bell. I know all the guys in all the lanes, and I would tell you personally they're all gracious guys - I love them. They've not been mean, cruel, or unkind to me in any way. So it's not a personal beef. But it's a concern for the content of their instruction.

[24.04] So it'd included Brian McLaren, Doug Pagitt, and Rob Bell - who also has a church called "Mars Hill" - no way affiliated with us - in Grand Rapids, MI. And my concern is, like, a guy like Bell - in his book *Velvet Elvis*, he basically says, you know, if we get rid of, for example, the virgin birth of Jesus - we don't really lose anything! I say we lose the *Bible* and *Jesus*. um, that's a lot. That's pretty much everything. You're sawing off the branch we're all sitting on. If the Bible lies about Jesus - we've lost everything. Jesus mother in the Bible is declared to be a virgin. That's what it says. If we lose that, we lose a lot.

A guy like McLaren won't answer the homosexuality question. He won't answer the question of the cross or hell. All these questions they continually duck. I asked Doug Pagitt - and by the way - they're part of something called the "Emergent Village" - uh, not an organization that I am favorable toward. And Rob Bell has McLaren cover his pulpit and preach for him - so they're all working together to some degree. And I asked Doug Pagitt - we contributed to a book - they're five of us - *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches* - and National Public Radio kinda hosted a debate, discussion, conversation. Can't debate any more - you have to converse. Um, people's feelings get hurt - then they blog. [laughter].

[25.19] And so, we had a conversation - and so I asked him - is... Doug's a friend and a good guy, a guy that I personally enjoy. I said, "is it okay to be a homosexual and a Christian?" He said, "sure."

It's like, "really?" Really. I mean, they're calling into question, or outright dismissing Christian doctrine that has been established for a *really* long time. And so I would say the three lanes - that I listed first - they're friends - I don't have any, you know, grave concerns - maybe some minor disagreements.

This fourth lane of the Emergent Village - I think they've totally gotten off the highway and they're lost out in the woods. Now some of you who are here then are pastors because we have the conference coming up, and many of you are Mars Hill folk, and you would wonder - what is the result of this? Well,

give you a quote from Dr. Al Mohler - he's the president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary - he says this:

"“When it comes to issues such as the exclusivity of the gospel, the identity of Jesus Christ as both fully human and fully divine, the authority [authoritative] and character of Scripture as written revelation, and the clear teaching of Scripture concerning issues such as homosexuality, this movement simply refuses to answer the questions.” Mohler further asserts that the "emerging movement" - the emergent movement - "represents a significant challenge to biblical Christianity"

[Driscoll doesn't attribute but seems to be quoting from Baptist Press article from 23 March 2005]

[26.36] I agree with him. I think at best, it's new liberalism. At worst it could be cultish, and going in a completely new religious direction.

That being said, some of you are here wondering - why are we talking about this? Because I have to answer the question - so now I'm going to move on. Because, you know what? We don't care.

And you know what? You shouldn't care. Because what can happen is - you get so messed up and so concerned... it's so easy for Christians to wonder - "what's this Christian sayin?" and "what team am I on?" and "what does this guy think?" and "what does this blogger say about this blogger?" I'll tell you what - maybe this is what you can learn from the emerging church - you know - what false doctrine is. Maybe that's a good thing to learn.

[27.13] And what I would tell you is - when we started Mars Hill Church - I didn't start as part of the emerging church - and I wasn't reading *books* about the emerging church - and I wasn't trying to figure out what the other churches were doing. The two things we really care about - I really care about - are Jesus and the Bible.

So for me, I'm looking at the life of Jesus, reading my Bible, trying to figure out - Lord God - what do you want us to do at Mars Hill church in the city of Seattle - what is our mission and call and message? So that being said - who *cares* what the emerging church is doing? It's a junk drawer category for all kinds of different people. It's highly confusing. I'm not even sure that the description is any more of benefit of use... so please go to Acts 17 and we'll talk about something that matters.

Now, in Acts chapter 17 - this is where we launched Mars Hill Church, and this is Paul's ministry at Mars Hill - so this is actually where we get the name of our church. And in sharing this with you - I haven't preached this text since 1996 - October of '96. This was the opening night text of Mars Hill. So what I would say is - for those of you that are here - *both of you* who are here and care about this question - and those would listen online - my answer would be:

[28.28] we didn't start reading all the books on the emerging church - we started by reading the Bible. We didn't worry about what everybody was doing. We were trying to figure out what *Jesus* was up to.

That's all that really matters at the end of the day.

Names titles, teams - they come and go - but Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So I'll tell you about Jesus - this is where I get excited. The rest is just stuff I talk about at conferences... I don't know why.

So here's the deal: Jesus is GOD. NOW we're in to something good! Jesus is God. And he came into human history as a missionary. Alright? God made us - we sinned against him - he pursued us in love - his name is JESUS.

And he came as a missionary in culture - he says 39 times in John's gospel - "the Father has sent me." --

that's a missionary. He left his culture in heaven, came to earth, he spoke the language, ate the food, he wore the clothes, he celebrated the holidays - he, uh, participated in the customs of that culture. Okay? And eventually he lives without a sin - he's born of a virgin, lives without sin - eventually goes to the cross - and there he substitutes himself, and he dies in our place, for our sins, paying our debt to God - and paying our price for our salvation.

[29.36] Three days later he rises and he ascends back into heaven. And before he left, in John chapter 17, he prayed the longest prayer of any recorded prayer of Jesus in the Bible - and he prayed that you and I - who are Christians - and I know, know not all of you are - he prayed that we'd be missionaries in John 17 - he says, "Father, as you have sent me, so I am sending them" - the Christians. And Jesus prayed just prior to that, in John 17.15 - that we would not be fundamentalists or liberals. He says - Father, my prayer is not that you take them out of the world." - see, that's fundamentalism. Leave the world, turn off your TV - throw out your mp3 player, you know, find a good piece of land, put up barbed wire, load your gun, get some canned goods, read books on the rapture - freak your kids out - cause the end is near.

Right? Cause that's classic fundamentalism, right? Classic fundamentalism - separate from the culture - withdraw.

He says - my prayer is not that you take them out of the world - my prayer is that you would protect them - Jesus says - John 17.15 - from Satan - the evil one. Cause Satan's at work in the world. And he wants us to not think Biblically, not act Biblically, not live in holiness - live compromised lives of sin. And that's classic liberalism.

Jesus says, "I don't want you to be fundamentalists, and I don't want you to be liberals. I want you to be missionaries on the earth, in the culture - but not sinning - as I was, following in my example." And to lead the charge, after he ascended into heaven, Jesus came back down to save a guy named Saul - you might know him as Paul. And appointed him as the missionary to the Gentiles - me, you, us - the non-Jews.

[31.10] And so what we need to do is look at Jesus, and then Paul, as our example of what it means - individually and corporately, to take a missionary posture. And to do that, we'll go to a city called Athens - Acts 17.16 - "now while Paul was waiting for them in Athens" - so the first thing is, you've gotta pay attention to what's going on in the city. Athens was a great city. That's where Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Alexander the Great had descended from. It was the heart of Western Civilization for many generations. It is almost impossible to underestimate the influence of Greek philosophy and thought even to the present day.

And Paul went to the city. And this is incredibly important. Cities are marked by density and diversity - more kinds of people closely packed together than suburban and rural areas. If you've been at Mars Hill for any amount of time - you've heard all this before. There needs to be churches wherever there are people because God loves everyone, but cities are most strategic because culture is made in the city. The thought has been, in previous generations, that culture gets made in the East Coast i.e. New York, uh, the West Coast i.e. L.A., and that is would come into the middle of the nation.

Now we know that culture gets made in certain what they call "creative class cities" - like Seattle, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Portland, uh, Denver, Atlanta, Houston, South Beach, Manhattan, certain cities are culture making centers.

Which means Christians have, in large part, abandoned the cities and are in every then, *downstream* from culture. And they'll complain - "we don't like what's on TV; we don't like what's on the radio; we don't like where culture is heading; we don't like what the politicians are offering. Well the answer is, like Paul then - you need to get into the city. Cause the city is where culture is made and it flows from the city downstream to the suburban and rural areas.

[33.03] And even if a church is ministering in a suburban or rural area, it still needs to pay attention to the city, and send resources in to plant churches to reach the city. Because in the city - that's where the students are, that's where the universities are, that's where the lawyers are, that's where the bankers are, that's where the television stations, radio stations, newspapers, the media gatekeepers, the bands, the record labels, the concert venues, the art galleries, the fashion industry - everything is in the city. Transportation comes into the city. Goods and services come from the city. If you wanna change the world, you've gotta reach the city.

So much so, that Paul's ministry was from city to city in the book of Acts. He almost overlooks the outlying areas altogether. By about 300AD, the historians tell us, that about half of the people who lived in Roman cities were Christians - 90% of those who lived on the farm were pagans. And 'pagan' means "one who lives on the farm."

So people today are freaking out saying, oh my goodness, we live in a non-Christian world - and it's all urban, and everyone lives in the city - what are we gonna do? And my answer is? This is nothing new. This is exactly how Christianity started - in a very spiritual, NOT Christian, urban environment. Nothing new.

He goes on then. "his spirit was provoked within him as he saw the city was full of idols." First thing, pay attention to the city. Second thing, "look for the idolatry."

There were each made to worship. And the question is not "will we worship?" but "who or what will we worship?" If we don't worship Jesus, we will still worship. Our time, our talent, our treasure. It will go to food - we'll worship our stomach. It will go to relationships - we'll worship a person. It'll go to our family, to our children, to our jobs, to our intellect, to our INCOME. We worship sex, and fame and power and money and glory...and what that means that for some people is a restaurant is a temple. For some people a sports venue is a temple. For some people a flat screen TV is a temple, and for some people another human being who is willing to be "in it" with them is a TEMPLE. And we go there to worship - to give our self - to the person, the thing, the cause, the experience.

[35.10] And it's easier to see idolatry in someone else's culture than it is in our own. We tend to be blind to it. Just see it as entertainment or hobby, or as, uh, personal preference for cultural enjoyment. Go to the city and see what people are doing with their time, talent, and treasure. Who or what are they worshipping other than Jesus.

And then his third point is to talk to people about Jesus. Verse 17. "so he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons and in the marketplace with those who happened to be there." Paul demonstrates two methods - this is what a missionary does. For those who are Jewish - they believe in the Old Testament - so he reasons from the scriptures. You'll see in a minute -for those who do not have a background in the Bible - he reasons TO the scriptures from the culture. But what he does nonetheless is he talks to people about Jesus.

If you're at Mars Hill, we want you to talk to friends, family, co-workers, about JESUS. If you're not a Christian, we would love to talk to YOU about Jesus, and what I find curious among churches, is they ask questions like, "what are emerging churches do reach lost people" - and my answer is, "generally, NOTHING."

Emerging churches are taking the disgruntled children of evangelical mega-churches and re-orienting them into cool-hip services where they complain about their parents church. That's not the point. The point is to get people who don't know Jesus, and introduce them to Jesus, which means rather than reading books about bad the church is, it's better to go out and talk to non-Christians about Jesus.

So, if you're here - and you're not a Christian - we'd love to talk to you about Jesus. If your Christian

friend brought you - ask them questions on the way home about JESUS. And if you are a person that goes to Mars Hill church - talk to your neighbor about Jesus!

[36.47] Don't worry about what every emerging church or whatever group is doing. Across the street from you, upstairs from you in the dorm or apartment complex is somebody. Go up there [knocking sound] and say howdy. Talk to them. I know it's a CRAZY, innovative, revolutionary idea. But you could talk to them. You might not even have to text message - you could actually do it face to face [laughter] and have an old school conversation. Just something to pray about.

And the point is you go into the city, you see what is goin' on, and you talk to people about Jesus. And when you do, some will criticize you - take it from me.

That happens here, in, uh, verse 18. "Some the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with Paul, and some said 'what does this babbler wish to say?' Others said 'he seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities' because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection." As soon as you say Jesus is God and he died for your sins and he rose for your salvation, some people are gonna criticize you - make fun of you. You're an idiot. Didn't you go to college? That's old thinking. We're into the new spirituality.

[37.48] Now, if you got to Mars Hill, you need to know this - I have lots of critics - praise be to God - and, additionally, they tend to fall into two categories. Uh, people who are very sinful and people who are very religious. Which, in some ways, is the same guy. But just with a different outlook, okay, now.

Because I believe Jesus calls sinful people to repent of sin, and religious people to repent of religion. And when he calls sinners to repentance - when he says, "stop sleeping with your girlfriend... stop stealing, stop lying, start reading your bible, stop worshiping false gods, stop being involved in Wicca. Whatever it is you're into - if it's not Jesus - you're into the wrong thing." All the religious people say [clap-clap] "Yeah, get 'em!"

And then you look at the religious people and say you're not very loving, you're not humble, you're not nice... you're the guys who murdered Jesus. They don't take that well at all. [laughter] And Jesus called sinners to repent of sin, and religious people to repent of religion. And the sinners actually love Jesus, and the religious people tended to hate him the most. Which means, if you're at Mars Hill, it'll be very confusing, because truthfully, in the same day, I have gotten shot by people nationally who are all about free sex and pornography, and fundamentalist pastors who preach out of the King James Bible.

[38.53] Okay? I'm a unifier, not a divider. I bring together the dude in the dress and the dude in the suit into a coalition. That's my gift to the body of Christ [laughing, clapping]

And it makes it fun, at least for me. But you're going to get critics - of some sort or kind. Right? You're gonna get... and that's okay. And some people say - I don't want to talk about Jesus because somebody's not gonna like it. No you say - I love you, I try to be humble, you may disagree with me, but let me talk to you about Jesus. And you can criticize me, and I'm gonna love you some more because - Jesus loves you - that's why.

Additionally, verse 19 "and they took hold of him, they grabbed him, brought him to the A - that's Mars Hill - that's where we get our name. Saying 'may we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting, for you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean. Now all the Athenians - you could substitute Seattleites - and foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

Alright. Use the conversational portals and outlets to get into the cultural discourse. That's the next point. In that day, Mars Hill was the court where the Athenian philosophers would gather, perhaps 30 men, and they would sort of oversee the teaching in the city. Socrates had been there many years before Paul. And so everyone would gather and they'd just talk about all the latest ideas. This is their

version of talk radio, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, blogging. This is their version.

[40.13] Which means if you're here and you're a Christian, you're a missionary, right? Wherever people are talking, conversing, coffee shop, home, you know - Texas Hold 'Em tourney. Whatever you're IN to, your, I dunno - you're out for dinner visiting with your friends - whatever the conversations of life and discourse occur - Christians are to be there - lovingly, graciously, talking about Jesus. And this includes online. Alright? That's why truthfully, we put as much as we can for free online. That's why we have a website. That's why we're at iTunes. That's why we're at Facebook. That's why we're at MySpace. That's why we're at YouTube.

That's why we put out as much as we can, because those are networks and communities where people get together for conversation. And to be honest with you, I'm shocked at what a big deal it is. Again - 10 times more people listen online than attend at Mars Hill. And like I started a Facebook account - which is weird, cause I'm not in college, and I already have a wife, so I don't need to meet girls [laughter]

So I started a Facebook account. And I got like 4 and a half thousand friends! Now not friends like we're going to get matching sweatshirts and ride a tandem bike - I think we should have a word other than "friends." But friends with people who got a lot of questions about Jesus, and some are asking for churches and books, and it's just an opportunity to further discuss Jesus. And to help some people come to know him. Paul did that. And so, in our discussion - you know - coffee shops and dinner parties and hanging out with your friends and getting' into sports rec league and having a community group and opening up your home and bringing over your family friends and neighbors - these are all little Mars Hills - little conversation portals to talk to people about Jesus.

[41.45] The next point then, he's gonna talk about - or we're going to see, rather - is him contextualizing the gospel - verse 22. "So Paul standing in the midst of the Areopagus - or Mars Hill - said, 'men of Athens' - he says the same thing Aristotle said - "I perceive that in every way you are very religious. Some of your translations will say you're really "spiritual." Their day was very spiritual but not into Jesus, just like our day is very spiritual but not into Jesus. I've spoken innumerable people - and I'll ask them questions like, "are you spiritual?" "oh yes, I'm very spiritual" "what do you do?" "I pray" "who do you pray to?" "uh, God" "well, who's God?" "I dunno!"

They, they - don't know! They like to pray and they don't know who they're prayin' to! Why do you want to be a good steward of the environment and recycle? "well, I believe, God made the earth and we need to take care of it!" "okay, great - which god?" "I dunno... whatever god made the earth... I dunno who it is!" There are a lot of very spiritual people doing what they perceive to be very spiritual things but they don't know anything about Jesus.

It was the same way for Paul in Athens. So he says - I see you're very spiritual. I see you're very religious. For as I passed along and observed the object of your worship I also found an altar with this inscription "To the Unknown God" - let me explain to you what happened here.

[42.55] A plague broke out - people are dying. Their Greek view of the gods and goddess is that they're mean, capricious, and nasty. So they think the gods must be punishing us. So they decided - we'll let sheep go - wherever the sheep lay down, we'll sacrifice the sheep to the god of that area to appease them so that the plague won't continue. Well the sheep lay down in some areas where they didn't know whether there were any gods or not. And so they built little altars to the unknown god, and sacrificed for that unknown deity. So as Paul is walking, he's like, "unknown god, unknown god, unknown god." ... It's no different than Seattle. It's no different in Seattle or most major cities in the nation where people believe in God and don't know who he is.

It goes on to say: "what therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you." I'll explain who God is. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything since he himself

gives to all mankind life, and breath, and everything. And he made from one man - that's Adam - every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and boundaries of their dwelling place - that they should seek God, in the hope that he might feel, that *they* might, rather, feel their way toward him and find him, yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for - he quotes Epimenides from 600 BC - "in him we live and move and have our being. And as some of your own poets" - your own rock stars - "have said" - he quotes Aratus From 300BC - "for we are indeed his offspring"

[44.23] Now what Paul is doing here - he's contextualizing the gospel. He goes to their place. Speaks their language. He puts argument together in their form, philosophically, of understanding. He quotes their own poets - their own rock stars as it were - because he's trying to contextualize the gospel. What we're not talking about here is changing the doctrine but contextualizing the style.

A - Allowing people to meet Jesus without lots of cultural baggage and inhibitors. Paul said it this way in 1 Cor 9, "I became all things to all men, so that by all means I might save as many as possible - I do this all for the sake of the gospel that I might share in its blessing." Again - doctrine doesn't change, but methodology does. Timeless truth, timely method.

And here's the truth. And this is where traditional or establishing churches - back to the question - this is where they freak out. "You can't change the way we do church - because that will be: compromise." My answer is no. Every single church *is* culturally contextualized. For example pews didn't come into existence until the 13th century. Before that all Christians stood for their church service. So any church that's sitting down is experiencing a cultural contextualization of the gospel. Any church that has mass print Bibles, hymnals, books for sale - they're experiencing a 15th century contextualization of the gospel, whereby the printing press was invented by Johannes Gutenberg. Before that there was no such thing as mass market printing and media.

[45.53] Additionally, fast forward to the, uh - 19th century... late 19th century. At that point what is invented - and the church benefits from - is - sound systems and Pas. So any church that has a sound system is experiencing a 19th century contextualization. Fast forward to the 20th century - anyone who listens to a radio preacher is experiencing a 20th century innovation. In 1995, the internet went public. Anyone who logs on to a website to find the church they want to attend is experiencing, a 1995, 20th century technological contextualization of the gospel.

And so my point is simply this: it's not whether or not a church contextualizes, it's to what YEAR. Get me point? Some churches are on the cutting edge of the 17th century [laughter] Right on the cutting edge. Right? If you walk into a church that doesn't do screens, it's not on the edge of the 21st century, and I'm not saying its sinful, bad, or wrong, but there are more televisions than people in America - and people live with a screen - between their computer and television - and their phone, and whatever, you know - multimedia device they have. Screens are a 21st century adaptation of technology for Christian faith. We use them rightly.

If you walk into a church, and you know - they guy's really happy - tucks his shirt in, has feathered hair, a polo shirt, and, you know, is real happy, and has shadow fonts for all of his PowerPoint - that's the 1980s, right - you know that! You're goin' - "that's '86 - I love Don Johnson - rock" [laughter] you know, and...

You know, I can moon walk - this is awesome - I feel at home, you know?

Every church is contextualized to a time - the question is - is it most effective - is it most efficient - is it lowering the threshold of accessibility to church, and Jesus and the teaching of the Bible? That's why at Mars Hill we have our own music - we write our own songs - that's why I speak English. I don't speak Dearly-Beloved-ism. I get in trouble for this all the time. Dearly-Beloved-ism is the guy that gets up and, [lower voice] "Dearly beloved..." [chuckles]. One of the first churches I went to as a new Christian; guy

got up he's like, [low voice] "dearly beloved" - I'm like, "beloved? I just got here, man" "we're not beloved, dude - you and me, that weirds me out" And he's like, "uh, I.. We're gonna beseech th" beseech? Does that... that sounds like it'll hurt - I don't know if I wanna be beseeched. I don't know what we're talkin' about here - you gotta speak English. My dad's a construction worker and I just rolled in - you know - I don't know what we're talkin' about!

[48.27] If he'd got up and said, "welcome." I'd be like, "okay, now I'm with ya." "dear God" - okay, I'm with ya. But the Holy-Beloved-ism is just weird. I don't speak Holy-Beloved-ism - there's a reason for that.

I dress in regular clothes. At least what I consider to be regular clothes, right? I don't come in a suit, because I... I don't like em! And, uh... I think the Jesus t-shirts are funny. And this one is from Urban Outfitters - it's D.J. Jazzy Jesus, and uh, and if you think about it - here's what's weird: at Urban Outfitters they're selling Jesus t-shirts! But if you ask the kids selling the Jesus t-shirts - they haduh - t-shirt of his mother Mary - uh... THEY believe in the Virgin Birth. I mean, bizarre... Urban Outfitters does and the emerging pastors r like - "I dunno." Well, go to Urban Outfitters and ask the non-Christian kids in the Virgin Mary t-shirt. - [laughter] he'll tell you it happened!

Even though he's goin' to hell, wearing the Virgin Mary shirt - at least he's got that settled. I mean it's just weird. It's just a weird day - that's my point.

And that's why we have a website, and that's why we use technology, and that's why we use video... it's all just cultural adaptation so more people can meet Jesus - that's all. Alright. It includes service times as well. So, you know - our campuses have different service times - but like, at this campus we've got two morning, three evenings, what time's the last one? 8:30pm! Because our city is filled with single people who can't get up 'till the crack of *dinner* [laughter] - so we're gonna reach them! But seriously - I'm preaching the 8:30 - we started this service not too long ago - people continually show up late with bedhead! [laughter] [fake yawn] - It's like ... it's like "it's 9 o'clock!" What were you doing?? "I dunno, I dunno...!" [sigh] Alright - welcome all you guild leaders - you know - Jesus died for you too! [laughter] Gee-whiz! I mean it's crazy. So.

[50.12] But it's just tryin' to find ways to welcome everybody and love 'em. Okay, you got the point.

Verse 29. Contextualization. Verse 29 - "Being then God's offspring," Paul says, "we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or a stone or an image formed the art and the imagination of man. In times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent." Now he's getting' kinda fundamentalist, uh - "because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man" - that's Jesus - "whom he's appointed. And of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." - that's the resurrection of Jesus.

In addition to contextualizing, Paul is here also *contending* for the gospel. He says it this way in Jude 3, "to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the Christian saints." That means not only we do we - try 'n do Christianity in a way that's culturally accessible - we also need to make sure that we defend the distinctive truth claims of the Bible, Jesus, and the historic Christian faith. Here, what he is saying, first of all - Zeus is not god! Jesus is! First thing. There's one God - his name is Jesus. That was VERY controversial.

Secondly, he said God is the Creator - and he made the earth and all the people on it. That was controversial, because they believed in an eternal universe. They didn't believe there was a Creator or a Creation. He said furthermore - you're all sinners. And they didn't believe that - and need to repent of your sin - and they didn't believe that - and he said - if you don't, you'll be judged by Jesus in the end. He's the one who rose from death. They didn't believe that God made them; they didn't believe that they were sinners; they didn't believe they needed to repent; they didn't believe that God would judge them; they didn't believe that ANYONE rose from death; and they didn't believe there was any eternal

consequence like heaven or hell.

And Paul here is contending. He's saying: this is really what the Bible says. This really is what Jesus taught - this really is what Christians believe - this really is the heart of all that it means to be a faithful Christian.

[52.02] And so in as much as possible, we can contextualize, but at certain points we cannot change what we believe because that would cause us to be false teachers, heretics, and compromisers, and we need to be *contenders*. Contenders for what is true.

Now in saying this, I believe part of the problem with what is known as the emerging church is what my friend D.A. Carson outlines in a book on, uh, First Corinthians. And he said that one generation believes something, the next generation assumes it, and the third generation denies it. That's what's happening. There was a day where the Bible and Jesus and the Trinity and sin and heaven and hell was believed. And then there was the proliferation of sorta soft - what we'll call "seeker churches" - that didn't deny those things, but sorta assumed them. And didn't stress them. Now their children raise up, and they *deny them* - and that's what's happening.

Which is why contending is so incredibly important. To make sure that we clearly declare what it means to be Christian; and so I'll tell you.

There is one God.

There is one God, and he is the maker and heaven of earth.

And he made us in his image and likeness, male and female with dignity, value, worth, and purpose. He made us to worship. And we chose to sin against him - to rebel against him - to disobey him. As a result we are separated from God and we live under the foolish myth that to some degree we are each our own god - declaring right and wrong and living our own life by our own standards. And that God lovingly came into human history as the man Jesus Christ - fully God, fully man. That he was born of a virgin, and he lived a life without sin though he was tempted in every way as we are. And he went to the cross, and there he substituted himself. Our first parents in the garden substituted themselves for God, and at the cross Jesus reversed that substitution and substituted himself for sinners. And when Jesus went to the cross, he took willingly upon him, the SIN of those who would come to trust in him - that means me! As a sinner - Jesus went to a cross and took upon himself all my sin - past, present, and future.

And Jesus Christ - God who was a man - died in my place, for my sins, paying my debt to my God, and purchasing my salvation. Jesus' dead body was then laid in a tomb, and for three days, he was buried. And the third day - a Sunday, which is why we worship on that day - Jesus rose in victory over Satan, sin, death, demons, and hell. And he commissioned us - with the Holy Spirit - to be missionaries telling this amazingly good news that there's a God who passionately, lovingly, continually, relentlessly pursues us. And he ascended into heaven, and today Jesus is alive and well. And he's seated on a throne. And he is ruling and reigning over all nations and all cultures and all philosophies and all races and all periods of time. He is ruling over moderns and postmoderns and women and men and children and the elderly and the rich and the poor and the wise and the simple and the black and the white and those who are living and those who are dead and those who have been born and those who will be born and he is King of Kings and he is Lord of Lords, and he is ruling and reigning over all people commanding everyone everywhere to repent of everything and he is coming again to judge the living and the dead and those who trust in him will enjoy eternity in his kingdom of heaven forever, and those who do not will suffer apart from him in the conscious eternal torments of hell!!

That is what we believe! We believe in JESUS! [applause]

[55.53] And I know! I know that some of you don't like that! And - and the case was the same in the days of Paul. Which brings me to my last point - that he says it this way - Luke does, "Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. Others said: we will hear you again about this. So

Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined them and believed - among whom were Dionysius of the Aeropagite and a member of the Mars Hill court and a woman named Damaris - probably a common woman - and others with them.

When JESUS is lifted up, when Jesus is made much of, when Jesus' name is declared with authority and power - not just as our example, but as our savior - not just our example, but our redeemer - not just as our example, but as our King of Kings and Lord of Lords there are three reactions. One is contempt. As Paul experienced - roll their eyes and reject the option - and say, "this is ridiculous - this is old religion - this is Christianity- uh, we're tired of this. Have you nothing new?" No there IS no such thing as a "new kind of Christian." There's just Christians who love Jesus, believe the Bible, repent of sin and trust in him alone.

There are those who have contempt.

There are others who have curiosity. Perhaps some of you have contempt, you know, "I can't believe I got drug here by my friend! He just told me I'm goin' to hell - I KNEW he's a fundamentalist - I KNEW it!"

Now, I LOVE ya - and you're going to Hell. But I love ya and you don't need to go to Hell! You say, "I don't like hell!" Great! Jesus! Now you don't need to go to hell! You're welcome.

Now - for those of you who have curiosity, right? Ask your friends who are Christians 'n brought you - join a community group. Come forward for prayer afterward. Send in your questions via e-mail. Let us answer your questions. Continue to pursue your curiosity. And if you pursue the truth, you'll end up worshipping, loving, knowing: Jesus!

And some are converted. Some say, "you know what? I believe in Jesus. I believe he lived, died, rose in my place, for my sins - he's my great God and savior - and I want him to change my life now, and I want my life to be lived with him forever." If that's you, we would beg - IMPLORE you - to give your life to Jesus today. To confess your sin and trust in him. Become a Christian. You can do that in prayer in your seat.

[58.07] Here's what we're all about: Jesus.

The emerging church will come and go. The traditional church will come and go. The church of Jesus Christ will continue on, because Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So here's my promise to you Mars Hill: we will always be about Jesus. As long as I'm here. Furthermore, we'll do all we can to welcome as many as we can through as many cultural mediums and adaptations as we possibly can - to know the Jesus of the Bible - without changing any of our doctrinal convictions - because our goal is not just to be fruitful, it's also to be faithful.

For those of you who are Christian - we would call you today to repent of sin and continue to trust in Jesus. For those of you who are non-Christians today - we would encourage you to become Christians - to repent of sin, and trust in Jesus.

And we're now going to give you an opportunity to respond. A couple ways that we do that at Mars Hill: prayer and repentance. Get things right between you and God. If you are Christian, you're welcome to take communion with us, which is remembering the body and blood of Jesus who takes away sin and gives us salvation. Give of your tithes and offerings so that the ministry of Jesus can continue. And lastly, we're going to stay, we're going to sing, and we're going to celebrate: we'll raise our hands, we'll raise our voices, we'll raise our heart and our minds... to Jesus. He's alive and well - and unlike anyone and anything, he is worthy of all worship and praise. And so now is YOUR chance Mars Hill to worship Jesus. To make much of his name. In a place that desperately needs to know how absolutely altogether wonderful he is. Amen?

Thank you, I'll pray.

Lord Jesus - we are all about you, we're ONLY about you, we're continually about you - we're thoroughly about you. May your name be made much of. May YOUR fame be declared to the city and the nations. Lord Jesus - may YOUR people speak of the goodness of your work in their life. Holy Spirit, I ask that if there are any here that do not know love, serve, belong to, adore, trust in, follow Jesus - that you would give them hearts to receive - minds to believe - wills to desire to do so. Lord Jesus for those who do know you - it is my prayer that the heart of this church would continually burn for you. That our Bible...  
[1.00]

**[End]**