

PAOC 2020 INITIATIVE CONVERSATIONS re SPIRITUAL AND THEOLOGICAL VITALITY

Fall 2014 /Spring 2015 Cross-Canada Tour - Executive Summary of Feedback



SPIRITUAL VITALITY

1. What does Spiritual Vitality look like in the life of a LEADER?

- Living and showing that spirituality is practical and authentic (borne out of finding security in relationship with Christ).
- Engaging in the Word of God in fresh ways by praying the Scriptures and reading using different versions. Memorize Scripture regularly.
- Making fasting a regular and scheduled part of your spiritual disciplines. Do it individually and in family/small group settings. Be accountable. Share what God is doing.
- Write out prayers – allows you to look back and see God’s faithfulness. See it as writing back to God, as we take in His written Word.
- Intentional scheduling of regular prayer times each day when/where is best. Find location(s) that work best (i.e. private room, church balcony, office early, vehicle, etc.)
- Keep a running list of people and things to pray for. Practice listening prayer times, not just speaking prayer times.
- Ensure your ‘spiritual antenna’ is connected to God. Maintain that connection the entire day.
- Be very intentional about finding places to receive ministry personally (i.e. Pastors retreats, camps, conferences, etc.)
- Learn what is for you and what is for the Church. We must seek our Father for what He says to us personally, not just what He is saying to the Church.
- Maintain a Sabbath. Rest. Make time to live in the Word and in prayer – helps prevent burnout. Reduce noise in your world – seek some quiet, remove technology.
- Actively engage in worship services when you are not involved in leading them.
- Listen to podcasts during the week – learn from others and from their preaching.
- Spiritual vitality is measured by our obedience to the Spirit. First understand, then obey.
- Go on prayer walks in your community. Develop a deep passion for those without Christ, asking God to help you find ways to engage and share faith with them.
- Live in community by networking with other pastors, building intentional relationships. Find mentors who will speak the truth in love.
- Incorporate S.O.A.P. method in your spiritual disciplines: Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer

2. What does Spiritual Vitality look like in the life of the LOCAL CHURCH?

- Build up the body: Incorporate reading of Scripture and public prayers, using various readers. Allow for testimonies to be shared to acknowledge and celebrate God’s goodness.
- Encourage people to make daily decisions around Biblical values
- Put spiritual formation first. Have a “Foundations” course. Make time for intentional disciple-making at all ages, levels of understanding.
- Schedule weekly prayer times incorporating dimensions of prayer (listening prayer, worship prayer, ministry prayer, listening prayer, resting, prayer, etc.)
- Host an annual prayer retreat.
- Encourage corporate fasting, expecting the supernatural to occur.
- Stir up a healthy understanding of the Holy Spirit. Correct as necessary.
- Held a “31 Days of Prayer and Reading” using the book of Proverbs (church printed a booklet for the congregation to use).
- As pastor, talk regularly about your own commitment to prayer and Bible reading. Help people develop a hunger to do likewise.
- Presence of the Spirit must be evident through us in the church and also in the marketplace each day.
- Teach regularly on the moving of the Holy Spirit, gifts, speaking in tongues/interpretation
- Create prayer times within your service schedule that encourage and enable people to pray, on their own and with one another

- Prayer groups that meet at various times of the day (early morning to later evening) to accommodate everyone's daily schedules/responsibilities
- Teach on learning to hear God's voice and responding.
- Teach the next generation to know the Word (i.e. Bible memorization, drills, meta-narrative, encourage daily reading and journaling, etc.)
- Encourage congregants to make the Sunday sermon their daily devotions for that week, reflecting and re-reading what was shared.
- Encourage and help to establish relationships within the Body. Include the mentoring between older and younger.

HIGHER PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP

3. What kills vision in your church?

- Share vision and approach others in love, rather than judgment or shock
- Lack of communication, clarity and/or consistency in articulating the vision. Weak leadership core.
- Expectation that the senior pastor must do/be involved in everything.
- Own agenda rather than an agenda that has its origin in the Kingdom (ie. Based on personal demands of life rather than Biblical mandates)
- Rallying around a cause rather than the mission.
- Limited finances. Limited prayer.
- Focus on peripheral items over mission
- Dealing with discipline issues, criticism or conflict.
- Lack of buy-in, apathy or unity in the body. Lack of support for pastor/leadership.
- Lack of strategy / action steps to move the vision forward.
- Exhaustion. No margin. Lack of or limited volunteer base.

4. What will kill this collective 2020 vision?

- Lack of buy in, cynicism, complacency
- Not getting outside the church walls – limited interaction with those who don't know Jesus
- Focusing more on numbers than on the purpose of the vision
- Hastily making disciples that don't become grounded in their faith.
- Lack of communication to churches to how to implement the vision.
- Not having a healthy dissatisfaction with where we are. Allow for self-evaluation and accountability.
- Not following those chosen to lead the vision, taking responsibility to support the vision
- Lack of planning for church planting (who, where, when). Effective training/mentoring for planters. Investment into planters.
- Expectation that 'others' will do the work (i.e. other churches, districts, international office)

5. Is the 'way of love' really the highest principle?

- "Love" has been redefined by society today. Church can take on society's view rather than having a Biblical view. Clearly define "way of love".
- Acceptance does not mean approval (i.e. woman caught in adultery)
- In today's culture, the standard of holiness has changed. Tolerance is huge. Love truth, according to Biblical standards.
- Exhibit love, with room for discipline. Use wisdom.
- Love swallows pride and selfishness and serves others.
- Love connects the diversity of parts under Christ.

6. Relational Vitality – Step to encourage greater effectiveness

- Develop opportunities for people to connect. Help them get to know one another.
- Cultivate respect, grace and honour. Respect differences.
- Define what is essential to build unity and what is essential to authentic relationships.

- Encourage fellowship, sharing, decisions made for the good of the whole; encourage people to express themselves in small groups.
- Develop a climate of trust, with no hidden agendas.
- Encourage and teach on loyalty. Do what you can to establish a secure context so people are not hurt easily.

THEOLOGICAL VITALITY

1. Do you see evidence in your church of what the CBES survey reported?

- Missing the younger generation. Church doesn't focus on Scripture teaching with kids. Separating children from their family/not seeing parents as examples. Parents need prompters on how to teach/engage their children effectively in the Word.
- See lack of Bible knowledge in first-year Bible school students
- Observed low numbers attending Bible studies. Self-absorbed society.
- Do an anonymous survey to determine where each person is at in their Bible knowledge so we can teach/preach accordingly
- Fruit of the Spirit / Biblical truths and values not evident in people's daily lives.
- Topical sermons more popular than expository teaching/preaching
- People are reading less. Parents are not teaching the Bible to their kids. Limited importance placed on the Word in the family home. Busy lives/limited Scripture/God-centred conversations.
- Public reading/engaging in Scripture is very limited in church settings.
- People challenge Scripture with their own truth.

2. Are you or how are you helping people process what we believe about the Bible?

- Getting them into the Word – each book points them to Christ.
- Separating Christian psychology trends from Biblical truth
- Systematic presentation of the Scripture
- Pursue materials that help people discover the truths of God's Word, rather than just bringing in guest speakers
- Help people know where to start/begin in their studies of the Word. Read – Meditate – Listen – Come together and share what God is saying
- Celebrate with testimonies of what God has done/is doing so people know God's Word and power to be real and real for today.
- By comparing the Old Testament with the New Testament
- By doing topical studies together - provide fill-in-the-blank hand-outs (keeps people engaged).
- Having an "Ask the Pastor" night
- Explain the Bible as our authority/the Truth
- Small groups in homes during the week with sermon-aligned studies.
- Teach quarterly seminars on "How to Read the Bible" for both new and seasoned believers, at various ages/stages of life.
- Encourage Bible reading challenges (E100, 90-day, 40-day)
- Have adult Christian education class/Bible studies in your church (study based - different than Sunday sermons). Do likewise for all age groups. Must be active Bible studies, beyond Sunday school stories and basic topics.
- Young people having open forum/conversations about the Bible. Ask questions / get answers (interactive)
- Apply the Bible context to people's contexts today. Give time for people to process.
- Preach/teach through the PAOC's Statement of Faith/Fundamental and Essential Truths – know what we believe and why

3. Are you or how are you helping people interact with the Bible?

- Use a social media feed to encourage people in reading the Word. Post/send out Scripture passages, questions, study points, etc.
- Print a reading plan in your bulletin or sermon notes. Send out through social media. Post on church website. Talk about it. Have people share highlights, challenges, insights, life-change.

<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage use of apps. Make recommendations and give reasons why (i.e. YouVersion, Gideon Bible app...) Have them track with you.
<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage reading in community – share the reading experience (with spouse, as a family, in small group, Bible study setting).
<input type="checkbox"/> Targeting households / families. Parents' responsibility with their children.
<input type="checkbox"/> Stand while reading the Bible – Make it a priority. Show importance of God's Word to us as we receive it.
<input type="checkbox"/> Visit other churches to see how they engage. Ask others what they do. View church websites and social media.
<input type="checkbox"/> Observe the church calendar. Prepare in advance.
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide resources for Bible reading program options – hard copy and online
<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate a Q&A format. Can ask, write or tweet questions. Allow time for discussion and digesting.
<input type="checkbox"/> Set those in counselling sessions to the Scriptures for answers/Biblical principles. Daily bread for living well.
<input type="checkbox"/> Use a Bible when teaching/preaching. Visual reminder of importance of the Word.
<input type="checkbox"/> Use real-life experiences to help people know how to apply God's Word to their own situations.
4. Are you or how are you helping people talk with other people about the Bible?
<input type="checkbox"/> Teach parents how to effectively engage God's Word with their children.
<input type="checkbox"/> Set a passionate example as leadership to engage in conversation about the Scriptures.
<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage people to be in the Word daily so it's fresh. Teach them how/what to share with unbelievers.
<input type="checkbox"/> Read the Bible as one book (novel like format). Can be easier for conversation to spark re story lines.
<input type="checkbox"/> Teach the plan of salvation as laid out in Scripture (Roman's Road). Memorize Scriptures together to build confidence in sharing.
<input type="checkbox"/> Teach on how to share faith and scripture with others. Give opportunity to practice among friends before going into the community.
5. Are you or how are you helping people remove the dullness/routine of devotions/Bible reading/family devotions?
<input type="checkbox"/> Show how the Bible is chronologically laid out. Help readers understand the timeline, overarching themes. Use acronym: CASKET EMPTY (Creation, Abraham, Sinai, Kings, Exile, Temple, Expectations, Messiah, Pentecost, Teachers, Yet to come)
<input type="checkbox"/> Help people to take the Word in its context, not just portions.
<input type="checkbox"/> Listen to an audio Bible. Take advantage of technology.
<input type="checkbox"/> Give out Daily Bread booklets (available in various languages).
<input type="checkbox"/> Produced a "STEP Journal" (journal with Bible reading plan). STEP= Scripture, Teaching, Experience, Prayer. Guide for reading Bible in one year. Entire leadership team uses it together to set example for entire congregation.
<input type="checkbox"/> Videotaped congregation members sharing what God has spoken to them through His Word during the week and how they have grown.
<input type="checkbox"/> Use "The Life Journal" by Wayne Cordeiro (ties into "The Divine Mentor")
<input type="checkbox"/> Have kids (adults too) show off their memorization abilities or have fun with Bible quizzing. Will encourage others to do likewise.
<input type="checkbox"/> Teach on how to meditate on the Word.
6. What might you be willing to try in your church to see a more healthy engagement with the Bible?
<input type="checkbox"/> Sing Scripture. Pray Scripture. Read Scripture. Quote Scripture. Post Scripture. Be excited about Scripture!
<input type="checkbox"/> Commit a verse to memory and apply it to your life this week. Come back and share how it went.
<input type="checkbox"/> Do a One-Year through the Bible with the whole church. Provide Bible reading plans.
<input type="checkbox"/> More public reading. Post Scriptures on website. Weekly Scripture promises sent out to congregation through social media.
<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate usage of different versions of Scripture. Use of Lectionary.
<input type="checkbox"/> Discipleship programs like Alpha, BG Clubs, etc. Put resources in families' hands to empower them to walk through the Bible with their kids.
<input type="checkbox"/> Make it oral once again – read out loud! Challenge people if they believe that it's true!
<input type="checkbox"/> Give opportunities to sign up for small groups in the week to interact with the message/Scripture passage shared.

THEOLOGICAL VITALITY

7. As you prepare sermons, does your approach to interpreting Scripture lean more toward a “traditional Pentecostal reading” or an evangelical “historical critical” approach? Why is this your preferred approach?

- Hybrid - two methods are not exclusive. Use both—they can't be separated. Take time to establish a historical critical approach, then ask the Spirit to give direction in conveying the message in a way that listeners will understand and grasp.
- Trust Spirit to give supernatural understanding of context of Scripture for us in modern explanation/teaching. Historical for prep/Pentecostal for appl'n.
- Safety/caution in leaning heavily on side of historical critical as the foundation, but also include Pentecostal hermeneutic.
- Traditional Pentecostal is the natural approach for a Spirit-filled believer.
- Position your preparation with “Lord, speak to me ... speak to us”. Approach Scripture as being “alive” / Living Word of God.
- Develop confidence that the Pentecostal approach is valid and has a lot of richness (particularly in Luke and Acts)
- 80-90% historical critical approach because text creates the sermon. Also, trained in this method. Others record 60/40; 50/50 split.
- See generational differences when discussing this with 5-6 different pastors.

8. When we read scripture, is the work of the Spirit restricted to illuminating the message the author intended to convey?

- Holy Spirit illuminates/expands the historical text, helping us understand so we can respond with our lives
- One interpretation – multiple applications. Content does not change.
- No, however we teach beyond culture of the day. Spirit can use text to speak His truth to us outside of the author's context. Be in relationship with God.
- Personal experiences can affect the way we read.
- The Holy Spirit makes His Word come alive. Can be illuminated through individuals.
- Author wrote to a specific group of people – didn't see then how it would be read or studied in future.

9. How can we ensure that a Spirit- inspired reading of Scripture does not end up interpreting the text to mean whatever we want it to mean?

- Take responsibility for what God is saying to you.
- Practically, preach on the weekend then create a discussion paper for home groups to use during the week (keep people on track)
- Accountability, humility, authenticity on part of those sharing the Word.
- Explore the meta-narrative – Does it fit in the whole?
- Use tools, but realize they do not come from a neutral vantage point.
- Checks and balances in the larger PAOC community. Ask, “Does that sound like something God has done before”? Know God's Biblical voice.
- Dare to do the tedious work. It is hard work when we attempt to interpret texts.

10. How do you encourage your people to interpret the Bible well?

- Work hard to help people read the text (often they don't know how). Encourage reading, with maturity.
- Mentor. Lead others to be intentional, to dig deep, to be in relationship. Guard against bad hermeneutics.
- Have repetition. Keep the Word before the people always. Preach exegetically well.
- Encourage reading of the entire story. Many resources available today to help with this. See the bigger picture / God's plan for mankind.
- Teach people to pray first, then study, but listen for the voice of God. Spirit knows the needs of the hearer.
- Be in community. Study in a group – good for guidance and accountability in what is being interpreted.
- Know your audience. Defend truth. People's issues can be matters of discipleship- bring to light and correct– critical if we are going to reach our mission.
- Need guidance of Holy Spirit. Test prophetic words: Go to Scripture first, then to elders. Always go back to Scripture. Must align with God's character.
- Encourage use of a devotional book so as to not have only your own interpretation, and also recommend commentaries for deeper study.
- Align curriculum used in small group studies with sermon themes. Read/study in context, not just one verse at a time.
- Appeal to PAOC Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths and position papers.

