

We Cry Out

Young Christian leaders today crave authentic faith. Here  are seven passions of the next generation.

1. A Cry for the Simple Gospel

By Francis Chan

When I did youth ministry back in the 1980s our goal was to get people to our meetings however we could. We offered entertainment, food, bands, games, prizes—anything. Then we would give a message telling people how easy it is to get to heaven. We wanted to get them to pray the prayer!

Some good things resulted from those days, but I also know I wasn't being entirely honest. Fearing rejection, I often didn't mention the cost of following Christ. This was faulty reasoning.

The truth is, when the Holy Spirit moves, people will come to Christ regardless of the cost. All I was doing was deceiving them into thinking they were saved when they indeed may not have been.

Thankfully, the days of “tricking” people into church gatherings and manipulating them into praying seem to be coming to an end. Today's Christians are hungry for absolute truth and desperate for authenticity.

Unbelievers are still offended by the gospel, but they are more offended when a person's true beliefs are watered-down. The world can respect those who lovingly disagree with them but not those unwilling to state their true beliefs.

Jesus was very direct and easy to understand. He said, “Follow me.” He was clear that following Him was going to be difficult but that He is worth it (see Matt. 16:24-26).

Rather than ignoring the commitment He calls us to, let's emphasize the worth of our King so people are willing to follow at any cost.

Francis Chan *is pastor of Cornerstone Community Church () in Simi Valley, Calif., and the author of two books, Crazy Love and Forgotten God.*

2. A Cry to Engage the Culture

By Erwin McManus

For some Christians, whenever they hear the word “relevance” they hear the word “heresy.” Being relevant doesn't mean you change your convictions to cater to any audience. You do listen carefully to learn how to communicate effectively to the people who so desperately need to hear, believe and receive.

Any church that genuinely loves people and passionately pursues them with God's love is going to have to rethink much of what they're doing today—how they are going to get the living water to those who are dying of thirst.

If you are biblically literate you immediately understand the metaphor of living water. Jesus used it when talking to a woman at a well. He was attuned to the times and to His context, and His imagery and language made perfect sense.

Today we're still using the same language, the same metaphors. When was the last time you met someone at a well? But I bet you've met someone recently at a Chili's or a Starbucks.

We have made the words rather than the wisdom of Jesus our model. I don't for one minute think Jesus intended for us to canonize His analogies. I believe He expected us to do like He

modeled.

At Mosaic, where I pastor, we carry as our No. 4 core value, “Relevance to culture is not optional.”

We keep reminding ourselves that the church isn’t ours, that we are the church and we belong to God. And if that makes us controversial, then so be it. I would rather be a friend of sinners anyway. How about you?

Erwin McManus is lead pastor of Mosaic, a faith community with locations in greater Los Angeles and Berkeley, Calif. ().

3. A Cry for Justice

By Lynette Lewis

There comes a time when you look at all the pain in the world and stop hoping something will change. You decide, *I will answer the cry for justice*, not knowing how you’ll find the time or resources, who will join you or when you’ll see results. You simply decide to act.

That is how the Stop Child Trafficking Now campaign began. My husband, Ron, and I were tormented by the growth of child sex-trafficking in the U.S. But being appalled wasn’t enough. We researched the issue, talked to experts and built a grass-roots campaign.

Though we branded the campaign as a “human rights” mission, Psalm 10 became our battle cry—in particular verses 17-18: “You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted ... defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more” (NIV).

As the campaign grew, thousands of teens and youth inside the church and beyond it responded to the cry for justice. The

last weekend in September 2009, people in 40 cities and on 70 campuses participated with walks, runs and other rallies, raising more than \$750,000 to fund operative teams of retired military elites who track down predators and bring justice to child victims. This is only the beginning of an all-out effort to defend the innocent.

This generation will not be silenced while the atrocities of injustice go on. The movement will grow until His “justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24, ESV).

Lynette Lewis *is an inspirational speaker and co-founder of Strategic Global Initiatives, an organization dedicated to giving a “voice to the vulnerable” globally ().*

4.A Cry for the Persecuted Church

By Lazarus Yeghnazar

In the last century, more souls heard the gospel and accepted Jesus Christ than in all the previous history of humanity. More martyrs also gave their lives for the gospel in that time period than had done so since the emancipation of the church.

When we reflect on the first-century church and the suffering it went through, we tremble and remember the words of Jesus Himself:

“Anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of me. If you do not take your cross and follow Me you are not worthy of being my disciple!” (See ; Luke 14:27.)

The trail of crimson, holy blood spilled by the saints has run through the church from the foot of the cross to this very

day—from the Roman catacombs to the Soviet gulags to the burning churches today in Indonesia, Mindanao, Nigeria and India.

The “persecuted” church *is* the church. The church that truly is “salt and light” in the world causes irritation, friction and suffering. Light and darkness cannot coexist peacefully.

Jesus said: “I have come to bring the sword” (see Matt. 10:34). A silenced, amiable, accommodating and nonthreatening church will live in peaceful coexistence with the world under an undeclared truce!

Are you a part of the persecuted church? Do you identify with her pain and suffering? Or would you rather be in a nonthreatening church with few demands? I am a member of the persecuted church.

Lazarus Yeghnazar *is an Iranian evangelist based in England and director of 222 Ministries ()*.

5. A Cry to Reach the City

By Napoleon Kaufman

The first homicide of 2010 in the city of Oakland, California, occurred during a robbery in which a young man was shot and killed in front of his wife and kids. The story touched me deeply. Our church isn’t in Oakland, but we have many members who live there. The tragedy was a reminder that we must reach our cities for God.

The apostle Paul was a master at reaching cities for God. Ephesus, Antioch, Paphos, Troas—everywhere Paul traveled he left a lasting impact. I believe he understood that truth is the greatest need in the hearts of people.

Truth is what ultimately will make us free. Paul skillfully preached and taught a noncompromising gospel that helped people come to grips with the fact that they needed to be born again. As a result, God's Word broke through barriers of religious pride, cultural bondage and spiritual deception.

We will never truly reach our cities if we continue preaching about politics or the latest Hollywood drama. Paul told Timothy to "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2) Our cities, political leaders and communities need the church to be what we were created to be—the pillar and ground of the truth.

Had anyone shared the gospel with the thief in Oakland? Had he ever been told there's a better way? I don't know.

But I hope that there's a cry welling up within you to go and reach your city for Jesus. Promise me that as you go, you'll tell them the truth.

Napoleon Kaufman *is senior pastor of The Well Christian Community (t) in Dublin, California, and a former NFL running back with the Los Angeles Raiders.*

6. A Cry for the Poor

By Biju Thampy

Five-year-old Raju and his mother, Vanda, had not eaten for four days when we found them lying on a busy street in Mumbai, India. We were shocked by seeing Raju's right eye literally sticking out, bitten by something. The infection had entirely destroyed his eye.

Vanda had given birth to a baby 12 days before, right on that sidewalk where we found her. The newborn died on the street for lack of care.

Vanda and Raju would have died in a few days if we hadn't met them. Hundreds of thousands of people had walked past or stepped over them without listening to their cry.

There are millions like them—who are not mere numbers but precious individuals created in God's image for whom Jesus died. But they are unable to voice their powerlessness.

God hears their silent cry, and He commands us to stand up for them as well: "'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute'" (Prov. 31:8, NIV).

I believe He created mankind to live with dignity (see Ps. 8:5-8). Today it isn't charity that will answer the cry of the poor, but dignity. Charity makes the giver feel good and gives temporary relief to the recipient. But giving dignity to the poor ends their cry, causes them to rise up and stand on their own feet, and puts them on the giving side.

You and I are God's answer to the cry of the poor in our generation. It is a cry we cannot ignore.

Biju Thampy *is based in Mumbai, India, and founder of Vision Rescue (), a ministry with the stated purpose to help the poor "live with dignity and respect."*

7. A Cry for Radical Discipleship

By Mark Batterson

During a trip to the Galápagos Islands I witnessed something awe-inspiring: wild animals in their natural habitat doing what they were created to do. They were uncivilized, untamed, uncaged. I felt a new affinity with Adam when I was in the Galápagos environment. I could imagine what life must have

been like before the fall.

After returning home, our family went to the National Zoo near our house in Washington, D.C. But after the Galápagos, I'm ruined for zoos: too safe, too tame, too predictable.

While walking through the ape house I had this thought as I looked at a 400-pound caged gorilla: *I wonder if churches do to people what zoos do to animals.*

I love the church; but too often we take people out of their natural habitats and try to tame them in the name of Christ. We try to remove the risk, the danger, the struggle. And we end up with caged Christians.

We foster spiritual co-dependency. We learn more, do less and call it discipleship. But Christ called us to live by faith, use our gifts and make a difference.

Radical discipleship is the willingness to do whatever and go wherever Christ calls. And I promise this: It won't be the path of least resistance because that's also the path of least impact.

Sure, the tamed part of us grows accustomed to the safety of the cage. But the untamed part longs for some danger, some challenge, some adventure.

And the cage opens when we recognize that Jesus didn't die on the cross to keep us safe but to make us dangerous. When was the last time you asked God to make you dangerous to the enemy?

Mark Batterson *is the lead pastor of the National Community Church in Washington, D.C. ().*

STILL CRYING

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church.