

LifeShapes with Mike Breen

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The phase that we are in, if it had taken place at any time in history, we would call chaos. It's a time similar to the fall of Rome. Some interesting things happen: people drink more coffee during these times of change (it's true!).

Hebrews 12:26-29 was written to believers struggling with massive change. The seismic metaphor seems appropriate for describing the change they were experiencing. It's a picture that is current today. We are experiencing a social earthquake.

I visited New Zealand recently, where earthquakes aren't uncommon. Napier is full of Art Deco. How did a city end up being built all in Art Deco? In February 3, 1931, everything was destroyed by an earthquake, 7.9 on the Richter scale. The bluff on the edge of town fell into the sea; the plain became a series of rolling hills; the lagoon became dry land. Today, most of Napier is built where the lagoon used to be. Old maps don't work anymore.

Circumstances can change the way people live and react. What do you do when the world changes so much?

First thing: offer compassion. A lot of our theological debates at the heart are really questions of how to be compassionate in a time of massive change. Compassion is entirely appropriate, but it's not enough.

Second: we offer something that provides a new context for community. Begin to offer a way of doing community that is not affected by the circumstances of change. In catastrophe, people tend to cling to people, even if they don't know them. In times of change, you rely on people before you get to know them. The normal structures of our society, the ones that have been there for a long time are now shaken to the ground. e.g. family: Whenever you see family in antiquity, it is never the nuclear family; now it's mostly gone, and even the nuclear family has a high rate of failure. Family is now a dangerous concept to a lot of people. In comedy up to the 90s, comedies on TV were about families. In the 90s, **Friends replaced family as the cornerstone of community.** Friends will move across a country to be with friends, something that has never happened before. We're recreated community and find what family used to give us in friends. Therefore small groups and medium size groups (clusters) are not options if you want to be a missional church.

After an earthquake, if you say, "We've got a building standing, come in," people go the other way. They don't trust a building after an earthquake. The same today: "We have a family, we have a church: come in." People don't trust either.

Programs that used to work well, and even brought revival, are like old maps that no longer work. This is the problem with our programmatic approach. What makes us think that somebody else's map will work where we live? Or that the map that worked last

week will work this week? Only the optimistic and enthusiastic heart of the evangelical. And when it doesn't work we just go looking for new programs. Maps are so temporary. Somebody somewhere has to say, "Enough of the maps! Stop drawing maps. What we have to do is get back to the compass that will orient us in any landscape." Hebrews 13:7-8: remember those who carried the compass, and carry that same compass - the unchanging Christ. The astonishing is: we so little refer to Jesus.

My premise: Jesus is way smarter than me, and is not culturally conditioned or captive. His teaching and life rings as clearly today as it ever did. If I orient myself to him, he is the way, the truth, and the life, and that never changes. We need to be calibrated to his presence. Every believer is connected to Jesus and therefore has this compass; not every believer is calibrated.

You in Canada have faced the postmodern context longer than many. (Calling it post-modern is silly, kind of like calling Tuesday post-Monday.)

Third: counsel them. The primary purpose of this counseling is to help people connect their story. People's stories are disconnected from each other. Because of this, we don't know who we are. What's missing: a meta-narrative.

Here's the thing: we have an amazing story - a true story - that will give people a real identity. We have what theologians call salvation history. It began at the dawn of time and has continued ever since. As people hear this story, it becomes their story and gives us a common identity. We have something the world desperately needs.

The main way people get their stories today is to connect to cultural icons. Through clothes, you can tell the story they want to connect with. In the past twenty years, people have started to wear the brand of the clothing outside. Even underwear: kids want you to know you're wearing Calvin Klein underwear; the waistband is supposed to be above the pants. It is about identity, communicated through symbol. Or baggy pants with crotches down at the knees: comes from rappers, the storytellers of whole culture (music is huge in this). When people went to prison, guards took the belts away. Rappers took their belts to connect with their friends in prison. Rap fans did the same to connect to the rappers. They don't even know the story they're connecting to, but they want the identity.

How is it possible that the early church was so effective in sharing the Gospel? They didn't have a Bible (weren't collected and distributed for a thousand years; everyone having a Bible is really only the last 100 years, popularized the past 50). How did they grow to the extent that by the time Constantine came along, about 20% of the population were Christians? They didn't have buildings or professional clergy. They did it by sharing a story that was absolutely compelling and easy to carry: an oral tradition.

Average Jew knew entire Pentateuch and many of the Psalms.

People are word weary and longing for symbols. We unpackage huge information from simple symbols (e.g. Mickey Mouse). Lifeshapes is just a way to access information that is stored, an attempt to recreate an oral tradition. Language creates culture.

Lifeshapes is not a program, an alternative to Purpose Driven Church or whatever. It is an attempt to give us some components that will give us a language that draws us back to Jesus. Every symbol reminds us: it's Jesus, dummy. If we can get what he says, it changes everything.

**Ministry to postmoderns: Since people don't trust buildings and programs, invite them to mission and community before they know Jesus. Invite them into relationship, to feed the poor, to relate to the compass (Jesus). Invite them to community before you do building and institution. Begin to talk to them about the story.

People out there have no understanding of how sound churches differ from snake-handling churches.

The Learning Circle

Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, emptied himself and doesn't consider robbery of God's power as he comes to be a servant. What is Jesus doing as he does ministry? Is he hardwired into his omniscient nature, or functioning as a normal human being? In John 5:19, he says, "I only do what I see the Father doing." Jesus chooses to take on the roll of what it means to learn as a human being.

In training his disciples, he taught the disciples the same thing: to see what God was doing, so they could do it. Mark 1:14-15. Four key words: time, kingdom, repent, believe.

He describes what he is inviting people into. All of our attempts are trying to bring heaven to earth. Jesus says the kingdom, that which we expect to experience in the future, is present because it's the time.

Time - *chronos*; the sequential passing of time; chronological time. *kairos* - "wasn't it a good time?"; an event; a moment or crisis when time can seem to stand still. *Chronos* could mark a significant shift in your life.

Kairos means that God is ready to break in. Heaven is close. Does Jesus expect you to be a disciple in those events? Discipleship is so much more than studying the Bible with notebooks. It takes place in everyday life. Jesus taught his disciples to learn in the context of daily life.

Disciple- *mathetes*, means learner or student. A disciple is someone who has committed to be a lifelong learner. With Jesus, we learn how to learn. At the end of the process, he tells us to make learners of all people, and teach them to do what Jesus taught us (Matthew 28:19-20).

It would be amazing to discover life as the context of discipleship.

Repentance - a change of mind and heart; a process of transformation that takes place within a person. Repentance is primarily internal.

Believe (*pisteuo*) - active trust. It's a trust based on something you've been persuaded about; a continuing process of belief and action. It can be translated as faith; something you are sure about. It's an action that indicates reality, something that can be seen.

Learning happens by both event and process. Kairos events allow us to enter a process of repentance and faith. Having experienced a kairos event in our lives, we then begin a process of learning from it. The result is seeing God's kingdom rule in your life.

We are to do what Jesus did, live as Jesus did. God is up to something, and we want to see what he is up to in our lives.

Observe -> Reflect -> Discuss -> Plan -> Account -> Act

The sermon on the mount: Matthew 5-7. Jesus has outlined a radical lifestyle. Disciples have experienced a kairos moment: being called to be followers.

Observe - Matthew 6:26, look at the birds. Parables are usually about getting people to look at things from a different angle. Samaria: you think it's a transit corridor; open your eyes and look at the harvest. If you follow Jesus, you have to look at things differently.

Reflect - Are you not more valuable than they? (We think questions in the Bible are rhetorical.) In rabbinical teaching, there is back and forth.

Discuss - Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

Good so far, and we usually call this a Bible study. But we stop here and it's not enough.

Plan - seek first his kingdom

Account - A good tree can't bear bad fruit... We need appropriate places for people to confess. We need to get things into the light. Huddles - what was your kairos of the week?

When we make a wrong plan, God gives us another kairos, and the learning circle becomes a slinky or spiral.

Kairos and money: having too much and too little are kairos events.

Need to do this. Pastors aren't learning from their experience; they are repeating it over and over again.

How can this be put into practice in your own life? What issues and questions does it raise?

How soon do we need to teach this? We need to jettison our modernist approach to learning (I speak, you listen.)

Lifeshapes is an operating system, not an application. It gives a framework for living the Jesus life. Programs like Alpha are programs, but they run a lot better with the right operating system going. You can't run applications (Purpose Driven Life) like operating systems. **Most of what operates in North America is applications run on an operating system that no longer exists (Christendom).**

Q&A

The Renaissance has affected many of us more than the Reformation. It's affected how we teach and learn.

For instance, we assume that preaching includes a certain set of things which Paul and Jesus might not have meant when they talked about preaching.

Church is like a river flowing over culture. It's affected by culture. It should help shape culture. When it stops working, it allows the culture to shape it.

The megachurch is the final flower of Christendom. It is a strange creature; we'll look back at it as a blip.

Barna's *Revolution* book warns us of the coming shift: in the next 20 years, 20 million Christians will stop coming to church. The church is living in a world that no longer exists, a world that is not helping meet people's spiritual needs. One churchgoer accidentally slept in one Sunday morning and liked it so much, he never went back to church.

Lifeshapes is like a rule of life.

How to react? Church can become a community of communities. Leave people long enough, and they will stratify into different sized groups.

We need to focus on the organic rather than the organizational. We have an elaborate cart and a weak horse. We need to ignore the cart and feed the horse. (In some churches, the horse is in the cart and it's going downhill.) Strategic neglect or organizational issues!

Everything that is valuable in a large church has been learned from a small church. It's a lot easier for a big church to learn from a small church than a small church to learn from a big church.

Go public with Lifeshapes slow. Ask key *kairos* questions like, "What is God doing?" Gather your leaders and invest in them as they serve.

Don't start small groups. Start with clusters (idea size 40-60). We are hardwired for extended family. It's a lot easier to start nuclear families (small groups) from extended families than the other way around.

People learn through story and symbols. It's the way that people learn and communicate. It's not that propositions aren't important, but stories and symbols are the way to communicate propositions.

Barna and Gallup:

- 20% of boomers are postmodern
- 40% of generation x
- 60% of generation y

The Semicircle: The Rhythm of Life

The average North American Christian is overcommitted and under-connected.

They are so busy that church has become almost impossible for them to do. People don't need to hear about more commitment but about strategic commitment.

John 15: looking at the picture at Temple from the Mount of Olives: vine a symbol of Israel. Josephus said that everybody had a vine. Cut it back for three years. Grow it so it has a central trunk from which it grows. We are meant to bear fruit. What is the fruit? In the metaphor, the final one of his life, fruit is the multiplication of the life. Every disciple is designed to reproduce more disciples.

The key: verse 4- abide in me. No branch can bear fruit by itself.

You can't bear fruit unless you abide. The overcommitted model of grow grow grow will never bear fruit.

Abide -> Grow -> Fruit -> Prune -> Abide (pendulum swing)

How often do we apply this process and apply it? See fruit from the program, and then prune it, so we can rest and abide and bear fruit again.

Key word: fruitful. Goes right back to the first chapter of the Bible: Genesis 1:26-28. Be fruitful. In 2:15, connects fruitfulness and work.

We are designed to work from rest, not rest from work. Rest came before work. We are designed to be fruitful from a place of abiding.

This is so important that when God says 10 things, all of fundamental importance, all important, this makes the list. Not taking a day off is as serious as murder. Teaching people an overcommitted lifestyle is the same as teaching people to live promiscuous lives or how to steal.

Without the pendulum, if you go from rest to work and don't return, you move out to burnout danger zone. Animal farm: "I must work harder." Then: crashing back to rest.

Jesus spends six weeks in retreat before starting his three year ministry. We would give someone a seven year ministry with a six week retreat after. You see this all over in Jesus' life. It's why he was so fruitful.

We have to learn what it means to abide. Purpose of retreat is revelation: abide in me, and my words will abide in you. If we don't have food, we have nothing to offer anybody else.

Do you have a time of rest each day? Each week? Each month? Sometime we just need to take God at his word. Fastest growing church in England, yet I golfed twice a week.

This is the most counter-cultural shape of them all. Our landscape is resistant to this word. This is partly due to our view of death: we try to keep things artificially alive. Boomers are especially resistant to it. (Those younger than boomers might not get the work part.)

It's also about where we get our security from: from Christ and our identity in him, rather than our accomplishments. Embrace death rather than always continue in activity.

One way to do this is to shut everything down during certain seasons of the year. We assumed that Jesus wanted to grow the church more than we did, therefore we wanted to do it his way.

If I rest properly, I can do what the average person does in a week in three days. Before, my productivity dipped more and more.

Pruning: stopping. Rest: retreat (withdrawing from what produces fault)

The Triangle: Up In Out

Three dimensions to life: up, in, and out:

- Up with God where we develop intimacy with Him
- In with other believers, where we look to be a community
- Out with non-believers, where we seek to make an impact for the Kingdom of God

Why? This is the way Jesus lived. He tended to all three dimensions. He always held them in balance. e.g. Luke 6

If you took the mountains and the meals, it would be a short book. Up often took place on mountains; in often took place around meals.

- Up - Jesus was in constant contact with his Father, whom he spoke of in very personal, intimate, and familiar terms. Prayer, praise, and waiting on his Father was a fundamental element in the lifestyle of Jesus. Luke's gospel tells us that Jesus often withdrew and prayed.

- In - Jesus came as a human being and showed us the way human beings are to live out their lives in society with others. We need each other. After prayer, Jesus called the twelve to become his small group. Jesus chose to live as a human being, and humans are social beings. He spent three years building strong relationships with the disciples. This is how we should do ministry. The loneliness of pastoral ministry is a choice that we make. We can choose something else.
- Out - The pattern revealed in the life of Jesus is that we need to be in intimate relationship with the Father, then with one another before effectively moving out to the world with the Good News.

The disciple of Jesus lives the life of Jesus.

- Up - God's presence in your life, but it is often hidden beneath the surface. We need to do excavations. Spiritual disciplines are the excavation of God's presence. The purpose of the disciples isn't discipline; it is intimacy with God.
- In - The world knows this better than we do. They are longing for community. Illustration: the Join Me movement (karma army). Book: Join Me.
- Out - God has a mission to the world that he invites us to. Evangelism is part of mission, not the other way around. He has a mission of love to this world.

If communities evolve that are three-dimensional, people will begin to see Jesus through us.

The triangle is an incredibly useful diagnostic tool. Most of us construct programs with less than three dimensions in them.

The Leadership Square

Everybody is a leader of somebody. Everybody looks like a shepherd from the back and a sheep from the front. Therefore everybody needs to learn how to need.

Jesus is the model for leadership. He says some radical things: Mark 10:44-45. Jesus as a servant leader operated with different styles of leadership depending on the people he was dealing with. Other times, he drove merchants from the Temple.

Our models of leadership often come from culture rather than Jesus. Sometimes democratic, nice.

The process of discipleship:

I do it, you watch.
 I do it, you help.
 You do it, I help.
 You do it, I watch.

Jesus shows us how to lead people using different styles of leadership.

D1 -> D2 -> D3 -> D4

D1 - Mark 1:15-20; Jesus already knew the disciples. Team: high enthusiasm, low experience, high confidence, low competence. Leader: high direction, high example, low consensus, low explanation. What have I started?

D2 - Luke 12:32-34; Jesus makes it hard for the disciples. Seven woes (scathing!), and then to the followers, "Don't be afraid of those who can kill your body." Not exactly encouraging. "It's a lot worse than you think...but also better." Team: low enthusiasm, low experience, low confidence, low competence. Leader: high on direction, high on discussion, high on example, high on accessibility. When someone is in D2, I need to change my agenda. You can smell D2 from far away. What have I let die?

In D2 they need vision and grace, not enthusiasm.

D3 - John 15:12-17; Team: increasing enthusiasm, growing experience, intermittent confidence, growing competence. He already begins to prepare them for D4. Leader: lower direction, higher on consensus, high on discussion, high on accessibility. Most of us are trained to start here as leaders, which is a fatal mistake. Stay here too long and you lose vitality.

D4 - Matthew 28:18-20; Team: high enthusiasm, high experience, high confidence, high competence. Low direction, high on consensus, low on example, high on explanation.

What takes you from one stage to another is a kairos movement. There is a pain and a pleasure at each stage.

Leaders delegate too early.

I could take any phase of your life and identify your phase.

Leadership starts off by being directive. When you get to D2, you don't try to get people fired up again (going back to D1). Jesus didn't re-engage their enthusiasm; he engaged their reality.

Directive -> Coaching -> Pastoral -> Delegating

Jesus was good at different styles of leadership. Where I am not the strongest leader, that is an area for grace in my life. **Look for other people who are good at what you want to be good at and copy them.**

The Pentagon: The Fivefold Ministry - What's My Role?

Jesus is doing his ministry through his people today. He is doing the same ministry today that he has always done. The ministry of Jesus is reflected in the church.

The ministry of Jesus is not restricted to the professionals. It's the whole body doing the whole ministry.

Ephesians: not occasional; general letter; teaches about ministry not in reaction to a problem. Only one letter written to the church in general about the church.

Pastor - Evangelist - Prophet - Apostle - Teacher

Ephesians 4:11 has usually been neglected or seen as referring only to leaders. My interpretation is that it talks about everybody.

Jesus was all of these. Every person is one of these five areas in waiting (unbelievers).

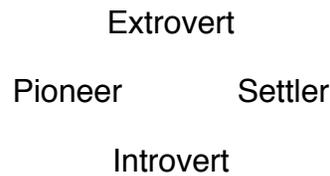
Teacher: One who grasps truth, is excited by it, and holds it out for others to receive. The teacher provokes others to receive truth. Enjoys reading and understanding the Bible, helping others to discover the truth.

Pastor: One who shepherds people, cares for others with a tender heart, sees needs. Confront and encourage. Burdened by other's problems.

Evangelist: John highlights this especially. Bearer of good news.

Prophet: Telling forth more than foretelling. Enjoy being alone with God, waiting on God, listening to God. Usually introverts. Often the creative types.

Apostle: Read John's Gospel and look for the word sent. Entrepreneurs.



As you grow, you take up a bigger place in the continuum.

Bottom: usually prophetic-teaching. Top: apostolic-evangelist-pastor

God wants to grow us in all five areas out of our base. You're restored by going back to your area of strength. You experience burnout if you go beyond the grace that is apportioned to you (if you're an apostle, you can move to the pastoral area but you will reach a limit.)

Staffing - your next hire should be what you are not.

These are your base. Your spiritual gifts are the tools you pick up to work from your base. The biggest group is usually pastoral.

The Hexagon: The Lord's Prayer

There is a lot out there on prayer. The muchness and complexity can be defeating. It drives us back to Jesus to hear what he says what to do to pray. This is what the disciples did.

When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, it was astonishing in its simplicity. He didn't say, "This is one way to pray; you can think of others."

Six phrases, but one big thing: Our Father. It is what Jesus reveals in prayer. We are not praying to an impersonal deity. God, whom we address in prayer, is personal and interested.

Two things: couplets:

- God's kingdom, God's will - no distinction between God's kingdom and God's will
- Forgiveness and forgiving - only statement that Jesus goes on to talk about after the prayer
- Temptation and evil

Three things: up in out

Four styles of prayer: contemplative, intercessory, petitionary, warfare

Five languages of love: gifts, acts of service, quality time, physical touch, words of affirmation. Also fivefold ministry.

What is your life saying to God? Too busy? Too involved building your own kingdom?

Two ways to use the six phrases: take them and pour them into a situation, or take them and allow them to pour through you.

- Father
- Kingdom
- Bread
- Forgive
- Sin
- Evil One

The Heptagon - Mrs. Gren

M is for movement - Movement takes place in response to stimuli. It is impossible to be a disciple and not be on the move. Has your church moved since last year? New territory, new frontiers, a new vision that is opening up.

R is for respiration - The work of the Holy Spirit is always spoken of as breath. We don't think about breathing. Believers usually either don't breathe or hyperventilate.

S is for sensitivity - Do we have sensitive hearts or hardened hearts? Want to avoid over- and under-sensitivity.

G is for growth - If something is alive, it grows. It doesn't have to grow fast.

R is for reproduction - Reproduction is a basic sign of life. Everything in every species is sacrificed for the next generation. Our next generation: the young and new Christians. Kids having a small percentage of the budget does not reflect God's best. Who is following you?

E is for excretion - If you don't deal with toxins, you die. Jesus only mentions the church twice in the Gospels. One of them is in Matthew 18:15. Number one cause of division: people don't properly deal with conflict.

N is for nutrition - We need to be fed by Jesus every day. Eat the meal and not the menu.

The Octagon: A Mission-Minded Life

We need to look for people of peace (Luke 10:5-6) - people God has prepared to hear the message of the King and the kingdom. These can be developed through:

Presence - When you are present in a situation or with a group, speaking and acting as Jesus would

Passing relationships - Strangers, people we meet once or twice. Plant a seed or water, even though you won't be part of the end result.

Permanent relationships - Family and close friends. Pray, wait, watch.

Proclamation - A pathway to relationship; helps us identify people of peace

Preparation - Cultivating soil and planting seed; Engel Scale (helping someone to move along in the process of preparation)

Power - Be ready when God shows up

Perception - Spiritually perceptive to situations and circumstances

We are to live a lifestyle of mission, not just engage in evangelistic projects or programs.