DTS's New Initiative on Cultural Engagement

Part 4 of 4: Personal Goals for the Initiative
with Mark M. Yarbrough, Darrell L. Bock, and Mark L. Bailey
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What are your personal goals for this endeavor? What would you like to see [so] that Dallas Seminary will be successful in the engagement of culture. We've said it in different ways, but if you could just summarize that in a sentence or two. “We will do a great job of engaging the culture if we do it this way for this kind of a purpose.” How would you answer that?

I pray that we are known for having a Christian response and walk in our culture. There's a lot that comes out in the Christian community. Let's just call it what it is: I don't think it's – it's not done Christianly. And that's a little bit of this tone aspect that we've talked about.

I pray that what comes out of it is that it's not just the content. While we're all concerned about the content – there's no doubt about that – how we carry that content out is just as critical. You can say the right thing and you can say it the wrong way. And what you have just said has been negated.

And so my prayer is that we model to our students and that the students learn. I'm already excited about some of the discussion I've heard from some of the chapels that we've already done that will be coming out in podcasts a little bit later on. I'm really excited to hear some of the tone of the students pick up on that tone. Their tone is modeling that tone. That's encouraging to me because I think that, again, what we see and hear a lot, and we've just had some discussions about that, [is] that some of us in our generation, we've not done as good a job as we need to do.

And so now it's an opportunity for us to lay the mantle on a new generation that's going to minister in brand new ways, and to say, "This is now a battlefront for you." Battle, maybe, is not the best word, but it's going to be a challenge for them to walk Christianly and to have the tone that comes out Christianly in these very significant discussions in our culture.

And it's not just a western thing, but this is a global issue. You guys talk about some of the Lausanne issues. You know, there's a beckoning to the western church right now of how are we going to handle even some of these topics. So I think it's one of tone – that's one of my prayers through this.
I have different audiences in mind. I mean, to the Christian church, my hope is that we do a service to them that helps them in orienting themselves to these different topics, not only in terms of the content, but even the way in which the arguments are made and presented and the biblical basis for it, et cetera. There's that. I think for someone who's a non-Christian, I hope that they are fascinated by what we do, and that they might see that their impression of what Christianity is and what they think Christianity is, may, in some cases, be a misread of what's really going on, and that we are able to communicate that enough that some may get that.

My hope would be that we have enough of a global perspective in what we do and how we talk about things that we’re not nearsighted. We’re not nearsighted with regard to only thinking in a Western Christian way or in an American Christian way. One of my hopes is to bring enough global dimensions to the guests that we have and [to their] perspectives, that everyone appreciates the global nature of Christianity. You know, Christianity is not a national religion. It is a global faith. And so I'm hoping that we communicate that. So there are a variety of ways that I hope – so I hope when someone listens to The Table or they hear a chapel or they come to a conference event, that they walk away and say, "I learned something. I learned about how to communicate it well, and I appreciated even how the gospel was reflected and how it was done." And those, I guess, are my hopes.

Mr. President, can I do one thing here?

Mark

Yarbrough: Sure.

Mark

Bailey: This is the worst pun of the day. Can I turn the table? Sorry. I just had to say that.

Mark

Yarbrough: You can.

Mark

Bailey: Mr. President, what are your goals in all of this?

Mark

Yarbrough:
Sure. My goal is really to reflect a tone of Christian love, to not at all compromise the truth, but to engage so that – I think of the word, "resource." I think one of the best things that we could do, as a seminary, with the expertise that we have on campus, the context of expertise we have off campus, the alumni we have around the world, the recommendations of those in Christian leadership that all of us to get to rub shoulders with, whether it's fellow deans, fellow presidents, fellow professors that are a part of our academic and ministry world; all of us, pastors and church leaders and ministry leaders, we all serve on churches or boards in which we have a wonderful opportunity to find resource.

But to provide those resources so that coming out of a podcast, here's a list of a bibliographic resource, here's a list of argumentation, here is places to go beyond us, where people who are interested and have a compassion for our world would find the needed material to engage with great tone and great truth.

You know our slogan for years here has been teach truth, and love well, and I think it's a great tagline. And just a slight tweak I'd like to make is my hope is that we reflect truth, and love well. And what I mean by that is that we're not just interested in disseminating content. Content's important. You can't get there without it. But there's a way in which it is delivered that also is important. Sometimes it means a confrontation. Sometimes it means a gentle word. A lot of times it needs an explanation. And I hope that we develop in people a sense of what's the right choice.

The wisdom and for what approach.

Mark Bailey:

Exactly.

Darrell Bock:

What's the right choice and what's the right combination, and those kinds of things. And that's going to take work. And, frankly, sometimes we'll probably misstep. You know, we don't claim to have an inerrant understanding of the truth, by any means. We'll misstep, there'll be times.
So I would ask people to be gracious with us. These topics are not easy. And because they're not easy, the answers aren't always clear, and it won't be transparent what you should do. And there might actually be places where there is a good, healthy disagreement about exactly what to do.

And part of what we hope to do, in some cases, will be to show that conversation. We may not actually, in certain places, actually come down on a particular line to take, because of the difficulty of the discussion and the possibilities where good Christians might legitimately disagree with one another. So we're going to try and display grace. I guess what I'm saying now is I'm hoping that the audience gives us a little bit of grace, because these areas are not easy and we don't pretend to have all the answers.

You're not saying that churches disagree on worship styles.

Mark Bailey: Not at all.

Darrell Bock: And ways to enact church discipline. Ways to govern people. Yeah, it is a variety out there.

Mark Bailey: Let me go back and take one more round, that what came to mind as both of you were talking these last couple of questions and answers series, is that we have been big on promoting family. But we're not as good at living family. And the amazing thing is I don't think the world sees the Christian church with the model of what genuine family could be.

And so for them to toss over a marriage, to just basically extricate a kid out of their lives and things like that, they don't see the redemptive, they don't see the reconciliation, they don't see the respect, they don't see the love demonstrated that has made family different, which is a condemnation of the church.

Yeah because the churches have not done very well in the area of divorce in a lot of cases.

Darrell Bock:
Mark Bailey: Exactly. And I come back to one of those verses that we have used, and it's actually on the wall over our Campbell Academic Center because it so epitomized Dr. Campbell and his ministry. But one of his favorite passages was Ezra 7:10, that Ezra had “purposed in his heart to study the law –" to live what it reflected. That's what came out of your conversations, to reflect it. And then "to teach the statutes and oracles in Israel."

For us to reflect that truth in our own lives, as a platform, hopefully, to share that truth with others – that order of dedication, reflection and propagation is a critical order coming from that passage.

One quick mechanical question. If people want to know where they can get material that we have done on the broadcast or if they want to make suggestions about future topics, how would they do that?

Well, it will certainly be posted on our website, www.dts.edu, that's for sure. And we think we'll have it set up to be subscribable through iTunes. So those two means will at least get you access to those things that we're going to offer directly to the public without charge, which is going to be a lot. So that's for sure.

If you want to offer suggestions about things that you'd like to have covered, we can't commit to responding to every request that'll come in. But if you will write to me at the seminary – this is dangerous – dbock@dts.edu.

Want to say that one more time?

Mark Yarbrough: Dbock@dts.edu, and if I get flooded after this, I'm going to regret having done that. But, anyway, we've actually already polled our faculty for what they think we should cover. We have a full intention of polling alumni for what they hope we should cover.

And we've already heard from a bunch of alumni.
The Table Podcast

DTS's New Initiative on Cultural Engagement

Darrell Bock:

Or about those certain things we've already posted. We had our first chapel a couple of weeks ago and we already posted that and gotten – are beginning to get feedback on that. So just let us know and then just be patient 'cause it'll be in a queue. And plus it takes some resources to get there. So anyway, if you let us know, then we'll do our best if we get enough requests on the same topic to follow through.

What are some of the topics that we have on the docket that we are working on, planning to talk about and release in the near future?

Mark Bailey:

Well, we're beginning with a series on cultural engagement, just to talk about what this is and look at it from various angles. So this is the first of what will be several broadcasts. And this is the way we're going to do the podcasts, at least initially, is we're going to take a topic and then we're going to look at it from several angles, and then we'll move to a new one rather than doing one at a time.

So, for example, in cultural engagement, we've got cultural engagement, this one. We've got one with our faculty that's going to talk about the importance of cultural engagement and looking at it from a theological angle, from a global angle.

Then we're going to do one on cultural engagement in the media. We have Kerby Anderson coming in and talking about his experience in the media, along with my experience in the media, and we're sharing how media works and how Christian leaders think about the media, and it's role and the way it sees itself, so you can understand what they see their task as being and why that, sometimes, is a disconnect.

We're going to have Reg Grant come in and talk about cultural engagement in the arts. I'm going to bring in Ramesh Richard and Barry Jones to talk about global aspects of cultural engagement.
And then we're going to shift and move to the next topic, which is going to be – we're going to do a segment every now and then on religions of the world. And the first one will be Islam. And so the only DTS Dialogue that we are resurrecting for this sequence, at least at this point, is a terrific interview we did with Dudley Woodberry years ago, in which he – as someone who lived in a Muslim country and is a missionary to Muslims – talks about Islam, his experience with Islam, et cetera, and explains Islam to us. And it's a wonderful presentation and just so crisp and well done.

Then we're going to look at Bible translations in the context of Islam. And then we're going to look at – we're going to interview some people who came to Christianity out of Islam, as well as people who've lived in Islamic communities as Christians, to talk about that experience. We're going to interview someone who lives in Europe to talk about the impact of Islamic presence in Europe. That gives you a feel for the variety.

Then we're going to shift to the historical Adam, you know, just easy topics, and the debate that's gone on particularly in evangelicals from over the last year and a-half or so, about historical Adam. And we'll, again, look at this from a variety of angles from the standpoint of the text, the ancient near-eastern background, the issues that are related to the New Testament. We're going to hear reports about what has been discussed on Christian college campuses, and that kind of thing.

And then, as if those weren't simple enough, we'll turn our attention to sexuality. And, in particular, discuss the relationship of the church in ministering to the homosexual community and the issues that that raises, issues of family, the issue of counseling in these kinds of areas, that kind of thing.

So you can get a sense, just from the first four topics, the range of what it is we're going to try and cover and how we're going to go about doing this. Each podcast will run for around an hour. But we will release them – we're planning to release them, at least initially, in 15-minute segments.
The Table Podcast  DTS's New Initiative on Cultural Engagement

We hope, eventually, to get to where we will set a time to stream live on a regular basis, so people who want to connect with us can do that, and maybe even to get to the point where we're taking questions live. But, initially, we'll do it on tape and release them in 15-minute increments.

One of the other aspects that we would like to do as well is provide resources. There may be a subscription cost; there may be a nominal cost for those resources that people can purchase through the Center for Christian Leadership and Cultural Engagement, that would be resources that would help them in ministry. And so there's a variety of things that we have on the table.

We're trying to plan for those. And we want people to know, up front, that what we're going to do in the first year is everything that we offer is going to be available to them directly at no charge. But this is not an inexpensive operation to undertake. The fact is the very fact that you see three of us sitting here doesn't indicate the staff of people who have to man the cameras, listen to the audio, and, in some cases, edit the pieces, et cetera.

I mean, there's a lot of work that goes into doing this, and resources. So, to be honest, we have to raise some money to be able to do this. And, hopefully, if we minister effectively to the church, we're hoping that a really minor fee will give you access to some additional things that we're doing beyond the podcast, and that fill out what we're doing, and that are worth it.

We're hoping the charge will be really minimal. My joke is "a Coke a month." And if you're willing to invest a Coke a month across a year, you can get access to these resources. But we won't do that for a while because we have to set it up. Plus, we want to show people kind of what the map is of what we're going to do. And so we'll be releasing things, and in some cases we'll say, "This will always be free and this is the type of thing that will go into the subscription," so they can see, before they're asked to subscribe, what it is that they will be paying for.

Great. Any closing comments?

Mark Bailey:
Mark Yarbrough: It's exciting for us to be sitting here at The Table talking about this. What an opportunity for us at Dallas Seminary to carry out our mission in a whole new way.

Mark Bailey: It's a privilege and it's also a responsibility. And we take that seriously. Darrell, thank you for taking the challenge and being willing to step up to the plate and help give leadership to this initiative. And, Mark, thank you for all that you do and have done to put this in place as well. And we appreciate it. The Lord bless you.