



BIG CHURCH

Week 4: The Power of Culture

MEET

Sample Icebreaker Question:

What was the most uncomfortable night's sleep you ever had?

MAGNIFY

Suggested Song(s):

Mighty to Save (Hillsong)

Unshakeable (Hillsong)

It may also be useful to have some time here to sing and pray in tongues.

MESSAGE

Our purpose as a church is "to inspire you to dream, to challenge you to live the dream". Last week was inspiring, this week may be challenging – but get exciting because the challenge is to live higher and be part of something awesome. The group today is going to discuss something at the heart of Tree of Life Church. It is going to be very family based, in the sense it is aimed at the people who consider them part of our church family.

Read Genesis 28.10-22. In v. 10 Jacob slept the night at a certain place using the stone there as a pillow – because the stone would have kept him warm in the cold, desert night. But while he was asleep he dreamed, and in the dream God spoke to him and told him that he was blessed and the place he was sleeping in was a gateway to heaven.

Jacob awoke and said “surely the place I am in is an AWESOME place”. The place didn’t change; but it went from a CERTAIN place to an AWESOME place. Here is the rub: the same place was both a CERTAIN place – a normal, boring, same-as-always place and an AWESOME place – a life changing, God encountering place. The only difference is that Jacob changed the way he thought. We have to change the way we see church from being a certain place to being an AWESOME place. Inviting people, bringing people, serving with joy – they can only happen when we realize church is a gateway to heaven – it is an awesome place!

When Jacob went to bed it was a certain place because he didn’t know the Lord was there. He didn’t know the place was a gateway to heaven! Everything comes back to how you see the church. Some people still have a certain place mentality about Tree of Life – they don’t invite people because they don’t believe this place is any good. They turn up at 10.20 when church starts at 10am because they don’t believe this is an awesome place!

Some people have never done any service in the church because their mentality is that of a consumer. You might say that you believe this place is awesome, but if you do then your actions will back up what you believe. Are you ready to see what happens when you realize this place is awesome?

You need to realize that Tree of Life Church is awesome. Filled with awesome people, awesome things are happening here – and if you are part of this, you are awesome. See yourself the way God does – you are awesome.

Stop making excuses – you can serve, you can be here on time, you can encourage and bring people to church!

Read v. 18.

Jacob turned the pillow into a pillar! When you realize that this is an awesome place you stop being a pillow person and start being a pillar person. A pillar is a monument to how good God is. A pillow is something to keep you cosy. Church is not a place to keep you cosy – it is a place to equip you to show the world how awesome it is to know God.

Pillow people are more concerned about their comfort than changed lives. They quit church when the pastor doesn’t wear a suit not caring that a suit puts new people off. They don’t like it when the songs are changed or the place grows but God is moving!

Wake up – we should be your pillar. Church is the proof that your life is changed! If you have never been in church at 9.45am you need to make some changes! You are not a pillow person – your destiny is greater than that – you are a pillar person.

In Gal. 2.9 Peter was described as a pillar of the church. He started off as Simon the Reed – blown away by anything. The kind of person who quit on you because you upset him or whatever. Then in Matt. 16.18, Jesus called him a pebble (which is what Peter means) – you can rely on a pebble, it has weight to it. It doesn't get blown about. It is stable. You know it is still going to be there. Pebbles don't think about what the weather is like or their attitude is like before going to church, they just go.

Then eventually, Peter became a pillar. He was a load-bearing part of the church. If he left the church, part of it would fall down. You will never become a pillar unless you realize this place is a gateway to heaven. We could lie and tell you that if you don't God will kill you, but that will only work for a season. When you get it by revelation that God is in this place, you will gladly be part of the furniture so to speak.

So, church is changing. We are doing a new rota and a Discipleship Class at 9am every Sunday morning (run by the awesome Pastor Amanda Conway). All our helpers will arrive at 9am too and we will have a Helpers Prayer meeting before doing what needs to be done. We are going to create a culture of punctuality.

When you realize that a place is awesome you change what you call it. The place Jacob was at was called Luz, but he changed the name to Bethel. Luz means the scheming place, but Bethel means the house of God. Some people are scheming for a place in the church, scheming for promotion. Bethel people just do what needs to be done because they love God and they see this is God's house. In a Luz place worship is painful because you are trying to reach God, but in the house of God, you just enjoy God. They are both the same place – the question is what will you call it. Because how awesome church is is entirely up to you!

Read v. 22. When Jacob realized this was an awesome place: he tithed. Awesome church people tithe. That is why some of you still tip and do not tithe – you still think this is a certain place, you haven't realized this is an awesome place.

When you realize this is an awesome place, you invest in it. You want more full time workers, you want a building to call our own. You want big witness (I have just been offered £900 for a whole page in the booklet given to over 700,000 people in Queen's and King George's Hospital. Awesome people want to get involved in paying for that because they know the reward that will come).

Tree of Life Church has this culture: we are awesome and you are awesome and all our guests are awesome. Realize that and you will arrive early, you will serve even when it's not your week, and you will speak to guests that don't even look like you!

THIS IS AN AWESOME PLACE!

Questions:

1. What is the difference between a CERTAIN PLACE and an AWESOME PLACE?
2. Are you a PILLOW PERSON or a PILLAR PERSON? In other words, are you sleeping in the church and treating it as a place to keep you cosy, or are you serving?
3. Do you call church Luz or Bethel? In other words, are you critical or do you realize God is here?
4. Do you TIP or TITHE?
5. What is your attitude to guests at the church?
6. What one thing can you do differently this Sunday to show that you know this place is AWESOME?
7. Will you be on time this Sunday? (Remember clocks go back)
8. Will you be 5 minutes early and get ready for our 10am shout?
9. Will you be bringing someone to church this Easter Sunday?

MINISTRY

Some people may feel a little raw after Sunday and this session. Love them but remember to challenge them to make the choices that are going to lead them to walk into their dreams.

***PLEASE ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO BE THERE AT 9.55am on SUNDAY so we can be TOGETHER AS FAMILY FOR EASTER SUNDAY.**