

## Connection & Kingdom Culture

2020 Youth Leadership Summit AM – Jeremy Gove

**Psalm 136:1** O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever.

### Introduction: Discussion Question – 1 Minute

*"It has done more than diplomats, clergymen or scientists to knit the world together. Taken for granted by kings and butchers alike, it is an indispensable companion that serves without favor or prejudice. It has reached into every civilized corner of the world—and often brought civilization with it. From...[it]...spring the words of history in the making, the chatter of daily life....[It has been called]... 'the proudest and the most poetical achievement of the American people.'*

*...Millions of Americans...[use it]...to get the weather or the correct time, [for] shopping..., stock market quotations, recorded prayers, bird watchers' bulletins, and even...advice to those contemplating suicide. Teen-agers could hardly live without... [it]...and many parents can hardly live with it."*

A. What do you think it is?

- a. The answer: The Rotary Telephone
- b. The article was published in Time...
  - i. Magazine in Feb, 1959.
- c. The article continues and says:

*"Twisted into every position—so long as it is uncomfortable—teen-agers keep the busy signals going with deathless conversation:*

- *'What ya doin?'*
- *'Yeah, I saw him today. Yeah, I think he likes me.'*
- *'Wait, I'll change ears. What? Hold on.'"*

- d. Take the vowels out and what do you have?
- e. About 3 text messages.
- f. 60 years from then to today.
- g. And the dialogue hasn't changed.
- h. The tendency to connect hasn't changed.
- i. Only the medium, the method, has changed.***

***Because, here's the thing...Students, teenagers have an incredible talent and tendency to take technology—no matter what it is—and make it social.***

- B. That's why we have instances.
  - a. In the 18th Century.
  - b. Of teens breaking into telegraph offices.
  - c. To send messages to friends down the line.
  - d. It wasn't about vandalism.
  - e. It wasn't about the telegraph.
  - f. As right or wrong as it was.
  - g. It was about the people down the line.

## THE MOTH MYTH

- C. Teenagers always turn technology social.
  - a. They use it to connect to others.
  - b. It's not the technology that attracts them.
  - c. It's the people on the other side OF...
    - i. That technology

***And somewhere along the line, we've bought into what digital ethnographers (specialists who track digital behavior) and sociologists call "The Moth Myth."***

- D. The idea is that teens are like moths.
  - a. They're aimlessly flittering about.
  - b. But in all of their aimlessness.
  - c. There's one thing they're always attracted to.
  - d. They're drawn to things that plug in and light up.
  - e. And deep down, we know it's a myth.**

- f. We know it doesn't work like that.
  - g. But we still buy in.
  - h. We try to be relevant by being on the...
    - i. Latest social media platform.
  - i. We have to have the biggest screens.
  - j. We have to have the best lights.
  - k. We have to have a Tik Tok channel.
  - l. And we need to be on SnapChat.
  - m. And we need to have the latest, greatest...
    - i. Video game system in our meeting room.
- E. And we convince ourselves, if we do it well enough.
- a. If we plug enough things in.
  - b. And if they light up bright enough.
  - c. If we build it, they will come.
- F. And we waste so much time and so...
- a. Much energy trying to be relevant.
  - b. Trying to chase the symptom.
  - c. That we miss the source.

***We can't afford to miss the deeper, developmental need.  
Teens aren't looking for tech, they're looking for touch.  
They're looking for connection.***

- G. That's why they turn anything they...
  - a. Touch into a relational opportunity.

***Because of this developmental, fundamental need for belonging, for intimacy, and for identity.***

- H. That's why they put up pointless posts like:
  - a. "The outfit I almost wore."
  - b. Or "Look what I ate today."
  - c. "Look at my moves, hear me sing."
  - d. I mean, have you WALKED into a public place...
    - i. With your teens lately?

***They'll be walking down the aisle of a restaurant and while they're walking, they'll start doing a random Tik Tok dance moves with their arms! Whether they're recording or not!***

- I. And we get onto them and we get discouraged.
  - a. And we say, "Well, they're just self-centered."
  - b. And, yes, that's part of the problem.
  - c. But here's the big reason why they do...
    - i. All of those things.
- J. It's because they're looking for intimacy and...
  - a. They don't know how to get it.
  - b. And here's what I mean by intimacy:

***The best definition I've ever heard for it is by Kenda Dean:  
"Intimacy is the deeply spiritual search for another who  
[YOU GOTTA CATCH THIS] knows what it's like to be me."***

## **MEANINGLESS MOMENTS**

- K. A person a lot smarter than me once wrote that the...
  - a. Basis of a healthy, vibrant relationship is...
    - i. *"A million meaningless moments."* (DeVries)
  - b. Think about it.
  - c. When you talk about the things that don't really...
    - i. Matter, you begin to know that person...
      - 1. In a newer, deeper way.
  - d. I know that, personally, the deepest bonds...
    - i. I've ever formed with my coworkers didn't...
      - 1. Happen in a meeting discussing profit...
        - a. Margins and sales strategies.

***They happened over a table at Wendy's laughing  
about accidentally using hot sauce.***

- L. The other items may have had more content.
  - a. They may have had more substance.
  - b. You could even say they had more importance.
  
  - c. But they didn't lend themselves to an...

- i. Intimate understanding of the person...
  - 1. Sitting across the table.
- d. Turning back to our teens:
- e. ***Who cares what you ate for breakfast?***
- f. ***Who cares about the 2 different outfits...***
  - i. ***You were trying to choose between?***
- g. ***Who cares what shoes you wore today?***
- h. We get onto our teens about it, while...
  - i. Missing the point.
- i. You know who cares about those things?
  - i. ***Someone who loves you.***

- M. Because whether they realize it or not.
  - a. They're crying out for an intimate connection

***They don't even consciously realize it, but they're telling themselves: "If I put enough information out there, maybe someone will understand what it feels like to be me."***

***When teens find someone who cares about the smallest, most insignificant pieces of their life, they know that they're onto a relationship that can be something more.***

- N. And here's the application. Because how fitting is it?
  - a. That we're told in the Gospels.
  - b. That even the very hairs of our head...

- i. Are numbered by God.
- c. We serve a God who is intimately...
  - i. Acquainted with the details of our lives.
- d. The relationship our student's seek is the...
  - i. Relationship that's offered.
- e. Our job is to connect them to that concept.

O. Please don't take what I'm saying out of context.

- a. We still need to teach.
- b. We need to get as much of the Word into...
  - i. Our students as possible.
- c. But we also need to connect them with the...
  - i. Culture of the Kingdom.
- d. Compassion is the Culture of the Kingdom.
- e. And you are its currency.

P. Because here's how the world looks at connection.

- a. There are 3 reasons why you connect:
  - i. **1. The Person is Useful**
    - 1. *They can help you with math*
  - ii. **2. The Person is Interesting**
    - 1. *They entertain you; keep you occupied*
  - iii. **3. The Person is Connected**
    - 1. *They allow you access somewhere else.*

b. Why's that dangerous to friendships?



- c. Because if THAT'S why you're friends.
- d. You can be easily replaced.

Q. And that's why teens today have:

- a. "Math Friends"
- b. "Church Friends"
- c. "Home Room Friends"
- d. And what you'll find is that very few of those...
  - i. Friends are what teens would call:
    - 1. "friend, friends"
- e. It's all about utility.
- f. It's all about usefulness.

R. And whether teens realize it or not, they KNOW it!

- a. And Social Media has given them the ability.
- b. To "connect" with their friends.
- c. So they don't get replaced.
- d. Without having to be there face-to-face.

***And so you have this increasingly faceless society building relationships and maintaining faceless friendships, not out of intimacy, but out of necessity.***

S. I NEED her and need to cultivate that relationship.

- a. Because if I don't, I won't pass Math class.
- b. Craig Watkins put it this way:

***Teenagers largely use social media for the potential to foster presence in absence...***

***["I'VE GOT TO STAY IN FRONT OF THEM OR THEY'LL FORGET ME."]***

***...and to experience deep relationships***

***[WITH THIS DEVICE, I'M CONNECTED EVEN WHEN I'M ALONE].***

***The average teenager sends 100 text messages per day, but mostly between 3-5 close friends. Just texts. That's not snaps, instagram posts, or anything else.***

***The average text message in the US is 7.7 words...and that includes your adult texts that come out like books.***

- T. According to the American Sociological Review, the...
- a. Average American today only has **2 close friends**
  - b. Which isn't all that alarming until you realize...
    - i. That just 25 years ago, the average...
      - 1. American had **6 close friends**.

U. And if that weren't enough, according to several...

- a. Studies, **25% of Americans report** that they...
  - i. Do not have a single close and trusted friend
- b. Contrast that with the fact that the average...
  - i. Person has **338** FB friends...
    - 1. And **150** IG followers
- c. And you see the disparity.

V. Friendship is on the decline.

- a. We are more connected and yet more...
  - i. Isolated than at any other time in history.
- b. We've traded trust for "tweets"**
- c. Smiles for "statuses"**
- d. Love for "likes"**
- e. And conversations for "comments."**

W. We use likes and emojis, not just to express what...

- a. We're saying, but to declare:
  - i. **"I hear you. I see you. I acknowledge you."**
- b. A simple "thumbs up" means so much more...
  - i. Than we think it does
- c. I overheard a couple of our students talking...
  - i. The other day.
- d. And one of them said, "Someone told me to my...
  - i. Face that they were sorry."
- e. "And I didn't know what to say."
- f. "If they'd texted me, I could've sent..."

- i. Them an emoji.”
- g. “Instead, I just kind of folded into myself.”
- h. We can talk all we want about the...
  - i. Short-comings of technology, but here’s...
    - 1. The point.
- i. She didn’t know how to express that...
  - i. Her friend was heard.
- j. She knew what she wanted to say.
- k. She knew what needed to be said.
- l. But she didn’t know how to say it!

X. They want intimacy. They want connection.

**a. But they don’t know how to get it.**

b. And here’s where we come in.

c. Now that we see the need.

d. One of our primary jobs.

e. Is to teach them to connect.

f. Not like the world connects.

g. But like God connects

**The world says: “I love you because of what you give.”**

**God says, “I love you and SO I give.”**

h. “For God so loved the world.” (JN. 3:16)

i. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in...

- i. That, while we were yet sinners..." (RO. 5:8)
- j. "when we were enemies...
  - i. We were reconciled..." (RO. 5:10)

## **HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOREVER**

Y. We are tasked with connecting our students to the...

- a. Culture of the Kingdom.
- b. Compassion is the Culture of the Kingdom.
- c. And you are it's currency.

Z. And tying this into my original text.

- a. The phrase "Mercy Endureth For Ever" is...
  - i. Not uncommon.
- b. It occurs 41 times in Scripture.
- c. Ezra and Jeremiah both proclaimed it at...
  - i. Different times in their ministry.
- d. David charged a choir to sing it in His Tabernacle
- e. It was sang at the dedication...
  - i. Of Solomon's Temple
- f. And it was chanted before Jehoshaphat's...
  - i. Troops as they went into battle.

AA. Psalm 136, which ends each verse...

- a. With the phrase, does so with purpose.
- b. The 136th Psalm serves as a summary...
  - i. A synopsis, a description.
- c. It is the identity of Israel in a nutshell.

d. It is an encapsulation of their culture.

***One commentator says: "The Psalm turns history into theology and theology into worship."***

e. Verses 1-9 show Him to be **The Creator**.

i. *The One Who Brings Us Forth*

f. In verses 10-12, He's **The Redeemer**:

i. *The One Who Brings Us Out*

g. In verses 13-16, He's **The Shepherd**:

i. *The One Who Brings Us Through*

h. In verses 17-22, He's **The Conqueror**:

i. *The One Who Brings Us In*

i. In verses 23-26, He's **The Deliverer**:

i. *The One Who Brings Us Back*

BB. And as God walks Israel through their own timeline

a. As He outlines their identity.

b. He lays out their history.

c. He says, "This. Is. Who. You. Are."

d. "And it's because of Me."

e. Coupled with every description of the Creation

- f. Every account of overthrown kings.
- g. Every instance of redemption in the Exodus

***The one phrase that's repeated over and over, serves as an explanation for everything that's done.***

***Transcribed directly into Israel's ancestral and cultural DNA is the understanding that the Mercy of the Lord endures forever.***

- h. In this series of verses.
- i. The literal definition of the...
  - i. Word "mercy" is "lovingkindness."
- j. God's writes an account of their culture.
- k. And as He does, He drives home His compassion
- l. And we should do the same.

## **CLOSING**

- CC. In Jeremiah 29:11, God's man of the hour...
  - a. Prophecies the following.
    - i. (Most of you can probably quote it)
  - b. We use this verse when we find ourselves...
    - i. In need of encouragement.

**Jeremiah 29:11** For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

- c. But here's thing about this verse.
  - d. When God says it, Israel is not In a good place.
  - e. At this point in history, they've rejected...
    - i. Him time and again.
  - f. They've went chasing after idols.
  - g. They've killed the prophets of God.
  - h. God, in His mercy, would send them men...
    - i. With a message from Him.
  - i. And they wouldn't just reject the man.
  - j. But they would chase him down, torture...
    - i. Him, and kill him.
- DD. Even Jeremiah, the man that's speaking...
- a. On God's behalf.
  - b. Because he's simply saying what God wants...
    - i. Him to say.
      1. ***They beat him.***
      2. ***They put him in a stockade.***
      3. ***They burn his scrolls.***
      4. ***They throw him in a pit. They curse him.***
      5. ***They tell him to starve and die.***



- EE. And yet God, seeing their hearts, and seeing...
  - a. Everything they've done, begins to speak...
    - i. To Jeremiah, and he says:
      - 1. ***"I want to give my people a promise."***
  - b. **"I know what they've done."**
  - c. **"I know what they're doing."**
  - d. **"I know where their hearts are right now."**
  - e. **"But My mercy. My love. My lovingkindness."**
  - f. **"My compassion...is greater."**

- FF. And here's what you have to understand.
  - a. It's to THOSE people that He says:
    - b. **"Don't you know? Don't you have any idea?"**
    - c. **"Don't you have any inkling of how..."**
      - i. **Much I love you?"**

**Jeremiah 29:11** For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace [**THOUGH YOU'VE FOUGHT ME**], and not of evil [**THOUGH YOU'VE DONE EVIL**], to give you an expected end. [**I HAVE A GREATER DESTINY FOR YOU THAN YOU CAN SEE**]

- GG. And here's the reason why.
  - a. That's Jeremiah 29:11.
  - b. Exactly 4 chapters later in Jeremiah 33:11.

- c. Resting in the middle of that...
  - i. Verse, we find this phrase:

***“for the Lord is good;  
for His mercy endureth for ever:”***

- HH. His mercy. His love. His lovingkindness.
  - a. His compassion, for you.
  - b. His compassion, for your students.
  - c. His compassion...endures forever.
  - d. The Culture of the Kingdom is a...
    - i. Culture of Compassion

## **LOVE OF GOD**

*Could we with ink the ocean fill  
And were the skies of parchment made,  
Were every stalk on earth a quill  
And every man a scribe by trade,  
To write the love of God above  
Would drain the ocean dry,  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole  
Tho stretched from sky to sky.*

**\*\*\***

*O love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure  
The saints and angel's song.*