Stewardship in the Age of Digital Pluralism

David J. Lose, Luther Seminary
Re-thinking Stewardship Conference
July 19-21
2 Things Everyone Needs

1. A Sense of Belonging
   (Identity follows belonging)
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2. A Sense of Purpose
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2. A Sense of Purpose
   (Greatest motivator ever discovered.)
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He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep.’

John 21:17
2 Things Everyone Needs

1. A Sense of Belonging = *Justification* - drawn into the Discipleship Community
   (Identity follows belonging)

2. A Sense of Purpose = *Vocation* - invited to use all that you are and have
   (Greatest motivator ever discovered.)
Stuff only makes sense in story!
“You ask, what is our policy? I can say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us!... That is our policy.”
“Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore.”
“What is truth?”
Stuff only makes sense in story!
Stewardship
Justification

Stewardship
Justification
Resurrection
Justice
Stewardship
Gospel
Grace
Fellowship
Stuff only makes sense in story!
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(And we don’t know our story anymore....)
“We live in the age of the death of the meta-narrative.”
~Jean-Francois Lyotard
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~Jean-Francois Lyotard
We live in the age of the competition of the meta-narratives!
Digital Pluralism

describes a world in which there are multiple and competing realities, stories, convictions, perspectives and worldviews, most of which are mediated by digital means.
Digital Pluralism

the exponential proliferation of the means by which to distribute and access information...
Digital Pluralism

the exponential proliferation of the means by which to distribute and access information... to the point of super-saturation!
Figure 1

Digital Information Created, Captured, Replicated Worldwide

Tenfold Growth in Five Years!

Source: IDC, 2008
Today a person is subjected to more new information in a day than a person in the middle ages in his entire life!
Digital Pluralism

3 Cultural Shifts
1. We have moved from the age of obligation to the age of discretion.
So many choices
So little time!
2. We have moved from a time when identity was *received* to a time when identity is *constructed*. 
3. We have moved from a culture that values tradition to a culture that values experience.
Life’s short. Get a divorce.

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Digital Pluralism

A digitally-mediated world of limitless choices where the Church is just one more option
How have we missed these changes???
How have we missed these changes???

Because church leaders tend to be people who value duty, received identity, & tradition.
What Do We Do???
1. Focus on opportunities.
Obligation = Guilt
Discretion = Need
Receive = Passive
Construct = Active
Tradition = Past
Experience = Present/Future
What would church look like if we imagined that the people coming were looking for a community that would help them meet their deepest needs, construct meaningful identities, and experience the living God?
2. Start with questions.
Ask people what they need from a church?
Together, ask what your community needs from a church?
What would church look like if it intentionally asked the people who were coming - and those who weren’t - what we as a community needed from our church?
3. Ask for help.
3. Ask for help.

You don’t have to be an expert in everything.
What would church look like if everyone who came through our doors was invited to contribute their gifts, talents, and ideas to make the church & world better?
4. Give people a chance to practice.

“Knowledge isn’t skill. Skill is knowledge practiced 1000 times.” ~ S. Suzuki
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What would church look like if we imagined that Sunday morning was the God-given time in which we rehearse and practice our Christian lives in the world?
5. Make conversation a priority.
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Think inter-generationally!
What would church look like if people believed that the church was the place they could find others interested in talking about what really matters?
6. Tell God’s story so that it offers meaning, purpose and identity.
The primary goal of biblical study is not to find the original *meaning* of the passage, but to find *yourself* in the story today.
What would church look like if it was a place where people heard God’s story told, sung, and taught such that they could imagine themselves taking their place in the story?
7. Tell a Better Story vs.
The Odysseus Option
The Orpheus Option
The Orpheus Option

Tell a better story, sing a better song!
What would church look like if it was the place where people could count on being told that they had infinite worth and were invited into lives of meaning and purpose?
He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep.’

John 21:17
And after this he said to him, “Follow me!”

John 21:19b
Thank you!
Even more, thank God for you.