

We're in a series on marketing and are we going to have some fun today—talking about *content marketing*! Let's turn to [the definition of content marketing from the American Marketing Association](#).

“A technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience—with the objective of driving profitable customer action.”

Now, what's going to be so illuminating is that we're going to parse that definition into its key parts in order to understand how the Kingdom of God has been so hugely successful in growing by hundreds of millions of believers during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But for all that marketing success and growth, there's *also* been a lot of stagnation and inertia in many churches worldwide—and that requires some examination first. Why? Because we can often learn as much if not more from *what not to do* that from *what to do*!

So, we'll start with one of the most important questions that rarely gets asked of Christians, even the most serious Christians. Here it is: when it comes to the Kingdom of God, are you an *employee* or a *customer*?

The fact is, many believers in the modern American church function a whole lot like modern, pretty much entitled customers—that is, they act like consumers who are to be catered to and fussed over during their touchpoint experience. You know, the all-too-common stuff of church life:

- Rather than fully immersing themselves in vibrant worship of the living God, they closely critique the suitability of the worship song choices and loudness, or...
- Rather than seeking to apply their local pastor's Biblical direction, they challenge the quality and length of the pastor's sermon, or...
- Rather than losing themselves in the privilege of gathering together with fellow believers to get freshly equipped by the Word of God, they wonder why the room temperature in the church sanctuary isn't regulated to just the right temperature.

Yeah, the usual kind of stuff for self-centered consumers accustomed to the “good life” in America.

But the funny paradox here is that God *does* want us to be very acutely aware of one main thing that we *do* consume—His saving grace, available only through the shed blood of Jesus on the Cross! Hey, remember that glorious day when you first believed in Christ and experienced that overwhelming feeling of accepting God's gift of grace? Amazing.

And we continue to avail ourselves of His grace every day! That why Jesus's yoke is so light—the gift of grace is so easy as compared to the futility of our trying to fulfill the Law of Moses that Jesus fulfilled on our behalf. We will all be gratefully *consuming* God's grace until the day we're taken up to be with Jesus!

But the moment we believed, something else also happened: we were transferred to the Kingdom of God (Colossians 1:13-14) and we became ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20)! And ambassadors work for those they serve...in our case, it's King Jesus! So, yeah, the truth is, from the moment we've absorbed that first burst of grace, God's ongoing grace and love *compels us to tell others* to avail themselves of God's free gift of grace! That's a crucial morphing *from* mere “consumers” to “employees” of Jesus Christ!

Here's the thing. It's clear that God's will is that all would be saved (1 Timothy 2:4-7), and He's counting on His ambassadors worldwide to represent the interests of His Kingdom—to go forth and make disciples of every nation (Matthew 28:19-20)! Brilliant in both structure and wisdom, *we are consumers of God's grace so that we are not sidetracked* into fruitless works...or a misguided pursuit of the Law of Moses that cannot possibly promise eternal life, the very law that Jesus completely fulfilled on our behalf. Astounding!

So, indeed, believers continue to be consumers, but *a very key purpose of that consumption of grace* is such that we don't have to focus on the keeping the law or piling up good works to try to ensure we can get to heaven. Neither pursuit will do that. Yes, salvation is only assured totally by the Cross, then we're freed up to market the Kingdom of God by proclaiming the good news of the Gospel and making disciples!

And that's why we are compelled to say that our special role is as *employees* of the Kingdom—yes, proclaimers, ambassadors, witnesses of the glory of God—and what eternal service He has provided for us! There's no better place to see the foundation of that than Mark 1:14-15 (ESV)—Jesus's grand start of the greatest marketing initiative ever conceived and delivered: "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'" *That's* marketing radically more enduring than a Super Bowl ad!

And then there's this very strong companion to that, when we see John doing his own proclaiming (John 3:16-17): "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." Wow, go revel in *that* truth like it's the first time you've heard it! And that brings us back to the *content marketing* of the church. Here's the AMA definition again.

*"A technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience—with the objective of driving profitable customer action."*

We're going to break that definition into four parts, starting with the second portion of the sentence.

- *"...valuable, relevant and consistent content..."* Well, of course, that's *the good news, the Gospel itself!* Salvation unto eternal life is the ultimate "valuable, relevant and consistent content" of the Gospel message, initiated by Jesus Himself and carried forward by serious believers ever since!
- *"...to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience..."* Yeah, the content of the Gospel is powerful "to attract and acquire," and, of course, the AMA's "clearly defined audience" for that Gospel is absolutely everyone—the *"whosoever"* in the Bible—wherever they may be around the world!
- *"...A technique of creating and distributing..."* Here's God's fulfillment of the "technique" this AMA definition calls for...first, Jesus obediently, sacrificially, enduringly *created* this amazing Gospel—then we are appointed as "employees" of the Kingdom to *distribute* this Gospel by all means available, starting with loving our nearby neighbors and extending all the way to satellite delivery!
- *"...with the objective of driving profitable customer action."* Of course, this is captured so perfectly in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20a. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Yes, going and making new believers in Christ, new disciples of Jesus, is the ultimate in "driving profitable customer action"—that's the shocking ministry given to us of reconciling each person to the Father through Christ (2 Corinthians 5)!

But none of this really gets accomplished if believers position themselves *merely as consumers*, self-absorbed in trying to satisfy God unto salvation through futilely trying to fulfill the Law and doing good works—trying to satisfy the very God who has already made any whosoever made righteous through his or her belief in Christ and Him crucified! Rather, we are to confidently look outward to others, ministering to them in confidence, knowing that our reward in heaven is based on our building on the foundation of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:9-16).

But let's get real. Is your church focused on *equipping, exhorting* and *expecting* saints to go forward in grace-propelled confidence to proclaim the saving Gospel to their neighbors and around the world? Or is your church mired in proclaiming Moses rather than Jesus? Or is your church more focused on members' self-improvement and therapeutic issues of modern life? Or is your church more focused on pleasing the already-saved flock as just "customers," making sure the A/C and sermon length are calibrated just right?

Whatever your answers to these questions, each of us is called to live out our lives in Christ, pursuing our "employee" status with confidence, vigor, and expectation! Yeah, Jesus gave us the *greatest content marketing opportunity for all time!* So, how's your content marketing going, neighbor?

## *A&A: Application & Action*

1. As an “employee” of King Jesus from your neighborhood to your workplace, do you effectively market the content message of “Christ and Him crucified”—as the Apostle Paul so succinctly put it? Be specific.
2. As the local manifestation of the Kingdom of God, does your church market the content message of the Cross effectively to your community and around the world? Give examples.
3. Do you believe that the King’s rewards at the judgment seat of Christ will reflect most favorably on people who work to “content market” the Cross, who work to “go forth and make disciples”...? Or will people be rewarded in similar fashion who do good works without ever proclaiming “Christ and Him crucified,”—good works like, say, painting houses and feeding people? Discuss.