<Blessing Home Invasion> (2 minutes)

**Intro by Chris (2 Minutes)**

 Good afternoon and welcome to Redemption Church. My name is Scott and I am the youth pastor here and have been for many years. Redemption Church’s vision is to be a

<1st century church connecting with a 21st century world>

and that’s good for me because even though some of our senior saints may feel like they grew up in the first century, with our youth group it can feel like I am desperately trying to catch up to a 21st century world. Text messages, Facebook, Twitter, VIDEO CHAT, CLOUD FILE SHARING, STREAMING HIGH DEFINITION VIDEO, BLUE TOOTH WIFI 4G SIGNALS these are all things that barely existed when even I was growing up, but now they are the language of the age. To connect with a 21st century world, we have to speak that language. Christ & His apostles used innovation to connect with his 1st century world. We are going to be a 1st century church – with all of the **passion, power, and heart** that they have, but still connect to a 21st century world.

 The problem that we find is that there are some 1st century churches out there and there are some 21st century churches out there. When not in partnership, the effectiveness is cheapened. There are churches in the metroplex today that have the power of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of the scriptures, but they have no idea how to connect to a 21st century world. They are living in the 1st century… In order to be an attendee at that church, you need to step into a time machine of sorts. (Bluefish Apostolic guy story). Then we look at a 21st century church, with no connection to the 1st century church. Everything is sterile and although the electric bills are awful high with all of the technology, there is no power. They lack Holy Spirit Power. This 21st Century church facebook account might have 20,000 friends, but none of them know each other. They lack Community! Their website may be cool, but what does it really “SAY.” They have sermons built around illustrations and not scripture… Not Jesus. A 1st Century Church is ALL ABOUT JESUS… It is always focused on the MISSION.

**Believe me Redemption Church when I say that we don’t want to be either of these churches…we need to be a hybrid.** We need to convey that power, that passion, that wisdom, and heart in a way that people understand it.

I’m here to talk to tell you how a 1st Century Church can minister to a 1st Century World.

**<Innovation Connection>**

 Innovation can create that connection. We need to bring innovation and creativity into what we do as a church to connect to people. Just *making or preparing these things* can bring people to Christ. We make weird videos because they catch people's attention. We try to make videos that you are glad to share on Facebook and other social media. God can work through these videos; when we were filming this silly home invasion video, Marshal met his neighbor for the first time and invited him to church. So it can bring community to places that it hasn’t been before. Additionally, Non-churched folks’ attention can be captured by a relevant use of innovation. Also, Churched people can catch the fire of inspiration with a bit of well produced, well placed innovation. We have done this as a church by using popular secular songs to season our special services (sigh…ALLITERATION). We have had our stage decked out in all kinds of things. From a haunted house on Halloween, to an open grave on Easter, to the mark of the orange revolution on friend’s day. We like to use creativity to set moves and illustrate what we are trying to convey to you. We have had some dramatizations, employed a choir, and even a little thriller dancing…all in the name of connecting to the lost or uninterested. If we tell you that we are going to do something special for you to bring friends to, you can bet its gonna’ be good. You hear people discussing worship services at big churches like they attended a laser light show, but The church has never been against employing a little innovation if it connects people.

**<Paul>**

Paul was schooled in the ancient. He remembered the old paths of Judiasm and was an expert in the levitical law that he learned as a Pharisee. He knew the unchanging Truth of Jehovah God… but… {Tie the idea of the ancient being packaged in new ways}

Paul was the man about using creativity and innovation to reach out to people. If you’re not familiar with Paul, he is the guy that wrote half of the New Testament. Even that was innovative. All the epistles and writing down the Gospels were a new way to connect back in the day. They didn't have a regular mail service back then, you just wrote a letter and hoped someone would take it where you wanted it to go, but Paul needed a way to communicate with people far away when he couldn't go there. And then the early church needed a more effective way of sharing the Gospel than passing it along verbally, so they started writing it down, so they could distribute it and copy it more easily. Their goal was letting people know about Jesus, and they were willing to do it any way they could. Paul took the function of writing letters and worked it into the 13 epistles that are included in the Bible, many of which show us how to live the Christian life. Paul took this post-Jesus wisdom and distributed it all over the place. That’s a wonderful bit of innovation right there. You wouldn’t have a bible except that men like Paul brought innovation to the Church.

 Paul wasn’t afraid to try new things. He had that 1st century church power and he was willing to do ANYTHING to connect it to his world. Paul was comfortable with God’s power flowing into and out of him. So much so, that Acts 19 says

**<Acts 19:11-12**

**11 God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.>**

Paul was busy and between travelling everywhere, making tents at work, and being imprisoned all of the time, we can infer that he wasn’t able to go and pray with everybody. Items that touched him healed the sickness in others. (It was like Paul was looking for a way to connect with people… He may have thought to himself “I can’t be there to connect with them… to touch them… but I can touch this handkerchief and in a way, I will be there…) This innovation seemed crazy then and it still does today, but Paul seems open to it and God worked through it. God still can work through it.

What Paul would have done with Video chat? His google hangouts would spread the gospel SO rapidly.

Paul would travel to different parts of the world. He would encounter areas with a much different culture than Jerusalem. Paul found ways to preach Christ within that nation’s culture… Probably one of the best examples was Paul in Greece…

 Paul’s sermon on Mars Hill was revolutionary and what some consider a perfect example of modern evangelism. Let me unpack it for you a little bit.

Acts 17:16-23

16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. 18 A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. 19 Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean.” 21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

So Paul is preaching the Gospel, the good news about Jesus and it startles the educated people and gets him invited to a meeting of the Areopagus, The highest judicial and legislative council of ancient Athens. They want to know what he is talking about.

22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

Paul went to where they were and figured out how to reach out to them. He knew that these philosophical people were open to new thoughts if presented correctly, so he packaged it nicely within their own customs. He was connecting with the culture and presenting Christ. The altar to the unknown god gave Paul his “in” and he just straight broke it down for them in an educated/well put together summary of our God, His place, and His gift of Himself in Christ Jesus.

In the sermon, he even quotes popular works of *their* poets. There are scriptures in your Bible that are quoted from other known sources! In verse 28 of Acts 17, it says:

**<Acts 17:28**

**for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'>**

“For in you we live and move and have our being.” That’s from the poem Cretica, written by Epimenides (ca. 600 BCE)

“for we are also his offspring.” That’s talking about the highest Greek god Zeus from the Cilician poet Aratus (315-240 BCE)

Paul (who typically quotes scriptures) takes lines from two popular works of literature of the day and runs them together to explain God. To 1st century Christians, this might have been edgy, but I would bet that their desire to share Christ with others would override it. To the Jews, this would be blasphemy, because God was not for the Greeks and the Messiah had not come. However, to Paul, he was *desperate* to connect the message to people and tell them about Jesus.

So Paul was on the cutting edge of connecting the message of Christ to people all throughout his ministry.

**<Jesus’ Parables>**

Another way that innovation helped people connect to the love of God actually originated with Jesus Himself. Parables were stories that Jesus would tell to illustrate principles to people. Some of these people were learned and hearing the message a different way would help them connect with it. Others were not learned people. Nowadays, we all go to the same schools and learn to do basics as a rule in America. Back in the first century, this was not the case. Fishermen knew how to fish. Their dads were fishermen and they were good at it because they were taught by seasoned veterans. Fishermen didn’t understand tax collection. Fishermen didn’t understand all of the workings of the priests, but when Jesus used common elements from everyday people, he was able to connect EVERYONE to the message. This may seem like a small tool, but it was terribly important. There was a parable that I didn’t understand even until a couple of years ago after I had heard it 100 times. (EXPLAIN THAT STORY). The parables still teach us things even today!

<Ipad child vid>

**<CONNECT>**

 Redemption Church wants to connect people to the love of Jesus. That little girl in the video could navigate around an ipad, but was lost as far as the magazine went. These churches are magazines, filled with good information (and have been for decades), but to this child, it’s just a broken ipad. For this little girl, it wasn’t a problem with understanding the content, it was a problem with delivery. Redemption Church wants to **connect** people to the love of Jesus. We want to take this 1st century church power, passion, love and connect it to our 21st century world. And we are going to take a page out of the first century church’s playbook, because we are going to be innovative. We share this hunger that the first century church had. We have met Jesus and we want all to accept Him as their Lord and Savior. To accomplish that, we will do pretty much anything. We will utilize technology/dramatizations/edgy concepts/music/whatever to try to connect people to the love of Jesus and the passion of that 1st century church. We will NEVER do these things for the sake of being cool, but instead attempt to attract the un-churched and open the scriptures to the saints in ways that they have never seen it before. (What would Paul do with Facebook). We have tools and we have creative people and a creative God. Technology is not a bad thing. It can be distracting, but it is not a bad thing. It is our pledge to you to never let the cool-ness of something distract from the message that it presents. Our entire mission is to connect people to Jesus. We want Redemption Church to be a place that is living and vibrant and trying new things all of the time.

 Some of those new ideas might be in your head and you keep them quiet. Don’t do that! We want to collaborate with everyone here to bring the gospel to people in ways where it meets them. Let your innovative light shine. Connect Christ to your world.

**<Matthew 5:14-16**

**14“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;15nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.16“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.>**

We all have different skills and unique ideas, but at Redemption Church, we have one vision. If we do something weird, we would be happy to talk to you about it, but chances are that there is a good reason (that has already been debated about a lot) that we are trying it. We want people to know the Jesus that we know. We want to bring a little of that 1st century church to the 21st century.

~Cue music~

 We don’t want to be a broken ipad. We don’t want to be financially successful and spiritually unrelatable. Redemption Church will never be a comfortable, country club atmosphere, but it will ALWAYS be a great place to bring your friends to receive the power of Jesus, the love of other believers, and the passion of a church seeking the lost. Will you connect your world to Christ today? Christ can have a seat at your super bowl party. He doesn’t have to stay here.

We come to the altar at Redemption Church because we take physical steps to connect. We invite him here and we pray our thanks and our petitions right here. Will you connect with Him today?

Close: Dear Jesus, please let us use the innovation that we have. Please let our innovations not stay Silent. We want to connect the real you to the shadow of you that people know. We want to bring the real church to this century.