

THE HERMENEUTICS OF HISTORY, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*  
A Thoughtworks Intensive with Don Rousu

Personal Introduction: After years of apathy, the “history student” *gets it* in 1967!

Personal Sharing: Tell your name and share an incident from your personal history that changed the course of your life.

The Plan:

Follow the progression of Hunter’s book, a chapter at a time.

I have many questions to stimulate discussion —

I want you to think this through, and I want everyone to hear what you think.

I also have thoughts to share in each section.

At the end, I want to introduce some thoughts from Randy Frazee’s book, *THE CONNECTING CHURCH* and also share a video of Randy Frazee speaking at Willow Creek Community Church for a Small Groups Conference because I think there is a vital, workable connection with The Celtic Way of Evangelism!

*The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, Chapter One

Highlights:

- A. Three Profound changes in Patrick: (Pp. 13, 14)
  - 1. Coming to Know “The Presence”
  - 2. Understanding the Irish, their language and culture, with “intuitive profundity”
  - 3. Loving his captors to the point of identifying with them as “his people” and hoping for their reconciliation to God
  
- B. Preparation for Cross-cultural ministry:  
Patrick, lifted out of Roman culture into Irish culture for cultural training, back into Roman culture for theological and pastoral training, then back into Irish culture with a high sense of mission through his Macedonian Call.

Patrick formed a “monastic mission” — what did it look like then?

Do you see the expression of a five-fold ministry (Alan Hirsch, APEST)?

Was there a definable strategy? (P. 21)

Was there a clear goal? (P. 22)

With what kind of results in 28 years (ecclesiastical and societal)? (P. 23)

Is the church of North America today more aligned with Patrick or the British Bishops? (P. 24)

Does Patrick’s story stir any desires in you?

*The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, Chapter Two

Hunter says that Patrick and his team left behind a new form of “monastic community”. It differed from eastern monasteries in that celtic monasticism was shaped by mission, as opposed to protectionism and escapism, and it was calculated to penetrate pagan society with the message of the Kingdom. In other words, the missiology drove the ecclesiology. Furthermore, the celtic communities were primarily laymen-centered, not clergy-centered. (Hunter, P. 28)

Question: Is there anything about this type of monasticism that can and should be duplicated today? If so, what? In other words, what are the identifiable elements?

Shared purpose (team mission), shared place (communal living, hospitality), shared possessions (thrift, economy)

Where was it done then, and where could it be done now?

Then: Outside tribal villages, and then within tribal villages. (Viral assimilation)

Now: What are the existing structures to be penetrated?

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*The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, Chapter Three

After Ireland was substantially evangelized, what became of Celtic Christianity?

Where did it go?

What did it do?

And how?

Hunter speaks of the threefold challenge of Irish missionaries living in Europe: converting *barbarian* peoples, converting *Arian barbarians* to orthodoxy, and renewing Christian populations. (P. 39)

Question: How does this relate to the life of the church as you experience it now, particularly in the Vineyard?

Hunter says (P. 43), “Not until Vatican II would the Roman Catholic Church affirm the idea of *indigenous* Christianity.” Until that time, the Roman church opposed the Celtic way of evangelism and finally took the life out of it.

Question: What marks a Christianity that is *indigenous*?  
What implications does that have for the way we do church, and how are we doing?

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*The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, Chapter Four

Hunter says (P. 47) that “Five themes suggest what we might learn about ‘missionary ecclesiology’ from the ancient Celtic Christian movement.”  
They are:

First theme:       The community evangelized as a **team**

Second theme:     Life in the monastic community was experienced on the four levels of the solitary self, the soul friend, the small group, and the whole community.

Third theme:       *Imaginative* prayer (See St. Patrick’s Breastplate, Pp. 49-51)

Fourth theme:     Hospitality to strangers as the highest commitment

Fifth theme:       More caught than taught; belong before believe

When you hold this template against the life of your local church, what do you observe? What model have you been emulating?

(If it would be helpful, we’ll break into small groups, process this, and then come back together to share in a plenary session)

*The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, Chapter Five

Does it matter *how* a person or a community communicates the good news of God's nature, His love, and His salvation for us?

The way of the Roman Church was and has been primarily a rational apologetic approach.

What do these things from Celtic spirituality tell us about the *wineskin* of their message (see bottom of P. 71):

1. The Celtic knot (See P. 141) and the Celtic Cross (front cover)
2. St. Patrick's breastplate (Pp. 49 - 51)
3. The ubiquity of music as they worked, played, and prayed

Was Patrick simply brilliant at rhetorical technique, or was there something deep within him that intuitively gave birth to his wildly effective technique? If so, what was it – how would you define it?

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*The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, Chapter Six

Missionary movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have often been accused of committing “cultural genocide.”

1. What do we learn in this regard from the missional mind of the Celts?  
(Pp. 77, 93)
2. Where do you and your local church stand on the issue of human nature — inherently evil since the fall, or inherently good because of the image of God?  
(Pp. 89, 90)

Which position (Augustine’s or Patrick’s) is the right one? ☺

How does your understanding of the nature of man affect your outreach to the most broken in your community? What kind of success are you having?

*The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, Chapter Seven

Hunter says that we have a situation in western culture that is ripe for Celtic style evangelism. He is referring to a culture of addiction, and he calls those who belong to it *The New Barbarians*.

He says they are:

1. “Secular” and have no Christian memory
2. Are unrefined, have no “class”, and are often out of control
3. The **most receptive** people in our communities, looking for spirituality in all the wrong places
4. Typically ignored by the church as “unreachable” or “undesirable” or “unsalvageable”
5. Have their own culture with its unique language, symbols, institutions, rituals, music and tribal history, and ministry roles (dealer, high priest, storyteller, medicine man, etc.)

What do you think of his assessment of the parallel between 5<sup>th</sup> century Ireland and 21<sup>st</sup> century North America?

On P. 117, Hunter says, “The two most prominent Celtic approaches to evangelization – a monastic **community** welcoming seekers as guests and **teams** from the monastic community visiting settlements for weeks or months — might, at first blush, seem unavailable to churches today.”

Do you agree? And what do you think of his attempts to show where it might be happening?



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Consider his statement in light of Randy Frazee's book, *THE CONNECTING CHURCH* and the practice of authentic biblical community

A brief overview of *The Connecting Church*

- The staff meeting – In a church built on small groups, all staff members disliked their small groups and thought they were dysfunctional!
- The study about authentic biblical community and what opposes it.  
2 cultural values have shaped the North American church:
  1. Individualism (vs. corporateness)
  2. Consumerism (vs. service and sacrifice)
- Three defining marks of authentic biblical community
  1. Common purpose
  2. Common place
  3. Common possessions
- The birthing of neighborhood home groups to carry out the mission of God and all the functions of the church

Randy Frazee speaks via DVD about his personal journey

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