Communicating With A Secular Audience
Reflections from George Hunter in *How to Reach Secular People*

The challenge of communicating with an increasingly secularized population is growing day by day. Here’s a check list of things to consider when it comes to evaluating how you’re communicating today as the church amid the rising tide of secularism:

Remember…

1. **Keep it simple.** Simplify everything from the bulletin to the sermons. You will communicate better with secular people.
2. **Translate, please.** Secular people don't understand the theological jargon we use. You can simplify biblical terms without sacrificing their integrity.
3. **Timing is everything.** Time is the new currency. Communication must be concise. If people lose focus because of time, they lose the message.
4. **Take nothing for granted.** The average churchgoer often takes for granted things new people may not understand. The answer? Define what terms mean. Print prayers, creeds, etc, in the bulletin.
5. **Define non-negotiables.** Some language and practices simply can't be changed (like communion liturgy at some points). Define the non-negotiables and then clarify their meaning.
6. **Educate, educate, educate!** Secular people require instruction. If you don’t educate, you will not fully communicate.
7. **Cut the “preacher talk.”** If an everyday word can be used, use it!
8. **Use secular terms.** They can be a vehicle to convey a sacred meaning as long as they don't threaten the Biblical, theological, or liturgical integrity of what you are trying to communicate.
9. **Use a variety of communication forms.** Lyle Shaller says, "Today we are dealing with the ‘Sight, Sound and Sensation’ generation." Diversify your forms of communicating the same sacred message.
10. **Embody the Good News first**--Christian communication has always been personalized before it is verbalized. If you want to share the message, live it first.

*Hunter defines secularism as “the withdrawal of whole areas of life, thought, and activity from the control or influence of the church.” The era of “Christendom” when the Church “defined the purposes of each area of life” is over. Hunter gives as example by describing a young man named Sid who could not be classified as an atheist, saying “I don’t believe in your God,” or an agnostic, saying, “I don’t know if I believe in your God,” but rather an “ignostic,” who simply says, “I don’t know what you are talking about.” The church is increasingly filled with “ignostics” who don’t have a clue what traditional Christian language, concepts or practices mean.*