

Core Principles of Evolutionary Christian Culture

Principles of Evolutionary Culture^[1]

I'm struck by how little emphasis there has been in liberal Christian congregations on teaching people the core principles and practices for how to actually love each other as communities of faith. Many congregations have "core values", but how are these to be enacted? In truth, congregations end up far too often being cultures of suffering, as our lack of skillful means for loving relationship all too often wreaks havoc in congregational life. Can you imagine congregations consciously agreeing to the following set of principles, and then being offered regular opportunities to learn about and practice these principles. I'm sure that each of us have our own principles that we could add. In fact, I'd love to hear from you what you think about these ones, and what you think I may have omitted.



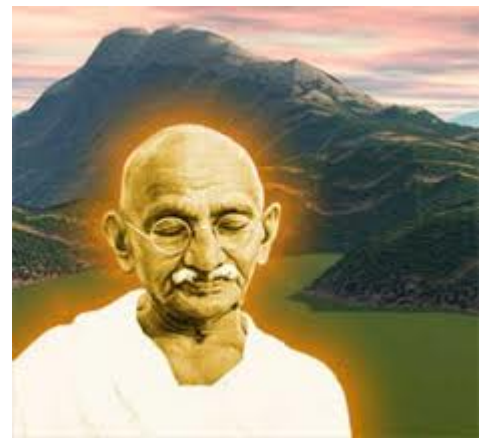
1. Listening with Deep Curiosity

When we listen to each other, we bring a profound curiosity to understand how others are seeing and interpreting their world.

We sincerely desire to see reality through the other's eyes, and therefore risk the possibility of being changed by the perspective of the other. This requires deep humility and willingness to be listening for the divine in others. Nicodemus, a religious authority, exemplifies this curiosity, when he comes to the peasant rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth, as a student and not a teacher.

2. Being Exemplars to Every One We Meet

We accept that we are always on stage in the eyes of the world. The way we conduct ourselves in this community and within the larger community is a profound witness to what life in Christ looks like. As humans committed to conscious spiritual evolution in Christ, we are accountable for upholding moral standards and exhibiting a quality of consciousness that is a light unto the world. The ancient Jews knew themselves to be a holy people, which means being set apart, for a sacred task. They were a "light unto the nations". The author of 1 Peter picks up on this ancient identity, calling us to be a holy priesthood.



3. Transparency: Speaking our Deepest Truth

Our words can either hide or express our hearts. In our conversations we endeavor to be as transparent as we can at a particular point in our own self-awareness about our deepest

truth. We never use this principle as a weapon to hurt others, but rather speak our truth in love, taking full responsibility to manage our feelings and impulses. In groups, we listen deeply for the emergence of fresh wisdom that arises specifically and congruently with each new context, rather than tell our old nuggets.

Jesus was recognized for speaking with an inner authority rather than quoting other authorities (Mark 1:27).



4. Leaving No Trace: A Life of Constant Resolution

We are committed to resolving conflict as soon as we become aware of it. We assume responsibility for taking the initiative to clear up misunderstandings and hurts. We refuse to triangulate^[2] third parties as a way of releasing the tension that conflict causes. Rather we go to that person directly and if we cannot resolve the conflict we will seek agreement with the other to go to a mediator. We ask for the grace to neither shame the other, play the victim, or hide. The motivation for “leaving no trace” is that unresolved conflict saps life energy away from our commitment to evolve in love. Matthew’s gospel provides a model for dealing with conflict (Matthew 18:15-20). Once we resolve the conflict, we sincerely seek the grace to forgive—that is, we release any attachment we might have to the drama of conflict.

5. The Path of Vulnerability: Living at the Edge of Risk

We are taken most quickly to our evolutionary edge by knowing and embracing our vulnerability. When our earliest

evolutionary instincts get triggered they compel us to defend ourselves against perceived threats. While this is healthy and natural, we also recognize that these instincts can over-function. We all carry within us sore spots from our developmental history—emotional and psychological wounds—that leave us hypersensitive and over-vigilant in some areas. In the absence of self-awareness, we build our identity around these defense systems. We are committed to “owning” our vulnerabilities, rather than defending them and using them as an excuse to attack others.

We are also taken to our evolutionary edge by taking on tasks, new behaviors, and thought patterns that stretch us beyond our perceived limits. Rather than play it safe, we look for opportunities that involves risk and challenge us to grow. We walk with Jesus the path of vulnerability. With him, we are willing to go the cross and die to all identities and identifications that keep us from growing in love, compassion, and service.



6. Nobody and Nothing Against Us [\[3\]](#):



We assume, in Paul’s words, that if G_d is for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31)? When this adventure of becoming was catalyzed by the Big Bang, it was G_d’s “yes” to creation. It was an explosion of G_d’s love, wisdom, and yearning. G_d sees it all and declare it to be good (Genesis 1: 14, 25). And the

religious intuition that it is all made in God’s image,

suggests a positive orientation to life, even in the midst of challenges, crisis, and tragedy. As people of faith, we do not make the assumption that the universe is aligned against us, or even neutral. Rather it is *for* us. The evolutionary process itself is the patient unfolding of the divine heart and mind, coming to fruition in willing, surrendered souls. Therefore we assume that within personal and collective challenges is the hidden presence of G_d, and that these challenges are evolutionary provocations. Jacob wrestled all night with a stranger. He is wounded for life by this encounter. But far from signifying the absence of G_d, this wrestling match represented divine engagement with Jacob. Even when life feels as though it is pitted against us, we look for the hidden presence of the divine.

7. A Life of Radical Responsibility

We assume radical responsibility for our lives and our life in community. This encompasses body, mind, soul, and our relationships with self, other, Earth, and the Divine. We understand that the quality and circumstances of our lives are representative of our spiritual evolution at this moment in time. While it is not absolutely true that we create our own reality, operating from this assumption lifts us from a position of victimhood, reduces shaming and blaming behaviors, and empowers us to make choices for a preferred future. To know deeply that nothing and nobody external to us is responsible for our lives, we are empowered to bring forth the future that needs us, personally and collectively to emerge. This future, present already in how we show up in life when we assume radical responsibility, is what Jesus called the Kin(g)dom of God.

8. Setting our Mind on Christ: A Life of Surrender



Paul challenges disciples to “let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). We are committed to transcending, but including our personal selves, as our core identity. Through prayer and service, we abandon this personal self’s primary concerns for safety, security, and status, and sex, aligned with our earliest (and healthy) evolutionary instincts. By surrendering moment by moment to the divine will, we are transformed by the mind of Christ, a higher self-in-process, concerned fundamentally, not for our own survival, but rather with alleviating the suffering of our planet, both human and other than human. Through this practice of self-abandonment (or surrender), we realize the sacramental nature of this and every moment, and that our lives are like a scripture that we need to learn to read with reverence. As we show up for each other and with each with the mind of Christ, we create the optimum culture for spiritual evolution (1 Corinthian 13:1-12).

[\[1\]](#) I thank Craig Hamilton whose development of the Principles of Evolutionary Culture inspired and informed these principles.

[\[2\]](#) Triangulation is a relational dynamic popularized by Murray Bowen, whereby we deal with conflict by drawing a third party into the conflict. Another word for this is gossip. Not only is this a breach of confidentiality, it gives the temporary false impression that we’ve done something about the

conflict, when in truth we have simply enlarged the circle.

[3] Gary Simmonds:

Seeing as there are so various families buying online and likewise exploring the internet market place, it has become increasingly famous to purchase medications online. So the next question is where can you get info that is reliable. You can find useful information fleetly and conveniently by going online. The most common sexual problems in men are erectile dysfunction and ejaculation disorders. A lot of doctors think about "[levitra cost](#)". Did learned something about "[buy levitra online usa](#)"? Other question we are going to is "[buy generic levitra online](#)". In effect, a medicinal reviews found that up to three quarters of people on such remedy experiment side effects. Luckily, most cases of sexual dysfunction are treatable, so it is momentous to share your concerns with your partner and physician. Today, there are many options for men who suffer from erectile dysfunction. Get emergency help if you have any of these signs of a side effect to this curing. Talk to your soundness care provider to see if it's sure to make the switch.