



Developing Your Very Own Christ Awakening Servant Team(s) – C.A.S.T. David Bryant / 2009

*“Connecting Christians more fully to the person of Christ
by increasing our conversations about the supremacy of Christ”*

*“The Lord gave the word
and great was the company of those who proclaimed it!” (Psalm 68:11)*

*“Let the message about Christ dwell among you richly
as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom....” (Colossians 3:16)*

BACKGROUND ON THE ORIGIN OF THE C.A.S.T. VISION

A new day has dawned for a Christ-awakening movement – anywhere! Leaders from across the Pacific Northwest attending a recent *Christ Convocation* took a bold new step in their on-going commitment to foster and serve a Christ-awakening movement in their region. The decision they made that day holds strong promise for a Christ-awakening for any city or region of the country – in fact, for any local church or other group of Christians anywhere.

On October 14, 2009, near Seattle, 80 pastors and leaders, from southern Oregon to the Canadian border, spent a full day discussing the spiritual momentum of the Church in the Northwest in response to dozens of *Christ Gatherings* across the region the past five years (such as Christ Roundtables, Christ Summits, Christ Huddles, a Christ College, etc). At the conclusion, these leaders (both clergy and lay) took unprecedented action. They launched the first-ever *Christ Awakening Servant Team* (“CAST”). They did so believing this step will significantly help prepare the Church for the Christ-awakening movement many have prayed for over the years.

Five of the *Christ Convocation* attendees were set apart to form the initial CAST. In doing this, we believe we have entered the next chapter (even the culminating phase) of an impending renewing work for Christ among God’s people in the Northwest.

But our vision that Wednesday went beyond launching *one* servant team. Rather, we sensed the Spirit intends this one team to provide a model– and then to help replicate – similar servant teams who function within individual local churches – or within Bible study groups, ministries, businesses, neighborhoods – to help foster and serve a wide-spread Christ-awakening. Using a familiar phrase from the movies, the Convocation suggested there should be “a “CAST of thousands!” – meaning that, eventually, there should emerge CASTs within a thousand churches (and other groups) across the region. This appears to many of us as quite possibly the “final step” from *our* side to allow God’s people to experience a Spirit-given, region-wide Christ-awakening movement. In fact, the CAST strategy could very well become the “tipping point” for it.

Following the Convocation, about ten leaders stayed on to meet with the newly-commissioned CAST to think through more carefully the CAST mission, and its approaches and strategy for the coming months. One of the first initiatives planned is for four members of the CAST to be deployed as a team in a *Christ Awakening Journey* this fall, to visit churches, ministries, pastor groups and communities represented at the Convocation.

However, much more came out of our post-Convocation discussions. Below is a summary of ideas which are now helping CASTs to form and take action. But more creative insights will surface, for sure. So, we want to keep the discussion flowing. We invite other Christ followers to help us flesh-out what CASTs should pursue. We expect this to become a rapidly-spreading phenomenon across the Body of Christ.

Speaking personally for the mission of PROCLAIM HOPE!, I firmly believe on October 14 God birthed an unique and dynamic strategy. CASTs could become *the key to saturating the grassroots* with the message of the full extent of Christ's supremacy, leading to a re-conversion of God's people back to God's Son for ALL that He is. The Spirit of God alone can take us from this point into this Christ-awakening that must come. And, I'm here to tell you: *I'm standing on tip-toe!*

WHAT DOES A C.A.S.T. LOOK LIKE?

Whether as a regional traveling team (like the initial CAST has become) or as a small group inside one local church or other Christian group, a *Christ Awakening Servant Team* consists of day-to-day disciples (whether in formal leadership or not) who have a growing desire to see Christ assume His rightful place in the hearts and lives of God's people. First of all, they already evidence a humble, servant attitude in their relationship to fellow believers, loving them and wanting God's best for all. At the same time, they are enjoying a growing vision and passion for ALL that Christ is and they want others to share in this journey with them. Thus, they are willing to tactfully and lovingly make Him a major focus of every form of communication they conduct with individual Christians as well as within their own congregations. They are committed, as the first step, to bring Him into their normal daily and weekly conversations with other believers. Imagine with me how much the Way, the Truth and the Life will pour Himself into our lives as the CAST members, and more and more of the Body of Christ with them, conscientiously talk to one another about Him!

The CAST ministry is thoroughly biblical – not only is the sharing of God's Word with God's people something modeled all through Scripture, especially in New Testament writings. But specifically, as CAST members seek to get more of God's Word about God's Son into the regular conversations that go on among believers.

The CAST ministry is something anyone can assume. It is universal in its appeal and transferable to any believer anywhere because it is so simple and practical in its implementation. Every CAST is really the first wave of what should ultimately become a group of believers who are full of "Christ-awakening servants" who do for one another what the initial CAST did for them. Using the normal avenues of communications they introduce fellow Christians to more of Christ for ALL that He is.

What is their one mandate? – that at every opportunity and with every relationship, we are to sow a little more of God's Word about God's Son into the lives of God's people so that God's Spirit can work with those seeds to help connect (or re-connect) believers more fully to Christ for ALL that He is.

Notice, however, they do work as a *team*. They do so in order to encourage each other in their mission, to hold each other accountable to their calling, to report to each other ways they see God "connecting Christians to Christ by increasing the conversations about Christ), to pray together for a Christ-awakening for the believers and within the congregation or other Christian group they are reaching, and to strategize about ways to expand communications and increase conversations focused on the glory, majesty and supremacy of God's Son.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO LOOK AT THE MISSION OF ANY C.A.S.T.

The overarching theme – the “mission vision” of a CAST – could be stated this way:

“Connecting Christians more fully to the person of Christ by increasing our conversations about the supremacy of Christ”

Here are other ways we might look at a CAST’s mission. *Which ones are most helpful to you?*

- Connecting individual Christians more fully to Christ by helping them increase their conversations about the supremacy of Christ, ultimately can result in their congregation (or group) as a whole experiencing more of the fullness of Christ. Conversations about the glory of Christ can multiply among all believers. This should make every leader glad!
- As a way of life we desire to foster and serve a God-given Christ-awakening movement among God’s people by how we talk with them about God’s Son in the normal course of everyday conversations.
- In order to fill God’s people with more truths about the vast reign of God’s Son, we faithfully and regularly share with them from the multitude of verses that point believers to who He is, where He’s headed, what He is doing and how He gets blessed.
- Our job as a CAST is to constantly look for ways to take the initiative to get Christ – His person, His purposes, His promises, His priorities – into the daily conversations that go on among our fellow believers.
- We want to make sure the Main One remains the main focus in all of our relationships with fellow Christians, beginning with how we talk with them about Him.
- By what we say to fellow believers, we bring Christ out of the shadows and in from the fringes to increasingly become the true focus of our conversations (and our lives) together.
- We intend to help Christians turn from talking *around* Christ to actually talking *about* Him
- By shaping regular conversations so that Christ is increasingly included, we seek to create an environment – a “culture of Christ” as it were – where God’s Spirit is free to use God’s Word to re-convert God’s people back to God’s Son for ALL that He is. The Apostle Paul would say that “*in Him (Christ) we live and move and have our being.*”
- A CAST serves God’s people by (as it were) “casting a larger vision of God’s Son” among them by what we share with them daily regarding aspects of His loving Lordship over us and the nations, as well as reasons for enlarging our passion for His name and the extension of His reign.
- We look for every opportunity to share God’s Word with God’s people in such a way that they walk away from our conversation (or any form of communication) with a larger vision of Christ and greater reasons to put their hope in Him
- A CAST desires to reestablish within our churches and groups new ways of thinking about Jesus that lead believers back to a “high Christology”, a vision of Christ that majors on the full and rightful place He ought to hold among us.
- In a sense, a CAST *re-evangelizes* God’s people as we remind them of, and refresh them with, grander dimensions of the good news of Christ’s redeeming reign among us.
- Serving as “*messengers of hope*”, a CAST takes responsibility to keep before fellow believers the full scope of Kingdom hope we have in God’s promises to us in Christ Jesus.
- On a regular basis, in the midst of normal conversations, members of a CAST seek to help fellow Christians experience the following: to see Christ in new ways, so that they will seek Him in prayer and savor Him in worship for ALL that He is; so that, in turn, they will speak of Him to one another for all that He is, show Him to others in Christ-like living, serve Him by helping to build up His Church, and share Him with their neighbors and friends as well as with the unreached people of the world.

- The larger goal of an initial CAST is to set the pace, providing an example, for how all believers should minister God's Word about God's Son to one another as a way of life. The mission of a CAST is to reach the day when, in a sense, the whole Church becomes CAST-like *as a way of life* (including caring for people's physical needs with Christ's love as they converse about Christ's glory).

PROMISES ABOUT WHAT GOD MIGHT DO WITH ANY C.A.S.T.

Here are promises every church or Christian group would want to see fulfilled

- 1) If it is true that God cannot lead us on the basis of facts we do *not* have; and therefore, if it is true that God cannot lead us into a deeper relationship with His Son on the basis of a vision of the supremacy of His Son we have *never* been given; then, in the same manner, it must be true that there is *no limit* to how far God can take us in our relationship with His Son if we regularly receive larger visions of God's Son from God's Word, and thus greater reasons to put our hope in Christ.
- 2) As believers learn how to share Christ more fully with fellow believers, we will fulfill the mandate of Colossians 1:24-29 [we make God's word known in its fullness, that is the riches of the mystery which is Christ among us as the hope of glory, *so that* by teaching and admonishing fellow Christians we might present them *complete* in Christ] *as well as* the similar mandate of **Colossians 3:16** [we allow the message about Christ *to dwell among us in all of its richness* because together we teach and admonish one another with the wisdom that Christ is for us all]
- 3) Our churches will begin to act more like and look more like **Acts 5:42** ["Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ."]
- 4) The more the majesty, greatness, glory and supremacy of God's Son becomes the penetrating focus of a congregation's life together, the richer and more alive will be their seasons of worship, their hunger for the teaching of God's Word, their love for one another, their willingness to serve one another and the church, and their desire and effectiveness in sharing Christ with unbelievers everywhere.
- 5) To say it another way: When, in the midst of normal, regular conversations, a CAST in a local church helps fellow Christians *see Christ in new ways*, so that they will *seek* Him in prayer and *savor* Him in worship for ALL that He is; THEN *in new ways* that congregation will begin to *speak* of Him to one another as a way of life, to *show* Him in Christlike living, to *serve* Him in building up His Church as we serve each other, and to *share* Him with their neighbors and friends, and then with the unreached people of the world.
- 6) As we are more intentional about bringing the *Person* of Christ into our conversations with one another, we will become more *purpose* driven in how we serve the mission of Christ
- 7) Since faith comes by hearing when what is heard is the message of Christ (Romans 15:6), then to the degree we plant in the hearts of believers the great truths of the fullness and reign of Christ, the more we can anticipate believers taking fresh steps in their obedience of faith as they serve Christ and live for Him.
- 8) If we get Christians more fully connected with Christ for ALL that He is, then God can take them from there wherever He wants them to go.
- 9) A CAST ministry is a powerfully simple way to reignite in the Church what Scripture teaches about the "priesthood of believers" as we minister the truth about the fullness of God's Son to each other, both by what we say to and what we pray with each other (i.e., being "priests" to each other) and how we serve with each other to magnify His glory, greatness and lordship.
- 10) A CAST provides reinforcements for the spiritual leaders of a congregation, making their jobs that much more fruitful, as the CAST takes the initiative to keep the vision of Christ and His glory sharp and alive, as a way of life within the congregation

- 11) Jesus said that out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12). Therefore, the more of God's Word about God's Son we pour into the hearts of God's people, the more they themselves will begin to talk about Him to one another, which only intensifies the conversations
- 12) By flooding our life together with conversations that lift Christ up for each other, a CAST helps to confront and cure any forms of the deadly "crisis of Christology" that may currently impede the life and ministry of believers and congregations, doing so by growing their efforts into a Church-wide "Christ Awakening movement"
- 13) Along with our prayers, the proclamation of Christ by Christians to one another puts us right at the threshold of the Christ-awakening for which we long. With more of God's Word about God's Son in the hearts of God's people, God's Spirit is able to bring us into desperately needed, life-transforming revelations of the majesty of Christ and His Kingdom purposes.

SPECIFICALLY, WHAT MIGHT A C.A.S.T. DO TO GET STARTED?

- It is as simple as "**SEEK AND SPEAK**" = Each member of the team spends enough time in God's Word to uncover new truths about the greatness of Christ. Then share what you find (even the passages themselves) with other believers – in conversations, in a small group study, during a Sunday school class, or by a letter, card, email or phone. You can do this once a week at church or once a day (like with your spouse or children or a Christian friend), as the Spirit directs you.
- It is as simple as "**SAY AND PRAY**" = Every time God gives you an opportunity to speak of Christ with another believer, whenever it seems natural to do so, end your conversation by inviting them to pray with you, as you lead them in a short prayer. Focus on what you discussed about Christ, asking the Father to let it impact your love and service to Him.
- It is as simple as helping a family to establish a (what one leader calls) "**THRONE IN THE HOME**" = A CAST could help parents enlarge their family's vision of Christ on a regular basis, such as in times of family devotions or conversations around the dinner table, so that everyone is focused regularly on His glory and His Kingship. (One leader suggests setting aside a chair in the house that serves as a picture and reminder that Jesus really is reigning in that family.)
- **INTERNET:** Through one of the many such "social networking" tools available – such as creating your own CAST *Facebook* – you could work together to report what the Spirit is doing with your regular "conversations" about Christ's supremacy with other believers; tell what you've been talking about and how people respond. In addition, share stories of how you and others see a Christ-awakening movement emerging already in groups or congregations.

Not only will this networking encourage your team (and others) to press on in your own mission of "connecting Christians more fully with the person of Christ by increasing our conversations about the supremacy of Christ"; but it will allow you to use those very reports and stories in your conversations with God's people, enlarging their vision of how Christ is reigning among us. (Incidentally, setting up a social networking platform was one of the primary action steps established by the October 14 *Christ Convocation* in the Pacific Northwest.)

DO WE REALLY NEED C.A.S.T.s (Christ Awakening Servant Teams)?

To answer this question, try conducting a "*Listening Tour*" in your church over the next three Sunday mornings. Here's how it works:

The next three Sunday mornings, instead of talking to people at church, as much as possible your CAST should simply walk throughout the church just listening to what people are saying to each other at church. At the end of three weeks, meet together to share your findings and take stock on what you've heard. Ask yourselves: (1) How often did we even hear the *name* of Christ mentioned by fellow Christians at church

the past three Sundays? (2) If we actually heard His name come up, did we ever witness one believer sharing with another believer something new and wonderful they had just discovered about the glory and supremacy of Christ, in order to build up one another in their life in Christ?

Most likely you will find (as have thousands of other leaders who've tried the experiment) that God's dear Son – our only hope, our Lord and our Redeemer – is hardly ever mentioned at all in normal exchanges, even when we're at church on a Sunday morning. Furthermore, it is quite likely that you will have witnessed no one sharing something more of Christ's person, promises or purposes with another friend in the congregation.

Now . . . ask yourselves: What if every Sunday morning our conversations as a congregation were full of Christ – talking about all we're seeing and experiencing of the One in whose name we gather and because of whom we exist and for whom we live? What if every time we came together Christians *were* exhorting or challenging or warning or comforting one another based on fresh insights from God's Word into the majesty and supremacy of God's Son? Over time how might that lead to such a spiritual revitalization in your church that one might even dare to call it a genuine "Christ-awakening" (or revival?) among your fellow Christians?

Is it time to raise up a CAST in your congregation, or Christian ministry or fellowship? Could we ask for a more exciting – or more strategic – ministry to our fellow believers than this? Can you think of a more personal or relevant way to foster and serve a Christ-awakening movement where you live?

“Connecting Christians more fully to the person of Christ by increasing our conversations about the supremacy of Christ”

Let me know how I and other CAST leaders can help you in this wonderful journey in Christ!