

Develop your very own C.A.S.T.
Christ Awakening Servant Teams

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

Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. (Matt. 12:34)

Let the message about Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another. (Col. 3:16)

Faith comes by hearing, when what is heard is the message of Christ. (Rom. 10:17)

The Lord gave the word, and great was the company of the proclaimers. (Ps. 68:11)

So, what *is* a C.A.S.T.?

Back in the heyday of DeMille-type Hollywood blockbusters, film trailers promised “a cast of thousands”. This tool, on the other hand, is about raising up “thousands of CASTs” planted in congregations across our land. This endeavor, however, is more exciting – and more dynamic – than *Ben Hur* and *The Ten Commandments* ever were. CASTs play a strategic role in the Christ-awakening movements emerging across our land.

C.A.S.T.s – *Christ Awakening Servant Teams* – consist of disciples who have a burning passion to know and live in Jesus for ALL of who He is, and then to invite fellow believers to join them in the pursuit of knowing more of His fullness as God’s reigning Son. Tactfully and lovingly, CAST members seek to increase the focus among *Christians* on the glory of Christ. They do this, primarily, by speaking about Him during everyday conversations, especially on Sundays, to help deepen others’ love for Jesus as Redeemer and King.

We might say “a CAST serves by *casting*.” It casts a larger vision of God’s Son among God’s people in the midst of all types of ordinary communications. Quite simply, a CAST ministry comes down to this:

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

Let’s explore (1) Key characteristics of a CAST; (2) An experiment to uncover when a CAST is needed; (3) Blessings a CAST brings to any church; (4) How to form a CAST; (5) Ways to get conversations started.

Some key characteristics

A CAST ministry is thoroughly biblical. CAST members seek to get more of God’s truth about God’s Son into regular conversations with God’s people. They pass along fresh insights and promises from the multitude of Scriptures about the majesty and supremacy of the Savior. These exchanges allow God’s Spirit to connect (or re-connect) believers more fully to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A CAST ministry is something anyone can take up. In very simple and practical ways, CAST members use ordinary opportunities for regular communications – whether one-on-one or in small group discussions, in emails or phone calls – to help remind other disciples of the wonders of who Christ is right now. Any believer seeking to know Christ better and desiring to talk with other believers about fresh discoveries of who He is automatically qualifies for a CAST!

A CAST has one primary short-range goal: To share God’s Word with God’s people in such a way that fellow believers walk away from individual conversations or group Bible discussions (or any other times of communication) with (1) a little bit larger vision of Christ, and (2) greater reasons to put their hope in Him.

A CAST has one primary longer-range goal: To multiply themselves through a growing number of believers who follow their example by telling others about the greatness of Christ. A CAST models how *all* Christians can carry on Christ-focused, Christ-exalting conversations and discussions *as a way of life*.

A CAST is “pro-Christ” – it is not “anti” anything. A CAST’s role does not involve critiquing the spiritual vitality of their congregation or its leaders. They minister as *servants* to the Body of Christ. Their desire is to encourage fellow believers toward a more wholehearted devotion to God’s Son for *all* He is. They do this simply by how they humbly, sensitively weave the “*truth that is in Jesus*” (Eph. 4:20-21) into regular conversations.

A CAST complements the ministry of church leaders. They nurture a “climate of Christ” among church members, which provides many opportunities for believers to open their hearts to a greater devotion toward Christ. This is what their leaders long for them to discover. By multiplying conversations and discussions about the fullness of God’s Son, CASTs provide *reinforcements* to their pastors as they shepherd God’s people into fuller dimensions of Christ’s reign.

A CAST works as a team. They support each other in a shared ministry – as they pray for each other, hold each other accountable to their calling, and report to each other the ways they see God connect His children more fully to Christ by increased conversations about Christ. Sometimes they meet to strategize ways to increase effective, winsome, conversations focused on the supremacy of God’s Son. Also, they regularly convene to *pray* for the seeds they are planting – to pray for a Christ-awakening movement within their congregation and beyond.

An experiment to determine if a CAST is needed

As you consider forming a CAST for *your* congregation, you might want to conduct a “*Listening Tour*”. Do it over the next three Sunday mornings. Consider inviting your pastoral staff or elders or deacons to join you in this experiment. Here’s how it works:

When you get to church on Sunday, instead of conversing with people, just try to *listen* to them. Walk throughout the building overhearing what people are saying to each other in the fellowship hall, or parking lot, or sanctuary, or Sunday school class. After three weeks, meet to debrief the experiment with your leaders by discussing two questions:

- (1) How frequently did we hear the *name* of the Lord Jesus Christ mentioned in conversations the past three Sundays?
- (2) If we did hear His name, did we ever witness one believer sharing with another believer something he/she recently discovered about the worth and wonder of the reigning Christ, in order to build up the other person’s hope and passion toward Him?

Most likely you will be shocked by your findings! As have thousands of other leaders who’ve tried this experiment, you’ll probably discover that God’s dear Son – our Lord and our Redeemer, for whose sake a congregation exists in the first place – is rarely mentioned in normal exchanges, even when we’re all together as His followers on a Sunday morning.

Next ... ask yourselves: *What if* every Sunday morning the conversations within our congregation were full of Christ – adults and young people eagerly sharing what they are regularly discovering of the One in whose name we gather, because of whose reign we exist and for whose fame we live? *What if* every time we’re together, Christians exhorted or challenged one another, warned or comforted one another, using freshly uncovered insights into the “*unsearchable riches*” of God’s Son (Eph 3:8)? Over time, how might such consistent conversations lead toward a spiritual revitalization of our church family, possibly quickening a “Christ-awakening movement” among us?

So, what do you think? – Is it time to raise-up a CAST among your people? Could any Christian ask for a more strategic – or more loving – ministry to fellow believers than what a CAST offers? What more personal approach is there for fostering Christ-awakenings where you live? Are you ready to serve God’s people as you “*connect Christians more fully to the person of Christ by increasing their conversations about the supremacy of Christ*”? Many believe this is the greatest need of the hour for the Church worldwide.

Blessings a CAST brings to any church

Many blessings follow the ministry of a CAST. This includes those inherent in the “key characteristics” listed above. (Review them to note the blessings implied by each one.) In addition, three others should be emphasized:

FOCUS: As we Christians turn from talking *around* Christ to start talking *about* Him, the Lord Jesus will become so much more real for us. We will fulfill **Colossians 3:16**, as 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. That’s how any congregation begins to look 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.”* Abiding in Christ more deeply, as we talk about Him together we learn to *“live and move and have our being”* in Him as Lord of all.

RENEWAL: When the majesty, greatness, glory, vastness and supremacy of God’s Son become the over-riding themes of our life together, the community will enter into new dimensions of discipleship. We will be blessed by more vibrant worship, stronger prayer gatherings, enriched studies of God’s Word, sharper abilities to see how to love and serve one another. In turn, the desire to share Christ with unbelievers around us will become more compelling for us. Wherever God’s people give God’s Son His rightful place among them, that is where God’s Spirit comes down to bring renewal, revitalization and awakening at every level of Christian growth, prayer, fellowship and mission.

OBEDIENCE: Think about this – God cannot lead us into a deeper relationship with His Son on the basis of a vision of the supremacy of His Son we fail to give to each other. On the other hand, there are *no limits* to how far God can take us in our relationship with His Son *if* we regularly share with one another larger visions of Christ’s reign from God’s Word. Since *“faith comes by hearing, if what is heard is the message about Christ”*, then to the more we plant reminders and revelations of the meaning and majesty of Jesus in the hearts of believers, the more likely they will be to take bold, new steps in their daily obedience to Him.

First steps in forming a CAST

Every step toward forming a CAST should be taken in prayerful consultation with the spiritual leaders of your church. A CAST exists to serve leaders and their people. Please share this overview document with your pastor to help unpack the vision of a CAST and how its ministry can enrich your congregation.

Initially, in organizing a CAST, set up a meeting with four to six individuals who already clearly demonstrate a growing hunger for the greatness of Christ, and who also express longings to see Him receive more fully His rightful adoration in the lives of all believers. This might include people who facilitate or attend prayer groups, or guide discipleship groups, or serve as deacons or elders.

In your first session, you might want to review, discuss and pray about ideas presented in this CAST document. Decide where you sense God wants you to go from there. One of the first times you meet, each of you could share with the whole team aspects of your own deepening vision of Christ’s majesty. Start “connecting” *each other* more fully to the person of Christ by talking with each other about the supremacy of Christ. Early on, facilitate a session to reflect on portions of God’s Word that describe facets of the current reign of God’s Son. *Every time* you meet spend time praying for a Christ-awakening – in your own hearts as a CAST, within your congregation and throughout the Church at-large.

Your goal is to determine how the Spirit wants your ministry to unfold inside your congregation. Explore some ways to bring more of Christ into your conversations with Christians – then, give it a try and see what happens. Re-gather regularly to report what the Spirit is doing with your on-going “conversations” with other believers about Christ’s supremacy. Describe what you’ve been talking about and how people seem to respond. Be honest about times you struggle to bring Christ into a conversation and try to figure out why. Brainstorm better ways to sensitively initiate and deepen conversations about Christ. Share stories of evidences of a Christ-awakening you see surfacing within your church. Don’t forget to keep your spiritual leaders informed of what you are doing and observing. Invite them to rejoice with your CAST in ways you see the Spirit *“connecting Christians more fully with the person of Christ by increasing their conversations about the supremacy of Christ.”*

Getting conversations started

Here are four approaches to shape conversations with Christians about God's Son:

- **SEEK AND SPEAK** = SEEK – Throughout the week, each member of the CAST spends enough personal time in God's Word and prayer for the Spirit to quicken in each heart at least one new truth about the greatness of Christ, to be shared with others. SPEAK – Then on Sundays, as the Spirit directs you, share with other believers the nuggets you've found, doing it one-on-one. Sometimes you might quote a specific passage that touched your heart. Initiate these conversations in the fellowship hall, or in Sunday school discussions, or right before worship begins. Continue sharing these recent insights throughout the week in letters, cards, emails or phone calls.
- **SAY AND PRAY** = Every time God gives you an opportunity to share some aspect of the fullness of Christ with another believer, conclude that conversation by asking your friend to join you in brief praise to the Father for who Christ is, based on the facet of His supremacy you've just discussed. Then pray that, accordingly, both of you will grow in greater hope and love toward God's Son.
- **HOME THRONE** = Encourage parents to enlarge their family's vision of Christ on a regular basis – such as during family devotions or in conversations around the dinner table. Suggest they might want to set aside a special chair in the house (or at the table) to visibly *represent* Jesus' Throne in Heaven – to serve as a constant reminder that in the life of your family He really is actively reigning as Lord, right here and right now.
- **SERMON SPRINGBOARDS** = First, the pastor announces at church a sermon text for the next Sunday, asking everyone to reflect on it during the week. Next, CAST members meditate on the text, identifying insights or implications about Christ's glory and greatness. Arriving at church that Sunday they share with their friends some of their discoveries. This unfolds quite naturally for everyone since a week earlier *everyone* was invited to reflect on the passage. The CAST members use the text as a springboard for talking about Christ before and after the congregation hears the sermon. Not only does this enhance the impact of a specific message but it strengthens the pastor's efforts to help the congregation increasingly adore Christ as Lord. *A variation on this approach:* The pastor asks those who are willing to do so, to turn in their pews to some around them and take 30 seconds to tell them what they discovered as they reflected during the previous week on that day's sermon text. Those who do so automatically become, as it were, a "CAST-in-the-making"!

Conclusion

A new day is dawning! Christ-awakening movements are emerging across our land. *CASTs (Christ Awakening Servant Teams)* offer a strategic step toward fostering Christ-awakening movements in any local church or other Christian group. *And, the CAST ministry is so simple, virtually no one can fail.* It's all about....

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