

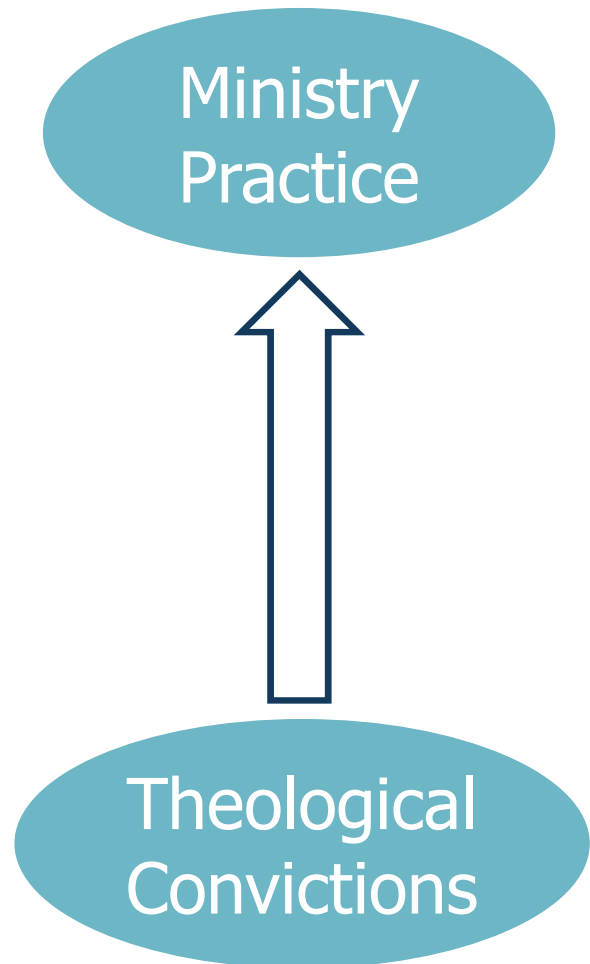
# Shaping a Gospel-Hearted Church



# Church culture

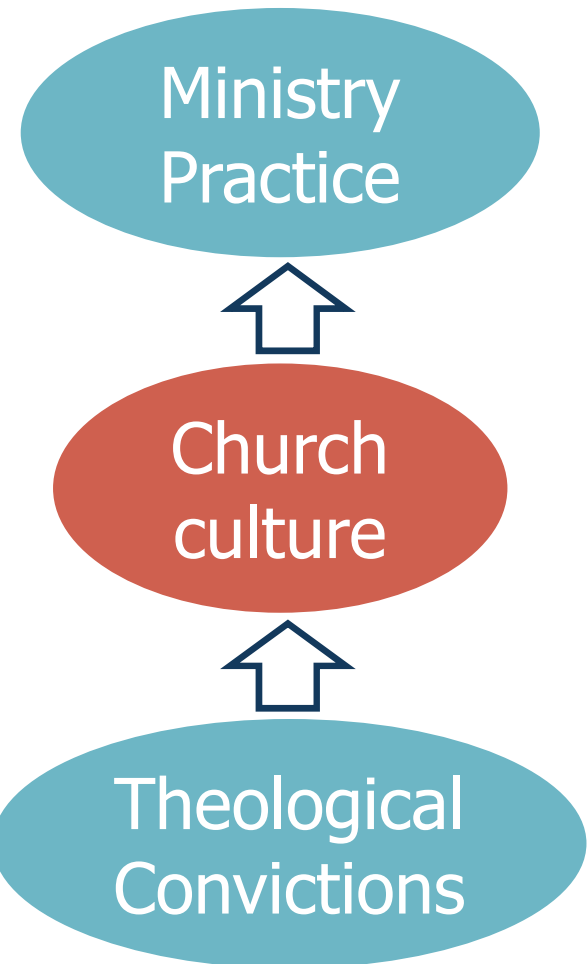
“What we routinely *do* communicates, reinforces and shapes who we are, often far more than what we teach.”

Marshall and Payne, *The Vine Project*, 32.



# Church culture

The way we do things round here...



# Acts 20

v17: Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the **elders** of the church to come to him = *presbuteroi*; older men

v28: Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to **care** for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood = *poimēno*; *shepherd, pastor*

v28: Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers** = *episkopoi*; *overseers, bishops*

**1. The culture of a church is shaped  
by the lives of its leaders**

# Paul's model

Acts 20:18

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia...

- 100% committed
- Hard work, trials and suffering
- Courageous
- Humble

# Paul's model

## Tears of suffering

Acts 20:19 ...serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews

## Tears of urgency

Acts 20:31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

## Tears of love

Acts 20:37 And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him...

# Paul's model

- 100% committed
- Hard work, trials and suffering
- Courageous
- Humble
- Integrity



# Paul's model

Shaping a church that was about loving, giving, serving with passion and commitment

Acts 20:28 – “Pay careful attention to yourselves...”

# Reflect...

What pace is your eldership team setting for the church?

What culture are you creating?

What's the vibe at eldership meetings?

What kind of people are you looking for as elders?

**1. The culture of a church is shaped  
by the lives of its leaders**

**2. The culture of a church is shaped  
by the priorities of the gospel**

# The gospel drives Paul's passion

- Changed by the gospel
- Declaring the gospel
  - Acts 20:21 ...testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- One passion
  - Acts 20:24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

# The gospel motivates us personally

- Know the gospel and love the gospel
- A felt gospel
- Believe it with all your heart
- Stay close to the Lord

# The gospel motivates us corporately

Agendas:

- Upholding tradition
- Keeping people happy
- Maintaining order
- Micro-managing church life
- Running the church business
- Survival



**The gospel  
is  
the agenda**

# The gospel...

## Shapes the questions we ask

- is this way of doing things good for the gospel?
- will this help us advance the gospel?
- how can we make the gospel more prominent in this ministry?
- are we seeing people saved?
- who in our community is hearing the gospel from us?
- is this the most strategic way to spend money if we're mainly about the gospel?



# The gospel...

## Sets the tone

- the gospel is outrageously good news
- when it is prominent, the main flavour is hope, joy, thankfulness
- creates a church of warmth, love, grace
- makes us less risk averse

# The gospel...

## Sets determines our priorities

- more important to spend money here than there
- more important to make this change than keep those people happy
- more important to invest time on this than that
- more important to appoint this person than that person
- more important to be in this location than that
- more important to run this program than that

1. The culture of a church is shaped by the lives of its leaders

2. The culture of a church is shaped by the priorities of the gospel

**3. The culture of a church is shaped  
by the ministry of God's Word**

# Let the Word do the work

Acts 20:20 I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house...

Acts 20:27 ...for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Acts 20:32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

# Let the Word do the work

- declaring, teaching, testifying, preaching, admonishing
- public and private
- evangelistic and edificational

Acts 19:10 This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

# Let the Word do the work

- Preaching ministry
- But “it’s a massive mistake to think this just means Sunday sermons!” Richard Coekin, *Gospel DNA*, 43.
- Other Word ministries

# Let the Word do the work

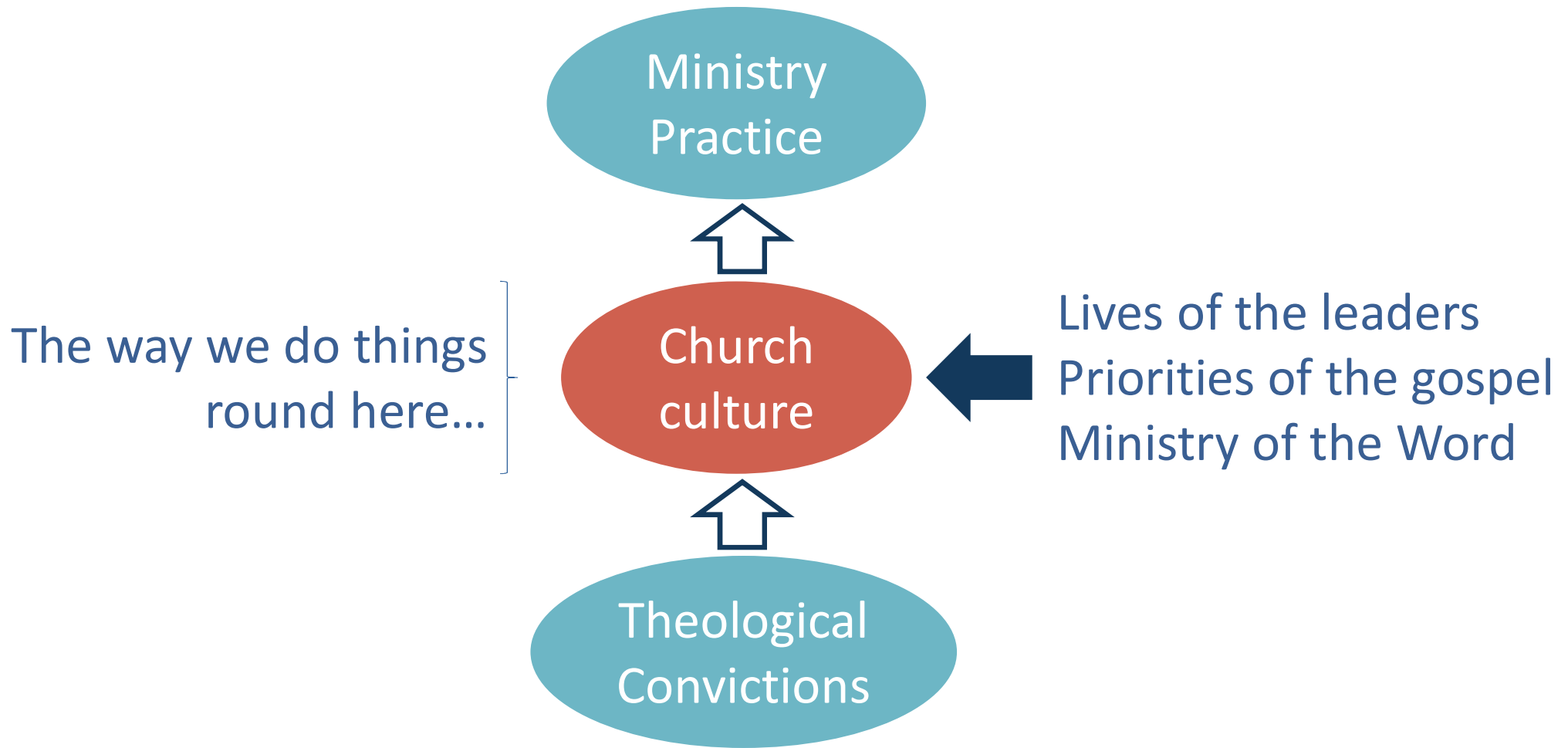
- Church Word ministries: children, youth, small groups...
- Personal Word ministries: personal Bible reading, 1-1 Bible reading, family devotions
- Training ministries: elders, new believers, established believers
- Elders doing Word ministry: apt to teach



# Not a magic book

Word and prayer

Acts 20:36–37 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.



# Reflection...

1. How would you describe the culture of your church?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the culture for gospel mission?
3. What things are *really* setting the agenda in your church life?
4. What evidence is there that your church has a culture that prioritises the Word? How could that be strengthened?
5. How are you as individuals and as a team praying for the church?  
What are you praying for?