

Ministry Discussion with Jeff Bogue & Keith Minier

Wednesday July 22 @ Charis Fellowship Conference

7:00 p.m. in the Studio

Description

Looking Back and Leading Forward: The Next Decade of the Church Join Pastors Jeff Bogue and Keith Minier as they explore the major cultural and ministry shifts of the last decade, share what they're seeing on the leading edge of church ministry today, and discuss practical ways leaders can prepare their churches for the opportunities and challenges of the next ten years.

The following AI notes provide some of the content shared.

Context and Format

- Jeff and Keith presenting at Charis Fellowship Conference, dessert/Q&A session
- Momentum Grow: cohort network for senior pastors and youth pastors, acts as ministry accelerator
- One Day Conference: full-staff training (senior pastor to custodian), professional + personal + purposeful input
- Four topics covered, followed by open Q&A

Ground War vs. Air War

- Ground war: standard preaching and teaching of orthodox doctrine
- Air war: applying those doctrinal truths to real-world cultural issues
- The problem: churches are strong on ground war, weak on air war
- Frequency of voices has exploded: 24-hour news, podcasts, streaming, social media, Christian commentators
 - People arrive with pre-formed opinions on race, borders, vaccines, foreign policy
 - If the church doesn't disciple them into these topics, culture will
- Result of neglect: people become delusional, divisive, or disordered; social media drift follows
- Air war venues at Grace:
 - Dedicated podcast for cultural/theological topics
 - Individual discipleship training
 - One intentional sermon series per year on a cultural issue
 - Staff and elder training conversations
 - "Fire pit" tone: different from pulpit, but still truthful; allows deeper path exploration
- Goal: give people rubrics to apply biblical truth to cultural questions
 - Example rubric on speech: "We don't do lies, we don't do secrets, but we do pretend and we do surprises"
 - Example rubric on government: sphere sovereignty (family, state, church), each with God-given Bible-grounded roles
- Modeling posture: slow to speak, quick to listen; reflect rather than react; hold tensions without caricature

Relationship as the New Excellence

- Shift away from performative excellence (production quality, smooth transitions, polished presentation)
 - Younger adults actively distrust “corporate” feel: bumpers, smooth music transitions, high-gloss production
- Church is no longer the primary information source; people can access any preacher, fact-check anything
 - Credentials are now a barrier, not a credibility signal, for younger generations
- Churches must become relational hubs, not information transfer centers
- Practical changes at Grace:
 - Lobby redesign: slowing people down with foosball, video games, ring toss; removing efficiency-first flow
 - Building program underway to consolidate services and create longer between-service windows
 - Food after almost every service: hot dogs, breakfast, pancakes; food trucks planned within 18 months
 - Structured “greeting time” reintroduced; intentional 15-minute unscheduled windows mid-service
 - Connector training launching in fall: greeters trained to invite people to lunch, not just hold doors
 - Services becoming more experiential: more silence, visualization, public prayer invitations, less lecture
- Average attender comes 1.6x/month but feels connected via podcast and small group
 - Goal: create a relational ecosystem where “great church travels with them seven days a week”
- Older adults as a strategic asset:
 - Young adults want wisdom, not agendas or political opinions
 - Non-adult groups meet at older adult homes, led by young adults, coached by older adults
 - After six weeks, consistent cross-generational friendships form
 - Older adults are screened before participating

Liturgy Comeback

- Previous era: “remove church, insert Jesus” — strip anything that needed explaining or felt churchy
- Shift now: callback liturgies are resonating, especially with younger generations
- Examples being reintroduced at Grace:
 - Formalized calls to worship
 - Corporate confession
 - Extended scripture reading
 - More frequent communion
 - Apostles’ Creed, Nicene Creed
 - True pastoral prayers
 - Corporate healing prayer (standing, hands extended)
 - Actual benedictions

- Greeting/dreaming time (now hard to stop)
- Four reasons liturgy is working now:
 1. Connects people to history and a greater story; lives feel fractured
 2. Deep opportunity for spiritual formation when explained, not just performed
 3. Combats consumerism; creates "otherness," moves people away from "do I like this?" mentality
 4. Provides quiet and stillness in an overstimulated, noisy world
- Key caution: explain the liturgy, don't just reintroduce it silently
 - "Here's what this benediction does and why we're doing it" — then do it
- Note: guests have already engaged the church online before showing up; they know what they're signing up for

Staffing Shift (Brief Note)

- When ministry began 22+ years ago, staff saw it as a life calling
- Now many staff see it as a job, with different expectations around boundaries and parameters
- Not a generational critique; the nature of what people think they're signing up for has genuinely changed
- Navigating this is a real and ongoing leadership challenge

AI in Ministry

- AI is not optional: already embedded in culture, no different from the internet revolution
- Pastors should use AI; Jeremy on Grace's team is a strong resource and available to spend time with other church teams
- Recommended uses:
 - Research: pull views from favorite authors/pastors in seconds
 - Scripture discovery: surfaces passages outside usual go-to texts
 - Writing improvement: making phrases more memorable, transportable, and polished
 - Administrative tasks: scheduling, accounting, letter drafting, content formatting
- Critical distinction: use AI to improve content, not create it
 - "You should not create content with AI; you should create creativity with AI"
 - AI-generated sermons exclude the Holy Spirit; the result is a book report, not preaching
 - Origination, pastoral discernment, and congregational sensitivity cannot be replicated
- Grace's custom AI build:
 - Ingested all books, thousands of hours of podcasts and sermons
 - Housed in an external bot owned by evangelical Christians with theological firewalls
 - Testing now; planned release to group leaders
 - Backed off public release after caution: "if you tell people they can trust it, they'll trust whatever it says"
 - Spent a year trying to break it before releasing
- Cautions:
 - AI is accurate roughly 75% of the time; frequently misquotes or decontextualizes scripture

- Always verify Bible references with a physical Bible
- People assume AI is authoritative; they won't flag theological errors they can't detect
- Younger generations will be the last to think critically outside AI; no red flags will go up
- Loneliness risk: AI is now personalized and remembers users; people will begin to relate to it personally
 - Real example: a widower in his 70s, an elder, said "she said" about his AI after 35 minutes of grief conversation
 - "We will be the last generation that thinks critically outside of AI"

Q&A Highlights

- Hard copies and tactile materials: students asking for physical Bibles; one church returned to paper connection cards and saw higher assimilation rates than QR codes
- Training AI on church content: Grace has done this; voice, branding, and sermon library all ingested; theological firewalls in place
- Social media as air war: yes, effective; short sermon clips, discipleship resources tied to series; social media best used to display church culture and relational spirit
- Podcast as discipleship: Grace moving bulk of educational discipleship to podcast format; 33,000 hours of engagement vs. 50-person class; planning to expand from 3-4 podcasts to 8-10
- Small groups to biblical community: shifted away from structured curriculum small groups toward activity-based groups (basketball, pickleball, volleyball) with a qualified spiritual leader embedded
 - Curriculum-based groups work for a set season, then relationships carry forward
 - Retreats and short-term mission trips (targeting 20% of weekend attendance) are the fastest relationship builders
- Giving and vision: "One Fund" approach tied to vision retreats and serving series; giving increased by \$100K/week after implementation; more discipleship-oriented than traditional capital campaigns
- Aging congregation: don't assume people won't change; most haven't been asked with vision
 - Framework: fuel what's working, ignore what needs to die (starve it of resources), create what's missing, kill only what's actively blocking
 - Shepherd people away from methods they've conflated with mission; honor their sacrifice, reframe toward the original goal

Closing

- Momentum Grow offers: cohort networking, ministry trips, One Day Conference, and direct team access (including Jeremy for AI)
- Core conviction: "The gates of hell will not prevail" — the mission doesn't change, the methods must