

## **Vision Series Slide**

Amanda Palmer and David Brooks are 2 vastly different people.

Amanda's a gen-x artist. David is a Boomer journalist.

I recently read books by each of them- And I always find it interesting when two very different human beings, coming from very different understandings of life are saying similar things.

Let me show you.

Amanda in her days before becoming a singer and full-time musician- was a living statue performance artist who was painted completely white, and stood in a park in Boston standing on a milk-crate wearing a wedding gown.

She was called the 8-foot bride.

## **Here's a pic of Amanda doing her thing.**

Here's how she describes it in her 2013 TED talk.

**"I painted myself white one day, stood on a box, put a hat or a can at my feet, and when someone came by and dropped in money, I handed them a flower -- and some intense eye contact. And if they didn't take the flower, I threw in a gesture of sadness and longing -- as they walked away.**

**So I had the most profound encounters with people, especially lonely people who looked like they hadn't talked to anyone in weeks, and we would get this beautiful moment of prolonged eye contact...**

**And my eyes would say -- 'Thank you. I see you.' And their eyes would say -- 'Nobody ever sees me. Thank you.'"**

Here's what she wrote in her book "The Art of Asking"

**"As I moved through my life as a statue and later as a musician, I started to understand. There's a difference between wanting to be looked at and wanting to be seen. When you are looked at, your eyes can stay blissfully closed. You suck energy, you steal the spotlight. When you are seen, your eyes must be open, as you are seeing and recognizing your witness. You access energy and you generate energy. You create light.**

**One is exhibitionism, the other is connection.**

**Not everybody wants to be looked at. But everybody wants to be seen.”- Amanda Palmer**

Now to David Brooks who recently released an excellent book entitled “How to Know a Person- The Art of Seeing Others Deeply and Being Deeply Seen”

**“In every crowd there are Diminishers and there are Illuminators. Diminishers make people feel small and unseen. They see other people as things to be used, not as persons to be befriended. They stereotype and ignore. They are so involved with themselves that other people are just not on their radar screen.**

**Illuminators, on the other hand, have a persistent curiosity about other people. They have been trained or have trained themselves in the craft of understanding others. They know what to look for and how to ask the right questions at the right time. They shine the brightness of their care on people and make them feel bigger, deeper, respected, lit up.”- David Brooks**

Amanda Palmers calls people that want to be looked at- Exhibitionists & people that want to **see** others-Connectors.

David Brooks calls them Diminishes and Illuminators.

Around here, our categories have been Platformers & Pillars. Consumers v Cultivators.

In 2024, we are going to intentionally grow as Connectors, Illuminators, Pillars that Cultivate.

Here’s the identity statement that’s going to guide us.

**We are Pillars not Platformers.**

**Pillars Pray to Cultivate. Full of Grit.  
Platformers Perform to Consume.**

Specifically in 2024- we are going to focus on sharing the good news of Jesus with the people of this city.

You aren’t hearing anything new there. We planted this church in 2011 to do that very thing.

But I want us to come together as one church body, to make sharing the gospel a priority this year. And we’re going to do that through IHOP.

**IHOP**

**Invitation (to church)**  
**Hospitality (in your home)**  
**Obedience (to the Spirit)**  
**Proclamation (of the gospel)**

There are 3 groups of very nervous people in the room right now.

**Title Slide “Pillars See People: Why City Church will IHOP in 2024”- Acts 25-28 pg 1438-44**

First- there are those of you who aren't Xians- and you are thinking “Ugh. Is this one of those proselytizing churches?” Well- short answer is “yes”. But what I want you to see- hopefully today- is that the longing that Amanda Palmer talks about- to be seen... actually really deeply- only comes from God. We get flashes of it from people- but never the deepest version of it that our souls are created for. People can point us to that God gaze- but they cannot ultimately give it to us. And if we try to get that from a person- we'll end up smothering and breaking that person.

The good news about Jesus is that God sees you at your worst- at your most vulnerable- and that He entered into that vulnerability and suffering and sin...he took it on himself...just so you could be together with him. Forever.

Its the deepest longing of every human heart to be deeply known and deeply loved at the same time. We're not organizing a religion here....we're seeing people and loving them deeply.

And I hope that helps the second nervous group of people in here today. Those of you who grew up in a church environment that had you build your entire identity- as a Christian- even as a person- on giving memorized gospel presentations to as many people as possible- in such a way that people became objects to be used in establishing your super Xian identity.

That's Platforming. Thats using people to be seen- instead of seeing people. Around here We're Pillar-ing. And if we get upset with each other- we can have a huge Pillar fight.

The point is don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. Just because you had a bad experience with evangelism, doesn't mean its not important- or commanded by Jesus- or necessary for deep human flourishing.

Then there's that third group- to which you might be surprised- I belong. Introverts.

For so long sharing the gospel with people felt like something extroverts do well...and introverts just have to blubber out something about sin and Jesus and then shuffle off awkwardly back into a hole- where they hope the person forgets the whole thing. And

you HATE airplanes because you've always been told that the last thing Jesus said before his ascension was "You're about to see me flying. When you fly, be sure to talk about me."

Listen- We're being Pillars. We're cultivating. We're lifting people up. We're being illuminators. We're listening. We're connecting. We're interacting. Through Every SINGLE IHOP Action- we are Pillars Praying to Cultivate. Full of Grit. Not Platformers Performing to Consume. Full of it.

That doesn't mean its not scary sometimes to have deep conversations with people...it is. But ultimately- you will find that though EVERYBODY doesn't want to be looked at- WE ALL want to be seen- even the introverts.

And being on either end of sharing or hearing the gospel gives you an opportunity to see someone and be seen by someone.

This is not about being a bubbly personality that is energized by people. Its about connecting- seeing people- and letting them know they are seen by God.

#### **Acts 28:23-30**

**23 After arranging a day with him, many came to him at his lodging. From dawn to dusk he expounded and testified about the kingdom of God. He tried to persuade them about Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets. 24 Some were persuaded by what he said, but others did not believe.**

**25 Disagreeing among themselves, they began to leave after Paul made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah 26 when he said,**

**Go to these people and say:**

**You will always be listening,**

**but never understanding;**

**and you will always be looking,**

**but never perceiving.**

**27 For the hearts of these people**

**have grown callous,**

**their ears are hard of hearing,  
and they have shut their eyes;  
otherwise they might see with their eyes  
and hear with their ears,  
understand with their heart  
and turn,  
and I would heal them.**

**28 Therefore, let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”**

**30 Paul stayed two whole years in his own rented house. And he welcomed all who visited him, 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.**

### **Transition:**

That last line is what it means to be full of Grit. Courage and Resolve. Boldness and Without Hindrance. You don't let obstacles tell you where you are going and what you are doing. You go over, under, around and through them for the sake of Seeing people and helping them See Jesus. That's what a Pillar does

Last week we looked at the very end of the Apostle Paul's life in his own words through his letter to his protege Timothy.

This week, we're going to look at the last few years of his life that led up to this final passage in Acts- and I want to show you what its going to take to be Pillars that Pray to Cultivate- Full of Grit.

First...notice how Paul Raises questions with his Gritty Hope.

### **1) Raise Questions with Gritty Hope.**

First lets go to Acts 20. I want to show you some of Paul's Grit. His courage and resolve. The he proclaimed the gospel with all boldness and without hindrance.

### **Acts 20:18-20**

He says to the Ephesians- “I served the Lord with humility and tears”  
That’s a Pillar. Humble- and caring enough about people that it stirs his emotions.

Then he says the Jewish leaders brought him trials. They constantly were throwing him in jail or trying to kill him. Yet Paul saw people. Look, he’s going into their houses and talking with them about the gospel.

### **20:21-23**

Specifically- he’s talking to them about repentance- seeing their own sin and turning from it to turn back to God...and trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus for their forgiveness and hope.

And then he says- he has been compelled by the Holy Spirit to keep proclaiming the gospel- and even as the The Spirit warns him that its going to be with great difficulty and persecution.

### **20:24**

Then he says he considers his life of no value to himself- but he is going to finish the course...because he recognizes his purpose is to proclaim the gospel.

Listen Just that passage alone had the HOP of IHOP in it.

Hospitality- he was in the homes of people- because he didn’t have a home. But there is a level of connection and seeing someone when you are dependent on their hospitality. Its vulnerable. Intimate.

There was definitely Obedience to the Spirit. Paul was listening to the Spirit as he moved forward with a Gritty determination- to proclaim the gospel.

Later, this prediction of danger and persecution becomes true in Rome.

### **23:10-11**

**10 When the dispute became violent, the commander feared that Paul might be torn apart by them and ordered the troops to go down, take him away from them, and bring him into the barracks. 11 The following night, the Lord stood by him and said, “Have courage! For as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so it is necessary for you to testify in Rome.”**

Once again- there is connection in proclaiming the gospel to people— living a humble life that prioritizes seeing God and Seeing other people- over above my own comfort and hearing comfort and direction from the Holy Spirit then proceeding with all boldness and without hindrance.

And the crazy thing is- When you are a Pillar- full of grit that lives this way- you end up drawing attention- you end up raising questions.

### **25:22**

Like later- when Paul is being detained again- he is brought before King Agrippa by Festus the governor- the King says "I want to hear the man myself."

### **28:22**

Or later when the Jewish leaders have Paul in front of him- They want to hear his views because they know how much people have come against him- yet he is still preaching the gospel.

Because when you live as a Pillar- a life of humility- that decentralizes yourself- that prioritizes obedience to the Spirit and Seeing people...even if people disagree with what you say- that want to know what makes you tick.

Which- turns out- to be the gospel- the very thing you have been proclaiming- sharing with them. The message you give others- is the very message that is fueling you.

### **Back to 1)**

You know what that is? Its integrity. The thing that keeps you going is the very thing that you are offering to people. Thats what a Pillar does.

What gives you life- you are passing on and sharing with others.

The gospel tells us that we are bad enough that Jesus had to die for our sin, but loved enough that he was glad to do it.

The gospel tells us that death has been reversed, overcome, defeated in Jesus' resurrection and that when we are attached to Jesus by faith- we will resurrect with him.

So that puts death threats or even threats of humiliation and shame in a totally different category.

If I know I will resurrect- death is not a threat to me anymore.

If I know I'm loved and cherished by God- you threatening to hate me doesn't control my actions.

Thats the way the gospel fuels Paul. No other religion or philosophy offers that kind of freedom- at the same time it presses you to care about others so deeply.

And that kind of gritty life is noticeable. When no amount of pain or suffering throws you off your determination to love God and Love others.

Look how Peter put it.

### **1 Peter 3:15**

**But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear them or be intimidated, 15 but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.**

When you live a life of humility and integrity that doesn't flinch in the face of suffering- because you have made Jesus your Lord- He says BE READY- That kind of Gritty Pillaring is going to have people wanting to know about the hope you have.

### **Back to 1**

City Church- if we are Pillars that Pray to cultivate...Full of Grit...then the way we talk, work, and live should be different. Full of Joy and perseverance. Gritty hope.

Does this describe your life? Is your life raising questions because you live with a gritty hope?

Transition: Next thing to notice about Paul is that he Sees the Unseen.

### **2) See the Unseen**

There are 3 ways that I mean we should see the unseen.

One way is the way that Amanda Palmer and David Brooks talk about being an connector and an Illuminator.

People who are overlooked- pushed aside. The unseen.

If I believe that God sees me, and loves me, and died for me...that's the gospel... Then I don't have to network to raise my Net Worth.

I'm already infinitely valuable to the only person in the universe who's opinion matters.

So now- I don't throw dinner parties and invite people that can pay me back with social clout or financial investments. Instead I can make unseen people feel seen.

### **Luke 14:12-14**

**He also said to the one who had invited him, "When you give a lunch or a dinner, don't invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors, because they might invite you back, and you would be repaid. 13 On the contrary, when you host a banquet, invite those who are poor, maimed, lame,**



**or blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”**

Paul and the other apostles are doing this all the time in Acts. They are paying attention to the blind beggar on the side of the road. They are healing and touching people who are untouchable in their society.

They see the unseen.

I also mean it in a different way.

I mean that when circumstances are broken and falling apart- you are able to see the way the UNSEEN holy Spirit will bring about healing and hope.

When Paul is being transported to Caesar for his final trial in Rome- he is detained on a prisoner ship that hits a really bad storm. Here it is in Acts 27

#### **Acts 27:18-26**

**Because we were being severely battered by the storm, they began to jettison the cargo the next day. 19 On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. 20 For many days neither sun nor stars appeared, and the severe storm kept raging. Finally all hope was fading that we would be saved.**

**21 Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul then stood up among them and said, “You men should have followed my advice not to sail from Crete and sustain this damage and loss. 22 Now I urge you to take courage, because there will be no loss of any of your lives, but only of the ship. 23 For last night an angel of the God I belong to and serve stood by me 24 and said, ‘Don’t be afraid, Paul. It is necessary for you to appear before Caesar. And indeed, God has graciously given you all those who are sailing with you.’ 25 So take courage, men, because I believe God that it will be just the way it was told to me. 26 But we have to run aground on some island.”**

Because in the middle of a storm- Paul was attuned to the Holy Spirit in prayer- he is able to see what God told him would happen over and above the panic of the sailors.

Again- he is a non-anxious presence. He is a Pillar. And he is infusing this Grit- this courage into the people around him.

I know it looks like we are going to die, but don't panic- I've seen the unseen.

This is what Paul wrote to the Corinthians

## **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

**16 Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. 17 For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. 18 So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.**

Do you see the Grit. WE DONT GIVE UP. WITH ALL BOLDNESS AND WITHOUT HINDRANCE!

We see things as God will make them when he redeems them. Whole- New. Complete. We have a vision for broken people as God will renew them. Whole- complete. Loved.

Our focus is not on our current circumstance. But on the renewal and salvation that God brings.

You know how you are fueled to see this.

By forming a habit of Reading the Bible. And Praying.

## **Acts 28:25**

In the closing verses of Acts 28- Paul is preaching and getting courage himself not from a voice he hears audibly this time- but by remembering what the Holy Spirit said in the Bible. he quotes the prophet Isaiah directly.

## **Back to 2**

The O in IHOP stands for obedience to the Spirit.

If you don't train yourself to listen to his voice in the calm- you won't hear him in the storm...or the busy-ness of everyday life.

Other voices will drown him out.

This is why you have to have a habit of intaking Scripture- the words of the Holy Spirit. And in quietly praying...and listening to God.

## **TOUR OF PAINTINGS IN LOBBY NOW.**

Finally- Paul was already to Seize the Opportunity.

## **3) Seize Opportunity**

When you are living a life deeply attached to Jesus- a life of Gritty Hope that raises questions...and you are seeing the unseen...opportunities to proclaim the gospel will pop up everywhere.

One of my favorite lines in the book of Acts happens with King Agrippa.

### **Acts 26:24-29**

**24 As he was saying these things in his defense, Festus exclaimed in a loud voice, "You're out of your mind, Paul! Too much study is driving you mad."**

**25 But Paul replied, "I'm not out of my mind, most excellent Festus. On the contrary, I'm speaking words of truth and good judgment. 26 For the king knows about these matters, and I can speak boldly to him. For I am convinced that none of these things has escaped his notice, since this was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe."**

**28 Agrippa said to Paul, "Are you going to persuade me to become a Christian so easily? "**

**29 "I wish before God," replied Paul, "that whether easily or with difficulty, not only you but all who listen to me today might become as I am — except for these chains."**

Paul is standing before a King- his life is on the line- and his main focus is not protecting his own life- but cultivating life in King Agrippa.

### **Back to 3)**

This is what it means to proclaim the gospel with all boldness and without hindrance.

What opportunities has God put in front of you to be a Connector instead of an Exhibitionist. An Illuminator instead of a Diminisher. A Pillar instead of a Platform?

Who do you need to see?

That's what we are going to help each other with in 2024.

I want to end with this quote from the late Fredrick Buechner- writer and pastor,

Use this Brooks quote for gospel- Buechner pg 166

**"What we hunger for perhaps more than anything else is to be known in our full humanness, and yet that is often just what we also fear more than anything else."**

**It is important to tell at least from time to time the secret of who we truly and fully are...because otherwise we run the risk of losing track of who we truly and fully are and little by little come to accept instead the highly edited version which we put forth in hope that the world will find it more acceptable than the real thing. It is important to tell our secrets too because it makes it easier...for other people to tell us a secret or two of their own.”- Fredrick Buechner**

Expressive individualism says- “Thats all thats needed. Express yourself. Platform.”  
But Jesus doesn't want us to platform- he wants to transform us.

The thing is- when you try and try to be seen by becoming the highly edited version of yourself that other people like and approve of- you end not really being known.

But when you are honest about who you really are- that means the ugly stuff- the sin comes out too- and we are afraid of being rejected.

But in Jesus- God sees our sin and dies to forgive us.  
And then we can finally tell the truth- our secrets- without condemnation- because we know we are seen and forgiven and loved.

And as we do this- vulnerability sparks more vulnerability. And the opportunities open up to give this good news to hurting unseen people everywhere.

But first- you have to believe it yourself.

Pray.