

CHANGE AGENT CAUSES

Building wisdom for getting involved in causes.



People enjoy supporting favorite causes, and young people zealously so. And there are so many causes to support, some of which seem to conflict. How does one figure out which one to support? Before investing your time, talent, treasure, or heart into a cause consider some discernment criteria that will help you to make wise decisions.

1. PERSONAL QUICK CHECK CRITERIA

Time Expectations What is this cause personally demanding of me? How much time? How long is the commitment? Will I be able to be faithful to my commitment if I say yes? How will this compete for my time in other areas of life? What's my trade-off?

Synergies To what degree does the opportunity overlap with things (e.g. work) you are already doing? The more synergies that you can find, typically the more efficient and productive that you will be for the cause you are trying to help.

Dimensions of Vocational Power *What do I have to offer?* Amy Sherman, author of Kingdom Calling, has listed seven dimensions of power related to work that can bring value to its holder. They aren't the same for everyone. Using that power on behalf of a cause can be a good synergy for you. The dimensions of power include: 1. Knowledge/expertise that you've accumulated and excelled in. 2. Platform- a unique voice or opportunity to get a message out. 3. Relational networks. 4. Influence – The degree of influence you possess and how to use that influence creatively for good. 5. Position – the

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degree of authority you have within an organization or community based on title or reputation. 6. Skills – Take an inventory of your skills that you can use to serve. 7. Reputation/fame –a high level of name recognition that can provide large following or strategic opportunities.

Personal vision-mission Does joining this cause fit within your personal vision-mission? Is it something that you should make a passionate priority in your life? Are you willing to sacrifice for it?

Attitude What's my heart posture towards those from whom I am asking for change? That of those to whom I might join in this cause? Am I respectful? Teachable- am I willing to listen and learn something new, even if I think that I know how to do what's asked? or learn from the "opposing" party?

Receptive to Authority Am I initially willing to submit to the authority of whomever the organization places over me in the serving effort?

Motivations- What are yours? Why do you want to join in this cause? What would you like to see happen for all stakeholders involved, including yourself and those from whom you are asking for change?

Faith & Practice Alignment How does this cause align with your faith and how your faith calls you to practically live out your daily life? How big is the gap between how you are called by God to live and how the organizers of the cause ask you to live?

2. CAUSE CATEGORIZATION CRITERIA

Causes will typically fall into one or more of four general categories. Each category attempts to answer a question. Which question is the cause you are considering attempting to answer?

1. What evil in the world (or in my world) must be stopped or that I just cannot tolerate?
2. What is broken that needs to be restored?
3. What is good that must be celebrated, preserved, or protected?
4. What's missing that we can contribute?

An organization or movement's worldview will influence what they call "evil," "broken," or "good." The bible tells us that people will call evil good and good evil. (Isaiah 5:20) What's this cause being called by its proponents and is that true? Their worldview will influence what they think the problem is, which will determine their proposed fix to the problem. Try to understand their worldview on the issue.

Purpose- What is the purpose of the issue in question? What are the starting assumptions about the nature of people? The assumptions about the purpose of whatever is missing, broken, or to be celebrated? Does this cause move its beneficiaries closer to God's created designed intent or further away? Would involvement with this justice activity be pleasing or displeasing to God? Where does it stand when the light of scripture is shown on it? Does God's Word or design address the issue in question? If so, what does it say?

Problem- What are the assumptions on the cause of the problem or issue? Does God's Word offer insight? To what degree does the broken nature of humankind influence the problem?

Fix- What do the cause leaders say the fix to the problem is? Did they get the problem correct? How does the proposed fix align with Scripture? Is it a God-honoring approach? (James 3:15-18)
Who is expected to take ownership in the fix? Are the expectations valid?

“A hallmark of redemptive change agents is a holy dissatisfaction with the status quo of our fallen world, and a stubborn conviction that God has something better for our neighbors, communities, and nations.” Dr. Bob Osburn

Future- What does the cause project as the future once things are “fixed?”

Advisors. Who are they? Are they credible? How do you know? What’s their reputation? See Proverbs

3. HUMAN FLOURISHING CRITERIA

Opportunity Do stakeholders in the cause (those helping and those benefiting) have access to opportunities?

Ownership Personal responsibility is the glue that holds initiatives together. It is self-governing, self-leading, and self-managing skills informed and driven by principles of high character. It’s important that those who are being helped in by a cause take ownership in the process. This helps them to preserve their God-given dignity given through the cultural mandate for humanity. Access to opportunities, and personal ownership and responsibility in the process, influence outcomes.

Corrupted Compassion Jesus was the model of compassion. He not only healed people physically, emotionally, and spiritually. He held people to account for their behavior and called them to a higher standard of holiness covered by his grace. “Go and sin no more” sometimes accompanied his compassion. True compassion addresses root causes. Compassion is corrupted when it discounts the individual’s responsibility in the cases of self-inflicted problems or when those helping think of themselves as the savior of the afflicted.

Collaboration- what cultural spheres are collaborating in this effort? How well do they seem to be collaborating? Who are the key stakeholders, what are their worldviews, and how much influence do they have?

Holistic approach- how holistic of an approach is currently being taken? Are the solutions currently being given too simplistic and not considering the big picture? Because mankind in his whole is created body, mind, soul, and spirit, does the approach to address these parts to optimize human flourishing? How are the key literacies of civic, health & safety, spiritual & moral, economic, and educational concerns addressed?

Measurements- What’s the history this issue? How will success or progress be measured?

Be a blessing- Seek the peace and prosperity of the city as mentioned by Jeremiah. Will this cause be a blessing to the city?

Spiritual Climate- what is the spiritual climate of the city or area in which you are working? What seem to be the spiritual strongholds? Who in the local Body of Christ seems to have spiritual authority?

Prayer- has the area or issue been prayed over?

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Locally driven solutions- to what degree have those affected by the injustice been involved in creating a solution?

Justice involves duties & rights- what are the duties and rights of those involved? What are the implications and consequences if one is emphasized more than another in this situation? Are the rights being claimed in this cause really rights?

Counterbalance to justice- besides giving people what is due to them, or the rights to exercise their free will (for better or worse), what is the loving relational action (characteristics of empathy, mercy, and self-sacrifice) and the holy action (ethically pure) that need to occur for a balanced solution?

Innate worth- will proposed solutions to the issue preserve the dignity and worth of everyone involved?

Relationships- how will the execution of justice foster right relationships? Does the solution engage relationally with folks?

Societal Flourishing Framework- to what degree does the existing societal framework create an environment for human flourishing and the application of justice? What are its bright spots to leverage? What are its weakest parts that need changed? The framework is: 1. Rule of Law 2. Free markets 3. Individual 4. Limited government responsibility 5. Religious liberty.

Member Motivations- What are the motivations- underlying, expressed or demonstrated, of those with whom you are considering joining in the cause?

Methodology and Action How do the methods, actions, activities align with James 3:15-18?

Sowing and Reaping principle- what may be reaped by what is being sown by this cause?

Shalom- Is this cause contributing to the ultimate peace of the city? “seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” Jeremiah 29:7

Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing- Who's behind (or inside) the organization bringing the cause into the sheep fold? How is the organization funded? By whom? What’s the worldview of the primary donors? What’s the history of the organization? Its organizational culture? The attitude, demeanor or spirit of the volunteers and staff it attracts?

History- Injustice has been a part of human history since Cain killed Abel. Has this issue or a similar one been addressed in the past? If so, what is the who, what, where, when, why, and how? What were the outcomes of actions taken? What can be learned?

Before jumping behind a cause, I hope you pause and consider these considerations and questions for a socially just city.

Ask Your Mentor

1. What are some of the causes you are involved with?
2. How did you get involved? Why are you involved?

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3. How do you determine where you give your time, talent, or treasure?
4. In which of the big cause categories are you involved? (Evil to stop; broken to fix; good to celebrate; missing to contribute?)
5. What have been some of your good experiences in causes? Poor experiences? What made them that way?
6. If you could do anything differently in how you went about deciding how to get involved in a cause, what would you do differently?

Go Do

What causes are you currently passionate about or curious about? Pick one of the two below.

1. Create a tentative decision-making approach for deciding how you will go about discerning if or how to get involved in a cause.
2. Take one of those causes and use some questions from each of the criteria sections to thoughtfully evaluate that cause, or an organization that is advancing that cause.

Go Deeper: Further Conversation & Study

1. Make a list of problems that you would like to see solved, evil to stop, or good to celebrate. What do you think would be the approach? How would you go about determining how your solution aligns with scripture's general teaching about the issue?
2. Read through some of the stories of Jesus serving people. What was His approach? How would you use those approaches to influence yours?

Sources & Resources

Article: Is it biblical to seek to influence culture?, John Stonestreet, Colson Center Breakpoint, <https://breakpoint.org/is-it-biblical-to-seek-to-influence-culture/>

Book: Generous Justice, Timothy Keller

Book: Just Business, Alexander Hill

Book: Good News About Injustice, Haugen

Video: What should someone consider before getting involved in social justice issues?, Robert Caldwell, <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/147809329>