

CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

Conversations that Matter are Online Gatherings of Bay Area Leaders of Faith + Nationally Recognized Thought Leaders Designed to Spark Dialogue Around the Big Questions that Impact Spiritual Life in the Bay Area.

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Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture

This resource is a companion to the Conversation that Matters on A Church Called Tov to use during a time of reflection on the importance of developing the habits of an emotionally healthy leader.

Moderator:

Dr. Roger Valci, TBC Advisory Board member

Panelists:

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[Scot McKnight](#), author, and Julius R. Mantey Professor of New Testament at [Northern Seminary](#)

Daniel Huskey, pastor at [The Parish Church](#) (Petaluma)

[Tony Traback](#), teaching pastor at Wellspring Church (San Ramon)

[Dan Perkins](#), Executive Pastor at Westgate Church (San Jose)

We may be familiar with the Hebrew word, tov as in Mazel Tov, an expression of congratulations often used in response to the news of an engagement, wedding, or child's birth. Authors Scot McKnight and Laura McKnight Barringer focus on the word tov, in their book, A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture to define good in the context of church culture.

The most important thing that I've learned in leadership or pastoring or professing is that character is more important than our qualifications, our giftedness, our strategies, and even the culture that we're forming.

-Scot McKnight

COMPARE TOXIC TO TOV:

Scot begins this Conversation that Matters by listing the causes of toxicity in a church and naming the TOV characteristic that forms a goodness culture.

Toxic: Narcissism: an inability to empathize with people, grandiosity, self-centerdness, rage, criticism.

Tov: Empathy/Compassion -Compassion is not an inner, quiet disposition. It's something that people observed about Jesus. When He saw people in pain who needed healing he was visibly moved with compassion.

Scot: When we're selecting leaders for our churches, are we selecting empathic people? Do our leaders see people in need and respond? I don't mean, do they say the right thing? Are they genuinely moved?

Reflect:

- **What are some ways to practice empathy to become better at empathy?**
- **What are some ways to encourage our team members to practice empathy?**

Toxic: Fear: toxic leaders motivate people by fear because they have power.

Tov: Grace: a social bond that becomes a reciprocal exchange of benevolence between people.

Scot: A gracious leader finds ways to build a person up so they can grow in grace.

Reflect:

What can I do to encourage and empower a person to grow in the giftedness that God has given them?

[Recommended resource: Paul and the Gift, John M.G. Barclay](#)

Toxic: Institution creep: when something happens in a church and the first thing people think is, what will happen to our church if this story is told?

Tov: People come first: learning people's names and stories.

Scot: We should have such a personal relationship with our people that our instinct will be to make them better rather than to cast them aside.

Reflect:

- **How can I be intentional about building personal relationships with our people?**

Toxic: False narrative: allowing ourselves to create a narrative that is not true and when discovered obliterates the integrity of the gospel, the group, and the leaders.

Tov: Truth-telling in a loving and compassionate and appropriate way.

Scott: Telling the truth is important for living in reality before a holy and true God.

Reflect:

- **Practice Yom Kippur**

Toxic: Loyalty culture: operating from a place of fear of retaliation.

Tov: Commitment to justice: doing the right thing at the right time.

Scott: It takes special character to see something wrong and to have the humility and the grace to do the right thing at the right time.

Reflect:

- **How can I be willingly courageously?**

Toxic: Celebrity culture: turn that gospel into an opportunity to make celebrities of ourselves.

Tov: Service culture: selfless giving of ourselves for the sake of other people.

Scott: If you are a leader in a church, I urge you to be involved along with your spouse in some kind of service that is never used as an illustration in a sermon.

Reflect:

- **Consider service opportunities**

[Recommended resource: Celebrities for Jesus: Personas, Platforms and Profits are Hurting the Church, Katelyn Beaty](#)

TAKE-AWAYS FROM PANEL ON FORMING A GOODNESS (TOV) CULTURE

Tony Trabeck suggests tov is not possible unless we are self-aware. He recommends 3 practices:

1. Find wise guides – people who are farther on the journey who can speaking into your life including the blind spots.
2. Develop an honest community – people who actually tell you your strengths and weaknesses and your rough edges.
3. Create patterns of withdrawing and returning to hear from God and return back to ministry with some level of understanding.

Daniel: “If we’re not paying careful attention to ourselves, we’re headed towards trouble.”

Dan: “We need to be in a bond relationship with others, giving grace and extending grace for we may need to be the recipients of that at some point.”

Scot: “Pray more. Read the Bible not for sermons but to hear God speak.”