

## KNOWING THE CULTURE OF YOUR DISTRICT

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Every one of us has an extra large soapbox about comparing our personal lives, success in ministry, and even weekend adventures to others on social media. We teach our students and Hyphens not to do it and we get annoyed when our friends do it, but unfortunately several times we find ourselves poring over Instagram accounts all in the name of “finding inspiration” while subconsciously thinking, “How can I get our Hyphens to show up like *that*?”

First of all, let me be the first to stop and thank you for accepting the wild endeavor of trying to get inside the brains of Hyphens in your state to figure out what they want and what will help activate them to grow their churches. This isn’t an easy task, but God has called and designed *you* for it. That—or your youth president—gave you no choice. Whatever state this article finds you in, know that your sacrifice is not in vain!

With that being said, let’s address the question again: “How can I get our Hyphens to show up like *that*?” I remember walking out of the meeting with my district youth president after he asked me to be over Hyphen in Louisiana, thinking to myself, “How in the world am I going to do this?” when the Lord spoke clearly to me, saying, “*I* am going to do this. You are going to be my hands.”

Now you would think that would have been enough of a heavenly reprimand to ease my mind that the Creator of the universe has it under control; however, my flesh won as I began to create an astronomical mental bar for Hyphen Louisiana. “We’re going to have *this* like Ohio, and then *this* like Texas, and then *this* over here like I saw on someone’s Instagram in California, and it’s going to be *awesome*,” I thought to myself.

Except it was not awesome. Because we were not located in Ohio. We were not located in Texas. And we were definitely not located in California.

We were located in Louisiana, centrally based, where hunting and football season has to be considered due to it, unfortunately, occasionally dictating church involvement. We’re located in Louisiana, where we have one cool hipster coffee shop per every 150 miles. We’re located in Louisiana, where the mosquito is not the state bird; however, its vengeance and habitat—extreme humidity—dictate outdoor events and involvement.

Beach volleyball wasn’t going to work here; there was no beach. Cool coffee-shop acoustic worship afterburners weren’t going to work here, where no cool places stayed afloat in business long enough for us to use them. “So now what?” I thought.

After repenting and seeking God for answers on what was on *His* mind for Hyphen Louisiana, I began to put some feelers out to our Hyphens of what they wanted, and the responses were sobering:

“We just want to hear God’s voice.”

“We just want a place to go to sit and talk.”

“We just want to have encounters with God.”

“We just want to belong.”

If I had been adamant about and focused on only looking great on our Instagram page with cool venues (not to say cool venues are the devil) or only competing with another district’s event calendar (not to say their ideas don’t matter either), then I would have completely missed what God wanted for Hyphen Louisiana. Am I



saying that all of the bells, whistles, excellence, and planning do not matter? Absolutely not. The Hyphens of our state deserve our freshest ideas and our most exhaustive efforts for planning and excellence. However, what they deserve the most are district leaders with a finger on the pulse of the culture and how God wants to grow and develop them where they are, using what they have.

One of the easiest traps we can fall into as district Hyphen coordinators is comparing our state's success and dynamic to another. Every state has a completely different dynamic, history, and culture. It is important that we make time to sit down with our teams and identify as individual states our strengths, weaknesses, and goals, to ultimately connect them "to service...with purpose...through resources...for a mission."

God has chosen you. Follow other states' Hyphen social media accounts. Call district leaders for ideas. Mentally lament with me that we can't all have a Hyphen Cruise Tour with Steven Curtis Chapman like Hyphen Caribbean (I don't know if that's a thing, but if it is, sign me up). Get all of the resources you can, but never compare your success with another district's numbers or events. God has chosen you for your state. Know the culture God has uniquely placed in your state, and ask Him today: "God, what do You want for Hyphen in this state?"