

We believe discipleship is a direction
not a destination.



Evangelism in a Skeptical World

Week 6

Course Outline (12 Weeks)

- ~~Week 4 Ch3~~ How to Craft a Gospel Presentation
 - ~~How to present the Gospel, then and now~~
- ~~Week 5 Ch4~~ Evangelism to Postmoderns
 - ~~Modernism and Postmodernism~~
- **Week 6 Ch5** Contextualization for Evangelism
 - The Gospel and Culture



Course Outline (12 Weeks)

- **Week 7 Ch5** Contextualization for Evangelism
 - How to Interpret Culture, Thoughts, Themes, Story
- **Week 8 Ch6** Gospel-Cultural Hermeneutics
 - Enter, Challenge, Fulfill
- **Week 9 Ch7** Storytelling the Gospel
 - Styles of Learning, Story-telling



Course Outline (12 Weeks)

- **Week 10** Ch8 How to Give Evangelistic Topical Talks
 - What is a Topical Talk and how to give one
- **Week 11** Ch9 How to Give Evangelistic Expository Talks
 - What is an Expository Talks and how to give one
- **Week 12** Ch10 Religious Epistemology, Apologetics
 - Moving People from Hostile to Loyal



Contextualization for Evangelism

Gospel and Culture

Chapter 5



Accents

- I traveled a lot and heard all kinds of accents
 - And I always wished I had an accent
 - And could sound cool
 - Alas I have no accent
- Wait, what?
 - We all have accents some are just more neutral than others



Accents

- That's why most broadcasters look for people from the Midwest
 - They have the most neutral accent
- But most movies are made in California because
 - They have the most neutral accent
- This is crazy, each groups claims their accent is the most normal in the world



Accents

- This is how many Christians regard their culture
 - They don't realize they have a culture
 - They do not hear their cultural accent
 - See their cultural dress
 - They are not aware of their views on:
 - Smoking, Gambling, work, education...
 - And how they are different from others



Youth Pastor Interaction

- Stereotypical Asian girl with the tiger mom
 - She studies obsessively
 - No sports, no camps
 - Her goal is to go to Harvard
 - Become a doctor



Youth Pastor Interaction

- Youth pastors sees this and says,
 - Your studies have become your idol
 - Repent of this
 - There is more to life then Harvard
 - More then being a doctor
 - If you are serious about following Jesus
 - Give up being a doctor, become a missionary
 - Or a youth pastor



Youth Pastor Interaction

- The stereotypical surfer kid
 - Hates high school
 - Spends every second at the beach surfing
 - Dreams of leaving school at 16
 - Becoming a day laborer
 - This will allow him to surf more
 - And hang out with his friends



Youth Pastor Interaction

- Youth pastors sees this and says,
 - Your surfing has become your idol
 - Repent of this
 - Dropping out is a horrible idea
 - God gave you intelligence you need to use it
 - If you are serious about following Jesus
 - Study hard, go to college, get a good job
 - Or become a youth pastor



Was The Gospel Shared?

- Did the youth pastor share the gospel?
 - Or did he share his own culture?
- The youth pastor told
 - The surfer to be more like the Asian girl
 - And the Asian girl to be more like the surfer
- He also told both to be more like himself



Merging

Syncretism

The amalgamation or attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought.

- Many Christians merge their culture with the gospel
 - Missionaries call this **syncretism**
- This is where missionaries don't just give the gospel
 - They also impose their culture
 - We are not just asking people to convert to Jesus
 - We are asking people to convert to our culture
- Long ago missionaries forced others to wear their clothes
 - To speak their language



So, How Can

- The Asian girl be a Christian and still be an Asian-American?
- The surfer dude be a Christian and still be a Californian surfer dude?
- This session will answer this question
 - By looking at the relationship between
 - Gospel and Culture



Seek to Be Understood

- Why can't I just give them the gospel?
 - The gospel is for everyone, God will open their hearts to hear and respond
- Why do I have to worry about the culture?
 - Denn so hat Gott die Welt geliebt, daß er seinen eingeborenen Sohn gab, damit jeder, der an ihn glaubt, nicht verloren gehe, sondern ewiges Leben habe.
 - Say what?



Seek to Be Understood

- For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16
- A great verse when sharing the gospel
 - But when it's in German it will fall on most Americans as gibberish
- At minimum we translate the Bible so other cultures can understand in their cultural language



Be Sensitive

- I share John 3:16 in English to another English speaker
 - Good so far
- But what if I'm wearing underwear on my head?
 - Or I have my middle finger up the whole time?
- I'm being culturally inappropriate, offensive
- The way I shared the gospel makes it non-credible
- We need to be sensitive to a person's culture



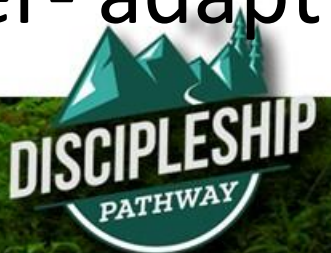
Being Understood

- “To teach math to Johnny, you need to know both math and Johnny.”
- In evangelism, we might say
 - “To tell the gospel to Johnny, we need to know both the gospel and Johnny.”
- We need to know both the gospel and Johnny’s culture



The Gospel and Culture

- Six aspects of the relationship between the gospel and culture
 1. The gospel is transcultural
 2. The gospel is encultured
 3. Our audience is encultured
 4. The gospel teller is enculturated
 5. There is no universal, decontextualized form of the gospel
 6. Every presentation of the gospel will over- or under- adapt



Aspect #1

- The gospel is transcultural
 - It is true for all cultures
 - Old testament:
 - God is the God of both Israel and the nations
 - New Testament:
 - Salvation is for both the Jews and the gentiles
- “The gospel is universal and normative for all peoples at all times and in all places.”



Aspect #2

- The gospel is encultured
 - The gospel is not acultural (devoid of culture)
- Take these biblical terms
 - The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
 - The Jewish Passover
 - Priests, temple, sacrifices
 - Jesus the Lamb of God
 - Jesus the Shepherd



Aspect #2

- The gospel is encultured
 - This is why when we teach the Bible or give a bible story
 - We say “In their culture...”
 - To understand the gospel
 - We need to understand its culture



Aspect #3

- Our audience is encultured
 - The person we are trying to evangelize is also enculturated
 - They are not devoid of culture
 - The person is deeply influenced by their culture
 - And this can range widely even in the same geographic area



Aspect #3

- Take a person from Houston
 - American-born Chinese culture
 - African-American culture
 - Texas undergrad culture
 - Community college culture
 - Single mom culture
 - Retiree culture



Aspect #3

- Each one of these people have
 - Different cultural concerns
 - Gospel interpretation
 - Cultural communication
 - Cultural application
- The Chinese man is concerned with honoring his family
- The single mom is concerned about time pressures



Aspect #3 Gospel Interpretation

- Gospel Interpretation
 - The gospel will be interpreted and misinterpreted differently by each culture
 - What does their cultural lens help them to see in the Bible?
 - What are their cultural blind spots which make them misunderstand what's in the Bible?



Aspect #3 Gospel Interpretation

- For example an American born Chinese girl
 - Might come to the gospel with a Confucian worldview
 - They understand shaming God
 - But they may think there are duties and works, required
- Or a Californian surfer dude
 - He comes with the western individualism mindset
 - I need to decide to follow Christ
 - But why do I need to do the group thing (Church)



Aspect #3 Cultural Communication

- For people to understand you,
 - You must speak in ways that their culture can understand
 - Think of all the slang we use in the US
 - Imagine a foreigner hearing
 - I got shotgun
 - He's a couch potato
 - I'm gona crash



Aspect #4

- The gospel teller is enculturated
 - Evangelists are also enculturated
 - We are not devoid of culture
- Our culture will affect our:
 - Understanding of the Gospel
 - Application of the Gospel



Aspect #4 Our Own Cultural Concerns

- We come to the Bible with our own cultural concerns
 - In my tradition, culture, I read what God has and is doing for me
 - I notice this everywhere when I read
 - This may be because of my individualistic culture
- We have all experienced reading a book of the Bible
 - And reading it a year later and it reads different
 - Did it change or did you, your perspective, culture?

Aspect #5

- There is no universal, decontextualized form of the gospel
 - There is no form for presenting the gospel that hovers above a culture, devoid of culture
- Jesus did this when he chose to be
 - Male, Palestinian, First century, and Aramaic and Greek speaking



Aspect #5

- We must do the same thing, we choose the English language
 - But we still must choose
 - What kind of English to use?
 - Who do we quote?
 - How do we illustrate?
 - Do we use humor?
 - What metaphors do we use?
 - What clothes do we wear?



Aspect #5

- You can see why our gospel presentation must change
 - Based on our audience
 - Do we talk about family and honor (Chinese)
 - Do we talk about Gods plans (American)
- There is no one perfect gospel presentation
 - We must adapt the *presentation* of the gospel
 - But not adapt the gospel



Aspect #6

- Every presentation of the gospel will over- or under- adapt
 - Every form of gospel presentation will either overadapt or under-adapt to a culture
- For example: We can cry out, “Abba, Father!”
 - Is Abba “Old Man”?
 - This could be over-adapting the gospel to our culture
 - Or just leave it “Abba”
 - This could be under-adapting, leaving us uninformed

Aspect #6

- When we over-adapt to a culture in application
 - We do not ask that culture to give up the things that the gospel clearly says they should
- When we under-adapt to a cultural application
 - We end up with legalism from our culture
 - We think it is gospel norms
 - But it is our cultural norms
 - Think of eating pork in biblical times



Aspect #6

- Let's take the Bible's view on sex
 - If we say it's ok to
 - Have sex with prostitutes to worship the goddess
 - Have multiple sexual partners
 - We are guilty of synchronism
 - We have not asked them to give up things the gospel calls out as wrong

Aspect #6

- But if we say sex
 - For any other reason but procreation is wrong
 - That sex for pleasure is wrong
 - We are guilty of legalism
 - We have under-adapted the gospel
 - We are asking people to give up more than what is required



Aspect #6

- This is very difficult for us as Christians
 - Our own culture can affect what we see and believe
- The warning is don't
 - Over-adapt, it leads to a watered-down faith at best
 - Or a false faith at worst
 - Under-adapt, it leads to a legalistic faith
 - A faith built on works and self



Aspect #6

- We may never get this balance right
- But if we do
 - This is when revival, with God's help, will come!



Adaptation of Gospel Presentation to Culture

	Under-adapted	Sweet Spot	Over-adapt
The Evangelist and the Culture	You challenge but don't enter the culture.	You enter and challenge the culture.	You enter but don't challenge the culture.
Gospel Interpretation	They are uninformed (or underinformed) of gospel truths.	They are informed of gospel truths.	They are misinformed of gospel truths.
Gospel Communication	They can't understand you.	They understand you.	They think they understand you, but they have misunderstood you.
Gospel Application	You make them do what they don't have to do and ask them to give up what they don't have to give up.	You make them do what they have to do and ask them to give up what they have to give up.	You don't make them do what they have to do and don't ask them to give up what they have to give up.



Adaptation of Gospel Presentation to Culture

	Under-adapted	Sweet Spot	Over-adapt
Gospel Presentation	Your gospel message has nonessentials that are confusing or unnecessarily offensive.	Your gospel message has essentials that are necessarily offensive but doesn't have nonessentials so that you don't confuse or unnecessarily offend.	Your gospel message doesn't have the essentials so that it is inoffensive when it should have been necessarily offensive.
Result	Pharisaism, legalism, cultural imperialism (imposing cultural norms as gospel norms)	Contextualized gospel	Syncretism
Category of Contextualization	Colonialism	Critical contextualization	Uncritical contextualization

Summary

- We need to be educated in cultural hermeneutics
 - We need to be able to exegete
 - The Bible's culture
 - The culture we are seeking to reach
 - Our own culture



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