**Gospel and Culture**

**Indian Quote:**
“Don’t bring us the gospel as a __________ __________; bring us the gospel as a __________ and plant it in our soil.”

**Kickoff**
1. Case study: You evangelize and establish congregations in a country that has a variety of berries and fruits but no grapes.
2. What will you do and teach concerning the Lord’s Supper? Will you use a substitute or will you import Welch’s (or Walmart) grape juice?
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**Main Objective:**
To de-Americanize our message so that we bring a universal and eternal gospel to people around the world.

**Following the Script**
1. Matthew 13:52: "...Every teacher …is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."
   - Key principle:

2. 1 Corinthians 9:19–23: “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”
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3. Galatians 1:6-9 “...As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!”
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4. 2 Tim. 1:13; Rom 6:17; Php 3:17
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5. 1 Cor 7:17; 1 Cor. 14:33-34
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**Essentially non-essential? Let’s come to terms:**
1. Transcultural —

2. Cultural —
3. What did you experience in doing the Gospel/Culture Test?
   □ Which practices represent absolute, authoritative commands that are applicable for all people for all times and in all places?
   □ Which practices appear to be culture bound?
   □ Is there a method for determining with elements of biblical teaching are transcultural and which are cultural?

Herman Who?
1. What key disciplines relate to these issues?
   □ Exegesis:
   □ Hermeneutic:
   □ Homiletics.
   □ Contextualization.

Major Hermeneutical Approaches:
1. Allegorical interpretation and typology.

2. Literal.

3. Devotional:
4. Liberal:

5. Existential hermeneutics
6. “New” Hermeneutic

How do we begin our hermeneutic with Jesus?
1. Christ-Centered
2. Love Driven
3. Grace Oriented
4. Spirit Led
5. United in Purpose

Postman or curator?
1. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that he had delivered what he had received. What is the difference between a
   □ Postman?
   □ Museum curator?
   □ “When the postman hands over a parcel to me, he loses nothing and I am enriched. The museum curator or the librarian, on the other hand, hands over nothing.” (David M. Paton)
How do we eliminate cultural traditions and preach only the basic Gospel?

1. What are some possible models?
   - Shane Clairborne, *Irre resistible Revolution*
   - Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis*
   - Francis Chan, *Crazy Love*
   - What do these have in common?

2. Have others in Christianity grappled with this problem?
   - Luther
   - Anthony Norris Groves, *The Church of the Brethren*
   - George Müller
   - James A. Harding
   - Reflections on examples:

3. Illus. What would you do if the only source of water is a polluted stream?
   - Options:
     a.
     b.
     c.

Restoration hermeneutic:

1. Restoration Plea:
   - into different groups with different names (denominationalism);
   - to use the Bible alone as our authoritative guide for doctrine and practice.

2. Restoration Slogans in regard to the plea:
   - In matters of doctrine,
   - in matters of opinion,
   - towards all,

3. Restoration Doctrine:

4. Restoration Practice: (hermeneutical approach) Bible doctrine is binding when it is a

5. How important was the concept of “pattern” or “example” in the NT?
6. What is our heritage at Harding?
   - undenominational
   - non-sectarian
   - honest inquiry
   - Christian freedom

7. What do we learn about Jesus’ heart for God and Scripture from Matthew 23
   - 
   - 
   - 

**Method to our madness: the “correct” approach**

1. 
   - Humility in our condition as finite human beings (Dt. 29:29).
   - What has been revealed is often profound (cf. Eph. 5).
   - What has been revealed is often easily understood, but profoundly challenging in its application: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

2. 
   - Paul: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able ..."
   - We cannot discern correctly the message without an intimate knowledge of the author of the message. ("Spiritual things discerned by spiritual men")

3. 
   - We reject the notion that the Bible cannot be understood except by the most learned professional scholars. “For we do not write to you anything you cannot read or understand...” (2 Cor. 1:13).
   - We affirm the notion that the Gospel still requires evangelists (preachers and teachers) that are prepared, thoroughly equipped for every good work. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. 'How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" (Acts 8:30-31).

4. 
   - We have come to realize that our message is not having as a great an impact on our culture as it should. There are at least two reasons:
     - Our culture is more secular.
     - Our message has not been presented in culturally relevant forms.
     - Our message must address the tough issues and meet the true needs of people.
5. Our message must be relevant in the sense of calling wayward people back to God—not in the sense of modifying the demands of God to make the gospel more attractive to the secular mind-set.

We must not confuse needs with wants. We must not compromise eternal truths to conform to passing cultural phenomena.

The more pervasive sin becomes in a culture, the more Scripture is going to call us to be counter-culturalists.

6. by which we can be conversant with the culture, language and literary types of the Bible in order to correctly determine what the message meant to the original source and receptor.

Linguistics
Culture
Knowledge of the Bible. Hermeneutical principles: the Bible is its own best interpreter; words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs must be understood in their context.

Solutions Proposed by Interpreters:
1. Roy B. Zuck, Basic Bible Interpretation (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991). Chapter four: "Bridging the Cultural Gap." Pp. 92ff. The following principles may be useful in determining which cultural practices and situations, commands, and precepts in the Bible are transferable to our culture and which ones are nontransferable.

Some situations, commands, or principles are repeatable, continuous, or not revoked, and/or pertain to moral and theological subjects, and/or are repeated elsewhere in Scripture, and therefore are permanent and transferable to us. Eg. A practice revoked: Nazarite's hair (Jud. 13:5; 1 Sam. 1:11; cf. 1 Cor. 11:14).

Some situations, commands, or principles pertain to an individual's specific nonrepeatable circumstances, and/or nonmoral or nontheological subjects, and/or have been revoked, and are therefore not transferable to today. Eg. 2 Tim. 4:11-13.

Some situations or commands pertain to cultural settings with no similarities but in which the principles are transferable. Eg. When Moses stood in God's presence on holy ground, he removed the sandals from his feet. And, the woman's veil, 1 Cor. 11:2-16. Ex. Holy Kiss, Moses' holy ground.

2. Shawn's Guidelines for determining if Bible practices are Culture-bound or Transcultural:

Shawn's Guidelines for determining if Bible practices are Culture-bound or Transcultural:

- We may retain both the theology taught along with the cultural-historical expression of that principle.
- We may retain the theology of a passage (the principle) but replace the behavioral expression with some more recent, but equally meaningful, expression.
- Five Guidelines:
  - a. Observe the reason why a command, custom, or historical example is given in the text.
  - b. In some cases, modify the cultural forms but retain the content.
  - c. Refuse practices that were integral parts of the surrounding pagan culture.
  - d. Retain practices that are grounded in the nature of God.
  - e. Notice when the circumstances alter the application of a law or principle.
  - f. Conclusion: The case for humility in cases of uncertainty.

Discussion on Woodroof and Smith:
God and Culture

What’s God’s Attitude Toward Culture?

Introduction:
“‘I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.’ John 17:13-15, NIV.

Options for God’s Attitude Toward Culture:
   - 1 John 2:15-16; 5:19 Identifies "culture" with the "world".
   - Missionaries require withdrawal from culture
   - Strengths:
     a. Transformation
     b. Identity
   - Weaknesses:
     a. Culture is mistakenly equated with the world which God loves (John 3:16)
     b. Assumes that one can escape culture, which is impossible
     c. Assumes all culture is evil

2. God-_________-culture Positions, Two Options:
   - God as a result of culture
   - God endorsing a particular culture
   - Strengths and weaknesses?
     a. God is near
     b. Secularism
     c. Esclusivism

   - God is above culture and unconcerned with human beings (Deism; ex. Thomas Jefferson). A "clock maker" God.
   - God in conflict with sinful man (dualism).
   - Strengths and weaknesses?
     a. God is “other”
     b. God is not involved
     c. God is an adversary

4. THE BEST PERCEPTION: The __________________________ culture position.
   - Above: God is transcendent and absolute
   - Culture is neither enemy nor friend of God
   - God works through culture to interact with humans
   - Though infinite, God limits self to communicate
Evaluating Cultures

1. Social Structure:
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

2. Anthropological Terms:
   a. Lineage:
      a. 
      b. 
   b. Residence:
      a. 
      b. 
      c. 
      d. 
   c. Leadership:
      a. 
      b. 
   d. Marriage:
      a. 
      b. 
      c. 
      d. 

3. Homogeneous Unit:
   a. Ethnolinguistic: same language and ethnic heritage
   b. Socially Defined People Groups:
      a. Socio-geographical
      b. Political
      c. Religious
      d. Educational
      e. Economic
      f. Medical
      g. Deviant
      h. Occupational

4. How to Look at a Country
   a. Ex. Bergamo, Italy
   b. Subcultures in America:
      a. Socio-economic
      b. Ethnic
      c. Generational
      d. Rural vs. Urban
      e. Regional
   c. Rural African Example
5. Ethnographic Field Work
   a. 6 months to two years
   b. Interviewing

6. Notes and Observations on the Peace Child
   - Missionaries: Don Richardson
   - Location: Irian Jaya
   - Highest Value: Treachery
   - Breakthrough: Redemptive Analogy
   - Extent of Contextualization:
Incarnational Ministry

Steps in the Process
Once we’ve learned the language, adjusted to the culture and struggled with the culture’s worldview, we are now ready to learn how to identify with the culture. We must take Jesus to them by being Jesus among them. This is incarnational ministry.

Which of the Following are “Identification”?
1. Learning the language and dialect?
2. Adopting the style of dress, clothing?
3. Ignoring traffic lights in Naples?
4. Eating the same food?
5. Hanging out in bars (=Jesus ate with sinners)

Definitions:
1. Identification: "Adapting oneself to another culture for the purpose of communicating the Gospel cross-culturally.

2. Anthropological Terms:
   □ — perspective of learning to see our culture from the inside and assuming it is the only and right way to view reality.
   a. Ex. Migrant missionaries of Spain and Portugal of the 18th and 19th centuries went and settled down and became local citizens. In time they were absorbed into the society.
   b. In comparison, we begin to recognize the strong hold our own culture has on us.
   c. We begin to see the world through the eyes of our hosts.
   □ — outsider’s perspective not tied to any one culture.
   a. broader vision enables them to detach themselves in come measure from their first culture and translate beliefs and practices from one culture to another.
   □ Edward Hall uses the etic view to compare cultural views of space.
   a. Social Zone— 3 to 12 feet, compelled to converse
   b. Public Zone— too far away, may be ignored
   c. Personal Zone— 1 to 3 feet
   d. Intimate Zone— physical contact to within a foot
   e. Latins and Anglos have different distances.

3. Identification≠Imitation
   □ What is the goal of imitation?
   □ What is the goal of identification?
   □ Conviction:
Biblical Models:
1. Jesus—Jn 1:14; Heb. 2:14-18
   - It was incarnational. Lk. 11:1
   - It cost him something. Phil. 2:6

2. Metaphors of Paul’s Ministry—1 Thes. 2:6-12
   - (cf. 2 Thes. 3:8-10)
     a. Aristotle: “People choose to do all things what those whom they admire deliberately choose to do.”

3. Implications for us
   a. Examples?
      - Ministry will cost us, What will it cost us?

Observations on Dances with Wolves
1. Incarnation
2. Identification
3. Imitation

Barriers to Identification
1. Cognitive Confusion: confusion here leads to misunderstandings
   a. Example:
   b. Clue:
   c. Solutions:
      - It is more effective to approach someone as a student than a teacher. misunderstandings are overcome by explaining.

2. Affective Confusion: — confusion here leads to ethnocentrism
   a. Example:
   b. Clue:
   c. Solutions: empathy, be a learner, avoid stereotyping, remember that people love their own cultures.

3. Evaluative Confusion — confusion here leads to premature judgments
   a. Example:
   b. Clue:
   c. Solutions:
Other Barriers
1. Paternalism
   - Examples:
     a. starting a meeting
     b. selection of evangelist/elders
     c. use of money
   - Solution: Fraternalism, Jn 15:15; Phlm 8

2. Extractionism
   - Examples:
     a. Bible schools, results?
   - Solution? Identificationalism

3. Attitudes

Signs of Identification
1. How can one tell if a missionary is identifying with the people?

Case Study on Roberto De Nobili
What would you do?

Living in Two Worlds:
Becoming bicultural, we live in two worlds, how can we reconcile them. An incarnational approach to missions class for us to affirm both cultures within us—and to build a bridge between them.
1. Rejection
2. Compartmentalization — we adapt ourselves to whatever culture we are in but separate the different cultures in our mind.
   - Dangers:
3. Integration —

4. Goal: Becoming bi-cultural. An incarnational approach to affirm both cultures within us — and to build a bridge between them.

Levels of Identification
1. Lifestyles
   - language
   - dress
   - eating
   - courtesy
   - transportation
   - housing

2. Roles
   - under local leaders
   - not in charge
   - serve alongside
   - work through innovators

3. Attitudes
   - overcome distance and superiority
   - genuine love for the people we’re trying to reach
   - serving and caring.

Steps to Identification:
1. Die to self
2. Learn the language
3. Study the culture, literature, history
4. Establish personal relationships
5. Participate: funerals, hospitals, births, work
6. Adjust standard of living