

CHAPTER 11: JESUS-CENTERED CONTEXTUALIZATION

SUMMARY

The Church has been given a mission, not to save the world, but to announce the saving work of Christ for the salvation of the world. And in order to achieve this mission, the Church must make decisions about what it will affirm from its surrounding culture and what it will not. The Jesus-centered church is a church that affirms certain characteristics from its surrounding culture while still holding faithfully to the gospel. The mission of the Jesus-centered church depends upon faithful and effective contextualization.

AUDIT

1. How well is your church contextualizing its ministry? Explain.
2. What motivates you to over-contextualize or under-contextualize? Is it the history or demographics of your church or personality of your church leaders?
3. Which aspects of the Bible are you most afraid to mention and are tempted to leave out?
4. What are the cultural idols of your context? What are its values? What are the common distractions and comforts?
5. How much time do you spend exegeting your culture? What keeps you from faithfully exegeting your culture?

6. In what ways does your church ministry rub against the culture? Should your ministry rub against the culture in these ways? Does the gospel demand it?
7. What aspects of the culture rub you the wrong way for personal reasons but not gospel reasons?
8. What aspects of your culture can you affirm without sacrificing the gospel?
9. What are other biblical motivations for meaningful contextualization?
10. What does your current practice of contextualization say about your love for your neighbors?
11. In what way can your church be “more neighborly” to those around you by considering helpful ways you might deliver the gospel message?

RENEWAL

1. Take some time to consider and repent of the ways you have under-contextualized or over-contextualized. Ask the Lord to forgive you and your church for any love that may be lacking toward your neighbors.
2. Organize a community prayer walk. Make a list of the cultural idols and hand that list out to your church or staff. Pray for God to displace those idols with His gospel.
3. Gather a group of church members who are great exegetes of culture and discuss how your church can be more culturally sensitive and faithful in the contextualization of preaching and teaching.

4. **Set up a series of meetings with the city council or other leaders in your community for the purpose of listening and learning about the unique desires, fears and values of the community in which you live.**

5. **Start a book club to read through popular books or subscribe to a few popular cultural magazines.**

6. **Read and discuss Tim Keller's Center Church, particularly Part 3: Gospel Contextualization.**

7. **Develop a plan of specific changes you and church can make to reach your community and city more effectively with the gospel.**

PRAYER

Father, thank You for the gift of culture. Please give us wisdom as we seek to both rub against culture with the gospel and redeem culture with the gospel. Help us be a people that loves our neighbors and seeks to preach the good news of Jesus Christ through healthy, biblical contextualization.