

Think Local: Why Changing the World Begins in Your Backyard – Week Two

Understanding the Local Context

Selected Scriptures

Introduction: While Jesus and the apostles always had the worldwide *eternal mission* in mind, they were always focused on meeting local needs, sensitive even to specific niche cultures.

1. JESUS' PATTERN – He is extremely responsive to local culture.

- A. Jesus chooses a place to work based on its strategic location. Matt. 4:13-18
 - 1. He chose Capernaum because of the international opportunities. 4:15
 - 2. He chose Capernaum because of the pain. 4:16
 - 3. He built a ministry with sensitivities to local culture “fishers of men”. 4:18
 - 4. What about you? You’re here in the sovereignty of God. This place is strategic...*for you.*
- B. Jesus empowers his 70 disciples to minister with sensitivities to location. Luke 10:1-12
 - 1. Jesus choice of 70 (or 72) symbolizes a mission that is relevant for the world.
 - 2. Jesus told them to embrace local customs and hospitality. 10:8
 - 3. Jesus instructed them to serve as the context for teaching. 10:9
 - 4. Jesus suggested their mission would involve joy (10:17-20) & unseen power. 10:18
 - 5. What about you? You’re called to embrace local customs & serve, expecting power/joy.
- C. What impact did this have historically on the church?
 - 1. A theology of appreciation for indigenous cultures developed.
 - 2. A spiritual discipline of missional discovery grew.

2. PAUL'S PATTERN – He too is extremely responsive to local culture.

- A. Paul lived in two worlds: local & international. On the international side...
 - 1. He fully embraced his identity as the minister to the Gentiles. Rom. 15:16; Eph. 3:1
 - 2. He traveled over 10,000 miles, visited c.a. 3 dozen cities, on 2 continents, under hardship.
- B. But Paul was always operating with responsiveness to local culture.
 - 1. Paul uses Scripture with God-fearing Jews. Acts 13:16-41
 - 2. Paul does cultural research in the city of Athens. Acts 17:16, 23
 - 3. Paul quotes local poets in Athens (Acts 17:28) and Crete (Titus 1:12).
 - 4. Paul makes the right use of language in Acts 22, then tells his story.
 - 5. Paul spiritual warfare in Ephesus. Ephesians 6:10-20
- C. How has this pattern of localism been preserved through history? Ex: Cyril & Methodius.
 - 1. They created an alphabet for the Slavic peoples.
 - 2. They translated the Scriptures, created a liturgy and translated classic texts.
 - 3. His response to the persecution of the trilingualists was brilliant: Muck/Adeny, pg. 105

3. OUR PATTERN – We too must be highly responsive to local culture.

- A. Non-missional response – “Identify w/ American evangelical subculture no matter where I am.”
 - 1. Sources of identity – television, conferences, books, radio, & past experiences. *But...*
 - 2. Problem #1 – The subculture isn’t necessarily the authentic invisible body of Christ.
 - 3. Problem #2 – The overall subculture might not be relevant to the culture where you live.
 - 4. Problem #3 – You aren’t called to a subculture. You are called to Christ and his mission.
- B. Missional response – I commit to be on-mission in this specific culture right now.
 - 1. It’s an all-consuming mission – John 20:21.
 - 2. It’s a mission where we actively penetrate the culture: salt and light – Matt. 5:13-16.
 - 3. It’s a mission focused on God’s kingdom power breaking through – Matt. 6:33.
- C. How does someone on mission in the local culture operate?
 - 1. We look for niche opportunities.

2. Here are some things we're currently doing at GCC.