

Why Inculturation Matters

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, thanks for the warm welcome. So these words, does anyone know what enculturation or contextualization means? No. Has anyone heard of that word?
- Just a guess. Take a guess. Well, think of us being influenced by nurture as well as by nature. Okay. And plus the need to be part of a community, a group.
- Yeah, we're not islands. That's a very, probably inadequate, but yes. Well, the major part. So a lot of it has to do with culture and faith and the relationship between these two things.
- And so the word enculturation is sort of based off like incarnation, like Jesus's incarnation, him coming to the world. And so what does it look like when the gospel actually goes into a place and becomes a living part of that place?
- So the word enculturation is more used in the Catholic circles and the word contextualization is more used in Protestant circles. But they're fairly similar. There are some other terms that maybe are more familiar, like adaptation or indigenization or reformulation.
- [1 : 0 8] But these are more the terms that the scholars today are using. And so Laurentine Magasa.
- So I'm going to be referring to some African theologians. But before we do that, I want to share an African prayer with you guys that we can do together. To start us off.
- So you can start with the bold and then I will continue in the non-bold. So together, this morning we shall sing a song of praise to God.
- Strike the chords upon the drum. God who gives us all good things, strike the chords upon the drum. Friends in health and wisdom, strike the chords upon the drum.
- The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid? Say peace.
- [2 : 0 8] Peace to the children. Peace to our friends. Peace to our parents. Peace to the gardens. Peace in the cities. Peace in the workplaces. Peace to the country. Peace in the world. Peace in the world. Peace in the world. Peace in the world. Amen. Amen. And so this specific prayer is a Kikuyu prayer.
- So Kikuyu is a tribe in Kenya. So there's many, many different tribes. And so this one came from them. And so as you can tell, even from these prayers, there's different language, like talking about the drums.
- And so drums are a big part of the culture and part of their worship. And maybe words that we might not choose here in this culture, but something that we can learn from and give us a new perspective on how we might be able to use these words to praise and worship God.
- [3 : 1 9] So Laurentine Magesa says this is what enculturation is. He says, Does anyone have questions on sort of the definition of enculturation, contextualization?

Well, if you do throughout, feel free to raise your hand. We'll be talking more about it. So now that you sort of have an idea of what that means, I'm going to show a video clip of John Piper.

So he did a sermon back in 2009. And he went on a bit of a tangent in his sermon and talked about contextualization. And so I'm going to play this.

He's an American pastor and author, if you don't know who he is. And we'll hear what is right now. Okay. I'm going to stress something.

This is the gospel. It's not the only way to talk about the gospel. It's just the way Paul's talking about it here. Our job as believers, among many other jobs, but ultimately is to spread the gospel to everybody who doesn't know the gospel.

[5 : 10] All the people groups of the world. This is called missions if you cross cultures. To try to get the news to them. Now what's the news? Now the reason I'm asking this is because so many people make missions so complicated.

Endless discussions of contextualization. And way over the top, in my judgment, on some of them. Now picture this way of thinking about the gospel. The first thing we see here is that it is universally and absolutely relevant for every human being on the planet.

No exceptions with barely any contextualization. There was an Adam. You say to somebody, what is Adam?

The very first human being. You are a descendant from him. He sinned. You're dead because of his sins. That is understandable.

You may not agree with it, but you can say, as a human, you inherited that. The reason you die is because he sinned. You're a sinner. You're all going to die. Second stage in the gospel presentation.

[6 : 18] The Son of God is like that Adam. He came to start a new humanity by rescuing people from this old humanity. And he came into the world and he never sinned like your and my forefathers sinned.

Never. Never. Perfect obedience. We will one day stand with him before an infinitely holy God to face him because we've all sinned. His righteousness was performed in order that you might be counted as obedient and righteous and perfect through faith in him.

So just as you were united to Adam and died because of his sin, you may be united to Christ and live because of his obedience. That word must be told everywhere.

With barely any contextualization. You've got to learn the language. Man. Man. Man. Father. Origin. It'll blow their worldview out of the water, of course.

It's just like it blows your worldview out of the water. We think, well, we white folks, Americans, been here 300 years and absorbed Puritanism.

[7 : 35] Now, we got the worldview figured out. Our brain set in America just fits perfectly with this book. It's just like a hat. Whoa. This book blows American brains.

And every other culture. And our job is to say it. Because every human being you meet is in chapter 5.

Your family is in chapter 5. Your kids are in chapter 5. Your parents, your colleagues at work are in chapter 5. Every human you see on the street is in chapter 5.

And the same truth is true about every one of them. And the same gospel applies to every one of them. And it isn't complicated. It's just mind-blowing. Okay.

So that was John Faber. And he's arguing that the gospel actually doesn't really need much contextualization. So I'm here to say that actually contextualization is important.

[8 : 36] So maybe with your neighbors, talk about whether you agree with him or disagree or what you disagree and agree with. So spend a minute or two. I'll draw us back.

Yes. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh.

Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[10 : 38] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[13 : 08] Thank you. Thank you.

Our group basically summarize faith comes first. It doesn't matter what else culture, but that's where it starts. That's where it starts to make a difference. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. So, my interpretation of what I would say is the Bible gives it to every human being. It's there is a gift to every human being.

It's there is a gift to every human being. It's core teachings are accessible to us all. And so, you need to tailor it to every human being. I'm interested to hear what you say, I'm interested to hear what you say because I think he's a little bit wrong.

Well, I like John Piper, but there's some aspects of this that I think are really good. There's other aspects which I'll go through that I think we can add a bit more information to that can be helpful.

[14 : 58] So, that's where we're going to go now. So, let's say that we summarize the gospel like John Piper did. So, let's say we have this, God created the world and everything in it.

Human sinned in relationship with God and the rest of creation was broken. Jesus came and died for our sins and resurrected. And because of Jesus, we can have relationship with God for eternity. So, let's say for right now, this is our gospel message.

If I were to say this in another country that doesn't speak that language, that would not be helpful, right? If I were to translate this message word for word in equivalent to the English way that it is, that also wouldn't make a lot of sense.

So, are there many of you that speak another language? A couple? A couple? Yeah. Yeah. And so, usually with another language, you'll still have to translate, which means you'll have to think of what word can I use?

There might not actually be an equal word in that language. How can I describe that thing in that particular language? So, maybe the word sin actually in a language doesn't even exist.

[16 : 18] And so, what do you do then? How do you explain this? Can I just say that in the original, it's Hebrew and Greek that tell us this stuff.

Well, it's already had to be, what's your word? Enculturated? Contextualized or enculturated. Yep. For us? Yes. But, but it's, so I think Piper would be fine with that.

Anyway, go ahead. I just want to clarify that it wasn't in, it wasn't originally in English. So, it had to be done for us. Yes, exactly. Thank you. Yeah.

So, scripture itself, translated into English from the original language, was contextualized. But scripture itself was even written in a culture, in a context. And so, faith, the gospel, wherever it has been throughout time, on earth, in creation, has been in a particular culture, in a time, and in a place.

And, I guess what I'm trying to get across, and John Piper does say that language translation is helpful, but I want to say that actually language translation itself is also highly contextual, that it does take contextualization.

[17 : 32] You do need to think about that culture that you're speaking into, what the words mean, and, and what words are in association with particular words. So, when I was in India, St. John supported myself and Olivia Smythe to go to India.

When we talk with people who weren't Christians, we would tell them, Jesus loves you. And we chose this phrase instead of saying, God loves you, because there are millions of gods there that they believe in.

And so, even though the phrase that God loves you is true and good, saying Jesus loves you, as a beginning point, was more helpful, because it would distinguish from which of the gods that we were talking about.

And, you know, eventually, hopefully, they would be able to see God loves you, and recognize that that is Jesus. And so, that's a good point. But starting points, understanding the context and the language and what the words mean in that particular context needs contextualization.

Because words, the gospel isn't just words, right? The gospel is living. It's breathing, and it's moving, and alive in a time and a place.

[18 : 50] And, as a fish might need water, the gospel's water is culture. That's what it's moving in. And so, Piper in his video, he sort of gives this idea that the gospel is sort of this entity on its own, and that can be plopped here and here and here.

But I don't think it's that simple, I guess, is what I'm trying to say. And that was ten years ago that Piper said that, so he may add different nuances now. So I don't want to bash Piper, like Piper.

But, yeah, I just don't think it's that simple and that much of a blanket statement. So, all this to say that language and context matters.

And I don't think this just applies to where we are in the world or different languages and cross-culture, but I think even here in Vancouver, right?

Like, if I'm speaking to someone who's five-year-old, that's going to be different than how I talk to someone who's 30 years old. If I'm speaking to someone who grew up going to a Christian school but doesn't know Jesus, that's going to be different than if I talk to someone who has no church background at all.

[20 : 22] And so just understanding our language and trying to use language that they actually already understand and can then associate what you're saying rather than giving them new words that they don't have an idea for yet.

Okay. So I'm going to sort of jump to the Bible now. And so can anyone think of areas where we see contextualization happen throughout Scripture?

Gentiles? Yes, there's Gentiles. Adapting the gospel through them, like should they be following Jewish, specific Jewish rituals and restrictions?

Yeah. So Paul, Paul, who was doing that, speaking to the Gentiles and the Jews, throughout Acts, he has these three specific speeches in Acts. We see this in chapter 13, chapter 17 and 26.

And so chapter 13, he's speaking to Jews. And when he speaks to the Jews, he actually draws on the history of Israel because he knows they know these things. He knows that they know the certain people that he's talking about.

[21 : 33] And so he uses that to share truth with them. Chapter 17, I'm going to read a bit for you here. And here he's speaking to the pagans of Athens. And he says this.

People of Athens, I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription, to an unknown God.

So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship. And this is what I'm going to proclaim to you. The God who made the heaven and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.

And he is not served by human hands as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man, he made all the nations that they should inhabit the whole earth.

And he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their land. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him.

[22 : 35] Though he is not far from any one of us. For in him, we live and move and have our being. And some of your own poets have said, we are his offspring.

So he's referencing their own poets to actually try to share truth with them. And he's talking about this God who made the world.

So there were other creation narratives going on. So he's saying this, this is a God who created the world. And he says, you guys have this inscription to an unknown God.

Well, I'm going to put a name to that unknown God. So he speaks into the culture and what they know. In chapter 26, he speaks to King Agrippa.

And here he takes a totally different tactic. He goes into his conversion story to share truth and how he was saved. And so Paul, he's contextualizing. And he knows his audience.

[23 : 33] And he has an idea of what they already believe and actually just uses that to share the gospel. So I want to jump into another aspect of contextualization.

This idea of universal gospel. So Piper talks about this a bit. And like this group said that, yes, the gospel is for every culture, every place and every time.

But what does that actually look like? And so this guy here, John B. Taylor, says this. Does anyone want to read this for us?

Christ has been presented as the answer to the questions a white man would ask. The solution to the needs that Western man would feel. The savior of the world of a European worldview.

The object of the adoration and prayer of historic Christendom. But if Christ were to appear as the answer to the questions that Africans are asking. What would he look like?

[24 : 35] The king into the world of African cosmology. The redeemed man as Africans understand him. Would he be recognizable to the rest of the church universal? And if Africa offered him the praises and petitions of her total uninhibited humanity.

Would they be acceptable? So he poses some interesting questions. Father Ororbatore, he's a Nigerian Jesuit priest who we actually got to go visit and listen to while we were in Kenya.

He says that theology does not operate in a vacuum. And every attempt to understand faith is grounded in our experience. As an individual has unique experiences, that will highlight different aspects, thoughts and theologies and questions.

As does a culture. So in Africa we found that questions around HIV, AIDS were very prominent. And how to deal with that as Christians.

And what the role of Christians was in sort of walking alongside people on that. Or questions about what does it look like to be in a place where the history is colonization.

[25 : 45] And Christianity was brought in that way. What does that look like? And so these are questions that people in Africa, in the church in Africa, are asking and wrestling with.

But it's different here. We have different questions that we're asking. The church here, we're asking a lot about sexuality. And how do we respond to what our culture is saying about sexuality.

Or what does it look like to evangelize in a post-Christian culture where Christianity was a big foundation. But now a lot of people don't believe that and already have these associations with Christianity.

So we're asking different questions. And so I think each perspective, we can learn from each other.

And the questions that people are asking in different places around the world. And this is the diversity and the beauty of the church. And it's only when we gather people from different cultures where we come to see this universal gospel that does transcend different cultures.

[26 : 52] John Mark Ella. So he's a Cameroonian sociologist and theologian. He says this, the universalism of Christianity is not an established fact.

It simply appears on the horizon of a promise that comes true in the dialectical tension produced by the confrontation of different cultures. So when I was in Kenya, I interviewed a group of young adults there in a Catholic parish.

And I want to ask you guys the same questions, but from your Canadian point of view. And so we'll go through this. So the first question I have for you is, what would you say makes a Canadian different from an American, Asian, or African?

You could just shout it out. Question's too broad. Don't know enough about Asians and Africans, right? Yeah. Well, what?

Yeah. Culture. Culture. Yeah. John? I know once Canadians were 50% Catholic. I was curious what Americans, if they're the same, but Asians, I don't know Africans.

[28 : 07] I don't know. Most African, most Anglicans are African. I know that. But when that, of that John Piper screen, is it white American, Puritan? Well, how many Americans are Catholics?

It sounds like it's not as much as in Canada, how we spoke. Yeah, so different places will have different, maybe, different proportions of the denominations and whatnot.

Yep. Different proportion of Christians. And what about differences between different Asian and African cultures? Yep. Yep. But what about Canada?

What, what, what, what do you see in Canada? Maybe in our culture, you said culture. What in Canada is maybe different from other places? We're, like the Americans, we grew from the start with multicultural society.

Mm-hmm. So we don't have one tribe in our history. We don't even have one country or something as a background. Mm-hmm. And that is actually quite different from some other countries, where they have culture and language in common going back millennia, you know?

[29 : 14] Right. There's many people from many different places, and we have many people speaking many different languages and different cultures coming here. On the other hand, we don't have tribal territories where those boundaries are more significant than national boundaries.

Right, right. So it's easy to go across borders and whatnot. Yeah? Sorry, we do have tribal boundaries that are more important than national boundaries. Yes. Perfect.

Please, Jeff, share more about that. It's called First Nations Communities. Yeah. All we have. Yeah. Yeah. And so, Canada, like the First Nations were here, are ready to begin with.

And so, they became colonized, right? And so, having that in mind as well is very important. Especially, yeah, they're included and very important as we think about these things.

And they have such an incredible voice that we can listen to. Because there are many indigenous Christians that are looking at how does, what does it look like to be a First Nations Christian?

[30 : 20] And they have unique perspectives that they can share with the global body. Sorry. What I would say is from a children's point of view, being a Canadian child is very lucky.

Is they only have 300 years of history to study. But being a Chinese kid, you got to study 5,000 years of history. Yes.

Yeah. History. Yeah. I think Asians have quite a different relationship between parent and child than Canadians. They respect their elders more. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. That's true. I can attest to that. I think that the concept of affluence, because I think that a lot of, in North America, we tend to think about how do we self-actualize ourselves.

So, it's very much me-focused, as opposed to, I think, in some other cultures where you're dealing with more issues of survival of you and your family, or opportunities for you and your family that might not be as core.

[31 : 23] As for some people going on. I'm not saying that there aren't people in Canada, but by and large, I think we think about what do I want to do, as opposed to will I survive? Yeah.

So, more of an individualist country. So, I'm going to move on. So, I asked this group of youth, young adults, and I said, what would you say makes an African different from Asian, European, or North America?

I said, black skin, diversity, many different languages and cultures in one place. Technological advances, dancing, they have a dance per tribe, that they can actually see the dance and they know which tribe that's from.

And traditions are big. So, that was really interesting. But black skin is only true of sub-Saharan Africa. In the North, they are not black.

Yeah. So, we were in Kenya. Yeah. Yeah. But, yeah, there is diversity within Africa. It's a very big place. Yes. Oh.

[32 : 21] So, what would you say makes a church in Canada different from a church in any other place? I think it's much more reserved, publicly more reserved, more proper.

Maybe it's not as spontaneous as in other places. Did you open a Pentecostal church? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So, maybe some churches have a bit more structure.

I would say that a church in Canada is full of Canadians, which makes it very different from a church in any other country. Yeah. Yeah.

So, that's a silly way of saying it. That we bring so much of our culture in our minds and in our lifestyles, our patterns, into church with us.

It's just assumed. Mm-hmm. So, that if we go to another church in a totally different nation, it looks so different. But a lot of that is just the embedded culture that those folks live and breathe in.

[33 : 35] Yeah. So, how the culture influences. One of the examples of that that I've experienced is just how in your, see from a Canadian, in your face you are with people.

Like, I think in our congregation you think twice about asking people personal details about their health or their family or their finances. And I think in some other cultures it's very appropriate to be much more open and honest and less reserved about what's really going on in your life.

Yep. I thought, I researched why it's more, seems more individualistic here versus other kinds. I think we come here, there's more abundance. So, since there's more abundance, we don't have to rely on family members.

We can rely on, so thus we become more individualistic here. And that's a result of a, more of a plentifulness up here in the, both North and South America.

But some similar thing worldwide. Every 200 miles a dialect changes no matter where you go. So that's the similarity. But, but they're individualistic. I think that's how it's. That's not sometimes good because sometimes in a very family orientated place I've been, and I go six blocks away and it feels very staticky, disconnected and disturbing.

[34 : 51] So it's a bit disturbing how we become individualistic here. Yeah, it's interesting. There's many different reasons for that. But individualism, like we said, like that, that isn't just part of Canadian culture.

Yeah. It has seeped into the church as well. So I asked the young adults in Kenya this, and I said, what would you say makes a church in Africa different from a church anywhere else?

They said, some are attached to customs. So some are still attached to witchcraft or rituals. They have songs that express African culture. Yeah. The marriage ceremony is different, and they have marriage ceremony songs that sort of reflect the culture.

They said it's lively, and they have uniform and dressing. So everywhere we went, the choir was all in African print in their uniforms. Wow. Any place we went, Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, and all the different denominations within Protestantism.

Wow. So that was really interesting. Can I ask a question? Yes. I found the churches in Canada, you can find the real gospel, Bible-based church, but like the church in the communist country, like communist mainland China, it's the three cell church.

[36 : 04] So a lot of things are forbidden to talk about, like the Jesus' second coming. Right. And God is like, you know, there you would say the communist party is my foundation, not God is my foundation, my cornerstone.

Right. The power of your kingdom. Yeah, that's really interesting. Thanks for sharing. So it's like the true gospel. Yeah. Yeah, that is, that's really interesting. One guy in our church, he's from Hong Kong, but my mom's dad's family is from southern China, too, and became communist in China after World War II.

It was in such a mess, but before the World War II, China was not communist. Hmm. Okay, so I'm going to move on. Um, so how do you think faith and culture interact?

How would you respond to that? A lot. Maybe someone who hasn't spoken?

No thoughts? No? No. No. No. No thoughts? No? I don't think one is without the other, right? Mm, yep. Um, you know, I mean, the Greek religious words once had a sec, you know, much simpler, secular for secular meaning resurrection erect the statue apostle political envoy that's all i meant and but they were given meanings through faith if you like or through the concepts they needed to represent right and um the pronunciation of jesus name was changed to suit the speech and yeah how often do our words altered to suit the way that we pronounce them yeah and uh culture is an essential every group has a culture of some sort yeah and one is not without the other and the influence and the influence is mutual yeah there's a what our friends in kenya said symbiotic relationship which i was like oh i haven't thought of that word for this i'm symbiotic basically means mutual relationships so they they influence one another in a i guess it could be a good or negative way um yeah they said that they complement each other and so how would you say actually i'll let you reflect on this one on your own how does culture influence you think about that so this is what the students said someone said it's the real me my background sense of belonging education of other cultures example intermarriages and learning from each other how boring if we were all the same so it provides entertainment different dances some cons though for example conflicts between cultures or tribes some may think they are superior some cultures carry out illegal practices so they gave female genital mutilation as an example of that okay so this is my last question for you what do you think the canadian church has to share and contribute to the global church i might have to be careful i suppose because i mean every culture has its deficiencies and errors and thought and practice and yeah so in other words we have first off just have distinction what was valid and what was not yeah because we want to share that yeah yeah so recognizing what are what are the good things in the church in canada that we we can share and maybe that will look different at each of our churches because we have such a wide variety of different churches in canada um there are um i've known of lots of people that with theological training in that that have gone out to india or africa places and they put on seminars or conferences we've got three women from our church right now in south africa sharing what they've learned about leading women women's groups and all that and share the knowledge and the education that we have yeah share it around the world we have a lot of resources and accessibility here to many things um that i think is something that that we can share but obviously and of course coming with a posture of humility because often i think throughout history it hasn't gone that way of

[41 : 09] coming in a posture of humility it's been in a posture of superiority and saying we know this and we're going to share this with you but instead rather how can we come together and say hey like this is how i understand christ to be and this is how you understand christ to be how can we learn from one another as people in the body of christ um and so the kenyan students said this that what the church in africa can contribute to the global church enthusiasm to appreciate various cultures uh encourage others to appreciate their cultures diverse songs um they said that there's such a willingness to learn other people's languages in that culture and so they're happy to learn their friends tribal language and sing that song in church and sing another one and i thought that was quite beautiful uh there seems to be a less divide between different denominations and between catholics and protestants um they seem to have more dialogue between um each of them and yeah and so that that was sort of a case study that i wanted to share with you um can i ask a question yes so are you saying that there's more division amongst the africans are they are the africans saying there's more division amongst the africans or amongst christians in cannabiss um i think they're saying that this is something that they see is really good in their church in africa that there isn't much of a divide between these different denominations where maybe in other places there could be okay yeah wow um any other questions concerns okay so i'm going to talk about maybe why some people might not contextualize and so i think some of these things have to do um with pride and fear and i'm going to talk a bit more about this uh so contextualization takes a lot of discernment right um and it's it's a lot easier to go across the world and across borders without any contextualization and it's a lot harder to enter a new culture and learn about that culture and actually discern what is hindering of the gospel and what is promoting of the gospel but it's also hard like in um kenya's case of how do we as an existing culture um who receive the gospel from people that are not from here discern what was actually the gospel and what was of that other culture and so that often happened with those who colonized africa so the portuguese came in and said it wasn't just you need to become christian but it was sort of you need to become portuguese and you need to change your name and whatnot so that would be a not great example of um not contextualizing at all uh but on the other side you can over contextualize and i think piper was sort of speaking to this side where sometimes there's too much and this can lead to syncretism where christianity looks no different from the religions and the culture around them and is actually unrecognizable to the global church and so this is right that there is a bit of weariness in that direction and willigio um says this that this might be why people feel this way they feel enculturation aims at creating a different type of christianity a faulty doctrine of our faith and lower the christian standards established at such a high cost of lives and efforts they suspect it would divert the christian growth by introducing its superstitions long condemned elements of paganism

long forgotten and create synchronistic christianity um so while this is something that we need to be aware of um it doesn't mean we should throw it all out and he says these things are a good measure of how how do we actually discern then what is good and what is not good of a culture and he says this uh first any culture any enculturation must be based on a deep understanding of christianity and the local cultures it is only when the two are well known that the synthesis that is salvific will emerge second the enculturation to achieve the expected results should be done within the ecclesial community with the full support of local bishops so this is a catholic theologian it is not the work of an individual theologian or pastor it should involve the entire people of god in that community third any meaningful enculturation should respect the common rule of faith the central doctrine doctrines of christianity and the necessary relationship between the local and the universal church last no enculturation should put into use without the prior pastoral and catechetical education of the christians and so he has a big emphasis on community and accountability as part of this process this isn't just something we're doing on our own trying to contextualize but this is actually a community thing so that so i think scripture is it is a good marker and and community in just helping to discern what we can accept of a culture and what we cannot um um okay so my last point we're gonna wrap up soon here um so contextualization takes humility it's not easy like it's really hard when i went to india we we dedicated two years to learning culture and language because we saw that it was important and we saw that we did have a certain lens that we were coming with um we didn't end up actually getting to stay two years but that's another story for another time um and i think i was really discouraged by meeting many different missionaries most from north america who did have this posture of coming with superiority coming um living in the exact same way that they lived in america in india um and and yeah and and weren't contextualizing um and it does take humility so one of the top five challenges actually for missionaries is conflict uh not necessarily with the culture but actually between group members uh and so in many ways it would be a lot easier for a missionary to just go by themselves and to do what they wanted to preach what they wanted evangelize the way the way they wanted and just make decisions by themselves um but this is actually dangerous because there's no accountability um and there are unique circumstances where people have gone up on themselves and god uses that um but um as welligio said that community is a huge part of this idea of contextualization but humility it takes a lot of humility to learn from people who you might very well disagree with and but i think coming with that posture that actually helps you to speak into and share the gospel in a way that that their world view can understand um yeah yeah and so i guess something as you leave here today just to think about um why why does this matter

or maybe for you you're thinking why does this doesn't matter um why why does this or not matter to us here in vancouver today and and how might you already actually be contextualizing the gospel um how might we have received a scripture that has been contextualized um for us uh what uh what is what does this look like and to end i'll read this quote here um through patience hard work community efforts sincere dialogue and mutual trust the future will certainly bear out the truth that only when christianity becomes authentically incarnated in the local cultures does it become really strong and alive and shine out more beautifully and above all acquire the nature of permanence among all the people of the world amen does anyone have any questions yeah what would you say is the role of the holy spirit in cultural meditation that's a great question holy spirit is needed in this process um i i'm trying to think if there is a lot of reading on that i guess i can mostly just speak from my own personal experience of being in india and you know when we went to um our language teacher's place and it was a hindu festival and she offered us food i had to decide on the spot oh my gosh like was this sacrifice to an idol i don't know was it not like this was not a question i had to wrestle with um in this context and and on that spot having to discern um what what i should do and i did end up eating it um and you know and you are going to make mistakes and might question what you did but you can learn from that but it was helpful to have my friend there and we debriefed it and thought like what what do we think of this um and yeah but yeah dependence on holy spirit is really important is especially when those moments that you don't have time to think really hard before it comes because it might just come um and and depending on the spirit and what god has revealed to you through through your own experience in his walk with him yeah thanks for that is your bottom line so far in studying this something are you are you confident that this is a good a good inquiry and it gets to good hands i would tend to think obviously it is the god of peace yeah it's a god who's good for all cultures and what he's done for the world and healing it in jesus so we can be confident if he'll he will write and relate himself to every culture yes is that your bottom line something like that yeah i think my bottom line and my hope for today is that this is already happening whether we know it or not and how can we be more aware of it so that people will hear the gospel in and understand it so not just hear these words that maybe are this gospel message but really understand it and take it to heart with what they have experienced and what they know wherever that may be in the world i think that that that that is my hope yeah and how do we actually learn and see value in in people and places that are different from us um and see what is god doing in that place and see what they have wrestled with theologically and how do we learn from them on issues that we have not spent a lot of time as a culture as a church in canada maybe learning about um uh someone in this church is uh working in the downtown east side

and uh she said to me that when things out on the streets um instead of talking about jesus uh she talks about uh the characteristics of jesus the spirit of truth uh the creator um and that people are able to receive um um and allow her to speak more about truth um so she is this is just something that this group that she's working with has discerned um she's working with has discerned that sometimes um the name of jesus just because of in our culture in the downtown east side um they just uh back away but they don't they're once trust is is gained and these people who are out on the streets ministering to all and sundry um and they talk about the uh god but in describing his characters his character and using that they they come they receive so i i think wow that's a way of doing this um um uh sort of presenting the gospel uh without you would just think well we have to mention the name of jesus they do eventually if there's um if they can invite them in but initially right there might be different starting points for each person depending on the people and i think make not having a black and white rule for every person of this is how it should be for all people but who are you speaking to and maybe for some people they might have a really heavy negative association with the name of jesus that actually might take them a bit of time to soften to that and and you know the hope is that they will get this idea that you know we are sinners and that jesus died for us and that we have relationship with god um but sometimes getting there and to those phrases or that um the essence of that idea might might be a bit slower um than we might think there was also and and some of you may recall this story i don't know where it came from um the this story of somebody probably in two centuries ago that went to africa and was ministering on his own to this tribe and um uh was there for three years um and then died and then um somebody else came along later and was talking about uh the gospel and um they said oh we've met jesus he was here three years ago um you know like and so like what better thing like they associated the the ministry of this man um who had gone out and given his life blood to this particular tribe with what later people came along and and spoke about so again that's that's that's the kind of thing that we're after ultimately is for them to understand the truth yeah you know i i don't know where this story came from thanks beth uh well thank you all uh and if you have any questions give them to david in two weeks

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