

# My Trip to Kenya: Examining African Theology

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good morning, everyone. Good to see all of you on a, sorry, I've got a bit of a cold this week, on a bright Sunday morning. I was here a couple weeks ago and it was pretty dreary, so hopefully everyone's a bit more lively today and awake. I hope I am. But yeah, it's good to be here with you all. My name is David. I went through, I grew up at this church, actually, went through the Artizo program the last two years here as well. I'm a student at Regent College and I was also involved with an organization called Youth with a Mission in South Africa for about five years. This is going back a few years. And so, yeah, I have a background in missions in Africa. I have been taking some of that into my studies at Regent College and that's what I'm presenting to you this morning. And what I'm presenting to you this morning is coming out of a course I did this summer in Kenya with one of our professors at Regent, Diane Sinton, and our whole course. And it was a really wonderful time and I want to share with you some insights that I gained from that course. So, on that note, who was here two weeks ago? A few of you, some of you were here. So, Katie Durr presented two weeks ago on this same, similar topic related to the same course that we did together in Kenya. And so, I hope this morning I can flesh out a little more some of the things that Katie introduced to you. We can go a little more in depth given that you've, many of you were there for that presentation. And yeah, I hope it's an encouraging time for all of us. So, I took this course this summer. We went to Kenya with 10 students, three of whom actually attend the evening service at St. John's, including myself. And we were about, so we were 10 students from Regent and we were about, I think there was eight Kenyan students as well. So, a lot of nice blend between different cultures. We had African professors, theologians coming and teaching on our courses. And it was a really wonderful time together. So, this morning, I would like to sort of touch on three main topics. So, first of all, the significance of African Christianity today, why this is an important phenomenon that we all here in the West should be aware of.

Number two, the topic of contextualization in Africa. So, how Katie was talking about this topic two weeks ago. So, how theology is made known to a people of a certain culture. How it is contextualized to their situation and how it speaks to them and their culture. And lastly, I just want to draw on some lessons that I feel like, yeah, that I gained from the course. Lessons that we can take here in Vancouver for engaging with our culture and also with other cultures as well.

So, the significance of African Christianity. So, Christianity obviously has had a long history in North Africa. So, if we think of Egypt or of Ethiopia, these are very ancient churches from the earliest centuries. So, just wanted to start off by acknowledging there is a long history of the church within Africa. We know that even Augustine was from North Africa, St. Augustine and other, Tertullian, I believe, as well. Early theologians from Africa. However, we've also seen within sub-Saharan Africa a much greater growth of Christianity in recent years. So, yeah, we've now seen this growth in sub-Saharan Africa in particular. And I just want to show you a picture. This will be a map that I will put up just now of the change in Christian percentage of population from 1970 to 2015.

So, this just gives a visual illustration of Christianity in the world in the last 35 years, 45 years. So, we see the dark red is a decrease of 10 to 40 percent. So, you can see Canada, the U.S., most of Western Europe, decrease of 1 to 9 percent, some other parts, obviously in South America and a bit of Europe as well. And then you have increase 1 to 9 percent in the light blue, an increase from 10 percent and up in the dark blue. So, if we look at the map of Africa, we see a lot of blue, especially, basically, sub-Saharan Africa with two or three exceptions is all blue. There's been an increase in Christianity, actually quite a great increase in Christianity within Africa over the last century. So, this just gives a visual illustration of that. And I'm just going to pull up a few more slides here to do with this. So, this is the growth of Islam and Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa since 1900. So, you see traditional African religions since 1900 have declined massively. Islam has kind of grown here in the dark at a steady state and Christianity has grown from 9 percent in 1900 to 57 percent in 2010.

So, this is a massive growth of Christianity that we see on the continent over the last 50 and over the last 100 years. There's really been a massive explosion of Christianity in Africa. Just one more slide of stats for you. So, this world encyclopedia states that there were 8.75 million African Christians in 1900, 117 in 1970, 335 million by 2000, and their projection, this was written in 2000, their projection at that point was 600 million by 2025. In 2018, however, this is a different source, different study, said that actually there are now 631 million Christians in Africa. You can see the source for that up there. So, that is a large majority of sub-Saharan Africa. It's about a, it's close to 50 percent as far as the entire continent, if you include North Africa, which is obviously much more Muslim. But what we see from these figures is how much within the space of 100 years, how much Christianity has really grown so much within Africa while it has been decreasing more in the Western world. And so, to illustrate, oh, one more, one last fact for you. This was from a, another article I read. There are more Anglicans today, and we probably know this at St. John's, there are more Anglicans today in Nigeria than there are in England and the rest of Europe combined. That is no longer a very surprising stat, probably, for most of us.

[ 7 : 33 ] And I believe there were even some Nigerians with us this morning. Yes. So, to illustrate the importance of this shift, I have, I have some quotes I'll be bringing up, and these are from some of the readings from our course. And so, this is from an English theologian, Andrew Walls, who's a missiologist. And he says this, it is widely recognized that there has occurred within the present century, and by that he means the last, the 20th century, a demographic shift in the center of gravity of the Christian world, which means that more than half the world's Christians live in Africa, Asia, Latin America, or the Pacific, and that the proportion doing so grows annually.

This means we have to regard African Christianity as potentially the representative Christianity of the 21st century. The Christianity typical of the 21st century will be shaped by events and processes that take place in the southern continents, and above all, by those that take place in Africa.

And I think, I think Andrew Walls is right. This is, this illustrates the need that we have as Christians to engage with Africa, to engage with African Christianity and African theology. This is no longer, this is no longer an option for us as Christians in some sense. Yes, Africa is on the other side of the world, but we need to be in, in dialogue with Christians from, from all over the world. And increasingly, uh, Africa is where more and more Christians are, and also more and more Anglicans for us, uh, who go to St. John's. Um, and if we even just consider our situation, uh, with the, uh, the ACNA, with a number of African bishops who've, who've supported us in various ways over the last years, we can see this, right? We can see engagement with, with the African continent. We, we see, we send teams to Malawi as well and bring their, uh, bring their priests here. Uh, and I think these are all really wonderful things. We need to be learning from one another and, uh, and we need to be aware of what's going on on that continent. So, uh, having established that we need to, we need to look into

African Christianity and their perspectives. Let's start by doing a bit of that. So I want to talk about, this is my second point on contextualization. So how is theology made relevant within a given culture? So if an illustration of this would be, uh, I saw, I actually took a picture of this painting with my phone. This was on, uh, the wall of a school in, uh, in Nairobi. Um, and, uh, so Jesus African eyes, um, welcoming the children to him. Uh, and so this is, this is kind of an illustration of what contextualization is about. You know, many, um, many of us who grew up in the West, we may have seen, uh, a blonde haired, blue eyed Jesus to contextualize to Northern European culture. Uh, well in Africa, they have an African Jesus to, to relate to their culture, right? Um, Christ was actually Middle Eastern. He was neither African nor Northern European, but, but there's something when, when Christ comes into a culture, we want, he identifies with us and we want to identify with him. And so it's natural that we will depict him as we would depict ourselves.

Uh, so we see that here, but we also see that within, uh, theology itself and how, uh, theology is, uh, lived out. And I love this quote to describe, this is a scholar we read for our course describing contextualization. And she says, contextualization is the process of making the gospel relevant to people in such a way as to be able to speak to their hearts. Um, so this is about, this is about scripture speaking to, uh, our hearts and to the heart of a culture as well. Um, and this is what I would argue, this is what is being done in Africa with, with actually great success. Um, this is because the gospel has been, especially over the last 50 and a hundred years, contextualized well or contextualized better to the African situation. Christianity has grown quite a lot. Um, and so, yes, the picture, there's tires in front of it. So where, where was the picture?

[ 12 : 14 ] The picture was at a children's school. Um, there were tires in front of it. I don't have an explanation for the, yeah, could be, or tire swings or not quite sure. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Could be. They might be rolling them down the road. That's a, that's a good one. Yeah.

Yeah. Maybe after service, we can go out in the lane. Um, yeah. Uh, yeah. So this is about speaking to, to people's hearts and missionaries often talk about the term heart language, uh, to refer to, uh, a people's mother tongue, the language that speaks to their heart. Um, and this is, this is what we see in scripture. We see God constantly affirming, uh, our own languages, right? If we think of, uh, the book of, uh, the book of revelation, if you think about Pentecost and how God pours out the Holy spirit and gives, uh, has all these people proclaiming the word of God within the language of the people that they're speaking to, even though they're not, even though they're not native speakers of these languages, the Holy spirit is giving them power to speak to each individual. They're in their own language. That's what acts chapter two tells us. And in, in revelation, we see all the nations gathered, um, worshiping God in their own languages. This is something that God affirms.

So contextualization is about this work of kind of translation. There there's translation of language, but also translation into a different culture. Uh, and why is this important? Well, I think it's important because we're called as the church to do the work of mission, um, to make disciples of all nations. And if we're going to do this, we need to make the gospel, uh, understandable to every nation, every people that we speak to. Um, another idea here is this idea of translatability. This is related term. Um, this is by Laman Sane, who was a Gambian theologian. He, uh, passed away last year, unfortunately. Um, I, I think in his sixties, I believe, uh, he was at professor at Yale. Um, and Kat Sane's core thesis surrounds this concept of translatability. And what he means by this is, uh, is that basically his argument goes like this Western missionaries, when they came to Africa, they brought the gospel with them. Uh, and even though at times they may have been misguided in, in motives or in, or in how they brought the gospel, the one thing that was really important that they always did was they translated the gospel into the local languages. And Sane said, this is incredibly important. And this, uh, this opens up a voice today for African peoples because they, they have the word of God in their own languages because missionaries have done the work of translating the gospel into their language and culture. So just a couple of quotes from, uh,

Sane's work. Uh, however much we may impugn the motives of Bible translators, they began something that changed the world. Once they introduced vernacular literacy, translators could not turn back the clock or pretend the things that things would remain the same. And many were not so dim as to persist in that attitude. The genie was out of the bottle. Translatability acquired a life of its own, which translators could not control. And one more quote from a different book of his, that some missionaries wanted to dismantle the older indigenous cultural dispensation to subvert the native genius is without question. So he's saying here, you know, that some missionaries did want to, did want to kind of remove African culture from the equation and, and put in place, uh, the gospel and Western culture at the same time. Um, so he said, this is without question, but employing mother tongues in their scriptural translation is a tacit surrender to indigenous primacy and complicates the arguments of Western cultural superiority in translating the scriptures. Missionaries gave local people a standard by which to question claims of Western cultural superiority. So he's saying, yeah, basically the missionaries, even, even if, even for the ones who perhaps weren't as well-intentioned or perhaps they even were well-intentioned, but they were, they were trying to perhaps force feed a Western version of the gospel on Africans.

He says the, what really matters is that they actually translated the Bible into local languages. That's what, that's what matters. That's what makes a difference now in the post-colonial context, where we see so many Christians, uh, so many Africans becoming Christians. Um, by the way, also with those figures that I showed earlier, this, this growth of Christianity in Africa, this was not something that was expected. Uh, 50 or a hundred years ago, most people thought, you know, uh, we'd sent, you know, the West has had many missionaries to Africa, not a lot of converts, uh, not much was going on. Um, there was not, you know, at the start of, you know, a hundred years ago, there was not a lot of hope that Africa would actually embrace Christianity. It seems as though it wouldn't. And it seemed as though when, uh, when these countries gained independence, uh, well, once they gain independence, of course, they're going to reject the gospel. Of course, they're going to reject the West wholeheartedly and they'll reject Christianity and all that.

[ 17 : 48 ] But actually what has happened is the exact opposite to what a lot of people expected. Um, in the post-colonial era, Africans have actually embraced the gospel more. Um, which is very, very interesting and not what was expected.

Uh, I'm going to show two more quotes here. Um, now these are by a, these are actually written by a German missionary, uh, to Africa who was writing in the 1920s. Um, and I think his words are very, very interesting. Even today, a hundred years later, nearly a hundred years later, Dietrich Westerman, he says with reference to Africa, the most adequate exponent of the soul of a, of a people is this language. By taking away a people's language, we cripple or destroy its soul and kill its mental individuality. We do not want Christianity to appear in the eyes of the natives as a religion of the white man and the opinion to prevail that the African must become a pseudo European in order to become a Christian. But we want to implant the gospel deep into the soil of the African mind so that it may grow there in its own African form, not as a gift of the white man, but as the gift of God.

Um, when I first read this, this quote, I was quite shocked that this was written a hundred years ago. Uh, these are, these would be, um, yeah, these are quite powerful words. I think even today, um, a hundred years later, and he goes on one more, one more quote, if this is to be affected, the gospel and the whole Christian education must take root in the mother soil of the vernacular.

So of the, of the mother tongue only in this way, will it enter into the African mind? If the Christian church in Africa is to be really African and really Christian, it must be built upon the basis of the indigenous particularities and gifts of the people. It must become part of the African genius. And these will forever be embedded in the mother language. Uh, so Westerman, Santa, um, Lama's son is saying something quite similar to Dietrich Westerman here. Um, that actually African needs to not only receive the gospel as a Western gospel, it actually needs to, as he said in the first quote there, um, be, uh, the bottom, be planted deep into the soil of the African mind, right? He, he's arguing that's what's needed for the gospel to grow in Africa. It needs to be, it needs to be planted in, in African soil and African culture. Um, and that's what's, that's what's happened over the last 50 years, over the last hundred years, the gospel has, um, been implanted in Africa, been contextualized in

Africa. And now we're seeing massive growth of Christianity and of the church. Now at this point, I want to also draw on another theologian. This is Andrew Walls, who I mentioned earlier.

[ 20 : 57 ] And, uh, he's a British, uh, theologian also spent a good amount of time in Africa. Um, and he, he, he paints, uh, he paints this picture of, of two different principles that every, uh, every culture, this is about culture's engagement with the gospel. So how does culture interact with the gospel? So he says there's an indigenizing principle and there's a pilgrim principle, and we're always in, every culture is in need of both these principles at work. Um, this is a good caution for us to, as we think about contextualization, right? Because we can, contextualization can be taken way too far, right? We can start, uh, you know, we could start, uh, saying yes to abortion, or we could start saying we, as we as Christians could compromise in many ways to the culture around us in an African context. Uh, you know, there's sometimes churches that really blend African traditional religion with Christianity, uh, far too much. And that's something we need to be careful of. So there is, this is a, just a reminder that we need, we do need, um, contextualization, but we also need caution.

So the indigenizing principle, this is the idea that every culture has to, it's basically contextualization. Every culture has to indigenize the gospel. The gospel has to be, um, has to be made to fit into that culture and made sense in the language and the ways of that culture. So it needs to fit into cultural frameworks to some extent. So that's the one side that we need to keep in mind, right?

Uh, the other side we need to keep in mind is this pilgrim principle. And this is where the gospel is, uh, discipling culture, where the gospel is actually taking culture from the place where it is to a place closer to what Jesus wants it to look like, right? So the pilgrim principle is this idea of walking alongside a culture and bringing it into line with God's values. So that might mean, uh, some transformation.

That might mean changing some things in the culture that are not good, um, in order to walk this journey of pilgrimage, in order to disciple the culture and bring it to a better place. So Walz is saying, we really need both of these things. Um, and just to, to put this in perspective from, uh, Katie's talk a couple of weeks ago, I think, uh, Katie was emphasizing this, this contextualization, indigenization piece, uh, a lot. And the video from John Piper was emphasizing kind of the other side, the, that the gospel confronts every culture that the gospel is, you know, clashes with every culture. Um, but I think we, we see a bit of both. We need to see the gospel fit into culture, but also not that we become idolatrous or that we bring in other religions or other things which are untrue, um, to the gospel. But we need to find an authentic Christianity within every culture.

And so, uh, lastly, I want to look at some lessons from, from Africa lessons that, uh, yeah, that I've taken from, from this course. Um, I will, I will leave a lot of time at the end for questions as well. So if you have any questions, um, we'll have a lot of time for that.

[ 24 : 12 ] So some lessons that we can learn, I think. Um, so first I'm going to, this is obviously, sorry, I should say, this is of course our own Katie Durr who presented here two weeks ago. Uh, she's discussing with, uh, Professor Mkansi, who is a professor at, uh, Africa International University where we were staying while we were in Nairobi. I think that was a well-captured shot of him trying to explain something. Um, so lessons, uh, just a couple of notable quotes, uh, that, that struck me from this course, uh, that I did. Uh, this is, uh, Professor Jesse Mugambi. He's actually an Anglican, uh, priest as well as an Anglican theologian in Kenya.

And he came to lecture on our course. Uh, he's quite a, yeah, quite a big name in, uh, in African Christianity. And he, this quote just struck me, uh, and perhaps, uh, in light of the political realities of our world, this is a good, good quote to put up. He says, we have too few statesmen in the world, uh, and too many politicians. We need statesmanship, not politics. And that applies not only in Africa, but everywhere in the world. So in light of our recent election and, uh, all the various candidates for that, it's a good, good reminder. We need statesman, statesmanship, not politics. Um, and, uh, one more from, from this professor. This is, uh, Professor Orobator. He is a, uh, Nigerian Jesuit priest, uh, so Catholic. And, uh, he was one of the most, uh, interesting and provocative lectures we've had. Uh, and he had this quote, which has really stuck with me, uh, quite a lot. And he says, uh, what we lack in Africa today is martyrs. We no longer have martyrs in the church because we've been playing it too safe. Um, so he's, he's commenting on, you know, there's, there's been, he's thinking more in the, in the past, there's been people in, in Africa who've really stood up for the faith and has cost them their lives. And he's kind of saying, well, maybe we need, maybe we need more of that today, actually, uh, to confront, uh, you know, especially in Africa to confront political power often can cost you your life.

Um, and so he is, yeah, he's very much, I think, speaking prophetically into that situation and calling for a radical, really radical following of Jesus.

Um, so dialogue, this is, uh, myself and my friend, Paul, uh, having a chat. This was actually not, this was not staged. We were just, uh, just talking. Um, and dialogue, this was probably my favorite part of the course that I was able to, um, engage with. I, I love the lectures from, we had lectures from all kinds of professors. We had professors from, uh, Kenya, Nigeria, uh, Tanzania, um, a number of different African countries come in also from a number of different traditions. You know, we had, um, yeah, Anglicans, Catholics, uh, Pentecostals, uh, all different, uh, yeah, all different denominations of professors as well. So it was really great to, to get all these different perspectives. Um, but what I actually enjoyed most about the course, much as I did enjoy the lectures, uh, was the dialogue between students getting to chat through these, these issues and these big questions with, uh, with fellow students, um, from Regent, uh, our group was actually from a lot of different countries from Regent, which is, that was great. So we had talks about Asian culture and African culture and Western culture and all of these, uh, interact in different ways. Uh, and then also with, with our Kenyan, uh, colleagues, uh, at the university there. Um, yeah. And we, we were actually, this is, uh, myself and my friend, Paul, we were talking at this time about one of the churches that we visited, um, and about, uh, contextualization as well. And so I wanted to, uh, wanted to give an, an illustration, um, of contextualization. So, uh, this is a, a, this is a story, uh, of, uh, Ghanaian theologian. So I'm just going to put up this video in a minute. Um, this is him, uh, he's a Ghanaian theologian. He passed away, I think about 10 years ago. Uh, uh, his name was Kwame Bediako and Bediako, uh, yeah, was really one of the foremost scholars in his time in, in African Christianity. And so this is him kind of telling the story of his testimony, uh, how he came to faith in Christ. And I think the, the, what he says here is quite interesting and, and quite connected to this issue of, of contextualization.

So I will hope our sound works. Thanks. That should be great. Okay. I come to a point in my life. I was, I had done well academically. My, my, everything was going for me, I was going to say, modern language. And yet, the, this, this, this, this, this, this pit of, of futility within, which, which was, which was, they caused me to, to begin to review my life. Suddenly it occurred to me, I, I come to a dead end. And I think I remember saying something to this effect, God, I'm tired, take my life.

[ 29 : 49 ] Now I didn't pray. I didn't know what God I was talking to. Instead, what happened was, I literally crumpled another shower. I hadn't turned on the tap. Yet I felt a drop on my, my foot. It was a tear. Then somehow I felt flowing into me a, a new, a newness of life.

Quickly got up, had my shower, went back to my, my apartment room. And I never done this ever before. I spent half of that night in prayer. I wish to define myself as a Christian, as an African Christian. Not because a European has told me so. Indeed, my exposure to Europe made me atheist. In becoming Christian, 33 years ago, in France, on my own, under the shower, in the summer break, on the campus of University of Bordeaux, I discovered I was becoming African again. I was recovering my sense of the spirituality of life. I was recovering my sense of the nearness of the living God. I was, I was recovering my African sense of the wholeness of life. I find in becoming Christian, I'm being more African than I think I was. I'm being more who I am.

Wow. Yeah. Very powerful. Yeah. I love that, that clip. Um, and I think it, it, yeah, it's, it's very interesting. I, he obviously, he went to school in Europe. Um, he says my exposure to Europe made me atheist. Uh, and then he has this conversion experience. Um, and I think it's just really significant. I was just really struck when he said, uh, in becoming Christian, I discovered I was becoming African again. Uh, in becoming Christian, I'm being more African than I think I was. Uh, so there's a sense in which actually when, uh, and I think this is, this is what the gospel does, right? This is what the gospel should do. Um, is it actually, uh, yeah, it makes a home in us and it makes us also feel at home in, in where we're meant to be and in our culture.

Uh, and so for him becoming a Christian makes him in a sense, there's something with his, that connects him with, with his Africanness, with his heritage. Um, and I think that's part of why we see so much, uh, yeah, spread of Christianity in Africa and growth of it is that it has spoken to the people's hearts. It has, as the quote we read earlier, uh, it has really, the gospel has been planted deep, uh, within the, the soil of the, what was it, within the soil of the African mind, within the, within the implanted, implant the gospel deep into the soil of the African mind.

Yeah. Um, it has really become deeply planted. Uh, and that is, I think in large part why Christianity is growing. And so I was, I was really encouraged to, to see that, um, and to see his testimony. And then he went on after that, obviously to be this, this great theologian who has written many, many books. Um, so if you're ever interested in African theology, Kwame Bediako is a great, great place to start. Um, yeah. All right. So what, what can we, what can we take from all of this? What can we, what can we learn? Um, I think a few, yeah, a few key reminders, uh, from what African theology shows us. So first of all, is this idea that all, all theology is contextual, right? Uh, just as, uh, if you go, if you walk into an African church this morning, you might be a bit, oh, this is, this is a different atmosphere.

[ 34 : 04 ] It's a different kind of world in the same way that if an African walks in here, they might also feel that it's a very different kind of world. Um, and so all, all, all theology is contextual and we, we, we contextualize the gospel in, um, in how we proclaim it. Right.

Um, if you go to an African church, you will not hear a 22 minute St. John sermon, right? You'll hear a 45 plus minute African sermon, most likely. Uh, so theology is contextual. Uh, and, uh, couple, these are a couple of proverbs, African proverbs, which relate to contextualization. Uh, and I like these, sorry, I realized I'm in the way here.

Aren't I? Um, it is the one who lives in the house who knows where the roof leaks. Um, and the second one, only, only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches. Okay. So similar, similar idea.

Um, and so as far as theology goes, these, these proverbs, I think indicate that actually, um, we, we need Africans today to be doing theology as well. We need Africans developing, um, and, and, and, and drawing from scripture and from tradition, uh, in order to, uh, to, yeah, to show us the way, the way forward and just to speak into this context. Right. Well, um, we, as, as Westerners, we can, we can do theology, which is great. Um, but we can't do African theology in, in the same way.

We actually need Africans to be doing this work to contextualize the gospel, to make it known to their own cultures. And lastly, from Andrew walls, we need, we actually need these two principles. We need the indigenizing principle and the pilgrim principle held in tension. We need, yes, we need the gospel to, to fit into culture, but we also need the gospel to, uh, disciple culture and walk alongside it and bring it to a better place, um, with Christ. I think, uh, one other thing here is that I think we have, we actually have a great need as Westerners, and this is something that we don't often think about. I think we often tend to think that, uh, because the church in Africa is, uh, or yeah, it tends to be much less wealthy, um, because historically it's been fewer in number, although that's no longer the case. Um, I think we can often think that we're the ones who need to help them and that they're the ones in need, but actually we also, I think have a need in this.

[ 36 : 38 ] Um, so this is a quote by, uh, another British, uh, theologian, Leslie Newbigin, who I'm sure many of you have heard of. Uh, so Newbigin, uh, spent many years as a missionary in India and he, uh, yeah, he draws on, on that experience and his missionary experience in his writing. And I think this, this quote is an important reminder for us. Um, and, uh, he's talking here about, uh, syncretism.

And so syncretism for just as a refresher is this idea of combining, uh, combining the gospel and culture, but going too far. Right. So syncretism is, is actually like, you know, bringing, uh, like in an African church, if they, um, they might, if they bring in like actual practices of traditional religion into the church service, that, that would be syncretism, right? If you're actually combining, um, one religion with another, that's what results in, in syncretism, right?

Um, so it's, it's basically, yeah, combining of different, different religions. So this often, often does happen, uh, in African Christianity. Unfortunately, there is a lot of syncretism and that is something we, I think need to be very careful of and watchful, uh, of, but Newbigin actually points out, uh, syncretism for us as well. This is what he says. He says, Asian and African Christians who received the gospel from European and American missionaries, and therefore were invited to see Jesus as our culture saw him. These Christians now struggle through their own study of scripture and their own obedience in their own time and place to articulate a form of Christian believing and behaving in terms of their own cultures. We need their witness to correct ours.

As indeed they need ours to correct theirs. At this moment, our need is greater for they have been far more aware of the dangers of syncretism of an illegitimate alliance with false elements in their culture than we have been. We imperatively need one another. If we are to be faithful witnesses of Christ in our many different cultures. Uh, so this is an important reminder for us that we, we also have to be careful of syncretism. We also have to be careful of, um, bringing in too much, uh, Western, not religion per se, or maybe, I don't know how to phrase that, but you know, Western culture into, into our Christianity, you know, our gospel can, our, our perception of the gospel can become, uh, very Western to the point of idolatry if we're not careful, if we, if we compromise too much. Um, so that is why we need to, yeah, we need to return to, to God and to his word, um, to actually see these, see these truths for, for ourselves and be reminded that, that some of these things are, are, uh, yeah, some of these things we are doing are cultural and are not in line with the gospel. So lastly, just a few questions to ask, uh, yourselves, a few questions for us to ask ourselves in light of this topic. So what in my culture is, is biblical? What is good about Western culture? Um, what in it is biblical? Because obviously a lot, there are things that are biblical. Um, but, but also what is, what is just simply cultural and is not essential. Uh, what, what can be dropped from that if, if it is found to be not in line with the gospel or if it is found to be idolatrous? Uh, another good question. What cultural assumptions do I have? Um, and are these assumptions, are they in line with, with scripture or not? Are they in line with what scripture teaches, um, and what Jesus teaches us? Uh, another good question. How can the gospel be contextualized within our culture? Okay. So within Canadian culture, or I'm sure there's many people here from different countries as well. Like how does the, how can the gospel be contextualized into your culture? Um, yeah, I, uh, I once had one of my friends, um, in YWAM, he was, uh, uh, a guy from the Philippines and he, he always said, I love to eat this. He said, uh, if Jesus had come to Asia, he wouldn't say that he was the bread of life. He would say he was the rice of life.

And I always thought that was a, a funny and good illustration of, of contextualizing the gospel, right? So probably bread's not the best translation of that word into a, into a culture where there's not a lot of bread, right? Um, actually there's, yeah, there's other ways of putting that.

[ 41 : 23 ] Um, that's a little harder to break. That's true. Might be, well, it may be easier to break. Um, yeah. Uh, and also then that's the indigenizing principle question. And the Pilgrim principle question is how does our Canadian culture still need to be disciplined by the word of God? So what, what things, uh, in our culture aren't in line with the word of God?

And we actually need, um, other, uh, other Christians and the Bible, um, to show us those blind spots and to show us those ways in which we need to be moving in a different direction.

And lastly, what can we in the West learn from Africa and what African Christians are doing? Uh, we've seen, uh, we've seen, yeah, like I've said, we've seen the gospel really increase in Africa and it seems like there is, there's something, they're doing something right.

There's, there's, there's a lot of authentic, um, evangelism and witness going on there, which is, which is working. Um, whereas in the West, it seems very hard often to do that kind of work.

And it can be hard for us to do that in, in light of a culture that is increasingly, you know, against religion, against God. Um, so what, what can we learn from, from what they're actually doing? I think there are perhaps some lessons there.

[ 42 : 48 ] Um, and so I would, I would like to take some questions, but lastly, I'm just going to put up this slide. This is a picture. I think it illustrates, uh, well, kind of what this course was all about, uh, different people of different skin colors and different nations, um, celebrating with the Ethiopian food, uh, in Kenya, uh, altogether. It's amazing. Yeah. Really nice.

So you rip, you rip off the, the, I don't know what it's called actually. Endura. Endura. That's right. Endura. We're off the Endura and you take the different pieces. So yeah. Uh, and I, I think, uh, yeah, I think this is what, yeah, this is what the kingdom of God is like. This is what engaging with different cultures is like. We actually need to be able to dialogue together, to eat together, um, and to learn from Christians of other cultures, um, that we together represent God's kingdom on earth.

Thank you.