The Believer’s Role In A Changing World
“The Need To Be Culturally Relevant”
(Part 1)

We live in a world that is constantly changing at an ever increasing pace. I ran across an old book this week that reminded me of this. In Seminary the hottest book was “Frog in the Kettle” 1990. Cultural changes to expect in 2000 and how these changes will impact the church. (explain – read quote.) Just 15 yrs ago nobody had these, now almost everyone does. This just represents one of 1000s of changes in 15 yrs. (My point?)

• The church must be able to adapt and function in an ever changing world or else it will become irrelevant to the people they are trying to reach. To ignore changing culture will kill the church. (Frog in the Kettle)

Intro: I believe one of the greatest mistakes of the church in the last 50 years is that it has lost its relevancy in our culture. (Church attendance in decline / empty church buildings) The average person of our day no longer looks at the church as a cutting edge / culturally relevant / community impacting institution. In fact, many people would wonder if the church is even necessary in our culture today. Maybe it’s outdated.

• I believe it is a sin for a church to lose its relevancy in culture! When the church loses it’s relevancy, it loses it’s impact! How do we make sure it never happens here! 3 Biblical principals of relevancy that I believe God wants us to embrace.

Know The Audience

I Cor. 9:20-21 “When I am with the Jews, I become one of them so that I may bring them to Christ...When I am with the Gentiles...I fit in with them as much as I can. In this way, I gain their confidence and bring them to Christ.” (NLT)

• The only way The Apostle Paul was able to do this effectively was the fact that He understood His audience. He understood the Jews and the Gentiles, and he adapted to whoever he was with.
• He started with their culture, not asking them to embrace his.
• He had the attitude of a missionary. So must we! We are missionaries to the Molalla area and we have a responsibility to know our audience!

We must understand our postmodern culture
1. How many of you could give me 5 specific characteristics of our culture today? Can you describe the beliefs and values of our culture? How many of you could define “postmodern?”

2. Defining postmodern values: 8 characteristics. This is what they value.
   - **Highly spiritual** – They recognize they are spiritual creatures.
   - **Pluralistic** – there is no single explanation for our reality
   - **Experiential** – Instead of reason and logic, experience carries more weight and authority than rationalism.
   - **Relativity** – no absolute truth or standard – Those who believe in absolute truth usually crave power over others.
   - **Altruistic** – selfless concern for others – service oriented
   - **Community minded** – Reality is discovered in community and close relationships. Highly relational.
   - **Creativity** – Creative expression is highly valued (music / art / lit )
   - **Authenticity** – No more keeping up appearances / no more veneered religious experiences / It has to be real, genuine, spiritual experience!
   
Modern culture values rationalism / science / individualism / capitalism – Postmodern doesn’t value these things at all!

3. The postmodern culture that we live in today is very similar to the N.T. culture. So the Gospel worked 2000 years ago, it still works today! In fact, many of these values provide wonderful opportunities to talk to people about Christ.

4. If we don’t understand what the people in our culture value, then we don’t know how to effectively communicate with them. A lot of churches are trying to speak to a modern culture when we have moved away from this!
   - Some pastors get up to speak and say things like, “Now, you all know the story of Gideon and his 300 warriors. (NO they don’t!)
   - During worship making people sing songs that are 300 years old. Hymns. “How Great Thou Art” Do any of you talk like this? “How art thou today? Then why would we make people sing this?

We must understand the uniqueness of the Molalla area
1. We are not living in some isolated environment. These values effect those living in the geographic area God has called us to reach out to.
2. Amidst these values, there are also characteristics that are unique to the Molalla area. Do we know what they are?
3. Community in transition / searching for its identity / average age mid 30’s / commuters / do not have extended families close by / drug problems / domestic violence / hunger issues /
4. In order to be culturally relevant, we have to be sensitive to these issues. For example: One thing we have talked about that we need to change is the issue of
childcare. We must provide more childcare for people in order to allow them to be involved. (WHY? Average age / no extended family)

5. The mistake we make is just assuming everyone’s like us. If we are going to be culturally relevant, we must know the people God is calling us to reach and begin with their culture not ours.

**Discover The Common Ground**

*I Cor. 9:22 “...I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ...”* (NLT) How do I find common ground?

We must be committed to bridge building

1. We must understand that to effectively communicate the Gospel with people we have to construct relational bridges to them.

2. During my days as a youth pastor, I would do things with kids that were important to them simply to build bridges. (I took up bow-hunting / I shot and ate bullfrogs / Grub camp / fishing / In these contexts I was able to talk to kids about Christ.

3. Every believer should be building relational bridges with unchurched people somewhere. We all should be intentionally finding common ground. (Statistic: Within 2 yrs. of accepting Christ, most have no unchurched friends!) Building bridges not burning them!

4. We do things corporately as a church to help people experience common ground at Foothills. (Messages / Music / Multi-media / Food / Working with the city / schools / We are a bridge building church!

5. We are responsible to go and build these bridges not the unchurched. We are commanded to GO and make disciples. But, before we can make disciples, we have to build bridges to them.

We must be careful not to compromise

*I Cor. 9:21 “…But, I do not discard the law of God; I obey the law of Christ.”* (NLT)

1. In our attempt to be culturally relevant and build relational bridges to people, we have to be careful that we don’t compromise truth.

2. Christian musician defending his lyrics that included swear words. (explain) Sometimes, we can go too far! In our attempt to be culturally relevant, we cannot violate clear Biblical principals.

   - Some churches no longer talk about sin / commitment / or repentance in order to connect with unchurched people. They’ve gone too far!

3. We also need to be careful that we don’t become legalistic and go beyond what scripture says just because we don’t like it! (explain – musical styles / clothing styles – more spiritual to dress up on Sunday / tattoos and piercings –
guy that delivered my fishing poles; who’s going to reach him? Who’s going to build a bridge to him?

4. In our attempt to build bridges with people, we hold true to the clear principals of God’s word and learn to celebrate the great variety of how God draws people to Himself.

5. Are we out there building bridges?

Communicate The Message

I Cor. 9:23 “I do all this to spread the Good News…” (NLT)
I Cor 9:19-23 – 6 times Paul gives his rationale for all this. “To bring them to Christ!”

• We are committed to being culturally relevant as a church in order to effectively communicate a message that will “bring them to Christ!”
• How do we communicate this message?

A. We communicate the message by living out its relevancy

• We do this individually and corporately as a church.

1. Individually, we must live out the Gospel in front of others. People are watching you. They are watching your marriage / your parenting / how you handled stress / crisis / pain. Your life is on display and it is sending a message. (Life in the fish bowl)

2. Do you consistently live out your faith in every context of your life? If you do, then people will conclude that what you have is real. If you don’t and you live a compartmentalized faith, they will conclude you are just another religious hypocrite.

3. People are looking for something spiritual that is real and authentic. What message are you sending them? This is why in order for us to be culturally relevant as a church, we each must be allowing Christ to be changing our lives.

4. The only way for us to be culturally relevant is to experience personal transformation ourselves. Our lives validate the message.

5. Corporately, as a church, we are going to communicate the Gospel in a variety of ways.

• Communicate the Words of the Gospel: Relevant messages that give people hope. God’s word addresses real life issues.
• Communicate the Lifestyle of the Gospel: Meeting tangible community needs (Hands and feet of Jesus out in the community)
• Communicate the Heart of the Gospel: Loving / accepting atmosphere. Non-judgmental / Non-condemning / unconditionally loving imperfect people.

6. We are going to communicate God’s message to this community by living it out in real life.
B. We communicate the message by telling our stories
   1. In a postmodern culture, subjective experience has more authority/weight than objective facts. Therefore, when we share our stories of what Christ has done for us, it carries tremendous influence!
      • Many people don’t share because they feel they don’t know enough about the Bible. Quoting Bible verses isn’t what people want to hear. They want to hear about your experiences.
   2. It’s not just the story of how we came to Christ, it’s how He has given us hope/helped us through crisis/changed our marriages/gave us strength when we were weak/provided in miraculous ways.
   3. We all have a variety of stories to tell of God’s reality in our lives. As we have built relational bridges, natural opportunities present themselves.
      *I Peter 3:15* “…Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have…” (NIV) People will notice and they will ask!
   4. Are you prepared to communicate the Message of Hope God has given you?

The believers role in a Changing World is to be culturally relevant in order to bring people to Christ! Will you make a commitment to relevancy? We will not become the frog in the kettle. We will not sit back mindlessly as the environment changes around us and we do nothing!
   • Make an effort to understand the people around you.
   • Intentionally build relational bridges.
   • Communicate the Gospel with your life and with your stories of hope.