

P R O C L A I M E D

PROCLAIMED, PART 1: A CHURCH THAT ENGAGES CULTURE

How people respond to what we communicate depends a lot on how we communicate. Approach matters. We can say the right things and have the wrong approach, and people will ignore the message. Our goal at oneChurch.tv is to present Scripture in a way that is so helpful and compelling that the audience leaves wanting to engage the scriptures more, and try it out in their lives.

BIG IDEA: We will do anything short of sin to reach people for Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever tried to communicate with someone of a different language? How did you feel when you weren't understood? When they couldn't understand you?
2. If you were going to become a missionary in another culture overseas, what would you have to learn and do to become effective?
3. How has our culture changed here in America over the past 50 years? What positive changes have occurred? What negative changes?
4. How has the church responded to our changing culture?

Churches tend to approach culture from one of three perspectives: *Isolation*, *Domination*, or *Incarnation*.

Isolation takes place when a church is so far removed from culture that it can no longer communicate the good news in effective ways. The church creates its own subculture and no longer relates to the real world. If isolation continues, it usually leads to a church that dies out.

Domination occurs as a church lashes out harshly at what are perceived as evil aspects of culture. Churches using a domination approach to culture are usually ignored as part of the fanatical fringe.

Observation of churches throughout history demonstrates that the best approach to making disciples is *incarnational*. Martin Luther used this approach as he adapted the secular tunes sung in bars and taverns of his day by writing Christian lyrics to them. John Wesley used this approach when he began speaking the gospel directly to the blue-collar workers of England, and gathered them into small groups that met in homes rather than cathedrals.

5. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read and discuss 1 Corinthians 9:19-22.* What is Paul's motivation for shaping his life around the needs and concerns of others? What is Paul willing to do to get someone to follow Jesus Christ? Was Paul being honest with himself in verse 20? Why was he willing to pretend and be all things to all people?

Paul wasn't willing to abandon his belief in order to win people, but he was willing to change his approach and how he communicated. He was willing to engage people just like him (religious Jews), but he was also willing to engage people who knew nothing about the Bible (Greeks at Athens).

6. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read and discuss Acts 17:1-2, 10, 18:4.* What was Paul's custom once he came into a new town? Where did he go? With whom did he speak? Why did he go to the same places one he got into town?
7. In Acts 17, Paul shares his faith with three different people groups. Compare and contrast the various ways that Paul shared the gospel with the three different groups of people. Why do you think he shared it the way he did? How did the people respond?



8. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read and discuss Acts 17:1-4.* What did Paul use to reason with people in the synagogues and point people to Jesus? Since Paul's conversion, Paul had been forced by persecution to leave an area. How would you view your mission if that happened that many times to you? How does your response compare with Paul's response (*1 Thessalonians 2:1-6*)?
9. Compared to the Thessalonians, how did the Bereans receive the Gospel (*Acts 17:11-12*)?
10. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read and discuss Acts 17:16-34.* How is our post-Christian culture today very similar to the pre-Christian culture of Athens?
11. What caught Paul's attention immediately about Athens? What did he feel about what he saw? What did Paul do in response to how he felt?
12. How is the religious climate during that time similar to the religious landscape today?
13. Paul spent time in the synagogue at Athens, but where else did he spend his time? How does Paul splitting his time with religious insiders and irreligious outsiders model for us today?
14. To be noticed by these Greek philosophers, how extensive must Paul's activity have been?
15. It is impressive that Paul was able to speak with equal ease to religious people in the synagogue, to casual passers-by in the marketplace, and to the highly sophisticated philosophers of the Areopagus. How does Paul open his teaching at the meeting on the Areopagus (*Acts 17:22-23*)?
16. What does Paul's approach to the men and women of the Areopagus model to us as we consider influencing those in our culture with the message about Jesus?
17. Does Paul quote any Bible in his teaching? What does he quote and reference? Why did he choose his quotes and references for the crowd listening?
18. What five things does Paul say about God?
19. How does Paul use their own culture to help them see the one true God? Does it bother you that Paul quotes a secular poem originally written about Zeus to refer to Jesus?
20. How can you be intentional this week about living and sharing your faith with the non-Christians already in your day to day life?
21. How can you engage culture in order to share common ground with the people God is asking you to reach?
22. Is your Community Group focused on reaching the lost? What can you do to become more intentional about this as a group?

THINK ABOUT IT

To be an effective church, we must know the Bible and know the culture. We expect churches to know the Bible. To study the Bible. But we forget that we have to speak the language of the culture around us. We study the Bible, yes. And we also study the culture in order to speak the Bible. There are three ways churches relate with culture.

- 1) They remove themselves from culture.
- 2) They are adversarial against culture.
- 3) They engage culture.

MOVING FORWARD

Look at creating conversations and dialogues with other people about faith. Don't try to convict someone. That's God's job. Don't try to convert someone. That is God's job. Don't treat them as a project. Conversations happen with people, not at people. Because ***Conversations always create connections.***

Look for common ground when starting conversations. Meet people where they are. Use culture to communicate Christ. So many movies out there have told the story of the characteristics of God and marketed them as their own.

Partner with oneChurch in doing anything and everything short of sin to reach our community for Jesus. Know that sometimes we're going to push the envelope, trying to communicate with people who know nothing about Jesus. Because our goal is Paul's goal—to become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some!

CHANGING YOUR MIND

I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. 1 Corinthians 9:22

