

George O. Wood: How the Culture Shifts the Church

Jerusalem spoke Hebrew; Antioch spoke Greek. Jerusalem kept kosher; Antioch ate cheeseburgers with bacon.

What is language in our culture? Consider the following languages:

- Music
- Dress
- Service times
- Church architecture
- Forms of worship
- Forms of church governance
- Tradition

The modality of bringing Jesus to the culture shifts with the culture, while the eternal message of the gospel does not change.

Acts 2:42 applied to the Antioch church just as it did to the Jerusalem church, and it needs to apply to us. The key is retaining apostolic doctrine and experience, and being flexible on the rest.

When Mao Zedong was leader of China, he imprisoned Deng Xiaoping as a capitalist roader. After Zedong died, Xiaoping became China's leader and instituted capitalist reforms that have fueled China's resurgence today. Hotly criticized by the old Maoists, Xiaoping's famous response was, "I don't care if a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice."

The apostle Paul took the same approach concerning how we communicate the gospel to various cultures: "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22).

In the church, we must be more concerned about results than means. Are people being saved, being baptized in the Spirit, living in the Spirit and becoming fruitful disciples of Jesus? If so, then we do not need to concern ourselves with pastors and churches that may do things differently from a past generation.

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