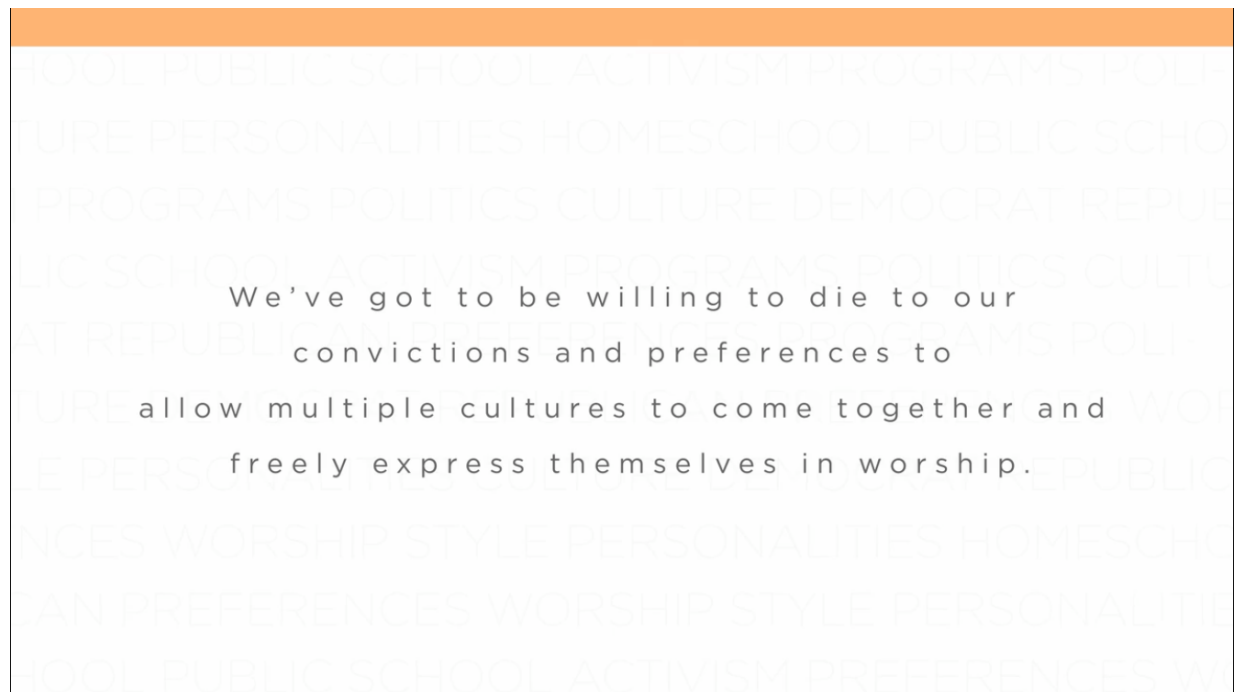


Gospel Community

Have you ever spent significant time in a culture different from your own? What did you learn from that experience?

Do you think a person from another culture would feel welcome in your church? Why or why not?



The church's mission isn't to reach only one kind of person, but all kinds of people. Therefore, Christian community needs to find its unity not in cultural conformity but in the gospel, which supersedes all cultures. One indication that God is at work in a group is the diversity of background, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other cultural characteristics.

Vance Pittman, pastor of Hope Church in Las Vegas said, "There's a difference between a multi-colored church and a multi-cultural church. He said, "Until you're uncomfortable, all you've done is forced people from different backgrounds to act like they're you." In terms of the health of a church and individual Christians, is it necessary to be uncomfortable for the sake of the gospel? Explain.

What expressions of worship or church order have you assumed to be the right way, but are actually just cultural preferences?

We've elevated preferences
to the level of conviction.

God is equally honored through different preferences in church practice. We must be careful not to assume that the way we worship is inherently more biblical than the way another culture worships. Differences in music, prayer, preaching style, and the order of services derive more from our preferences than from what the Bible prescribes. Being willing to forsake some of our preferences in church practice allows us to reach beyond our primary culture.

What happens when we take our preferences and elevate them to the level of nonnegotiable truths?

You can begin to live on mission where you are,
but you cannot finish the mission
without an intentionality to cross cultural barriers
with the gospel.

Our experience determines not only our preferences, but also the way we approach a Bible text. How could becoming more multicultural help us appreciate the Bible better?

All of the New Testament letters deal with issues that stem from cultural preferences. Our cultural identity shapes how we live in dozens of ways. This fact extends to life in the body of Christ. God loves people from every culture, and there are aspects of every culture that glorify God. When we expand our community, we have the privilege of learning more about the God we serve, the people who bear His image, and the Word that communicates His heart.

Stages in Multicultural Growth

1. Ignorance
2. Awareness
3. Intentionality
4. Gospel community

How diverse is your network of relationships? What keeps us from living multicultural lives?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16.

Paul wrote, "From now on, therefore..." As believers in Christ, what did Paul say we should not do any longer?

How does our identity in Christ reshape the way we see other people?

If we look at a multicultural people of God,
we're looking at a group of people who have had
to put someone before themselves, be humble
to hear someone's experience, and to act on it.

Christ's mission can't be completed unless we're willing to cross cultural boundaries. Doing so requires intentionality and growth on the part of all Christians. The reason we don't have multicultural churches is that we have monocultural lives. When we find our identity in Christ, that should lead us to expand our communities rather than restrict them. Because the gospel is for every culture, we must befriend and love people from every culture.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

What kind of effort will be required to expand the diversity our communities?

We have to exhibit the characteristics of
Christ in ways we haven't had to before,
in circumstances we haven't had to
apply them to.

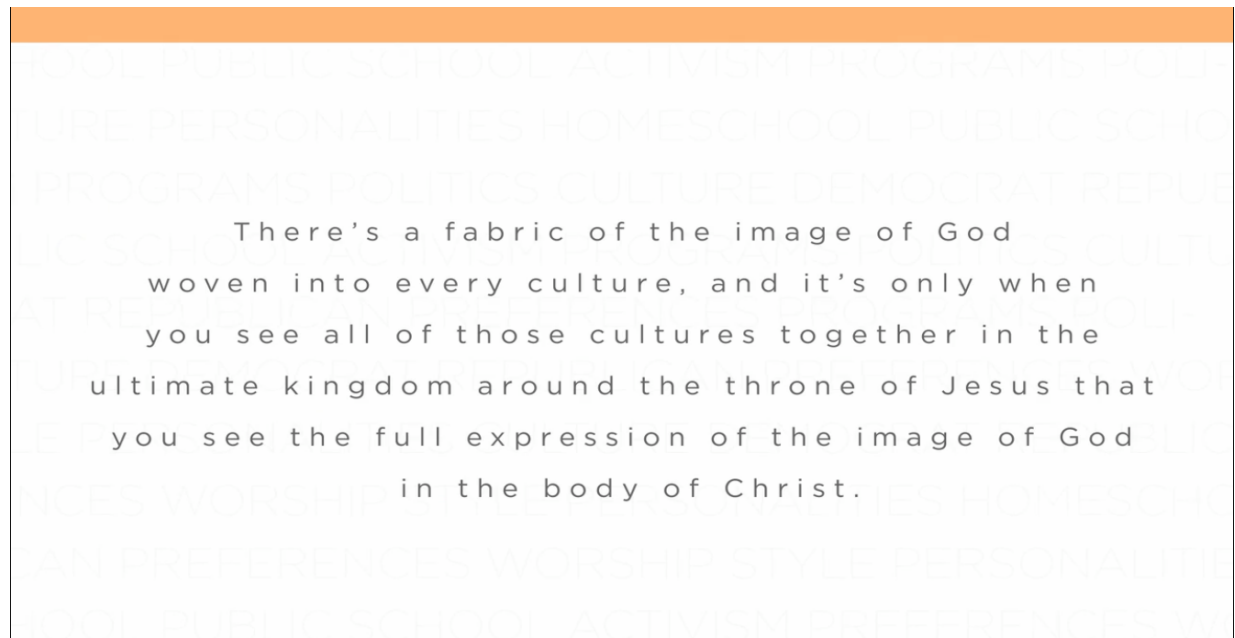
Having multicultural lives requires that we forgo preferences in nonessential matters, such as the order of worship or the style of music or preaching, for the sake of others. We allow others to teach us their perspectives on what it means to follow Jesus. This process doesn't happen by accident; we have to humble ourselves and work at it. Think back on the suggestions given in the video for developing multicultural lives. Which ones could you put into practice in your church and life?

Proximity breeds empathy.

God's coming Kingdom will be a people of all colors and cultures united around God's throne in worship (see Rev. 7:9-10). Although our church can't match the perfect diversity of heaven, it should strive to reflect, at a minimum, the diversity of our community. Our willingness to come together across differences and celebrate the one Savior of all shows that we've placed the gospel above all.

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7, saying His house would be "a house of prayer for all nations" (Mark 11:17). In the video, Walter Strickland suggested that we pray for cultures and ethnicities that aren't our own. Vance Pitman said prayer transcends cultures. If we find that our culture is monolithic, it's time to pray.



What are some ways you can pray for your own culture and others with whom you come into contact?

What's one way you'd like to grow in your understanding of others for the sake of kingdom advancement?

How would a truly multicultural church give greater evidence of the unifying power of the gospel?