

The Gospel and Culture

Fire and Go — Lesson 19



The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.
(John 1:14)

The Ultimate Missionary Model

Jesus did not visit humanity from a distance. He moved in.

The Greek word for dwelt means pitched His tent. The Gospel must take on genuine cultural form.

The Dual Nature of Human Culture



The Image of God

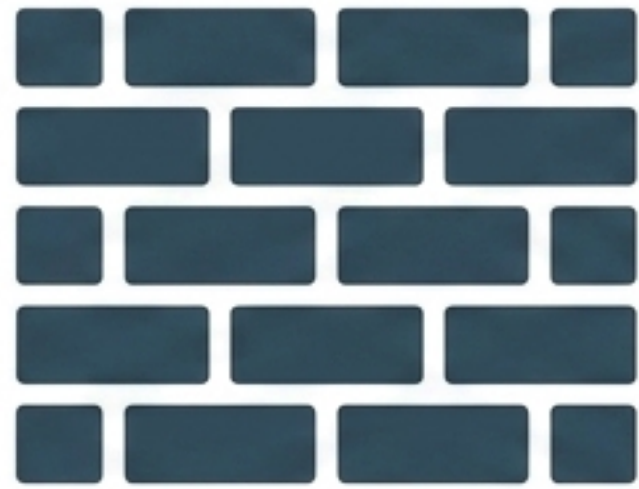
Nature: Reflects the Creator (Good)
Evidence: Art, language, social order, justice
(Genesis 1:28 – The Cultural Mandate).

The Fall

Nature: Marked by Sin (Fallen)
Evidence: Idolatry, oppression, darkness, and
rebellion.

Key Insight: No human culture is entirely good or entirely evil.

Three Ways to Engage Culture



Separationist

Definition: Rejects all culture as entirely evil.

Result: Creates isolated, disconnected believers.



Accommodationist

Definition: Accepts culture uncritically.

Result: Compromises the truth of the Gospel.



Transformationist

Definition: Affirms the good, confronts the bad.

Result: Brings all spheres of culture under Christ.

The Transformationist Calling



Question: What in this culture reflects God's image and truth?

Question: What cultural practices can be repurposed and used for Christ?

Question: What directly opposes the Word of God and must be challenged?

We do not destroy African culture. We transform it from the inside out through the power of the Gospel.

The Gospel is Familiar: Echoes of Truth

The Bridge: Every culture possesses echoes of truth placed there by the Creator.

A deep longing for justice.

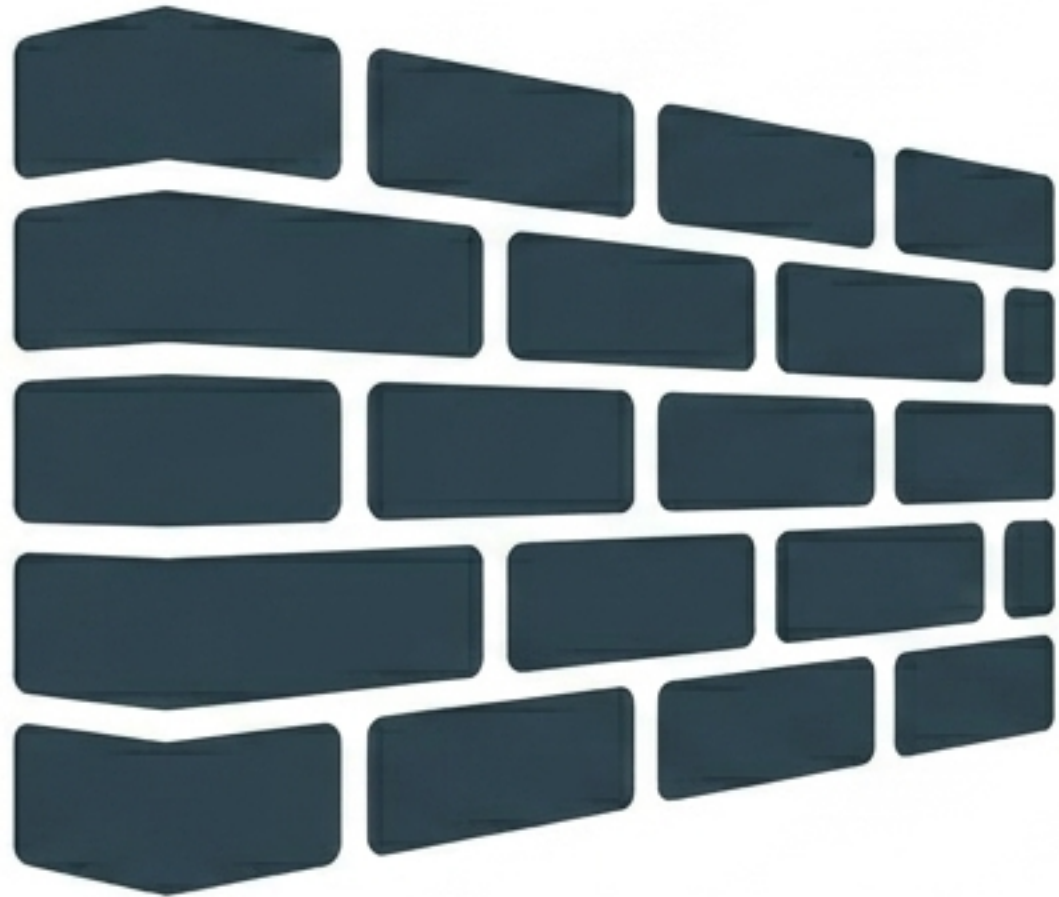
A search for the transcendent.

A consciousness of wrongdoing.

A desire for redemption.

Biblical Precedent: The Apostle Paul quoting Greek poets in Athens to introduce the unknown God (Acts 17).

The Gospel is Foreign: The Stumbling Block



The Stumbling Block: Because of the Fall, the Gospel inherently challenges every culture.

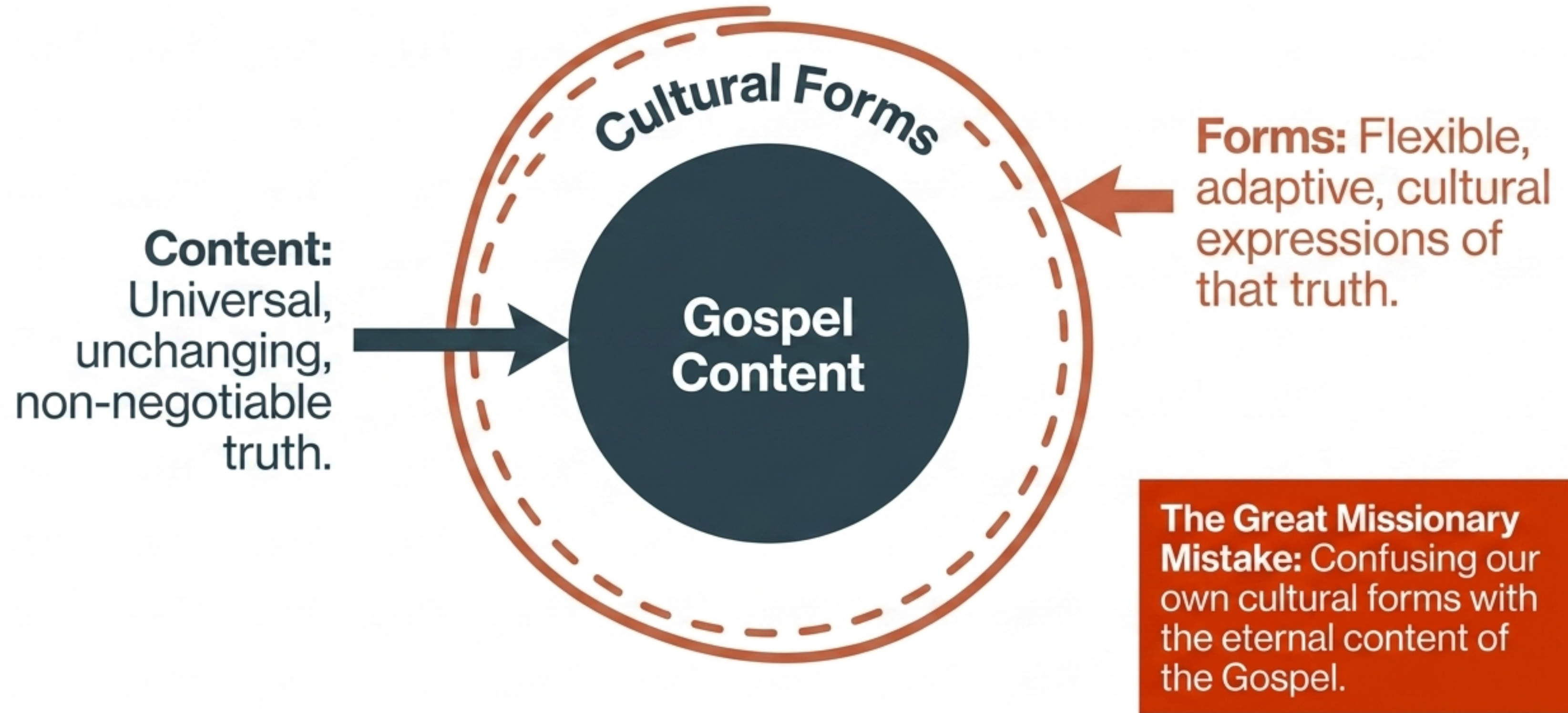
It confronts local idolatries and spiritual compromises.

It exposes human self-sufficiency and pride.

It refuses to simply baptize culture exactly as it is.

The Missionary Tension: We must show deep cultural respect, but we must never refuse to call sin by its name.

Separating Content from Form



The Unchanging Core (Gospel Content)

The Absolute Non-Negotiables

- 1. The One True God.**
- 2. The reality of human sin.**
- 3. Jesus Christ: Fully God, Fully Human.**
- 4. The Atoning Death and Bodily Resurrection.**
- 5. Salvation by Grace through Faith.**

The Adaptive Tent (Cultural Forms)



Music & Worship:
Instruments, rhythms,
and volume.



**Language & Preaching
Style:** Propositional
logic vs. narrative
storytelling.



Church Organization:
Elder-led vs. communal
decision-making
structures.



Architecture & Dress:
Local norms, building
styles, and acceptable
attire.

The Spirit and the Flesh: A Pentecostal Reality

The Divine Partnership

The Holy Spirit helps the eternal Gospel take on local cultural flesh.

The African Proof



African music, rhythm, and joy in worship.



African communal structures and relationship networks.



African prophetic traditions redeemed for Christ.



The Mandate

“We carry the Gospel, not a foreign religious system.”

Reflection



Question 1: How does the Incarnation of Jesus provide a direct model for cross-cultural missions?

Question 2: What specific elements of your own culture reflect God's image? What elements desperately need transformation?

Question 3: Can you identify historical or current examples where cultural forms were confused with Gospel content?

Prayer Focus



For Wisdom: To clearly distinguish between the non-negotiable Gospel core and flexible cultural forms.

For Love: To love people of other cultures deeply, genuinely respecting their humanity and background.

For Discernment: To know through the Holy Spirit what to affirm, what to redeem, and what to confront.

Action Step: The Form vs. Content Audit



The Assignment

Write down 10 specific features of your church's weekly worship and ministry style.

The Diagnostic Filter

For each feature, ask yourself: Is this Gospel Content, or is it a Cultural Form?

The Mission Application

Which of these forms would absolutely need to adapt if you planted a church in a completely different culture tomorrow?