

Contextualisation: Part 1

Lesson 20 | Fire and Go Missions Course

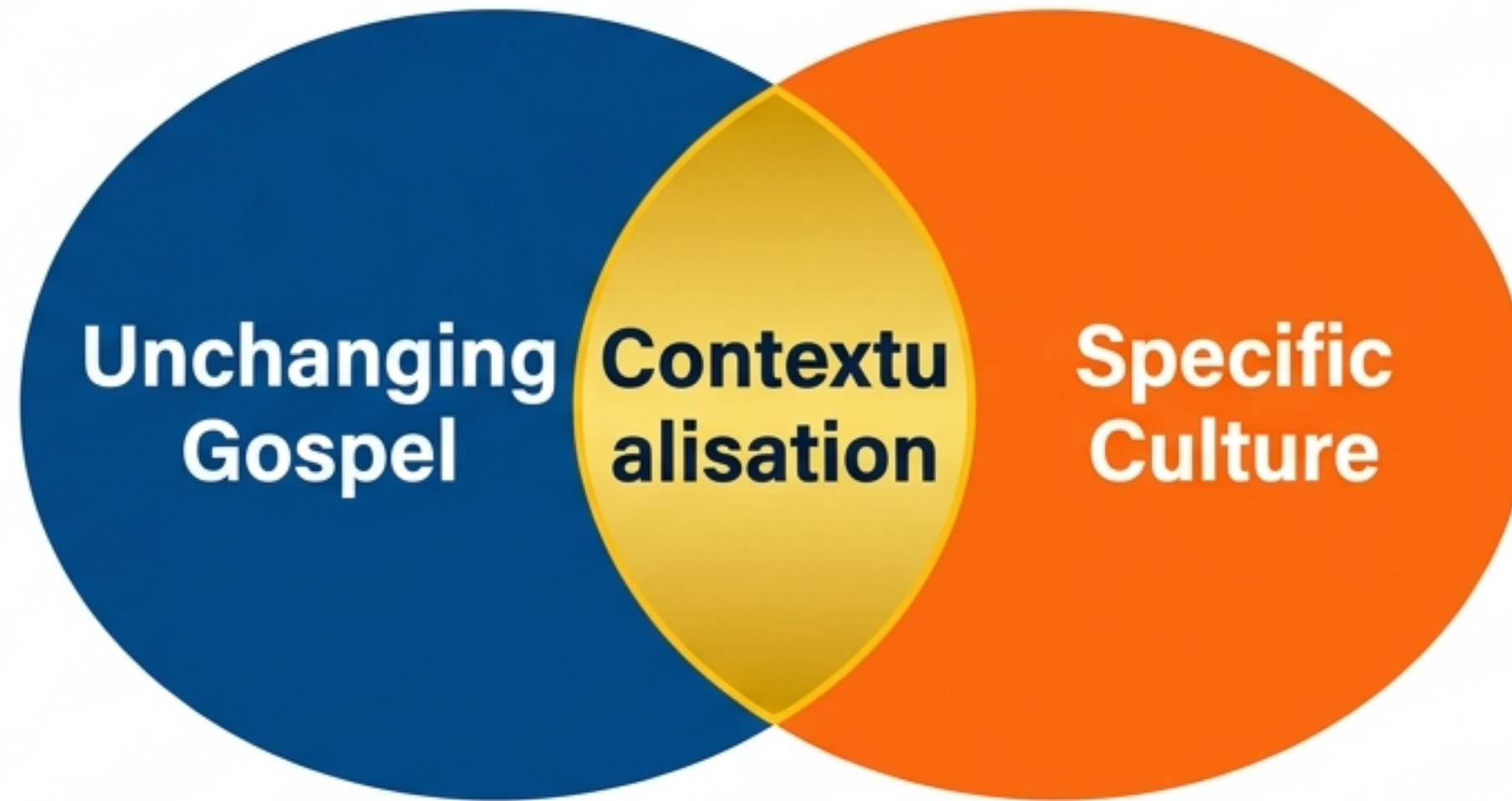
“To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

— 1 Corinthians 9:22 (NKJV)



What is Contextualisation?

The Missionary Translation



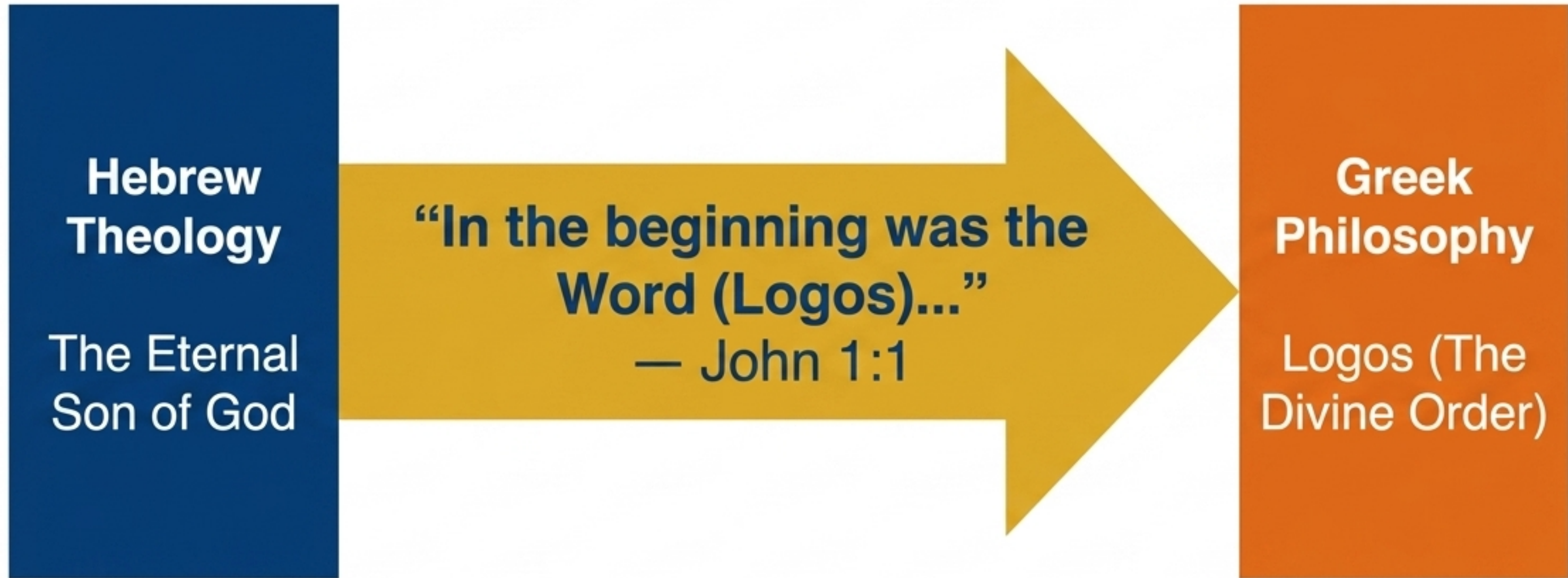
Faithful to the Gospel

Meaningful to the Culture

An Insider's perspective, not a Foreigner's

The “Logos” Example

How the Apostle John Translated the Gospel



John used a familiar Greek cultural concept to explain a profound Hebrew truth.

The Four Levels of Contextualisation

More than just language

1

Linguistic

Translating into the heart language.

2

Theological

Using meaningful conceptual frameworks.

3

Liturgical

Developing indigenous worship and prayer forms.

4

Social

Reflecting natural community structures.

The New Testament Context

One Message, Three Different Audiences

Gospel	Target Audience	Emphasis
MATTHEW	Jewish Readers	Fulfilment of Old Testament Prophecy
LUKE	Gentile Readers	The Universal Scope of the Gospel
JOHN	Greek Thinkers	The 'Logos' and Philosophical Truth

Paul's Adaptive Strategy

Changing the entry point, keeping the truth

Synagogue



To the Jews

Started with: Old Testament Scriptures

Mars Hill



To the Greeks

Started with: Greek Poets and the "Unknown God"

Lystra



To the Pagans

Started with: Creation and Providence (Rain and Seasons)

History's Greatest Missionary Advances

The church grows when it adapts



Patrick in Ireland

Used the Celtic Cross to explain eternity.



Cyril & Methodius

Invented the Cyrillic alphabet to translate the Scriptures for Slavic peoples.



Matteo Ricci in China

Presented the Gospel within the framework of Chinese scholarly culture.

The Pentecostal Approach

Spirit-Led Indigenization

“Unlike missions that imposed foreign cultures, Pentecostal missions allows indigenous forms to emerge naturally under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

The African Pentecostal Experience

The Gospel Comes Home

How the Spirit contextualised the African Church:

Authentic African music and rhythm

Communal, passionate prayer styles

Recognition of the spiritual world

Indigenous prophetic traditions



The Boundary Line

Contextualisation vs. Syncretism

CONTEXTUALISATION

Spirit-led adaptation
of cultural forms

Anchored firmly
in Scripture

Glorifies
Jesus Christ

SYNCRETISM

Compromising
Biblical truth

Adopting practices
forbidden by Scripture

Dilutes the power
of the Gospel

Pentecostal Application

Your Missionary Gift to the World

Your capacity for natural contextualisation is a great missionary gift.

You do not approach new cultures as representatives of a foreign religion.

You come as bearers of the Holy Spirit, who loves every culture and desires to express Himself in every form that glorifies God.

Reflection Questions

Discuss with your teams

1 How do you define contextualisation in your own words?

2 How does John 1:1 demonstrate theological contextualisation?

3 How has African Pentecostalism been a successful example of this?

4 What is the difference between Spirit-led contextualisation and calculated strategy?

Prayer Focus

Guided by the Spirit



Ask the Holy Spirit for a deep understanding of the cultures you are called to reach.

Pray for the wisdom to distinguish between the flexible cultural forms of the gospel and its non-negotiable content.

Action Step

For this week

1. Identify one element of your church's worship/ministry inherited from Western influence.

2. Research if there is an equivalent African cultural form that expresses the same truth more authentically.

3. Discuss this with your leadership team.

