

Os Guinness wrote:

By our breathless chase after relevance without a matching commitment to faithfulness, we have become not only unfaithful but irrelevant; by our determined efforts to redefine ourselves in ways that are more compelling to the modern world than are faithful to Christ, we have lost not only our identity but our authority and our relevance. Our crying need is to be faithful as well as relevant.

One of the benefits of rooted traditions is their ability to immunize us against the relentless changes in our culture and make us more attuned to faithfulness.

The church is set apart from the world. That difference will at times be repulsive, at times attractive. We shouldn't be surprised when unbelievers who visit our meetings don't understand everything that's going on. **"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned"** (1 Corinthians 2:14).

When evaluating ways we could become more relevant, our questioning should include a focus on the theological basis for our actions. (What biblical truths are we seeking to communicate more clearly through these changes?) Plus a careful examination of our motives. (Do we just want to be on the cutting edge?) And a realistic anticipation of the consequences. (What will we have to stop doing in order to start doing this?)

First Things First

When it comes to forms of worship, any form that facilitates and encourages worship in spirit and truth by a particular gathering of people, at a particular time in history, in the context of a particular culture is pleasing to God. That implies that no one form can fully express the vastness of God. No given time, culture, or generation can give God the honor he deserves.

This understanding keeps first things first. Cultures change, styles change, traditions change, times change. God remains the same.

Through wise leadership and a faithful example, let's train our people to draw upon the rich heritage of the past, while at the same time seeking to communicate the eternal gospel in ways our culture can understand.

—Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters* (2008)



We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

Credits

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Old Orchard Church

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 25, 2014— 10:15 to 11:50 a.m.

See print copy for art work.

*I will declare your name to my brothers;
in the congregation I will praise you.*

Psalm 22:22

Celebrating Jesus as the Community of Resurrection Worship

**Praise the Lord!
Easter morning was the first day of a new creation!
Christ is risen, Death has been conquered!
All who have bowed before Jesus,
Who trust in the power of his dying
To be the death of their guilt,
Are made children of the resurrection,
Partakers of an indestructible life!**

**Whoever has tasted truly
Of the powers of the age to come,
Sings to Christ from the heart:
Refrains of relief, carols of gladness!**

**The Pleasure of all that is to come
Tunes our tongue,
And our inward joys arise
And turn into a song!
Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.**



Today's Scripture

Old Testament Reading: I Chronicles 16:1-18
New Testament Reading: John 4:1-26

Today's Sermon

"Secrets, Surfboards and Salvation"
Joshua 7:10-26
Billy Cerveny, seminary intern, preaching

Worshipping the Resurrected Christ in 21st Century St. Louis

The Rightness of Relevance

The greatest traditions in the world are meaningless unless they effectively communicate God's truth to the people who come to our meetings. In every age the church must fight the tendency to grow mechanical in its worship as the Spirit-inspired practices of previous generations become the dead, unexamined practices of the next. That means we need to ask whether the songs, words, arrangements, visuals, expressions, and traditions we're using are saying the things we want them to say—and whether people actually understand what we're saying.

That's why we pursue worship traditions that are flexible and suitable for the present culture. We want to proclaim the unchanging gospel in ways our culture can comprehend, ways that will make it easy for people to perceive who Jesus Christ is and how he has changed us....

Relevance looks different from one geographical area to the next. One church will become more informal, another more ordered. A large church in the city might add a jazz band and use the Internet for all its communication, while a church in rural Tennessee may add a dobro to the worship team and stick with a Sunday bulletin.

But every church should make sure that the story of God's redemption can be clearly understood and experienced by those they're seeking to reach with the gospel.

The Dangers of Pursuing Relevance

We can't assume that we can adapt anything the world does and trust God to use it for his glory. The medium can affect and even obscure the message. For instance, communication in our culture today has become more image-driven and less text-driven. But an overuse of video imagery in our churches can lessen the impact of the Word and fuel a desire for more images.

As I've heard it said, what you win people with is what you generally win them to.

Relevance can also be an idol. We become convinced that some fresh, different, culturally hip idea will make our worship more powerful or appealing. Maybe it's lighting or candles or creative videos or "interactive artistic worship activity."

But we may find ourselves on the treadmill of cultural change. We keep moving, but we're not making any progress. What's worse, we can't stop. We forget that what was once contemporary is now traditional. Blink, and today's newest musical style or liturgical form is so yesterday.

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