



FAMILIES OF FAITH

Lesson 11 for June 15, 2019

Every family has its own cultural background. The culture we live in shapes the way we understand and accept the Gospel.

Which of our beliefs and customs are culturally based? What aspects of our culture should we accept or reject? What about cultural conflicts between different Christian communities? How can we preach the Gospel to a culture which is different to ours?

GOSPEL AND CULTURE

-  Accepting what is good
-  Rejecting what is evil
-  Cultural immersion

THE CULTURE OF THE GOSPEL

-  Sharing the Gospel
-  Spreading the Gospel



ACCEPTING WHAT IS GOOD

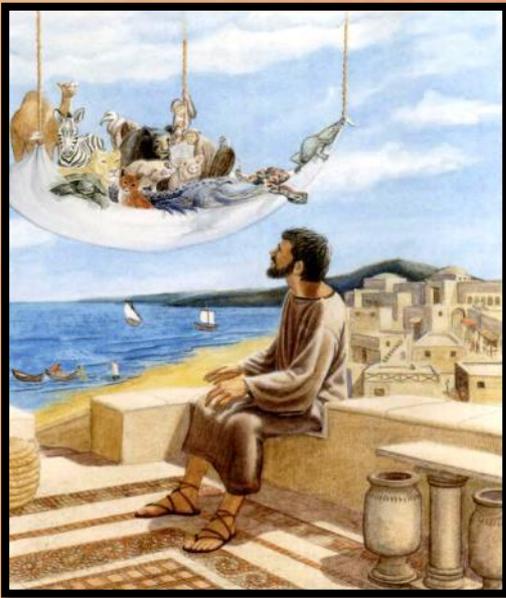
**"Test all things; hold fast what is good."
(1 Thessalonians 5:21)**

First Century Jews could not enter a Gentile house or share a meal with Gentiles. This rule was not Biblical but cultural. God intervened in a miraculous way to remove it from their minds.

As the Gospel began to be preached and accepted by different cultures, the church decided not to impose the Jewish culture on new Christians (Acts 15).

Should we remove every cultural influence when preaching the Gospel?

We are members of a community, and we're immersed in its culture. Some aspects of culture are in harmony with the Bible principles. We should respect and promote these aspects.



“When the practices of the people do not come in conflict with the law of God, you may conform to them. If the workers fail to do this, they will not only hinder their own work, but they will place stumbling blocks in the way of those for whom they labor and hinder them from accepting the truth.”

E.G.W. (Mind, Character and Personality, vol. 2, cp. 60, p. 560)

REJECTING WHAT IS EVIL

"Laban replied, 'It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one.'" (Genesis 29:26 NIV)

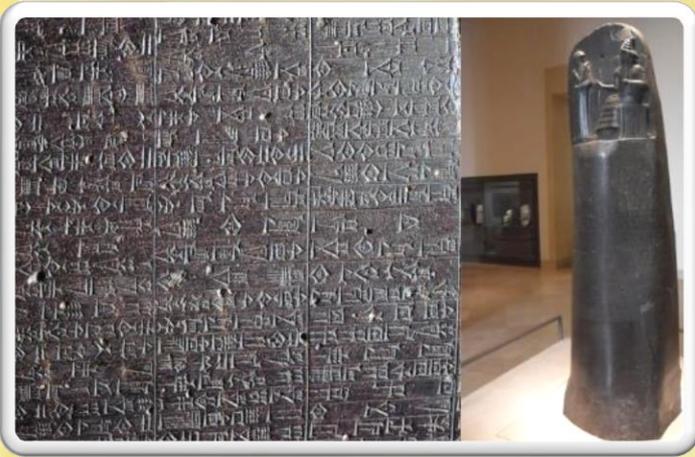
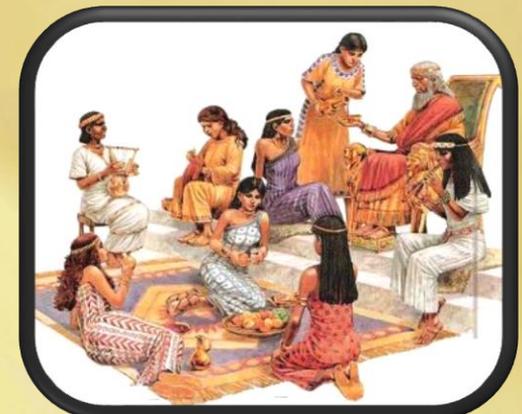


The Code of Hammurabi specified that an infertile woman could give one of her slaves to her husband, and the children were still considered hers. Sarai used this tradition to justify a behavior contrary to God's will.

God tolerated some cultural traditions for some time (for example, polygamy), but He rejected others (for example, worshipping idols).

Culture may influence us, but we must categorically deny anything that may compromise our faith.

If a cultural tradition moves people to despise others because of their gender, ethnic group, social class, disability, age or other differences, it must be rejected.

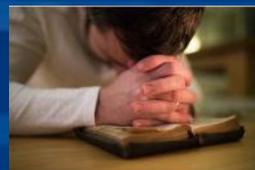
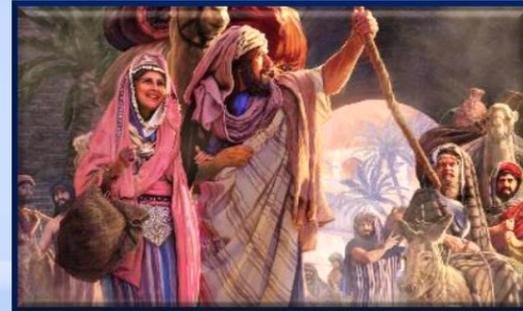


CULTURAL IMMERSION

"Now the Lord had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.'" (Genesis 12:1)

There are stories of people who were ripped out of their culture and taken to a completely different one, like Abraham, Ruth, Esther and Daniel.

This type of change is common nowadays. It affects our family and spiritual life, and generates anxiety.



God's promises, trusting Him and the support of our family and friends, can give us strength in those circumstances.

We must learn how to adapt to a new culture while accepting the good things and rejecting the bad ones. Prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit are essential.

SHARING THE GOSPEL

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become *children of God*, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of *God*." (John 1:12-13)

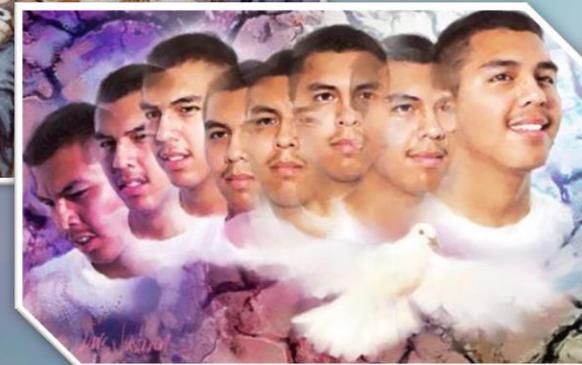
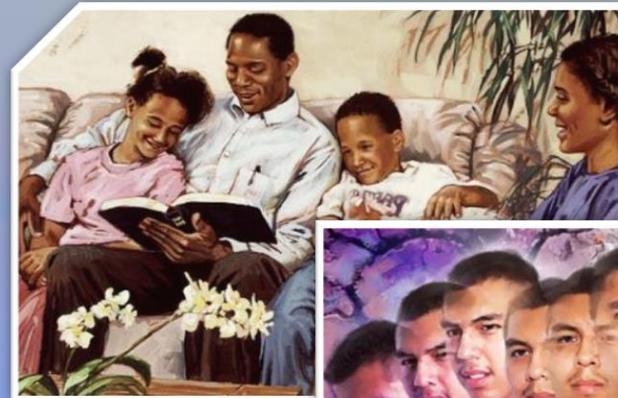


The founders of a movement are usually fully committed to their beliefs. Then, after one or two generations, many lose sight of the principles supporting their values.

Habits soon become traditions. Eventually, tradition and principles become indistinguishable from one another.

Our duty is to explain our beliefs to our children. But God has no grandchildren, only children.

Faith is not a genetic characteristic that can be transmitted to the next generation. Each person must experience a personal relationship with Jesus to become a child of God.



SPREADING THE GOSPEL

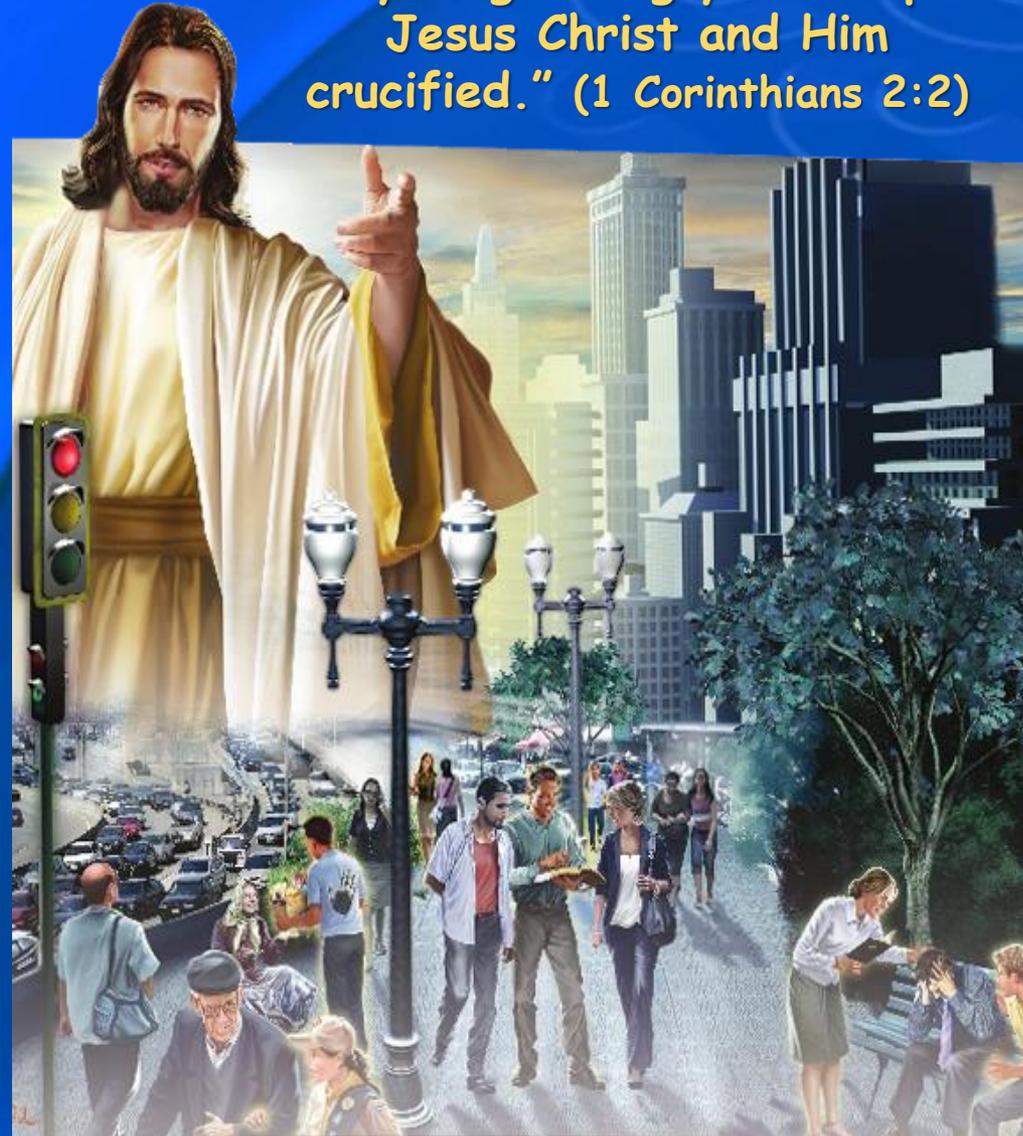
"For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2)



Christian families are encouraged to experience the power of the Gospel together, and to share it no matter the culture they're living in.

We must be passionate spokespeople who announce the Gospel of salvation and work towards unity and harmony (John 17:20-23). We must be willing to even risk our own lives for our beliefs (Revelation 12:11).

We may stumble when trying to explain our faith to a specific culture. However, God knows how to introduce His Kingdom in any cultural context. If we work together with Him, He will guide us with His Word and His Spirit.



“There is no person, no nation, that is perfect in every habit and thought. One must learn from another. Therefore God wants the different nationalities to mingle together, to be one in judgment, one in purpose...

If the Italian brethren, the French brethren, and the German brethren try to be like Him, they will plant their feet upon the same foundation of truth; the same Spirit that dwells in one will dwell in the other—Christ in them, the hope of glory. I warn you, brethren and sisters, not to build up a wall of partition between different nationalities. On the contrary, seek to break it down wherever it exists. We should endeavor to bring all into the harmony that there is in Jesus, laboring for the one object—the salvation of our fellow men.”

E.G.W. (The Upward Look, September 24)