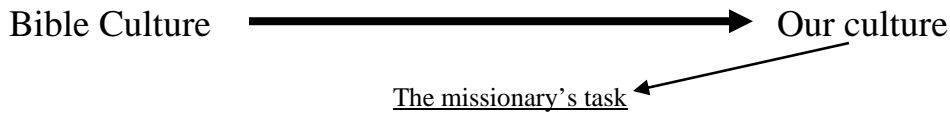


Cultural Issues

How to Study the Bible
Tom Mullenix

Culture is life's roadmap.



- **Is it culture?**
 - **Is it a command?**
 - **Is it an example?**

*Is it simply reporting what occurred?

What did the action mean to those who originally did it?

We can follow the custom and miss the _____.

Extra stuff:

“Day’s wage”

Feeding the 5,000

Ephesus [Acts 19]

Matthew 18:21-35

** Helpful tool: Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible

How to Study the Bible

Cultural Difficulties

Guidelines for dealing with cultural problems in the Bible:

1. Is the custom different elsewhere in the Bible? If so, it is cultural and temporary. For instance, in the Old Testament a woman wearing a veil was a prostitute (Genesis 38:14, 15); but in the New Testament a married woman would wear a veil and a loose woman would not (1 Corinthians 11:1-7). We conclude that the custom of wearing a veil is cultural and temporary.
2. Is the custom or command connected with becoming a Christian, as in repentance or baptism? If so, it is for all cultures and all times, though it makes no difference whether the baptizing is done in a river or lake, a baptistery or ocean, or a snap-set pool.
3. Read the entire context of a Scripture passage to find out if the Scripture itself gives any clue as to whether the practice or custom is or is not cultural and temporary. For example, Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 7:25-35 is clearly his advice for people to remain single in their present distressing situation (verse 26). Paul certainly did not mean people should never marry.
4. Could another action in a different culture fulfill the same purpose and principle that custom performed in Bible times? For example, greeting one another with a hug or handshake in our culture may be the same as greeting one another with a kiss in the New Testament culture (Romans 16:16)
5. Was the custom varied in Bible times and still approved? Prayer with lofted hands is mentioned in 1 Timothy 2:8, but that was not the only acceptable posture for prayer. In Gethsemane Jesus kneeled and fell on his face (Luke 22:41; Matthew 26:39). But the Bible gives no hint of more than one mode of baptism.
6. Notice the emphasis placed on a custom by the apostles. If they mentioned it only incidentally we can hardly consider it essential. Perhaps the principle of it can be applied as well or better in a different action.

Command

Apostles' Practice

Inference

7. Study all the Biblical references to a custom. If there is a variety in the practice of a custom, you can be pretty sure the custom is cultural and temporary.

*adapted from How to Understand the Bible, by Knofel Staton (out of print)