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President's Line

TOWARD RELEVANCY

A perennial challenge in the ministry of the Word of God is knowing how to apply the biblical text to a given cultural context. Nowhere is this more pressing than when we engage in evangelism -- trying to make the Good News relevant to the hearts and minds of our contemporary society. People may not be responsive to the gospel because we are not connecting well with them. We may not be "scratching" where they are "itching."

To achieve relevancy we need to make two fundamental commitments:

1. **To be biblical and contemporary.**

The challenge of gospel communication is to be doubly focused -- true to God's Word and yet connecting with our contemporary audience. Our call to communicate is not just a call to be biblical. Nor is it a call to be merely contemporary. We need to strive for biblical fidelity and cultural conformity wherever possible. In the past we have sometimes been guilty of not discerning those cultural elements helpful in our communication of the gospel. Sometimes, we have failed to be duly critical of cultural elements, and other times, we have been needlessly critical of such. This means we are to be rigorous exegetes of both Scripture and society. To achieve this we need to *rightly divide the Word* while we carefully assess cultural trends and values.

2. **To create new wineskins.**

The pithy teaching of Jesus in Matthew 9:16-17 calls for the creation of new wineskins for new wine. The wineskins are the means or vehicles for communicating the gospel. I believe that the wine of the gospel is always fresh for every generation.

Someone has rightly said that the success of one generation sows the seeds of the next generation's failure. The truth of that statement applies to how we do evangelism today. One temptation is to think that the "life" is in the wineskin, i.e. in the way we do things, rather than in the wine of the gospel. Therefore, we tend to hang on to old wineskins.

To be relevant we must commit ourselves to let the old and ineffective wineskins go. Let us be in step with the Holy Spirit and focus our energies to create new methods, new strategies, new structures to unleash the gospel effectively to our needy generation.

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