

The Relationship between Faith, Tradition & Culture Series



Lesson #3—“What was first century’s cultural impact on the Christian faith?”

Impact of Jewish culture on the church



Gospel of Matthew! (Jewish foundations of the Christian faith)

- **“Synagogue” as church in James 2:2**
- **Model of temple and synagogue impacts understanding**
- **Galatians heresy and circumcision**

Impact of Greco-Roman culture on the church

- Meats offered to idols
- twelve areas of society and culture
- Corinthian cult worship (sexual immorality & glossolalia)
- Women and veils in public life



Cultural impasse in the early church (Acts 15)

- “Unless you do this...you cannot be saved.”
- Background to the Council meeting
- “God who knows the heart
- James’ response
- Solution in the letter



Relationship between faith and culture

- Christ against Culture
- Christ of Culture
- Christ above Culture
- Christ and Culture in Paradox
- Christ Transforming Culture



Culture matters

- **“Culture” is not a negative word. We tend to think this way because we often use this phrase:
“Christian values vs. cultural values.”**
- **Toward a Christian consensus regarding the nature of culture and how it interacts with faith**



The “church of the Gentiles.” (Romans 16:4)



- Culture-based churches
- The global mandate of the gospel presupposes cultural diversity.
- “...the Gospel revealed no agenda for homogenizing the cultural expressions of faith among his Roman readership.”

How we experience church today

- Beginning with tent-meetings
- Church buildings—time, etc.
- Women's role impacted by culture
- Minister's role impacted by culture
- Our own church sub-culture, potlucks, structure and format of the assembly, architecture of the building



Practical application as we try to negotiate the tension between faith and culture

- Cultural “legitimation” of a religious group
- Respect and honor cultural/historical influences and practices
- Paul’s dictum, “I become all things to all men that I might win some.”



Practical application as we try to negotiate the tension between faith and culture

- **Significant question: “have we been too *anti-cultural* in the past, withdrawing rather than engaging?”**
- **Simple example: prayer at the city council**
- **Integration and contextualization of Christian life and message without synchronization**