

How Cultural Relevance Demands Church Response

Ministry in the local church has changed.

My reference isn't to 150-200 years ago, church has changed *dramatically* in the last 25 years. Current culture has transformed so much that if we don't change accordingly, we'll lose credibility as spiritual leaders.

The gospel of Jesus Christ never changes. ([John 3:1-21](#)) However, our perspective, our leadership lens needs to change. We need to see things differently in order to reach people.

Here are five ways to see how culture has changed and how we might respond and lead our churches differently:

1) Options rule.

My wife Patti recently asked me to go to the grocery store to pick up some chips and salsa. I stood there absolutely paralyzed by the 17 choices of salsa! I had no idea what brand, what kind, or how hot! But this is the expectation. Options! Further, "New and Improved" is apparently essential.

People expect options today, and new and improved options tomorrow. They want multiple service times. They want your sermons online so when they can't attend, they watch the service from their hotel, lake house or wherever. They want lots of choices for small groups, multiple ways to give financially, options for where to sit if their baby is crying, and they want it all to work.

The worthwhile challenge is to deliver options while remaining focused as a church. Since busyness kills the church, this means offering a very streamlined number of ministries and methods, but with several ways for people to engage each one.

2) Digital is now.

It's not uncommon for a church to operate weeks, months, even years behind in terms of technology, current events, social media, and the arts.

Your congregation is accustomed to instantaneous access to what is happening live and real time around them. If we let Google beat us to the punch on everything, the world wins.

Our great challenge is to deliver unchanging biblical truth in a way that is fresh, current and speaks to their lives with a sense of immediate connection. [The goal is to merge Holy Spirit redemption with high speed relevance.](#)

3) Tradition is out.

People no longer attend church because it's Sunday. Work, travel, kids sports and leisure trump church at the drop of a hat. You can call people uncommitted, but instead, I suggest that times have changed. Many of your most committed people attend 2-3 times a month and that takes effort on their part.

Our leadership challenge is to capture the hearts of people with worthwhile vision and meeting real needs that translate to changed lives, and not become frustrated by attendance patterns.

4) Green is Godly.

I'm not saying people are looking to see if your church recycles. (Although they might.) Green is bigger than that. It's about the way you see the world, and how you view the future. As Christians we understand eternity and teach the good news of Jesus Christ. And we should! The unchurched want to know what we are doing to make a difference today. They want to know what are we doing about compassion, justice and the next generation.

Our challenge is to help connect the power of eternity with our practices today so the people see God at work in their daily lives.

5) Faith inspires.

Far more than our cool lights, awesome bands, and fantastic children's ministry, people want to see if we believe.

In the 80's you could fill a church with great preaching, in the 90's you could do the same with amazing worship. Today, in a world that is confused, people are searching for what matters and want to find someone who cares. [When genuine faith is backed by love, it provides hope.](#) That inspires people, it helps them believe. They want to be part of that.

Deep down they know they don't have the answers, but will no longer settle for a polished theological treatise covered in biblical brilliance. They want to know if we believe what we say enough to truly live it. They want to see faith in action. That is our wonderful challenge.

Are you up for the challenge?

> [Read more from Dan.](#)