

Cultural Preval
September 3, 2017
Lynn Haven UMC

Introduction

“Paul and Silas have turned the rest of the world upside down, and now they are here disturbing our city...” (Acts 17:6b TLB)

Preval is not for ourselves, to make our lives more fun and exciting. It is ultimately for the world so that it will be turned upside down, or maybe it'd be more correct to say, so it can be turned “right side up”. God wants to change our lives and church so we, in turn, can change the very culture of our community and world. How might that sort of preval take place? What needs to occur in order for us to be able to change the culture of the society in which we live?

Digging Deeper

Cultural Preval occurs when we....

Realize the need.

- Have you ever walked right past something and later, when someone asked you about it, realized you didn't even notice a major detail like its color or size? Some people are just not very observant, but others are so caught up in what is going on in their lives that it is often impossible to expand their view to include anything other than themselves. If we were given the eyes of God for even one moment, we would probably be shocked at all the things we are missing. How can we use prayer and scripture to cultivate an increased awareness of the needs of those in our midst?
- What do we know from Acts 17:16-34 about what Paul thinks of the current state of Athens and its people? Can you draw any similarities between something you have felt while looking at parts of America, or even Bay County?

Reach out to people.

- Read James 2:14-26. Faith without good deeds is useless. When our eyes are opened to the needs of others, we must put our feet in motion. Talk about the kinds of things you could do (or have done) to connect with the needs of your community (or beyond). Do you have any relationships that stemmed from a service opportunity or non-social gathering? If so, how have they changed your perspective about getting involved?
- Do you think a fear of becoming “disturbed” prevents some from stepping out to meet the needs of strangers? To borrow a quote from Mahatma Gandhi, we must “be the change we wish to see in the world.”

Relate the gospel message.

- Meet people where they are. That means finding some common ground and relating biblical truth in understandable ways (by telling our personal story and acting like Christ). (Read 1 Peter 3:15) How would you respond to a non-believer if they asked you what you believe and why?

- People don't want to hear about the God you know if you act nothing like Him. How can we be sure the things we say and do reflect His light? Talk about an experience you had with someone that either proved or disproved their proclaimed faith through their words or actions. Did it have an impact on how you conducted yourself in future situations?

Remember our purpose.

- No matter the audience, no matter the setting, no matter the approach...our purpose is ultimately always the same – “to make disciples of Jesus Christ”. We must never forget and always remember, that's the purpose for all we do – to lead people to a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ. What do you think makes an effective witness?
- What methods do you employ to effectively communicate the gospel in an effort to lead people to Christ?

Conclusion

We have been given too much light to be living in the dark. We must step outside our comfort zones to realize the needs of others, reach out to them, relate the gospel through our words and deeds, all the while remembering that we do all of these things to bring glory to our Father in heaven. Pray for the Lynn Haven UMC to make a difference for Christ in our community and world.