

E.D. Burns has taken a massive missiological issue and made it equally accessible to missionary practitioners abroad, church leaders at home, and discerning laypersons. *The Transcultural Gospel* cuts through the haze of subjectivity in modern missions and presses the non-negotiables of the gospel. In an age where lived experience sits enthroned, this book will restore your delight in gospel truth. And best of all, Burns provides interviews and sample questions for pre-evangelism that will help you to put what you're learning into practice as you make disciples. Read this book and give it to every missionary you know.

– Alex Kocman | Director of Advancement
and Communications, ABWE

Having recently read E.D. Burns' excellent book *The Missionary-Theologian*, I was delighted to hear about his newest work, *The Transcultural Gospel*, and could not wait to immerse myself into it too. The Great Commission is a spoken mission on a global scale. This commission's target is the ethnicities of the world, and its message is the contents of all that Jesus taught and incorporates in the sixty-six books of the Bible. Through hard charging yet graceful reasoning, Burns engages readers, regardless of their culture, to conclude that the only way to change the world is by making disciples—men and women who will delight in living for God's glory alone with, by, and through the timeless-boundless inerrant Word of God. This, too, is the heartbeat of The Master's Academy International, which is to train indigenous church leaders to be approved pastor-teachers, able to equip their churches to make biblically sound disciples. It is for these reasons that I commend to you *The Transcultural Gospel*.

– Dr. Eric Weathers | Senior Vice President, Strategic Partnerships,
The Master's Academy International

In this short and practical book, Burns rightly places contextualization in missions and evangelism within Scriptural bounds by defending the transcultural truth of God's Word while showing the ways that Scripture itself applies the gospel to the world's value systems.

– Seth Vitrano-Wilson | Director of Biblical Translation
for the Middle East Center for World Missions,
Horizons International

E.D. Burns has written a helpful and timely defense of why the Protestant gospel does not need to be changed in order to be received by every tribe, tongue, and nation. Contemporary notions of cultural contextualization have made the gospel into a wax nose that is reshaped to suit the felt needs of a particular people group. Burns understands that even if a missionary or an angel preaches a gospel contrary to what we received in God's transcultural Word, then he is anathema. What you have in your hands is a faithful guide through the shifting sands of sociology and cultural anthropology, which dominate contemporary missiology, and back to the sure bedrock of Scripture alone.

– Chad Vegas | Senior Pastor of Sovereign Grace Church and
Founding Board Chairman of Radius International

Missions today is loaded with “silver bullet” methodologies that promise much but deliver little. This practical little book reminds us that the clear teaching of the gospel is relevant and powerful throughout the ages and throughout human culture. Aspiring missionaries and pastors will be greatly helped by this book in thinking through the complex issue of contextualization and its implications in cross-cultural ministry.

– Brooks Buser | President, Radius International

In an increasingly connected and globally minded world, it is imperative that Christians have a growing fluency in a transcultural gospel. Not only are we sending missionaries to the world but on a daily basis the world is coming to us. As Christians, we are called to engage those who come into our lives as missionaries, whatever field we find ourselves in. Dr. Burns' book is a field manual for every Christian to understand, formulate, and engage a plan for missions/evangelism that is thoroughly biblical and imminently useful among all people groups the world over. It slices through the confusion of many unique cultural challenges and gets to the heart of the saving Good News and sufficiency of Jesus Christ. As a pastor I find this work to be an invaluable tool to equip the church that I serve, encourage the missionaries we support, and deploy for screening future candidates for ministry and missions. Christians who desire a faithful and thoroughly biblical understanding of presenting the gospel the world over will be blessed by this work.

– Dr. Brian Fairchild | Pastor, Colonial Bible Church, Midland, Texas

I am taken by the writing of Dr. Burns. He has the mind of a theologically astute missiologist and the heart of a biblically informed missionary, and he expresses himself winsomely and with precision and clarity. In *The Transcultural Gospel*, Burns helps us differentiate between primary and secondary gospel paradigms as they relate to all the world's cultures and values. This feat is not as easy as it may seem. The church is awash with soft evangelicalism that seems to be replacing robust biblical Christianity. And many of the church's global missions endeavors have suffered mission drift by way of hyper-contextualization, often to the point of diminishing essential doctrines and robbing the gospel of its God-given, Christ-honoring offensiveness. Burns points us to the classic doctrines of Scripture as the unchanging, not-to-be-diminished, core of the transcultural gospel, relevant for all cultures and central for all value systems. He does this in a way that is accessible and that exudes a deep passion and keen concern for God's global glory. I plan to make this book required reading in my circles of positional influence, and I will strongly recommend it in my circles of personal influence. It's that good.

João Mordomo, D.Int.St., PhD | Co-founder and Vice-Chair,
Crossover Global Catalyst (Senior Associate), Lausanne Movement
Professor of Missiology and Intercultural Studies

If you are thinking and praying about going to the mission field, wait! Do not go until you have read this book! Having been born overseas as a third-generation missionary still living on the field and now working to equip pastors and leaders from all around the world, I can tell you that we do not want a "contextualized" gospel approach to missions. We want a Word-centered, gospel-driven reformation that shamelessly upholds the ancient gospel. This small treasure will help you think through this topic very carefully and better prepare you for what God has entrusted to you.

Rick Denham, | 9Marks International Director,
Desiring God Global Spreading Manager,
and International Director for Editora FIEL.

THE TRANSCULTURAL GOSPEL

E.D. BURNS



The Transcultural Gospel: Jesus Is Enough for Sinners in Cultures of Shame, Fear, Bondage, and Weakness

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Contents

Foreword	xiii
Preface	xvii
Acknowledgments	xix
Introduction	1
1. Christ’s Word over Culture.....	13
2. Christ Our Righteousness	27
3. Christ Our Honor	43
4. Christ Our Peace	57
5. Christ Our Freedom	73
6. Christ Our Strength.....	89
Conclusion: “As One of the King’s Sons”	107
Appendix 1: The Transcultural Gospel Model	113
Appendix 2: The Transcultural Gospel Model and Overlapping Cultural Value Systems	115
Scripture Index	117

For Elijah and Isaiah,
arrows in the hands of a warrior.

Fight the good fight.
Finish the race.
Keep the faith.

Hope in Christ.

*Faith and grace are the terms of
exchange between Man and God.
To have faith is to fix our eyes on Jesus.*
— John Sung Shang Chieh, 宋尚节

*The center of the Bible, and the center of Christianity, is
found in the grace of God; and the necessary corollary of
the grace of God is salvation through faith alone.*
— J. Gresham Machen

*But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our
Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done
by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by
the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,
whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ
our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might
become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*
— Titus 3:4-7

Foreword

The cultural context in which this book is written is one that I breathe every day. So, as I write this foreword, I am not trying to imagine life in such a context. This is life for me. What I find exciting about this book is that it expresses what I have often wanted to have stated unambiguously; namely, that the gospel of Christ as taught in the Word of God is enough in every culture. Christ is enough in a shame and honor culture as He is enough in any other culture. Only as those who preach God's Word and counsel individual Christians see this truth will the church be a beacon of hope for our world.

Those who are called by God to minister in a context that is not their natural habitat should ingest the contents of this book. I have in mind missionaries who leave a Western culture to minister in, say, an African or Asian culture. They need to read a book like this because culture is a blind spot. Unless you try to understand the culture in which you are called to minister, you often end up being like a round peg in a square hole without even realizing it. You wonder why you are so ineffective in your efforts to evangelize the local people and to build them up in their most holy faith. It is because you do not really know how to scratch where it is itching with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“A bad carpenter blames his tools” is an adage many of us are familiar with. What we do not realize is that its message desperately needs heeding by those of us who minister God’s Word today. Anthropologists and other social scientists give the impression that different cultures need a different message altogether and that unless the church realizes this, it will be ineffective and irrelevant. Therefore, it needs to be stated once again that the good old gospel of the Lord Jesus is the tool that all Christian preachers and teachers need today as much as in the days of the apostles. It is the same message that needs to address the deepest needs of human hearts in every culture across the globe. If we think it is failing, it is most likely because we are bad carpenters. Burns helps us to take a second look at how we are using the tool of the gospel. As you read this book you soon discover that it is your method that needs to be corrected rather than the gospel. The gospel of Christ is transcultural. Do not try to chop off any of its edges to fit any culture.

All human beings are made in the image of God. All human beings inherited a fallen nature from Adam and Eve. All human beings came under the curse of God that was pronounced upon Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. These stubborn facts transcend all cultures. Therefore, the greatest need for all human beings in every culture is how to be reconciled to God. Only after that should we ever hope that there can be any reconciliation to one another and to our environment. Thankfully, in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a very clear message. Paul puts it succinctly when he says, “In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19). This was through the substitutionary atoning death of Christ on the cross. Everything else flows from there. This must be taught to all people in every generation. It is a transcultural message.

Many books are either academic or practical. There are very few that manage to span this divide. This book by E.D. Burns manages to do both. This is because the author has labored in the classroom and at the same time lived in a foreign culture in which he seeks to apply the gospel. He is writing from experience and from a mind that has wrestled with how to communicate these truths to those who must teach others also. Thus, you have a book you can use in the classroom to prepare pastors and missionaries or use in the church to disciple young believers. Burns refers to a book he has written that is more academic than this, but trust me, this is a great primer!

— Conrad Mbewe

Preface

This book is the product of many years of teaching, conversations, and study. Much of this book derives from discussions and lectures on fear/peace, shame/honor, guilt/righteousness, weakness/strength, and bondage/freedom that I have been giving for years throughout the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Based on those lectures, I intentionally created this book to be user-friendly for missionaries and practitioners. It does not say everything I wish to say, nor does it footnote and evidence my years of study and missions practice.

The introduction outlines this book's background, main ideas, and goals. Chapter 1 briefly surveys the centrality of the Bible and basic doctrines that missionaries should consider when thinking through how to explain the gospel cross-culturally. Chapter 2 highlights and unpacks the centrality of Christ's penal substitutionary atonement and righteousness and our response of faith alone. It argues for the centrality of a guilt/righteousness paradigm for all other cultural value systems. Chapter 3 discusses how to apply a guilt/righteousness paradigm to shame/honor contexts. Chapter 4 takes the same paradigm and applies it to fear/peace value systems. Chapter 5 considers it in bondage/freedom value systems. Chapter 6 applies the guilt/righteousness paradigm to weakness/strength value systems. Finally, the conclusion rehearses and illustrates the big ideas of the transcultural gospel model.

After putting this book together, I realized a more academically corroborated and theologically expanded volume was necessary. I make many assertions and applications in this short book that do not require footnotes or sources. However, to make a persuasive case with thorough research, I have written a companion edition called *Ancient Gospel, Brave New World: Jesus Still Saves Sinners in Cultures of Shame, Fear, Bondage, and Weakness*. My suggestion would be to read this practical book first, consider how to apply its theological truths to your ministry, and then when you want in-depth details, read that longer academic edition. There might appear to be some occasional repetition between the two editions. But I created them to say the same essential things. The longer volume is more comprehensive (to be convincing), and this one is much more applicational (to be concrete). Both employ a similar persuasive and devotional style.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to my students who first urged me to write this short book. Through many discussions about this book's ideas and on various occasions, Patrick Schreiner, Ryan Lister, and Josh Mathews of Western Seminary all encouraged me to put this together. I am also honored and privileged to enjoy friendship with so many missionaries and pastors all around the world who love the gospel, proclaim the truth, and carry a like-minded burden to take the gospel of Christ to the unreached and undisciplined.

I am grateful to my friends Rick Holland, Mike Abendroth, Vern Poythress, James Dolezal, Chad Vegas, Brooks Buser, Chris Martin, Alex Kocman, Ahshuwah Hawthorne, and Tanner Heath, who provided helpful feedback after reviewing the basic ideas and framework of this book. Also, I wish to thank Tanner Heath and Atalie Snyder, who both kindly helped me create a digital copy of my hand-drawn sketch of "The Transcultural Gospel Model." And I am thankful for the colleagues, friends, pastors, students, and ministry partners who encourage my teaching, writing, and translation, some of whom I have included in my acknowledgments in *Ancient Gospel, Brave New World*. God has blessed me with so many like-minded brothers and sisters that I cannot even list them all.

My stronghearted father, my faithful mother, my joyful sister, my sacrificial, lovely wife, my God-fearing sons, my supportive

pastors/elders, my ministry partners, and my co-laborers in the Great Commission—all are God’s gifts to me. They are those unknown, silent saints in the land, of whom the world is not worthy.

I wish to thank the faculties at Western Seminary and Asia Biblical Theological Seminary for encouraging me to write and produce the best materials I can for our students and for the nations. I admire and respect both Chuck Conniry at Western and Jim Blumenstock at ABTS. I truly feel humbled to teach and serve under their leadership. I’m grateful to Mike Sidders for believing in me and giving me time to write this book. And one of the humblest men I know, Dave Bennett has always prayed for me and encouraged my theological and missiological leadership, for which I am indebted. Ben Mosier has been the friend who sticks closer than a brother since we were young kids, and I am grateful to God for him. Finally, to my wife, who provided a writing leave in 2019 for me to first launch this project, and to my sons, who are so encouraging of my writing ministry: I love you always and forever.

Above all else, the sovereign grace of the triune God is beyond description and without rival. Thank you, my Lord, for saving even me, in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone.

E.D. Burns
Thailand
December 2019

Introduction

During the sixteenth century, German monk Martin Luther (1483–1546) stood against the authority of the Church of Rome and the pope by elevating the Word of Christ above every other authority. The Roman Catholic Church viewed itself as determinative over the Bible and its message. It was Luther's rediscovery of the centrality of Christ's righteousness in the written Word that launched a gospel reformation and revival throughout Europe and essentially threw off the shackles of Rome's control over the Word of God.

Similarly, the global evangelical church of the twenty-first century has seemingly slipped into a self-made trap of heeding popular social ideas to interpret and apply Scripture relevantly and respectably. As Christians once languished under the theological captivity of popes and councils, so we now also struggle under the pressure of our cultural captivity. We grow weary of aping the latest talking points, attempting to make the gospel fit every cultural nuance, and relinquishing theological priority and prominence to each person's unique standpoint. These are not merely neutral cultural communication techniques for contextualizing the gospel. This repackaging of the gospel based on identity, intersectionality, and standpoint is the effect of a brave new religion. It blurs the transcultural distinctiveness of the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

The spirit of the age has profoundly permeated our sensibilities. It seems narrow-minded and unsophisticated to suggest that the controlling framework of our theology and missiology should be the self-interpreting Word and its historical gospel doctrines. Instead, indicative of secular theology, we readily query the culture's ecumenical priorities and multi-perspectival value systems to relevantly adapt the gospel. And this tendency is likely no more evident than in contemporary global missions. We desperately need a Word-centered, doctrine-driven reformation that shamelessly upholds the ancient gospel for missions. We must recover the ancient gospel. Its transcultural truths will outlast the brave new religion of this brave new world.

Cultural Captivity

Is truth dynamic or static? Does objective truth even matter anymore? Does a transcendent standard for interpreting reality still exist? Or is our relationship to reality so subjective that our "lived experience" is our only authoritative framework? Instead of living in a postmodern era of creative liberation, increasingly it seems that the globalized culture is plunging into a post-truth dark age. A problem with the popular culture's disdain for objective truth and suspicion of all external authority is that it influences even how Christian scholarship seeks to answer society's questions. To retain "influence" and "engage the culture" with a "brave prophetic voice," some Christian leaders inevitably adapt their methods to appear accommodating and open-minded. Then, after they have surrendered authoritative proclamation for "robust conversation" and "winsome discourse," their message slowly softens. They then find themselves neglecting or even abandoning core historical evangelical doctrines altogether. This is quickly becoming an obvious threat in the broader Christian world.

To the surprise of many, this tendency toward soft evangelicalism and cultural captivity has been quite common on the mission field for decades. Methods of hyper-contextualization have so universally permeated missions training and agencies that many missionaries consider the historical Christian doctrines to be impractical cargo to be jettisoned in the name of efficiency, effectiveness, political correctness, social acceptability, and cultural sensitivity. Because of this tendency to over-contextualize and minimize doctrine, the true gospel as the Holy Spirit has illumined it throughout the ages can fade into the background of other expressions and emphases of culturally nuanced gospels.

The Aim of This Book

The main point of this book is to provide a helpful model for how the historical “great exchange” of the gospel—Christ’s substitutionary death and imputed righteousness—relates to some of the world’s macro-cultural orientations and their corresponding value systems. As I mentioned in the preface, this book is an abbreviated and practical version of a longer, in-depth volume: *Ancient Gospel, Brave New World: Jesus Still Saves Sinners in Cultures of Shame, Fear, Bondage, and Weakness*.¹ Because that book grew out of this initial project, I state some similar and identical concepts in both, though considerably more expounded and supported in the other. Some applicational content is unique to this one, and overall, the other edition is much more content heavy. To illustrate content, *Ancient Gospel, Brave New World* employs some extra anecdotes, character conversations, and real-life examples that this edition does not. I intended this book to be helpful and useful for practitioners, whereas I designed the other edition to be substantial and persuasive. Though this is a practitioner-level book, both volumes maintain an identical thesis:

1 Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2021.

Many cultures value honor, peace, freedom, and strength, and the way the world achieves them requires doing enough according to a common code. But Christian doctrine teaches that Christ's substitutionary work is sufficient to secure such blessings and benefits. They are benefits of the gospel that God bestows freely on the legal ground of Christ's imputed righteousness. And so, united to Christ through faith alone, we receive Christ and all that He is for us—infinite, immutable, and eternal honor, peace, freedom, and strength. God's ways are not man's ways.

This book argues that the centrality of a guilt/righteousness paradigm is the standard key to unlocking the gospel for the world's macro cultural value paradigms of shame/honor, fear/peace, bondage/freedom, and weakness/strength. Trust alone receives Christ Himself and His benefits/blessings secured by His righteousness and atonement. Those gospel benefits/blessings are the true substance of the patterns of God's image valued in some cultural orientations. The exchanges of Christ's righteousness and His benefits/blessings for our unrighteousness and curse depend on His substitution and imputation.

The biblical gospel neither adapts nor adopts the imperfect meaning of the world's value systems. Rather, with transcendent truth, the Bible reinterprets and fills up what is biblically defined as honor, peace, freedom, and strength, bringing clarity to them in the light of the lordship of Christ. The transcultural Word of God brings cohesion and meaning to those cultural value systems by showing how the benefits/blessings of Christ's work depend on the redemptive center of His work: penal substitutionary atonement, the imputation of His righteousness, adoption into His family, reconciliation with God, and union with Him in His death and resurrection.

The curse-tainted image of God in cultural value systems esteems the true, good, and beautiful aspects of honor, peace, freedom, and strength. Learning how cultures interpret reality

and prioritize value systems is important for steering people toward the gospel's solution to the original sin problem. And learning how cultures contextually interpret ideas and value systems is helpful for knowing how to disciple someone to conform their thinking to the eternal gospel.

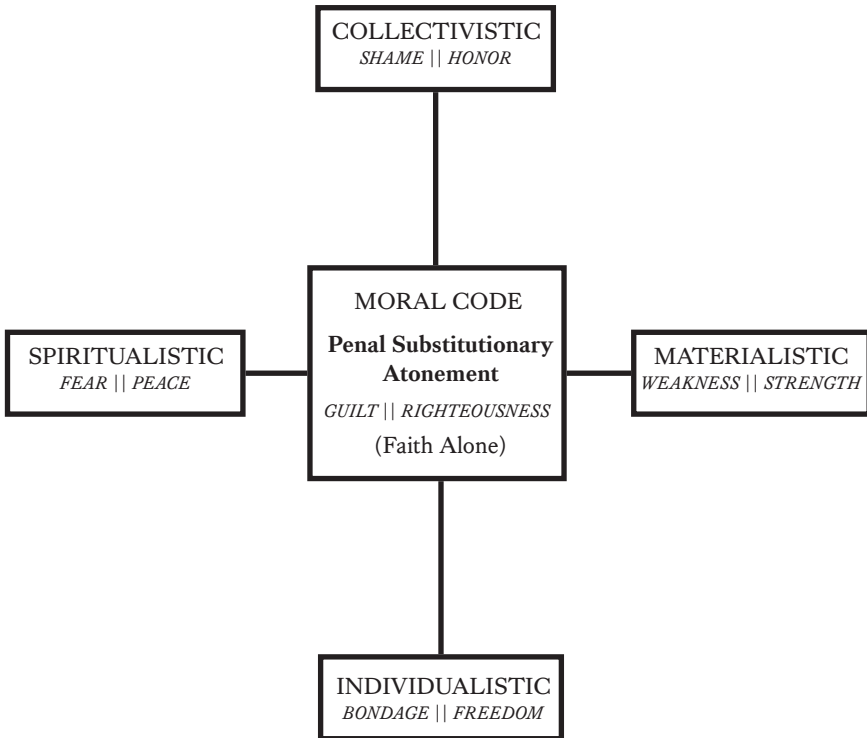
To put it another way, because of those aforementioned essential salvation doctrines that have consistently dominated the Spirit's illumining work throughout church history, sinners who rest in Christ alone can freely enjoy the grace-filled benefits/blessings of His active and passive obedience. These blessings include the exchange of our shame, fear, bondage, and weakness for His honor, peace, freedom, and strength—the expiation of our shameful, fearmongering, enslaving, and impoverishing *guilt* for the imputation of Christ's honorable, peace-giving, liberating, and strengthening *righteousness*.

This book is not a duplication of the popular works on shame/honor, fear/power, and guilt/innocence. Rather, it adapts those themes as *dependent* on the classic doctrines of the gospel, specifically those recovered by the Reformation. This book applies the biblical gospel as the center that holds together all these popular paradigms and value systems.²

Having evaluated some of the widely accepted value systems, such as fear/power and guilt/innocence, I believe the biblical evidence doesn't fully support those pairs. I have reframed them as fear/peace and guilt/righteousness and have prioritized guilt/righteousness as *central* to the other pairs, from which they all emanate. Also, I have coined pairs of values systems (e.g., bondage/freedom and weakness/strength) based on biblical evidence that I perceive fits within their respective cultural orientations, which I elaborate and illustrate.

2 See "The Transcultural Gospel Model" and "The Transcultural Gospel Model and Overlapping Value Systems" in the appendixes.

There could be other cultural value systems. But in terms of macro-level cultural orientations and value systems, the four offered in this book seem to represent most societies and cultures, complement each other well, and overlap quite naturally. They make sense of the big-picture gospel blessings/benefits granted to us in Christ. By basic observation, some of these value systems might interrelate so much that they seem more similar than different. That's a fair observation. Nevertheless, people in each value system prioritize differently their version of the fundamental problem, their corresponding solution, and their rules to do enough to get blessings.



For convenience and clarity, included below is the “The Transcultural Gospel Model” from the appendix. This is the model I use for this book:

How to Use This Book

Preparation: Questions to Ask Your Target Culture

There are many questions to ask in pre-evangelism and in discipleship. For example, pre-evangelism questions should include topics such as these: creation (origins, ancestors, evidence of the curse, etc.), God (who, where, what, etc.), good/bad (examples, source, etc.), and death (where, why, what). The point is to create a tension in the unbeliever’s interpretation of reality and existence. We want them to doubt the source and authority of their belief and value system. Moreover, we need to ask them to define terms and explain what they mean. A useful concept to remember is that *clarity is the enemy of error*. Probing the person’s source, authority, and definition helps bring clarity to confusion and falsehood. Be sure to also ask these questions: What do you mean by that? Why do you believe that? How do you know? Who told you? How do they know?

We must expose that they don’t have all the answers and that even some of their answers are dissatisfying. But before immediately providing a brief gospel explanation, it is wiser to delay it and tell them that the Bible answers these questions. Inform the person you will provide teaching on a later date (with other interested locals) to explain what the Bible says about these questions. Read this book with these example questions in mind about the people in your target culture:

1. What are their good, true, and beautiful cultural value systems that seem to pattern the image of God? What are their virtues and vices? What is their conscious cultural

orientation? What could be other cultural values and orientations through which they view reality but might not consciously realize?

2. How might you discern the transcendent themes they value most (honor, peace, freedom, strength, etc.)?
3. What is the solution they seek in life? How does that reveal their perceived problem?
4. What do they do to achieve that solution?
5. When do they know they have done enough? How?
6. Why do they believe this? Who or what is their authority?
7. In what ways and to what extent can you teach them about mankind's original sin problem in Adam and its effects on all cultural value systems?
8. How can you help them see Christ as the Last Adam?
9. How can you guide them to understand Christ's great exchange on the cross?
10. How can you help them understand repentance and faith alone in Jesus the Savior-King?

Listen for their "solutions" to repair and remedy what they perceive is not right in their lives. In so doing, you might be able to locate their solution (enough merit, enough loyalty, enough ritual, enough sincerity, etc.) to their perceived original problem (as they understand it according to their moral code). Listen for language of "enoughness." Ask, "When do you know it's enough?" Also, one way to identify the accepted idol of a culture is to probe what kind of speech and terminology they forbid. Every culture has blasphemy laws, and if you can discover what they consider

blasphemous, you might be able to trace it to what they treasure most. They usually despise the words and ideas they forbid, so be careful not to unnecessarily give offense. The gospel is offensive, but we don't want to be in our probing or behavior.

Reflection: Questions to Ask Yourself

When you are in the process of pre-evangelism question-asking and when you are seeking to disciple someone in the target culture, consider asking yourself questions like these:

1. Am I praying from start to finish for their eyes to be opened to wonderful things in God's law, for the miracles of regeneration and sanctification?
2. How can I help these people understand the main message of Scripture?
3. Have I carefully explained the inerrancy, sufficiency, and authority of God's Word? Have I shown how it transcends all generations and all ethnolinguistic cultures?
4. Have I helped these people see how the effects of the curse of which they are experientially aware (shame, fear, bondage, weakness, etc.) relate to mankind's original sin problem: guilt and corruption in Adam?
5. Have I miscommunicated the gospel in any way that might lead these people to trust in a combination of doing enough in addition to grace?
6. What are the potential counterfeit gospels these people might be prone to believe, and how can I help warn against them?
7. Have I communicated the gospel in a way that these people see how the "great exchange" of Christ's work on their behalf is His penal substitutionary atonement and imputation of righteousness?

8. How can I help them understand how Christ's benefits and blessings of honor, peace, freedom, and strength flow from the sufficiency of His work?
9. Are they trusting in and deriving assurance from their loyalty and submission to Christ, or are they resting in Christ alone?
10. How can I help them trust in Christ as Savior and King in a way that they rest in His kingly power and authority to save them?

Final Comments

This book, just as the other edition, will have its limitations and blind spots. They are all my own. What I articulate and explain at this stage in my Christian life, theological development, and missionary calling will hopefully all grow and sharpen over time. Even as I have studied and written this book's contents over the years, I have self-corrected and discovered personal, theological, and missiological deficiencies. Instead of waiting to publish this until I have "arrived" and "got it all figured out" (which is not possible in this life), I decided to ask some friends and colleagues (mentioned in the acknowledgments) to give me feedback and to help me locate areas for improvement. I assume that even after publishing this, I will regret saying something the way I did or excluding something I wish I would have said. That sense of personal disappointment with the final product is normal for anyone who serves the Lord—pastors wishing they could have preached their sermons better, missionaries wishing they could have mastered the language better, counselors wishing they would have said something else, and parents regretting not being encouraging enough while their kids were still around. This reason—that we can never do well enough—motivated me to write this book. From start to finish, no matter our cultural and ethnolinguistic

background and irrespective of our Christian service, God's grace in Christ is enough for us, and we receive those blessings in Christ as we trust in Him alone.

My prayer is that this short book will be helpful in preparing for pre-evangelism, evangelism, and discipleship. I do not intend to answer most questions about transferrable theological distinctives/traditions and degrees of contextualization, techniques, communication styles, and other methodological issues. My aim is to simply help the reader think through how to lead a conversation using the perceived cultural values of a people to move the discussion naturally and cogently to the gospel solution of Christ's substitutionary atonement and imputation of righteousness as it satisfies the problem of original sin and condemnation in Adam. And all the benefits and blessings of union with Christ because of His passive and active obedience are received and enjoyed through trust alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone, to the glory of God alone, revealed in Scripture alone. *Post tenebras lux.*

*By awesome deeds You answer us in righteousness,
O God of our salvation,
You who are the trust of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest sea.*

– Psalm 65:5 NASB95