



## The Unchanging Parts of Missional Worship

By Mike Zehnder

In order to be more missional and culturally sensitive in worship, churches around the globe have either changed or are considering changing worship practices that have long remained the same. What gets little discussion is what doesn't change. Here are five things that do NOT change in worship, no matter what techniques or styles are applied.

### 1. God Himself does not change.

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)*

Jesus' sameness yesterday, today, and tomorrow is our rock solid foundation – the “rock that is higher than I.” Cultural mores, modes, and methods may change but God means of forgiveness through Word and Sacrament will never change, His faithfulness doesn't waver, His promises aren't modified. Whatever He was yesterday, or will be tomorrow He can always just say, “I AM”!

*He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind. (1 Samuel 15:29)*

### 2. God's Word does not change.

*The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever. (Is. 40:8)*

*For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. (1 Peter 1:23)*

The Word of God stands inviolable. Heaven and earth will pass away, but not God's Word. It will never change, and it should never take second place in our lives. The Word of God is a means that brings us to faith and feeds that faith for living and all decisions, including those about worship.

### 3. Sound Doctrine Does Not Change

Titus 1:9, speaking of leadership, says, “He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.” Pilate and the world may ask, “What is truth?” but doctrinal truth taught in Scripture does not change nor may it be watered down. It is “God-breathed” and “is useful for teaching, rebuking, correction, and training in righteousness.” Sound leadership hinges on sound doctrine and those who teach correctly from God's Word about worship or any other subject are to be cherished.

#### 4. Spiritual Needs Do Not Change

People of every generation need a Savior because *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."*  
Romans 3:23-24

*The Father wills that all men should hear this proclamation and come to Christ, and according to his own word Christ will not turn them away, 'Him who comes to me I will not cast out.*  
(John 6:37)

I've been on numerous mission trips and every time preach or teach in a foreign land with a translator at hand I am confronted with the tremendous cultural differences between me and my audience. A lot of preaching techniques I use in America to hold attention and advance interest would be totally meaningless to foreign audiences. Sometimes I start to fret about it and then I remember the great truths of the passages above. Once I do that I am completely relaxed: they need a Savior just as I need a Savior and they have human needs just as I do. Suddenly the gap closes and I remember my preaching style matters nothing in comparison to their spiritual need for Jesus to be their Lord and Savior – same as for me!

#### 5. Spiritual Hunger Does Not Change

The Father seeks to draw all people to Himself in every generation. Paul preached:

*"From one man he made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this **so that men would seek him** and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:26-27).*

Paul was preaching to spiritual seekers of his day and making it clear to them that God was seeking them and smoothing the path for them to seek Him.

- Hebrews 11:6 informs us that God rewards those who "earnestly seek Him."
- It is a biblical fact that we **will always have spiritual seekers among us**; this will never change, nor should our attempts to reach those seekers with the Gospel.

Some things may change in planning culturally relevant worship; some things must never change!

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