



FACILITATOR GUIDE

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

1. Understand the concrete reality of the society where you serve.
2. Articulate a biblical message that is relevant and appropriate.

Read John 1:14

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Read Acts 17:18-28

What happens to believers when the Word of Christ inhabits them?

Read Acts 14 & 17

In these two chapters, we find the text (the Gospel) being applied in a specific context. We see how Paul contextualized the Good News in different cultural situations.

- Gospel faithfulness
- The goal of seeing the people saved
- Transcultural communication
- Use of known common elements for the people
- Love demonstrated in miracles
- Rejection of personal fame
- Christ-centeredness

DO: Welcome the group back.

SAY: In a few minutes, we will take time to review your hard work, ask questions, and share with one another.

Today's module is called **Connection Between the Text and Context**

By the end of this module, the participant will be able to

1. Understand the concrete reality of the society where they serve.
2. Articulate a biblical message that is relevant and appropriate.

TIME FOR SHARING & PRAYER

SAY: Before we get too far in the module, we would like to spend some time in God's Word and give opportunities for testimonies and prayer. Let's begin.

ASK: Will someone read John 1:14? Will someone read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23?

ASK: Will someone read Acts 17:18-28?

ASK: What happens to the believer if the Word of Christ inhabits them? Acts 14 & 17

SAY: In these two chapters, we find the text (the Gospel) being applied in a specific context. We see how Paul contextualized the Good News in different cultural situations.

- Gospel faithfulness
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SAY: *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*
– Colossians 3:17 (NIV)

Session 1: Biblical Foundation

CONTEXTUALIZING THE GOOD NEWS | Acts 14 and 17

A strong church is one where Scripture is taught and lived out in appropriate ways in the local and global community.

KNOWING THE CONTEXT

- religious
- socioeconomic
- cultural
- geographical
- political, etc.

How can one know the context?

One theologian used to say we need to have the Scriptures in one hand and the newspaper in the other.

ASK: Before we get to the process of learning how to make a connection between the text and context, would anyone like to share a testimony or information on the report on how God has transformed you or someone else in your community?

DO: Collect Healthy Church Reports and have participants report on implementing their action plans from the previous module.

DO: Pray.

Session 1: Biblical Foundation

CONTEXTUALIZING THE GOOD NEWS | Acts 14 and 17

SAY: A strong church is one where Scripture is taught and lived out in appropriate ways in the local and global community.

KNOWING THE CONTEXT

SAY: Knowing Scripture isn't enough to enable a church to successfully reach its community. The church must also understand its cultural context in a variety of different aspects:

- religious
- socioeconomic
- cultural
- geographical
- political, etc.

ASK: Why is it important to know these aspects? How can you find out information related to these aspects?

SAY: This comes from listening to people, building relationships with them, living among them, and learning everything possible from and about them. As the congregation comes to understand people's motivations, problems, dreams, and values, it can meet its neighbors where they are and explain how the gospel addresses their deepest needs.

One theologian used to say we need to have the Scriptures in one hand and the newspaper in the other.

To communicate the Gospel well, we need to understand how our neighbors think and why they think that way. Then we can be ready to answer their questions about Jesus and our relationship with Him rather than giving answers to questions they aren't asking.

SAY: Open your Bibles to Acts 14 & 17. When the Apostle Paul found himself in Athens, he went to a meeting of the Areopagus, where members would debate the latest religious and philosophical ideas. There he affirmed their

interest in religion and used an altar dedicated to an “unknown God” as a way to introduce the Gospel of the one true God: *“People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.”* – Acts 17:22-23 (NIV).

ASK: When Paul talked to the crowd in Jerusalem, what language did he speak? (He spoke to them in Aramaic, their native language.)

ASK: How did Paul introduce himself? (*I am a “Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.”*) – Acts 22:3-4 (NIV).

SAY: Note — when Paul spoke before the Sanhedrin, the council of Jewish leaders, in Acts 23, he mentioned his “credentials” to them: *“My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.”* – Acts 23:6 (NIV).

SAY: In each case, Paul took into consideration who he was speaking to and the cultural context they were from. While the message of the Gospel never changes, certain aspects of it connect more immediately with people in our community. As Paul knew, the strategies we use to communicate it should fit the people we are seeking to reach.

ASK: So, where do we begin?

ENTERING A CULTURE

How does the congregation contribute to the knowledge of the community in which it finds itself (physical and/or digitally)?

ENTERING A CULTURE

SAY: Entering a culture is all about immersing yourself in a culture to understand its worldview: the questions it asks, the things it values the most, the way it reasons and thinks and argues, along with its sources of hope and belief.

The second level is that of personal interaction. It requires spending hours and hours in close relationships with people, listening to them carefully.

The identification of the dominant worldview (or in some cases worldviews – plural) requires asking good questions: What is the central belief system and how do the parts fit together? Do they believe in a god, no god, many gods? How are right and wrong determined? Which behaviors/occupations/topics of discussion are honorable and which are taboo and why those particular examples? How do they view various subgroups: wealthy, poor, ethnic groups, women, children, those with disabilities?

CHALLENGING THE CULTURE

One of God’s primary goals is to bring God’s redemptive power to bear in working through the church to help transform whatever culture it is in by cultivating a worldview where God is king, Christ is at the center, and everything else finds its place in Him (cf. Colossians 1).

APPEALING TO LISTENERS

We need to make an appeal to those who will listen in a manner they will find compelling. That is why it is so important to determine how particular cultures come to decisions during the "entering" step. The Bible is full of rich and diverse language and metaphors for explaining what God is up to: agricultural, herding, marital, familial, legal, political, economic. Sometimes God offers freedom from fear of judgment and death, freedom from slavery to sin and addiction, freedom from shame and guilt. Sometimes He offers to fill our deepest longings for purpose and meaning, for truth, for a place to belong. Sometimes Jesus offered answers, sometimes parables and riddles, and sometimes He asked questions for His audience to wrestle with. The goal is to tailor God's appeal in such a manner that it will not be casually dismissed but carefully pondered because His voice is evident. That way your hearers are not accepting or rejecting what you are saying. They are responding to Him.

Congregations that are deeply invested in both the Word of God and the community become more capable of sharing biblical truth through actions and words that make sense for the community. There needs to be faithfulness to the Gospel message which results in people coming to faith in Christ. This Gospel is transmitted cross-culturally, making use of the culture's common elements for transmitting this truth. This is done lovingly and is demonstrated by miracles. The sharing of the Gospel is done without a personal agenda and is focused purely on Christ.

ASK: How can the congregation gain knowledge about the community in which it finds itself (physically and/or digitally)?

SAY: It is often said that the church must have "bridges to the community." The implication is that there is a chasm/separation between the local church and the community.

The local church must grow in and with the community and for that it needs to know the cultural, social, economic, demographic, and religious context. This will allow the church to provide ministry that deals with community realities.

The church must not be imported from another place. A church is the development of the born-again members of the community. When the Apostle Paul talks about the Philippian church, he's talking about the men and women who had accepted Christ in the Philippian context and are now forming their own church identity.

ASK: What does 1 Corinthians 9:20-22 teach regarding how a planter must enter a new cultural context?

Session 2: Tools

For you to get to know your community better, gather small groups in order to discuss the following questions/ topics. Later, have someone compile the results in a single document.

CULTURAL ASPECTS

What are some of the most important celebrations or festivities in your community or country?

How are they celebrated?

What do these celebrations represent or accomplish?

What are the most severe social problems in your community?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alcoholism | <input type="checkbox"/> Neglected elderly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drug addiction | <input type="checkbox"/> Neglected children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insecurity (food or financial) | <input type="checkbox"/> Others (describe) _____ |

Who are the most recognized leaders of the community?

Why are they considered leaders?

List and describe 5 reasons the leaders in the community are valued.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

SOCIAL ASPECTS

When you are sick, where do you go to receive help?

Do you believe in luck? Yes No

Do you think someone can control your future and improve your life? Yes No

Do you attend church regularly? Yes No

If yes, please specify *weekly, monthly, during festivities, other:*

If no, then specify why:

PERSPECTIVE REGARDING GOD

Do you believe in God? Yes No

Have you heard someone talk about Jesus Christ? Yes No

What do you know about Him?

Do you identify yourself with any religion? Yes No

Which one and why?

TOOL TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE CONTEXT

Communication of the Gospel involves not only verbalizing God’s Good News but also putting it into action.

We must communicate a message that has answers for people in a holistic way, a way that doesn’t seek to present a religion but a person—Jesus Christ and the need to maintain a personal relationship with Him. We want to communicate and develop faith that permeates each aspect of their lives.

We live in times as challenging as they have ever been but each crisis brings its own opportunity. We refer to these as God’s *kairos* (timing) moments. We must gather the crop or it will go to waste—every worker is necessary. For too long contextualization, which takes into account culture and the special characteristics of the people we serve, has been neglected. But if we pay close attention to our community, and if we pray for our mission field, fully depending on the Holy Spirit, we will be able to discern the doors God is opening to present Jesus Christ as the community’s only hope. He is the one who has the power to save and make life meaningful, in every context.

Review this graph, according to your reality.



Doctoral class with Paul Hiebert, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, February 2002.

EVALUATING THE LINK BETWEEN TEXT AND CONTEXT

The following tool uses a 1-10 scoring system, in which 1 represents complete disagreement or the lowest score and 10 represents excellence or strong agreement.

SAY: Let's review our Take Your Church's Pulse measurement result for this healthy characteristic. Was this an area of strength for our church or is this an area of weakness? Are there certain questions from the survey that we should pay special attention to as we prepare our action plan?

INTEGRATION BETWEEN TEXT AND CONTEXT											
1.	The church lives and practices Kingdom values in daily life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2.	The Word of God is the only guide for our church.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3.	The Word of God is used in church meetings and its services.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4.	The Bible guides us to try and solve the problems of our community.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5.	Our church is conscious of the needs of our community.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6.	Our church works hard at establishing relationships with the community.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7.	The people of our community see the church as a positive agent of change.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Session 3: Action Plan and Goals

Based on what you learned in this module, create an action plan with clear goals for you and your local church.

For Pastors:

Have you identified a leader to mentor as a future church planter? Y or N

If yes, did you meet this month? Y or N

For Review:

Did you turn in the Healthy Church Report this month? Y or N

Look at the 7 Take Your Church's Pulse (TYCP) questions for this module (Session 4) and review your overall measurements.

What are your areas of strength (scores greater than 7)? _____

What are areas for growth (scores equal to or fewer than 7)? _____

Begin to develop an action plan. An action plan for implementing today's materials into your respective ministries is important and should be a habitual process for every step forward in your ministry. Based on what you learned in this module, create an action plan with clear goals for you and your local church.

An acronym that is helpful in planning is to develop **SMART** goals:

Specific: It describes specifically what I plan to do.

Measurable: I will be able to tell whether it was done or not.

Appropriate: Is it in line with God's will?

Realistic: It considers my limitations and availability.

Time-bound: It mentions an exact time period.

Example:

- By the end of the month, I will preach a sermon on integrated faith so that people will realize that God should be a part of every portion of life.
- By the end of the year, financial giving will increase by 5% from the previous year.
- In 6 months, 12 new believers will be saved.
- By next week, we will develop a plan for small groups that will start next fall.

Coming Up: Stronger Churches Module 7

You will help your church understand what evangelization is and you will teach your church about the importance of mobilizing believers to evangelize.

Healthy Church Report	MONTHLY GOAL	MONTHLY RESULT
SHARED THE VISION How many people inside and outside the church has the vision been shared with?		
LEADERS How many leaders has the church trained for small groups and ministry?		
SPIRITUAL GIFTS How many people has the church trained to use their spiritual gifts?		
TITHE How many people has the church asked to tithe toward the mission of the church?		
PRAYER How many people has your church prayed for in the community?		
SHARE FAITH How many people has the church trained to share their faith?		
SMALL GROUPS How many people has the church brought into small groups?		
COMMUNITY MINISTRIES How many people has the church brought into ministries that serve the community?		
NEW MEMBERS How many people has the church welcomed into relationships in the church?		
WORSHIP How many people has the church invited to worship each week at your church?		

How to Use Reports

- 1. REPORTING** - Included in each module is a tabulation sheet with ten metrics for measuring entitled *Healthy Church Report*. As the participant progresses through the modular training a new measurement is revealed on the tabulation sheet for monthly reporting. Monthly reporting is a key part of the training. This provides accountability and focus on what matters most for the training participants. If the participants know ahead of time what will be asked of them at the next module, they are more likely to do those activities that lead to the results to be reviewed.
- 2. PASTOR TRACK MENTORING** - Pastors are encouraged during the training to identify and mentor a future leader to be a church planter. Each month of the modular training the pastor is asked if a leader has been identified and if they have met for mentoring (see www.multiplicationnetwork.org/resources/ministry-toolbox/203-mentoring-workshop-2 for mentor training material). At the end of the Stronger Churches modular training; Pastors are encouraged to turn in a church planter profile report (<https://www.multiplicationnetwork.org/resources/ministry-toolbox/159-church-planter-profile>) and churches are encouraged to plant a church by sending the new leader for More Churches Modular training.