In the World: Separation, Not Isolation

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Introduction:
- The transition from Israel to the Church included two very important elements which affect our relationship to the world around us:

- It seems to me that these two elements of this dispensation also present us with the great challenge we face in our day: how do we live in the world without being like the world?

- Perhaps it would be helpful to think about this from the standpoint of cross-cultural ministry—if we were pioneering a church planting movement in 21st century America, how would we establish churches that fit within their cultural context without compromising biblical convictions?

I. Foundational Principles

A. We are to separate from sin, not isolate ourselves from unbelievers, 1 Cor 5:10-13; Lk 15.

B. We are to avoid any gospel compromising actions, not withdraw from the culture around us, 1 Cor 8-10.

C. We should allow room for differing personal convictions while pursuing unified praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Rom 14:1-15:7.

D. We must honor the sufficiency of Scripture, 2 Tim 3:16-17.

E. We must remain confident in the Spirit, Gal 5:16-24.
II. Ministerial Implications

A. We Must Remove Our Cultural Blinders.
   1. Our culture is not monolithic.
   2. Our culture is changing.
   3. Our culture is changing us.

B. We Cannot Ignore the Challenge of Culture
   1. If we go native, we will forfeit the gospel.
   2. If we do nothing, our church members will be forced to compartmentalize.
   3. If we reject culture, we will move toward isolationism.

C. We Must Engage in the Tough Task of Cultural Adjustment.
   1. Accept responsibility for the task.
   2. Gather information about the cultural issue and analyze it uncritically.
   3. Study the biblical teaching on this issue.
   4. Evaluate the cultural issue in light of the biblical teaching.
   5. Formulate a clear position regarding the issue.

D. We Must Cultivate, within the Assembly, a Culture of Acceptance and Admonition.
   1. Because of what Christ has done for us, we should graciously accept one another as spiritual members of the same family and body, Romans 15:7.

   2. Because of what Christ has done in us, we can and should admonish one another so that we grow in Christ personally and congregationally, Romans 15:14.