



# Shaped by the Gospel Lesson 7: Loving the City Part 2

## 2 Minutes of Silence

### Watch Thining Outside the Box (23 minutes):

*In this video Keller discusses methods of contextualizing the gospel message and understanding your culture. Note: in the final minutes of the Video Keller speaks specifically about his observations of New York culture. Pay attention to his description and consider: "Could I offer a similar summary of my community?"*

Definitions:

**A Doctrine** - Something in scripture that the culture easily agrees with

**B Doctrine** - Something in scripture that the culture disagrees with and/or finds offensive

*"If God is Love, he is, by definition, something more than mere kindness ... He has paid us the intolerable compliment of loving us, in the deepest, most tragic, most inexorable sense ...*

*When we fall in love with a woman, do we cease to care whether she is clean or dirty, fair or foul? Do we not rather, then, first begin to care?...*

*In awful and surprising ways, we are the objects of His love. You asked for a loving God: you have one ... not a senile benevolence that drowsily wishes you to be happy in your own way, not the cold philanthropy of a conscientious magistrate ... but the consuming fire Himself, the Love that made the worlds, persistent as the artist's love for his work ... provident and venerable as a father's love for a child, jealous, inexorable, exacting as love between the sexes. How this should be, I do not know: it passes reason to explain why any creatures, not to say creatures such as we, should have a value so prodigious in their Creator's eyes. It is certainly a burden of glory not only beyond our deserts but also, except in rare moments of grace, beyond our desiring."*

C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 29, 34-35.

Notes:

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## Discuss as a Class:

### A & B Doctrines of our Community

What "A" doctrines (beliefs that already fit with the Bible's teaching) do most non-Christians hold in your ministry context?

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How can you affirm these? How can you connect them to "B" doctrines (Biblical teachings they find offensive)? Give specific examples.

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### Initial thoughts on Culture

Describe some of the cultural hopes, narratives, fears and struggles you see in your church and neighborhood.

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How can they be connected to and resolved in Jesus?

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## Exercise: Learning our Culture From the Inside

**Most people know what IQ is, and many speak of EQ (emotional intelligence quotient), but ministry leaders should also be characterized by CQ (cultural quotient). Cultural resourcefulness is not easily developed.**

First, cultural intelligence requires that we have a deep understanding of our own culture and how it shapes us. *One of the biggest barriers to effective contextualization is the invisibility of our own cultural assumptions.* Sometimes this blindness makes us disdainful of other cultures, particularly when we come to new cultures that are not wholly alien. For example, if a person from rural Indiana moves to Mumbai, he expects the culture to be different; accordingly, he sees the differences and tries to adapt to them. However, if this same person moves to downtown Chicago and discovers he isn't fitting in, he is more likely to see Chicagoans as snobs. Instead of seeing the problem as cultural difference, he is likely to disdain urban people as arrogant. If we cannot see or too uncritically accept our own cultural biases, we will be less likely to contextualize well.

The Bible states we are "aliens and strangers" in this world (Hebrews 11:13) and so must never be completely at home in any culture, including our home culture. The gospel and its critique of every culture can give us a detachment from our home culture that will enable us to better see its features in a way that others in it cannot.

1. Know your cultural influences. Earlier you were asked what institutions, schools, theologies, worldviews, regional cultures, artistic expressions, ministries, churches, and leaders have shaped you. Now it's time to ask yourself: What can I adapt, and what must I discard? Where do I need to "detox and rehabilitate" from these influences?

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Second, cultural intelligence requires a heart shaped by the gospel—a heart secure enough that we are liberated from our culture's idolatries and from the need for the approval of the new culture. We must also have humility to respect and learn from others who hold very different views.

2. Identify where you tend to find fault with the culture around you. Are those attitudes, values or practices wrong according to the Bible, or just according to your opinion? Are you communicating respect and humility to those who hold views different from yours?

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3. Identify where you have bought into cultural values that are not necessarily biblical values. How could relying more deeply on the gospel free you from obeying some of these cultural norms? To challenge them where appropriate?

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Third, cultural intelligence requires us to immerse ourselves in a culture, coming to love and seeking to understand its members as much as possible. The gospel can help us embrace the disorientation we feel when entering into a culture and allow this discomfort to yield fruitful inquiry and a relentless quest to understand more about the culture.

4. What are some of the ways you have found to engage and immerse yourself in the culture around you? Who can you meet who can give you a new perspective or deeper knowledge of your community?

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## Homework

**Pray:** Pray for the spirit to guide you as you answer the questions in the exercise. Pray for God to help us reach our city.

**Complete:** Learning Our Culture from the inside Exercise, bring it with you next week.

**Read:** The Tension of the City  
(pages 113-126)  
Redemption and the City  
(pages 127-135) only 3 pages a day!