

# A Pastor's Guide to and Concerns about Contextualization

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## I. Historical Background

### A. The Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches (1972)

“Contextualization is not simply a fad or catch-word but a theological necessity demanded by the incarnational nature of the Word.”

“Contextualization, while not ignoring this, takes into account the process of secularity, technology, and the struggle for human justice, which characterizes the historical moment of the nations in the Third World.”

### B. Crossover into Evangelical Missions Studies

### C. Application to All Ministry

## II. Meanings

A. Application of Biblical Truth, cf. Grant Osborne, “The theory has now been provided by missiologists, and it is important to note that what they call ‘contextualization’ is identical with what homiletics call ‘application’” (*The Hermeneutical Spiral*, p. 318).

B. The Process of Constructing Local or Context Specific Theologies (e.g., African theology).

C. A Communication Device, cf. David Hesselgrave, “Contextualization can be thought of as the attempt to communicate the message of the person, works, word, and will of God in a way that is faithful to God’s revelation, especially as it is put forth in the teachings of Holy Scripture, and that is meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential contexts” (*Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 143).

D. Incarnational Manifestation of the Gospel within a Culture, cf. Dean Flemming, “the dynamic and comprehensive process by which the gospel is incarnated within a concrete historical or cultural situation” (*Contextualization in the New Testament*, p. 19).

### **III. Theological Issues**

A. Inspiration and Authority of the Scriptures

B. Depravity and Culture

C. Depravity and the Gospel

### **IV. Concerns**

A. Comprehension vs. Persuasive Advantage

B. Passive vs. Aggressive Accommodations

C. Application vs. Incarnation

D. Theologizing vs. Theology

E. Religion vs. Culture