

Contextual Analysis of Cultural Sensitivity in Paul's Evangelistic Discourse in Acts and Its Implication for Christian Missionaries

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Abstract

The importance of cultural sensitivity in evangelistic discourse cannot be overstated. Effective evangelism requires an understanding of the cultural context in which the gospel is being communicated. This study examined Apostle Paul's display of cultural sensitivity in evangelistic discourse, with a focus on his sermons, defences and testimonies as recorded in the Book of Acts. The research employed a desk research methodology, using Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity as the theoretical framework. Nine (9) of Paul's evangelistic speeches in Acts were covered in this study. Based on the findings of this study, Paul demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt his approach to fit the cultural and religious backgrounds of his audience. Specifically, the findings revealed that Paul's approach to evangelism demonstrates characteristics of the higher stages of Bennett's model, particularly the stages of acceptance, adaptation, and integration. The study concluded that Apostle Paul's display of cultural sensitivity in evangelistic discourse provides a powerful model for effective cross-cultural communication in evangelism. Therefore, it was recommended that contemporary missionaries and evangelists adopt a similar approach, taking the time to understand and respect the cultural background, norms and values of their audience. By doing so, they can establish meaningful connections with people from diverse backgrounds and communicate the gospel in a way that is relevant, contextual, respectful and effective.

Keywords: Cultural sensitivity, evangelistic discourse, cross-cultural communication, Apostle Paul

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Introduction

In the context of evangelistic discourse, cultural sensitivity has to do with the awareness and respect for the diverse cultural backgrounds of the individuals being evangelized (Marpaung & Hwang, 2023). This will enable the preacher to appropriately contextualize the gospel message to suit the hearers. In order to effectively communicate the gospel message, the preacher must be culturally sensitive. Being culturally sensitive does not mean compromising the gospel message to fit cultural norms. It means presenting the message in a way that is understandable and relatable to different cultural contexts (Chaisson, 2024).

Cultural insensitivity can have devastating consequences for evangelistic endeavours. When missionaries and evangelists fail to understand and respect the cultural context of their audience, they risk alienating and offending them, creating a barrier to the gospel message. Besides, cultural insensitivity can result in the preacher being unable to contextualize the message (Lee, 2022). Therefore, every missionary and evangelist should take a cue from Paul, who said:

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. (1 Corinthians 9: 20-22, New International Version)

While most recent works focus on apologetic nature of Paul's epistles and sermons, there is limited research dealing with detailed examination of Paul's display of cultural sensitivity in his evangelistic discourses (Lotter & Thompson, 2004; Lee, 2020; Bertovich, 2024). Therefore, this study provides an examination of Paul's display of cultural sensitivity in his evangelistic discourses in the Book of Acts. This is much needed for culturally sensitive evangelism.

This work will analyze the various cultural contexts in which Apostle Paul made evangelistic speeches, investigate Paul's strategies for building bridges with diverse cultural audiences while communicating the gospel and identify the impact of cultural sensitivity on the success of Paul's evangelistic discourses. The study examines Apostle Paul's display of cultural sensitivity in the context of his evangelistic discourses, with a focus on his sermons and discourses as recorded in the Acts of Apostles. This study covers nine (9) of Apostle Paul's evangelistic speeches in Acts. In addition, the research covers the actual time range in which Apostle Paul preached in the Book

of Acts, which spans approximately AD 33 to AD 62 - about 29 years (Bruce, 1954; Keener, 2012; Talbert, 2013).

The study employs a desk research approach to analyze Apostle Paul's sermons and discourses in the Acts of Apostles. Secondary data were used for this study, in form of the Holy Bible, Bible commentaries, books and journal articles. In addition, the study uses Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity as the theoretical framework for analyzing Apostle Paul's display of cultural sensitivity.

Theoretical Framework

Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

Bennett has developed a *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity*. This model is a framework that describes the stages of intercultural sensitivity and the psychological development individuals go through when engaging with people from different cultural backgrounds. This scholar identifies six distinct types of experience across the continuum from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism: denial, defence, minimization, acceptance, adaptation and integration. Each stage represents a different level of intercultural sensitivity and competence (Bennett, 1986).

By ethnocentrism he refers to the experience of looking at one's own culture as central to reality. Beliefs, values and behaviours acquired through primary socialization are seen as adequate descriptors of the way things are. By ethno-relativism the scholar refers to the experience of viewing one's own culture as just one organization of reality amongst many legitimate possibilities. He uses the suffix "relativism" to explain that differing cultural perspectives should not be seen as superior to one another, but as relative (Schelfhout, 2022). The distinct stages are explained below:

Denial: In this stage, individuals are unaware of cultural differences and may assume that their own culture is superior. They may assume that their own culture is the only valid perspective, showing little interest in other cultures. Denial often leads to ethnocentrism, where one's culture is perceived as superior. This is the situation where one's cultural perspective is viewed as the only real or authentic one. Other cultures are either not noticed at all, or they are understood in a rather vague manner. Mono-cultural upbringing will normally result in a *denial* of cultural difference (Wagner et al, 2017).

Defence: At this stage, individuals recognize cultural differences but perceive them as threats. They may become defensive or ethnocentric when encountering unfamiliar cultures. In the Defence stage, individuals start to recognize cultural differences, but they may view them as threats. They become defensive or hostile when faced with unfamiliar cultures, often resorting to stereotypes or prejudices. Defensive individuals may avoid intercultural interactions or engage in them with a guarded attitude (Fantini, 2007).

At this stage, one's own culture is viewed as the best form of civilization. Culture difference is noticed but the world has become organized into a situation where one's own culture is superior and other cultures are inferior. A modification of this polarized situation is referred to as *Reversal*, in which the individual has a negative view of their own culture and regards other cultures as better than their own (Schelfhout, 2022).

Minimization: People in this stage begin to recognize similarities across cultures and downplay differences. They may believe that all cultures are the same and this can lead to cultural misunderstandings. *Minimization* of cultural difference is the state in which elements of one's own culture are experienced as applying to everybody. In this case, someone begins to feel that there is no difference between them and others since they are all human beings. The scholar suggests that this stage is the most common stage of intercultural development (Schelfhout, 2022).

Acceptance: In this stage, individuals acknowledge and value cultural differences. They become more open to diverse perspectives and are willing to adapt their behaviour and communication style. In the acceptance stage, individuals acknowledge and value cultural differences. They recognize that different perspectives can be equally valid and enriching (Bennett, 2004). Acceptance is marked by an open-minded approach to intercultural encounters and a willingness to adapt one's behaviour and communication. Acceptance of cultural difference is present when people experience their own culture as just one of a number of equally complex worldviews. People in acceptance are self-reflective on their experience of other cultures and are able to acknowledge others as different from themselves, but equally human. They are not necessarily experts in one or more cultures but rather they are able to identify how cultural differences in general operate in a wide range of human interactions (Schelfhout, 2022).

Adaptation: At the adaptation stage, individuals actively seek to understand and integrate other cultures into their own worldview. They can function effectively in multicultural environments.

Individuals actively seek to understand and integrate other cultures into their worldview. They demonstrate flexibility in their behaviour and communication styles to accommodate cultural diversity. Adaptation allows individuals to function effectively in multicultural environments (Nesterova et al, 2022).

Integration: This is the highest stage of intercultural sensitivity, which involves a deep appreciation for cultural diversity. Individuals in this stage can effortlessly switch between cultural perspectives and are highly skilled in intercultural interactions. Individuals in this stage possess a deep appreciation for cultural diversity and fluidly navigate between cultural perspectives. They effortlessly switch between cultural roles and exhibit exceptional intercultural competence (Bennett, 1986).

It should be noted that Individuals are not static in these stages; they can move back and forth based on their experiences and self-awareness. Development often occurs through exposure to different cultures, education, and reflective practices. This model is used in various fields, such as education, business, and intercultural training, to enhance cross-cultural understanding and competence.

Examination of Paul's Speeches and His Cultural Sensitivity

Paul's Sermon at Antioch in Pisidia: Acts 13:16-47

Paul's audience in the Synagogue of Antioch consisted of Jewish residents and proselytes (Gentile converts to Judaism). Scholars submit that the city of Antioch was a major centre of Hellenistic culture, and the Jewish community there was likely influenced by Greek thought and customs (Marpaung & Hwang, 2023; Lee, 2022). As a result, the audience would have been familiar with both Jewish and Greek traditions. They would have understood the concept of a single, all-powerful God, as well as the importance of morality, justice, and compassion. Additionally, they would have been aware of the complex relationships between Jews, Greeks, and Romans in the city (Lee, 2020). The Jewish community in Antioch would have also had a strong sense of identity and tradition. They would have been familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, including the Torah and the Prophets, and would have observed Jewish customs such as circumcision, dietary laws, and Sabbath observance (Lee, 2022).

Paul's sermon demonstrates his sensitivity to the cultural context of his audience. He begins by standing up, motioning with his hand, and addressing the audience as "Men of Israel, and you who fear God" (Acts 13:16). This greeting acknowledges their Jewish heritage and their

reverence for the one true God (Lee, 2022). By using this phrase, Paul establishes a connection with his audience and shows that he shares their values and traditions (Marpaung & Hwang, 2023). Paul's sensitivity to his audience's cultural context is also evident in his use of Scripture. He extensively quotes and alludes to Hebrew Scriptures, demonstrating Jesus' fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (Lee, 2022). Paul's sermon also reflects his awareness of the complex relationships between Jews, Greeks, and Romans in Antioch (Tino, 2017). He emphasizes the universal scope of God's salvation, citing Isaiah 55:3 to show that God's promise of forgiveness is extended to all people (Acts 13:34). Highlighting the inclusive nature of God's salvation, Paul appeals to the diverse audience in Antioch and encouraged them to consider the message of Jesus. The results of Paul's sermon in the Synagogue of Antioch were quite remarkable. The people's response was overwhelmingly positive, with many Jews and Gentile converts to Judaism responding eagerly to the message (Lee, 2022). As Paul finished his sermon, the people invited him and Barnabas to speak again the following Sabbath. In fact, almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord on the next Sabbath.

The Preaching to the Townspeople of Lystra: Acts 14:6-17

Luke records how the Apostle went about preaching the gospel to a purely pagan audience, who had no connection to the God of Israel. Paul's audience here was not like the Gentiles, who were familiar with messages proclaimed from Jewish synagogues (Bruce, 1954). Scholars submit that it was normal for the gods to appear in human form and humans must not make the mistake of failing to honour them, or they would face the wrath of the gods. According to Talbert, holy gods went through the nooks and crannies of cities and villages in order to watch the good deeds and misdeeds of humans. Then, when mortals failed to recognize them, they were subject to wrath (Talbert, 2013). Specifically, Zeus and Hermes were mentioned to have visited Phrygia (close to Lystra) before (Lee, 2022). There was an aged couple, Philemon and Baucis, who alone showed hospitality to the gods. The rest of the people were annihilated while only Philemon and Baucis were eventually spared and deified (Talbert, 2013). In addition, polytheism and the practice of magic were very strong in Lystra (Lee, 2022).

From the Bible passage, two things demonstrate the apostle's cultural sensitivity. The first is the use of natural theology while preaching to the Lystrans. Paul said that even in the face of man's rebellion and ignorance, God (the Creator) has not left Himself without a testimony. God makes rain to fall and crops to grow at their appropriate time (Acts 14: 17). Paul emphasizes that God's

providence and provision is an essential attribute that distinguishes him from the pagan gods (Peterson, 2009). Secondly, Paul opened up his ministration in Lystra by first healing a man who was born lame (Acts 14: 8-10). This was to demonstrate the power of the Living God over magic in Lystra (Lee, 2022). From the biblical passage, it was this miracle that led to the preaching of the gospel in that city.

Paul's Sermon to the Greek Philosophers of Athens: Acts 17: 16-34

Paul's audience in Athens consisted of Greek philosophers, including Stoics and Epicureans, who were known for their intellectual curiosity and love of debate (Lotter & Thompson, 2004). The city of Athens was a hub of philosophical and cultural activity, and its inhabitants were proud of their rich heritage and traditions (Talbert, 2013). The Greeks were polytheists, worshipping a pantheon of gods and goddesses, and their philosophy was deeply rooted in their religious beliefs. They were also known for their scepticism and critical thinking and would have been eager to engage with Paul's ideas and challenge his assumptions (Peterson, 2009). The Areopagus, where Paul delivered his sermon, was a prestigious gathering place for philosophers and intellectuals (Keener, 2012). The Stoics and Epicureans, who were present, would have been familiar with the concepts of reason, morality, and the nature of the universe. They would have also been aware of the latest philosophical trends and debates and would have been eager to discuss and critique Paul's message (Lee, 2022). As a Jewish Christian, Paul was aware of the cultural and philosophical differences between his audience and himself, and he tailored his message accordingly (Marpaung & Hwang, 2023).

Paul's sermon demonstrates his sensitivity to the cultural context of his audience. He began by acknowledging the Athenians' religiosity, noting that they are "very religious" (Acts 17:22). This comment shows that Paul was aware of the importance of religion in Greek culture and was willing to engage with their beliefs (Chaisson, 2024). Paul then used a quote from the Greek poet Epimenides to illustrate his point about the nature of God (Acts 17:28). This reference to Greek literature demonstrates Paul's familiarity with Greek culture and his willingness to use cultural references to communicate his message (Tino, 2017). Paul's sermon also reflects his awareness of the philosophical debates and trends of the time. He used philosophical language and concepts, such as the idea of an "unknown god" (Acts 17:23), to engage with his audience and challenge their assumptions. Luke records that after this sermon, a member of the Areopagus and a few other listeners became disciples, while some demanded to hear Paul more on the same

subject (Acts 17: 32, 34). This approach of Paul is characteristic of the integration stage of Bennett's model, where individuals are able to integrate their own cultural identity with the cultural practices of others.

Paul's Farewell Sermon to the Ephesian Elders: Acts 20:16-38

Paul's audience consisted of the Ephesian elders, who were the leaders of the church in Ephesus. The city of Ephesus was a major commercial centre in Asia Minor, and the church there was one of the most prominent in the region. The Ephesian elders would have been familiar with the teachings of Paul, who had spent several years ministering in Ephesus (Acts 18:19-21, 19:1-20). They would have also been aware of the challenges and persecutions faced by the church in Ephesus, including the opposition from the silversmiths and the riot that had erupted in the city (Acts 19:23-41). The Ephesian elders would have been deeply concerned about the future of the church in Ephesus, particularly in light of Paul's impending departure. They would have been aware of the dangers and uncertainties that Paul faced as he travelled to Jerusalem, and they would have been anxious about the potential consequences of his arrest and imprisonment. As leaders of the church, they would have been responsible for guiding and protecting the congregation, and they would have been eager to receive Paul's final instructions and guidance (Lee, 2022).

Paul's farewell sermon demonstrates his sensitivity to the cultural context of his audience. He begins by expressing his deep affection for the Ephesian elders, calling them "brothers" and acknowledging the hard work and perseverance of the congregation (Acts 20:18-19, 31). This expression of affection and appreciation establishes a sense of rapport and trust between Paul and his audience. Paul's sermon also reflects his awareness of the challenges and dangers faced by the Ephesian church. He warned the elders about the threat of false teachers and the importance of guarding the flock against spiritual predators (Acts 20:28-31). This warning demonstrates Paul's concern for the well-being and safety of the congregation, and his desire to equip the elders with the knowledge and skills necessary to protect the church (Bertovich, 2024). Paul used imagery and themes that were familiar to his audience, drawing on biblical and cultural references to illustrate his points and make his message more memorable (Chaisson, 2024). The response to Paul's farewell sermon was one of deep emotion and appreciation (Acts 20: 37-38).

Paul's Testimony before the Jerusalem Jews: Acts 22:1-21

Paul's audience consisted of Jerusalem Jews who were familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures and the traditions of their ancestors. They would have been deeply committed to their faith and would have seen themselves as the guardians of the Jewish tradition. The Jerusalem Jews would have also been aware of the growing tensions between the Jewish Christians and the non-Christian Jews in Jerusalem. They would have seen Paul as a leader of the Jewish Christian movement and would have been suspicious of his claims about Jesus being the Messiah. The Jerusalem Jews would have also had a strong sense of national identity and would have been deeply concerned about the Roman occupation of Judea (Marpaung & Hwang, 2023). They would have seen the Jewish Christians as a threat to their national identity and would have been wary of any movement that seemed to undermine their traditions and customs. As a Pharisee and a former persecutor of the church, Paul was familiar with the cultural and religious background of his audience and tailored his message accordingly (Lee, 2022).

Paul's testimony demonstrates his sensitivity to the cultural context of his audience. He began by addressing the crowd in Hebrew, establishing a connection with his audience and showing that he shared their language and culture (Acts 22:2). Paul then reviewed his own Jewish credentials, highlighting his education under Gamaliel and his zeal for the Jewish tradition (Acts 22:3-5). This review served as a reminder of Paul's Jewish heritage and established his credibility with his audience (Lee, 2022). Paul's testimony also reflects his awareness of the Jewish Scriptures and the traditions of his ancestors. He quoted from the Hebrew Bible and used Jewish terminology to describe his experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:6-11).

Paul's Defence before the Sanhedrin: Acts 23:1-10

Paul's audience consisted of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court in Jerusalem, composed of Pharisees and Sadducees. The Sanhedrin was responsible for interpreting Jewish law and tradition, and its members were deeply committed to maintaining the purity and integrity of Judaism. As a former Pharisee himself, Paul was familiar with the cultural and religious background of his audience. He knew that the Pharisees were strict adherents to Jewish tradition and law, while the Sadducees were more liberal and open to Greek and Roman influences (Bertovich, 2024). The Sanhedrin would have also been aware of the growing tensions between the Jewish Christians and the non-Christian Jews in Jerusalem. They would have seen Paul as a leader of the Jewish Christian movement and would have been suspicious of his claims about

Jesus being the Messiah. As a result, the Sanhedrin would have been eager to examine Paul's teachings and determine whether they were consistent with Jewish law and tradition.

Paul's defence before the Sanhedrin demonstrates his sensitivity to the cultural context of his audience. He began by declaring his good conscience before God, emphasizing his commitment to Jewish law and tradition (Acts 23:1). Paul then addressed the high priest, Ananias, with respect, acknowledging his authority and position (Acts 23:2-3). This approach shows that Paul was aware of the cultural norms and expectations of his audience and was willing to adapt his message accordingly (Marpaung & Hwang, 2023). Paul's defence also reflects his awareness of the theological differences between the Pharisees and Sadducees. He cleverly exploited these differences by declaring that he was a Pharisee and that his hope was in the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6-7; Lee, 2022). This statement sparked a debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees, distracting them from their examination of Paul and allowing him to escape further questioning (Acts 23:7-9).

Paul's Speech before Felix: Acts 24:10-22

Paul's audience consisted of Felix, the Roman procurator of Judea, and the high priest Ananias, who had come from Jerusalem to accuse Paul. Felix was a Roman governor who had been appointed by the Emperor Claudius to govern Judea. He was known for his cruelty and corruption and had a reputation for being ruthless in his treatment of the Jews. As a Roman governor, Felix was familiar with the Roman system of justice and was responsible for maintaining law and order in Judea. The high priest Ananias, on the other hand, was a Jewish leader who represented the Jewish community in Jerusalem. He was a member of the Sadducean party, which was known for its conservative and traditional views. Ananias would have been deeply concerned about the spread of Christianity in Jerusalem and would have seen Paul as a threat to the Jewish traditions and customs. As a result, Ananias would have been eager to accuse Paul of wrongdoing and to persuade Felix to punish him.

Paul's speech before Felix also demonstrates his sensitivity to the cultural context of his audience. He started by expressing his gratitude to Felix for the opportunity to defend himself and to clarify the charges that had been brought against him (Acts 24:10). Paul then proceeded to review the events that had led to his arrest, emphasizing his innocence and his commitment to the Jewish law (Acts 24:11-13). This approach shows that Paul was aware of the Roman system of justice and was willing to adapt his message to fit within that framework. Paul's speech also

reflects his awareness of the Jewish context and the concerns of the high priest Ananias. He emphasized his commitment to the Jewish law and his respect for the Jewish traditions and customs (Acts 24:14-16). Paul also used Jewish terminology and references to describe his faith and his commitment to the resurrection of the dead (Acts 24:15). In all, Paul was able to demonstrate that his faith was rooted in Jewish tradition. At the end of Paul's message, Felix, the Roman governor, was impressed by Paul's speech (Acts 24:24-25).

Paul's Sermon before King Agrippa: Acts 26: 1-32

King Agrippa, a Jewish king, and Festus, the Roman governor, represented two distinct cultures with differing values and beliefs. As a Jewish king, Agrippa would have been familiar with Jewish customs and traditions, while Festus, as a Roman governor, would have been more concerned with maintaining law and order in the region. This dual audience presented a unique challenge for Paul, requiring him to balance his message to resonate with both the Jewish and Roman perspectives (Bertovich, 2024). Additionally, the presence of Bernice, Agrippa's sister, added a layer of complexity, as she would have brought her own set of influences and biases to the gathering (Bruce, 1954).

Paul's sermon demonstrated his sensitivity to the cultural context of his audience in several ways. Firstly, he began by acknowledging Agrippa's familiarity with Jewish customs and controversies, thereby establishing a connection with his Jewish audience (Acts 26:3). Paul then proceeded to share his personal story, highlighting his own Jewish upbringing and his former life as a Pharisee, which would have resonated with Agrippa and the Jewish leaders present (Acts 26:4-5). His use of Jewish scripture and tradition serves as a powerful connection point with his Jewish audience (Acts 26:6-7). By making reference to the Hebrew prophets and the promise of the Messiah, Paul was able to establish a common ground with Agrippa and the Jewish leaders present. In addition, Paul demonstrated his sensitivity to the Roman context by framing his message in terms of the Roman values of justice and reason. He appealed to Festus's sense of justice, arguing that he was innocent of the charges brought against him (Acts 26:25-26). The use of language and concepts familiar to his Roman audience enabled Paul to communicate his message in a way that is both respectful and persuasive (Chaisson, 2024). He was able to challenge his audience to reconsider their assumptions about the Christian faith and its relevance to their own lives. Paul's address was so persuasive that King Agrippa confessed that he (Paul) almost converted him (Agrippa) to Christianity within the short period (Acts 26:28).

Paul's message to the Roman Jewish leaders: Acts 28: 17-28

Paul's audience consisted of the Jewish leaders in Rome, who were likely familiar with the Jewish Scriptures and the traditions of their ancestors. As Jews living in Rome, they were part of a minority community within the larger Roman Empire. They would have been aware of the complexities of living as Jews in a predominantly Gentile society and would have had to navigate the challenges of maintaining their Jewish identity in a foreign context. They would have also been aware of the growing tensions between the Jewish Christians and the non-Christian Jews in Rome (Lee, 2022). They would have seen Paul as a leader of the Jewish Christian movement and would have been suspicious of his claims about Jesus being the Messiah. As a result, they would have been eager to hear Paul's message and to determine whether his teachings were consistent with Jewish tradition (Lüdemann, 1989).

Paul used language and imagery that was familiar to his Jewish audience, drawing on the Jewish Scriptures and tradition to explain his message (Acts 28:23; Lee, 2022). This approach shows that Paul he was aware of the cultural norms and expectations of his audience and was willing to adapt his message to fit within that framework.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that Apostles Paul's approach is a model for contemporary evangelistic and missionary efforts. Paul used different approaches in all the nine places in Acts of Apostles, where he delivered evangelistic speeches. His message and approach at each occasion was determined by his audience. For instance, his awareness of the importance of magic and supernatural powers in the Lystran culture informed his decision to heal a man born lame as an opening to his ministry in Lystra, so he was able to connect with his audience on their own terms. Therefore, Paul's model is a shining example of effective cross-cultural communication. Besides, Paul did all these without compromising the gospel message. His willingness to respect the cultural practices of his audience, as well as his ability to adapt his message to fit their cultural context, demonstrates a high level of cultural sensitivity.

As can be seen from the reviews above, Paul recorded great successes in his evangelistic endeavours because he knew and understood his audience well. This sensitivity enabled him to establish connections with people from diverse backgrounds, creating opportunities for the gospel message to take root. Paul's approach to evangelism clearly demonstrates characteristics of the higher stages of Bennett's model, particularly the stages of acceptance, adaptation, and

integration. Therefore, as missionaries seek to engage in evangelism and discipleship across cultural boundaries, Apostle Paul's example is a good model for cultural sensitivity and adaptability in effective cross-cultural communication.

Recommendations

In contemporary missions, cultural sensitivity remains a vital consideration. It is recommended that missionaries and evangelists' study and understand the cultures of the people they engage with, recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities each presents. This may include learning their language, customs, and values. Also, they should adapt their evangelistic approaches to fit the cultural context of their audience. It is also recommended that missionaries and evangelists should allow their approach to evangelism to be determined by their audience without compromising the truth of the gospel. Finally, further study could examine Jesus' display of cultural sensitivity in His evangelistic outreaches.

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