

# **EXTRA!**

## **from the Creek**

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**This midweek, we're passing along to you  
a page from the pastor's**

## **CountyCulture Columns**

### **Adjustments**

March 28, 2007

It is so vital that we as the church keep a finger on the pulse of our local culture. And frankly, we've lost all sense of feeling if we think that that pulse isn't changing. Such cultural changes demand adjustments on our part; as the culture adjusts, so the church must adjust its methods to reach the most people possible. Notice that I said we must adjust our methods, not our message. Our message must always strictly adhere to the Word of God, which is stable and unchanging. But the ways in which we expound His Word has forever past been in flux, and it most assuredly must be in flux now. You might say that we need to operate with a Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other – that we need to renew daily our depth of knowledge both for the message of God and for the culture around us. Surely, this is what the apostle Paul meant when he wrote, "I

kept my bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life."

We can learn something from the sociologists who point out that the actual religious divide between Americans and Europeans is smaller than we think. Europe isn't exactly filled with hard-core atheists; the big difference isn't belief in God but church attendance, which is vastly lower in Europe. They argue that this is because American churches are freer to change their presentation so as to actively vie for parishioners—that they constantly improve their product. European churches, on the other hand, are often under state control and, like many government monopolies, have grown more and more inefficient. Most polls from European countries show that a majority of people are believers. Consider Iceland. To judge by rates of churchgoing, Iceland is the most secular country on earth, with a pathetic two percent weekly attendance. But four out of five Icelanders say that they pray and believe in life after death.

The culture of this county is different from any other culture I've ever known. Yes, it has a few similarities to Chicago or Nashville or Clarksville. But it has multiple differences as well—even from other rural communities that are undergoing some of the same kind of changes we are. Thus comes the question: How do we adjust the way we do things as a church so as to reach the broadest number of people who live in this particular culture today? We really do need to gauge what music and entertainment and TV and other media Stewart Countians prefer and make the appropriate adjustments to our presentation over time. Of course, today's culture will be ever so slightly different tomorrow; and so we must make ever so slight adjustments tomorrow in how we reach the culture then. Like Paul, we must be willing to make whatever adjustments are necessary to the ways in which we disseminate the unchanging message of God. It's called change, and we must change in order to lead those who are seeking God into the God-saved life.

#### **Sources**

Paul Bloom. "Is God an Accident?" in *The Atlantic* (December 2005)

Eugene H. Peterson. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (NavPress)

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