SBC Chapel Dr. Andrew Spurgeon

4 February 2015 NT Professor, Asian Christian Academy

Session 4 Notes by Dr. Rick Griffith, Singapore Bible College

**Reading Romans from an Asian Perspective**

***Unique Contributions of an Asian Reading of Romans to the Churches of Asia***

**Topic:** Evangelism

**Subject:** How can we address culture properly?

**Complement:** Identify with your culture within biblical constraints

**Purpose:** The listeners will be sensitive to unbelievers when they identify with their culture within biblical constraints

# Introduction

### Interest: Christians shouldn’t think and act like the culture they came out of, as they are not of this world.

### Subject: How can we address culture properly?

# I. Some aspects of culture are biblical while others are cultural.

## Dowry: Sometimes it is good in that the couple gets enough money to start off well. For example, seven Naga pigs are slaughtered for the wedding feast. However, too often the dowry system leads to greed, corruption, and death. One man actually took his new wife’s dowry, burned her alive in an “accidental” kitchen death, then married a second wife. Once he took her dowry, he also killed her and so on until he had collected several dowries.

## Sati: The woman dies by jumping into the fire to join her dead husband. Though technically illegal, one sati was televised in 1987.

## Bonded labor: A person starts working for the master, borrowing $200 and then brings his wife to work as well, so she also works. He still can’t pay the debt, so his oldest son then comes, and eventually the whole family must come, generation after generation in debt.

# II. We must honestly evaluate our culture by Scripture.

## Lori decided in 2005 to wear a nose ring since Ezekiel 16:12 notes that God gave Israel a nose ring as an act of honor.

## Men in Kerala do not wear facial hair, so Andrew does not speak there. This is an amoral issue.

## Bell-bottom pants are amoral, but prohibited in many Christian circles until they went out of style!

## Long hair for men keeps changing meaning, depending on the time and culture.

## Minor chords used to be considered demonic (same for harmony or drums).

## Head coverings have different meanings depending upon the culture. In Rajasthan, if a woman doesn't have her husband or father-in-law with her in church, she gives the impression that she has a “secret husband” when she wears a head covering.

## The Greek scholar Gustav Adolf Deissmann (7 November 1866 – 5 April 1937) discovered that title “Chief Shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4) used for Jesus was common in depictions, but the proper name that followed was often misspelled. This seemed strange since one would expect that greater care would be exercised to assure the correct spelling of prominent people. Later he discovered that this really means “under shepherd,” though his interpretation still has not made its way into modern translations (e.g., NAU, NLT).

# III. We should value other cultures for what they hold dear provided they do not contradict Scripture.

# IV. We must be careful that we do not become alien in our own culture.

## Hindu baby dedications to the gods at age one is typically a time when Christians do not attend.

## Take your shoes off when you enter other homes.

## Sit cross-legged in Indian culture as you do not have a chair offered to you but are expected to sit on a mat. In another Andrew

# V. Our neighbors should see us as fellow sojourners on another path but a narrower path.

## Andrew asked his Hindu neighbor Periah on his walk, “Have you worshipped your god today?” After doing this many times, Periah finally asked, “Why are you asking me this each time? Shouldn’t you tell me *not* to worship my god?” Andrew answered, “I do wish that you will worship my God, but you must first learn to be reverent and not cheat people. How many people did you cheat today?”

## We should not be seen as enemies of our non-Christian neighbors.

# VI. Your evangelism and missions take place.

## Andrew’s mother lived on a street with about Hindu 30 families. She never shared the gospel with them, but only shared one sentence: “I am praying for you.” After 10 years of doing this, they finally started coming over to share specific requests. Now, 30 years later, about 20 of those 30 families have become Christians.

# VII. The glory of God shines through our lives in our culture but in a new, kingdom way.

## “For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17).

## Do people define us by what we do or don’t do? Andrew’s Hindu grandfather who played the organ in a church thought Christianity meant no reading books, no singing, and no beer. What are we communicating to people?

## Paul said that the strong should accept the weak without passing judgment. Andrew and Lori used to watch R rated movies (esp. horror films) after their 10 and 8 year boys went to bed. One day their 10-year-old son asked, “Why can you watch big people movies but we cannot?” That day all of their R-rated films were thrown out.

## We must follow Paul’s principles of the strong and the weak.

### Accept one another

### Such acceptance is necessary so that the covenant people and those who receive his mercy should accept the Messiah

### Give your rights over—Andrew never eats beef in India, though he has the freedom to do so.

# Conclusion

### Identify with your culture within biblical constraints (MI).

### Exhortation: Get people to think that Romans was written to them.