Contextualization for Social Change

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1. Introduction –Summarize the intent of the course, how it fits into the graduate program as a whole, and the relevance of its position in the curricular sequence.

2. Personal Growth - Describe your personal growth–how the course stretched or challenged you– and your progress in mastery of course content and skills during the week and through subsequent readings – what new insights or skills you gained.

3. Reflective Entry - Add a reflective entry that describes the contextualization (or adaptation and relevant application) of new learning in your professional field. What questions or concerns have surfaced about your professional field as a result of your study?

4. Conclusion – Evaluate the effectiveness of the course in meeting your professional, religious, and educational goals.

1. **Introduction** – The intent of this course was to teach the how and why of contextualization, as well as to empower students to apply this new knowledge to an issue in their own personal or professional life. “Contextualization adapts a transformational message to a cultural context so that the message may be understood and received by a social group to change the world through spiritual and positive social change” (Dr Ward, October 1, 2024, slide 4).

 As a student in the OGS graduate program, learning to be a changemaker for the Kingdom, this course is imperative because there is a context that each one of us will identify in our studies as the issue God wants us to address. To date, my OGS coursework has helped narrow my focus and to allow me to see how God has prepared me for this challenge.

 Now that I have the issue to address, and the path to address the challenge, this course was key to showing me that I need to change the current context in order to persuade the people group I am addressing to see the issue as I do. Once the issue and current context is presented, I can then present a new context and the reason it is necessary. The last component is to present a solution based in the next context along with a persuasive challenge to join me in embracing the opportunity to positively impact the Kingdom.

2. **Personal Growth** - Each course I have taken at OGS completely shakes my world because I see God working through the coursework to enlighten me and grow my worldview. The challenge is always to learn then apply this new knowledge to the career path I am on. Professionally, it is wonderful to be working towards a degree and in doing so seeing the path lit ahead by the end of each course. This is unlike any degree I have completed in the past; and I have a lot of wallpaper! This will be my fifth degree since high school, but the only one where I see the next step professionally.

 Personally, God is already at the core of my life and I believe that made applying this course to my professional career easier than if I were 20 years younger. Part of my purpose now includes closing this gap for today’s youth. Teaching them at a younger age about the biblical principles of work in order for them to automatically see their college and career as a mission field.

 3. **Reflective Entry** - The obvious next step is to integrate this into my professional journey. Learning about contextualization helped me to conclude that one reason my organization has been unsuccessful in persuading churches to adopt our program isn’t really about the excuses they give (e.g., we don’t have time or the families will be financially burdened). It is because they do not value the biblical principles of work.

 Pastors and the church are focused on growing individuals in their faith, but they do not address faith at work in either Sunday sermons or bible studies. The context of church with regards to vocation must change for congregants to see their career as a mission field! Doing so will directly impact individuals with fewer burnouts, more fulfilling careers, and increased tithing. Indirectly, potential consequences include - more people coming to Christ, students working through high school with a path ready for college, fewer Christian students losing faith in college.

 This course helped me to see that focusing on high school students is good, but my ministry needs to address the church and persuade pastors to accept a new Christian contextualization regarding work. As a result, I will be working with my team to share this new insight and to develop a component that shares the need to teach about biblical work principles and why it is so important for our youth, for adults and retirees, as well as for the church and the Kingdom.

 Revising our program will also include adding a faith at work component where we will teach individuals to see college and career as a mission field. We want them to be prepared for college, especially secular campuses because we want to reverse the current trend where students lose their faith during college and instead have our students bring more students to Christ.

 It is my belief that modifying my ministry in this way will persuade church involvement in three ways. First, pastors and churches will embrace the need to teach the biblical principles of work and agree to adopt the STRIVE career ministry. Second, that retirees and adults in transition will be encouraged to shepherd the younger generation as mentors and liaisons for the career ministry. Lastly, that this program will have a positive impact on the Kingdom by reversing the number of students losing faith in college, increasing church tithes, and empowering Christians to be salt and light in their mission field.

4. **Conclusion** – I hope this learning journal speaks loudly regarding the effectiveness of the course in meeting my professional, religious, and educational goals. Learning about Christian contextualization was a giant “a-ha” moment for me. While I have said this about every course at OGS, this was like opening a new gallon of rocky road ice cream!

 The gold in this course is because I realized why my ministry has struggled since I have been a part of the organization to gain traction with our career development ministry. Seeing the need for a new Christian contextualization is opening that gallon of ice cream. The next step (equivalent to “digging in”) will be to test my premise and see if God opens the door!