

Staying “Trendy” In Today’s Ever-changing World

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Ministry has always been a blend of the changing and the unchanging. The Gospel message, and the pure words of scripture are **unchanging**; but the presentation of the Word of God must reflect the **changing** cultural and societal “trends” and needs, without compromising the Gospel message. A fruitful ministry is one that is led by the **unchanging God** and speaks the “language” of the **changing world** around it. The challenge is to remain anchored in God’s Word, while being aware of the “trends” around you.



Biblical Foundation

Throughout scripture, God’s ministers (prophets, teachers, apostles, disciples) have always been involved in “the world.” They have always been used by God to apply His message to the “trends” of humanity. Here are some examples:

1. **Joseph** – Lived with, ministered to, the world of Pharaoh (Gen. 40-48)
2. **Moses** – Lived among, learned about, dealt with the world of Pharaoh (Ex. 2-13)
3. **Moses** – Lived among, led the people of Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 13-40; Deuteronomy)
4. **Joshua** – Led the people of Israel into the promised land (Joshua)
5. **Ehud** – Delivered Israel from the evil of Eglon, King of Moab (Judges 3)
6. **Deborah** – Delivered Israel from Sisera (Judges 4 and 5)
7. **Gideon** – Delivered Israel from Midian (Judges 6-8)
8. **David** – Lived with Saul and then became King (1 Samuel – 2 Samuel 2)
9. **Isaiah** – Lived among the people to whom he prophesied (Isaiah)
10. **Jeremiah** – Lived among the people to whom he prophesied (Jeremiah)
11. **Ezekiel** – Lived among the people to whom he prophesied (Ezekiel)
12. **Daniel** – Lived among the people to whom he prophesied (Daniel)
13. **Hosea** – Lived among the people to whom he prophesied (Hosea)
14. **Amos** – Lived among the people to whom he prophesied (Amos)
15. **Obadiah** – Lived among the people to whom he prophesied (Obadiah)
16. **Nahum** - Lived among the people to whom he prophesied (Nahum)
17. **Habakkuk** – Lived among the people to whom he prophesied (Habakkuk)
18. **Haggai** – Lived among the people to whom he prophesied (Haggai)
19. **Zechariah** – Lived among the people to whom he prophesied (Zechariah)
20. **Malachi** – Lived among the people to whom he prophesied (Malachi)
21. **Jesus** - Lived among the people to whom he prophesied (The Gospels)
 - a. “You have heard it said...” (Mt. 5)
 - b. “When you give alms, <or pray,> <or fast,> do not be like...” (Mt. 6)
 - c. “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath...” (Mt. 12:8)
 - d. “The Sower went out to sow...” (Mt.13)
 - e. “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs...” (Mt 15: 26)
 - f. “...an evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign...” (Mt. 16: 4)



Definition of A “Trend”

A “trend” is an action or behavior that reflects a belief and exists long enough to become a consistent factor in a lifestyle. A “fad” is a “popular” action that will pass over time, with the coming of the next fad.

Being Aware of The Trends

1. Watch

- a. TV (news, television shows, award shows, late-night talk shows, specials)
- b. Movies

2. Observe

- a. Society “culture” (tattoos, piercing, clothing, anger level, etc.)
- b. Social media trends
- c. Economic “culture”
- d. Crime level
- e. Family stats (divorce, etc.)
- f. Neighborhood conditions
- g. Children playing?
- h. “Wal-Mart walk-through”

3. Ask / Listen

- a. Talk with parents in the church.
- b. Casual inquiries
 - 1.) “How do you like living here?”
 - 2.) “Do you like the schools here?”
 - 3.) “Is this community safe?”
 - 4.) “What is the #1 need?”
- c. At the post office
- d. At the gas station
- e. At the grocery store
- f. At local fast-food restaurants
- g. At local “sit down” restaurants
- h. At local schools

4. Read

- a. Magazines
- b. Newspapers
- c. Online sources
 - 1.) Blogs
 - 2.) Social media sites (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.)
 - 3.) Websites (see list on last page)
- d. Research / polls
 - 1.) Gallup Poll – <http://poll.gallup.com>
 - 2.) Harris Poll – <https://theharrispoll.com>
 - 3.) ICPSR – Inter-University Consortium for Social and Political Research – <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu>
 - 4.) Rand Policy Research – <http://www.rand.org/pubs/online/>
 - 5.) American Religion Data Archive (ARDA) – <http://www.thearda.com/> International as well as American data on religion.
 - 6.) Barna Research Online – <http://www.barna.org>
 - 7.) Pew Internet and American Life Project – <http://www.pewinternet.org/>
 - 8.) Pew Research Center – <http://people-press.org/> Reports at <http://people-press.org/reports/>

Analyzing The Trends

When a “trend” is discovered, or suspected, those of us in ministry positions need to seek God’s guidance in determining what the impact of that trend is on our ministry programs or approaches. Here are some questions to consider as you analyze the trend:

1. Describe the trend (what is it, who is doing it, and how is it exposed?)
2. How does this trend affect those who are participating in it?
3. What are the possible reasons for a person to participate in the trend?
4. How does this trend effect children?
5. How does this trend effect families?
6. What is the impact of this trend on children or family ministry (programming, parent support, curriculum, team training, outreach)?

Trend Research Websites

1. Religion & Ethics Newsweekly – <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics>
2. Wired – <https://www.wired.com/>
3. Newsweek – <https://www.newsweek.com/>
4. Barna Research Online – <https://www.barna.com/>
5. Predicting Tomorrow, C&R Research Services Inc. – <https://www.crresearch.com/>
6. KidzEyes – <https://kidzeyes.com/>
7. Kidscreen, Los Angeles, CA: Brunico Marketing Inc. – <https://kidscreen.com/>
8. Children’s Ministry magazine – <https://childrensministry.com/>
9. Church World Service Emergency Response Program – <https://cwsglobal.org/>
10. Boys & Girls Clubs of America – <https://bgca.org/>
11. Parents magazine – <https://www.parents.com/>
12. Nickelodeon magazine, – <https://www.nick.com/>
13. Connect With Kids – <https://connectwithkids.com/>
14. Family Life – <https://www.familylife.com/>
15. American Family Association online – <https://www.afa.net/>
16. Christianity Today Parenting – <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/topics/p/parenting/>
17. Christianity Today Leadership journal – <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/>
18. Focus on the Family – <https://www.focusonthefamily.com>
19. Child Trends – <https://www.childtrends.org/>
20. America’s Children – <https://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/>
21. Servant Evangelism – <https://www.stevesjogren.com/>
22. Trends Research Institute – <https://trendsjournal.com/>
23. Trend Hunter – <https://www.trendhunter.com/>
24. Social & Demographic Trends, Pew Research Center – <https://www.pewresearch.org/publications/?programs=social-trends#recent-publications>
25. Ask – <https://www.ask.com/>
26. Education Commission – <https://www.ecs.org/>
27. Social Trend Institute – <https://socialtrendsintstitute.org/>