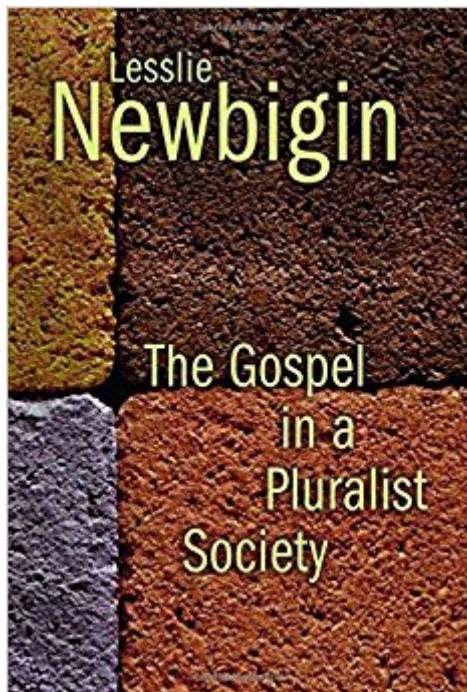


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The Gospel In A Pluralist Society



Synopsis

How does the gospel relate to a pluralist society? What is the Christian message in a society marked by religious pluralism, ethnic diversity, and cultural relativism? Should Christians encountering today's pluralist society concentrate on evangelism or on dialogue? How does the prevailing climate of opinion affect, perhaps infect, Christians' faith? These kinds of questions are addressed in this noteworthy book by Lesslie Newbigin. A highly respected Christian leader and ecumenical figure, Newbigin provides a brilliant analysis of contemporary (secular, humanist, pluralist) culture and suggests how Christians can more confidently affirm their faith in such a context. While drawing from scholars such as Michael Polanyi, Alasdair MacIntyre, Hendrikus Berkhof, Walter Wink, and Robert Wuthnow, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* is suited not only to an academic readership. This heartfelt work by a missionary pastor and preacher also offers to Christian leaders and laypeople some thoughtful, helpful, and provocative reflections.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When I initially picked up this book, I thought, "oh, another one of these books." There seems to be a new book on pluralism and postmodernism coming out every day. I had read bits of Newbigin before, and knew that a missionary in India for forty years would have something to say worthwhile. I was not mistaken. Newbigin's clear voice and wise, yet succinct, observations make this an extremely valuable book to read. I was greatly influenced by this book, and found new insights and confirmation of my own undeveloped thoughts which encouraged and challenged my thinking. Newbigin develops his thoughts by showing why and how a Christian message can be conveyed

and understood in a pluralist society. He first shows how a pluralistic understanding views religion in general. Coming from an Indian perspective he has an excellent understanding of this. Pluralist societies tend to be religious, accepting the transcendent as something which is greater than one single philosophy can grasp hold of. Yet, Newbiggin approaches this directly, asking "why?" What makes a person know that the transcendent is greater than one religion? He challenges the view by showing that those who claim this are asserting a source of knowledge on their own, establishing for themselves a point of reference which they deny to others. In addition, Newbiggin shows the now common fallacies which are involved in a true pluralistic view. A person can not be a pluralist in a math class. Thus, there are accepted areas in which Truth can be established. The role now before us is to show, and proclaim, that religion can be this area, and that Christianity is this truth.

I first read this book for my History and Theology of Mission class in college. Leslie Newbiggin's book was a treat to read. He offers a very good look into the Gospel and modern culture and tries to offer a solution to the question of where Christianity fits in a pluralistic world. In an age where no one can claim to know the whole truth anymore, how can Christians go around proclaiming that we know the only way? In modern culture, this makes us seem arrogant and prideful and causes more and more modern people to view the Church in an increasingly harsh light. However, evangelism can best be served, he argues, by the living witness of a community of Christians and by the activism of ordained ministers to help guide and teach this community. Jesus formed a community, he says, and the best way to witness is simply by being an active part of a flourishing community that praises, has truth, is involved with the neighborhood, where people are sustained to minister to the world, that is responsible, and that has hope. We are not called to defend the faith but instead to simply witness. Another answer to the increasingly hostile view of many towards Christianity can be found in dialogue. Newbiggin argues that true dialogue serves as a "starting point in our relation to people of other faiths." (180) All humans share the same need to answer the question "Why?" and he believes that dialogue can open the doors to a renewed sense of spirituality because it involves the telling of the story of Jesus. Of course to have true dialogue we must also listen to those we are conversing with, but instead of seeing this as something fearful that could possibly cause us to lose faith we should instead look upon it as an opportunity to check our own biases.

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