



Rightly Contextualizing God's Word of Truth: Hermeneutics and Discipleship in the African Context

2023 Bible College Consultation

Dr. Brian A. DeVries

Introduction



2 Timothy 2:1-2, 15-26

Do your best... to rightly handle the word of truth!

... and to effectively disciple students within context.

How to “rightly handle” correctly?

How to “rightly handle” effectively?



Rightly Contextualizing God's Word of Truth

Hermeneutics and Discipleship in Africa

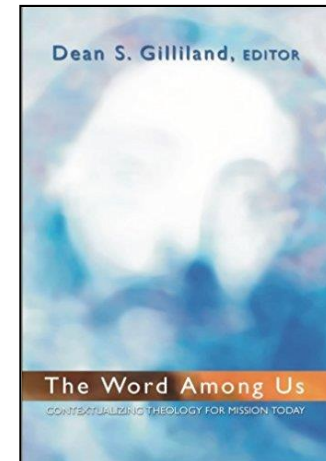
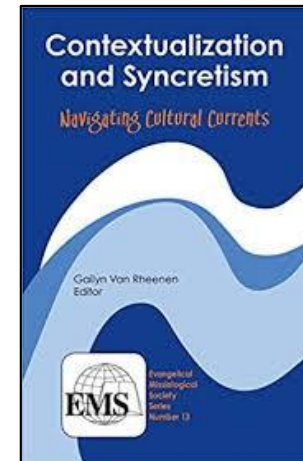
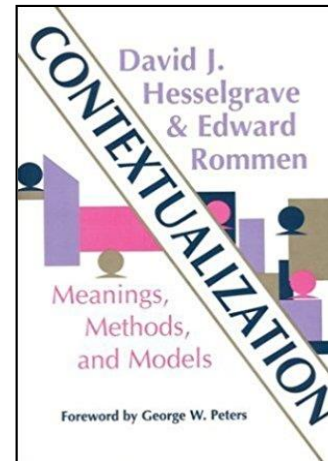
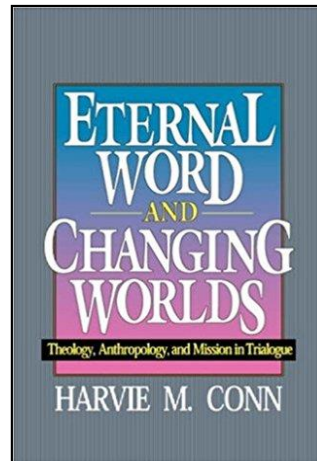
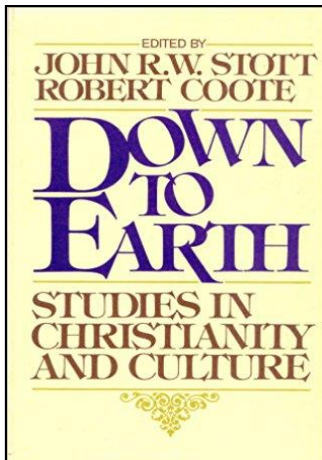
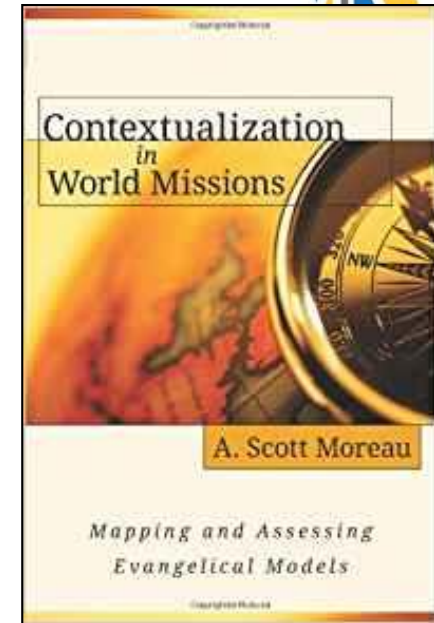
1. Defining Contextualisation
2. Hermeneutics in Context
3. Discipleship in Context



History of the Concept



- Term first used by conciliar churches
- Later adopted by Evangelicals
- Many related terms and ongoing debate about how to do it
- Several evangelical books:

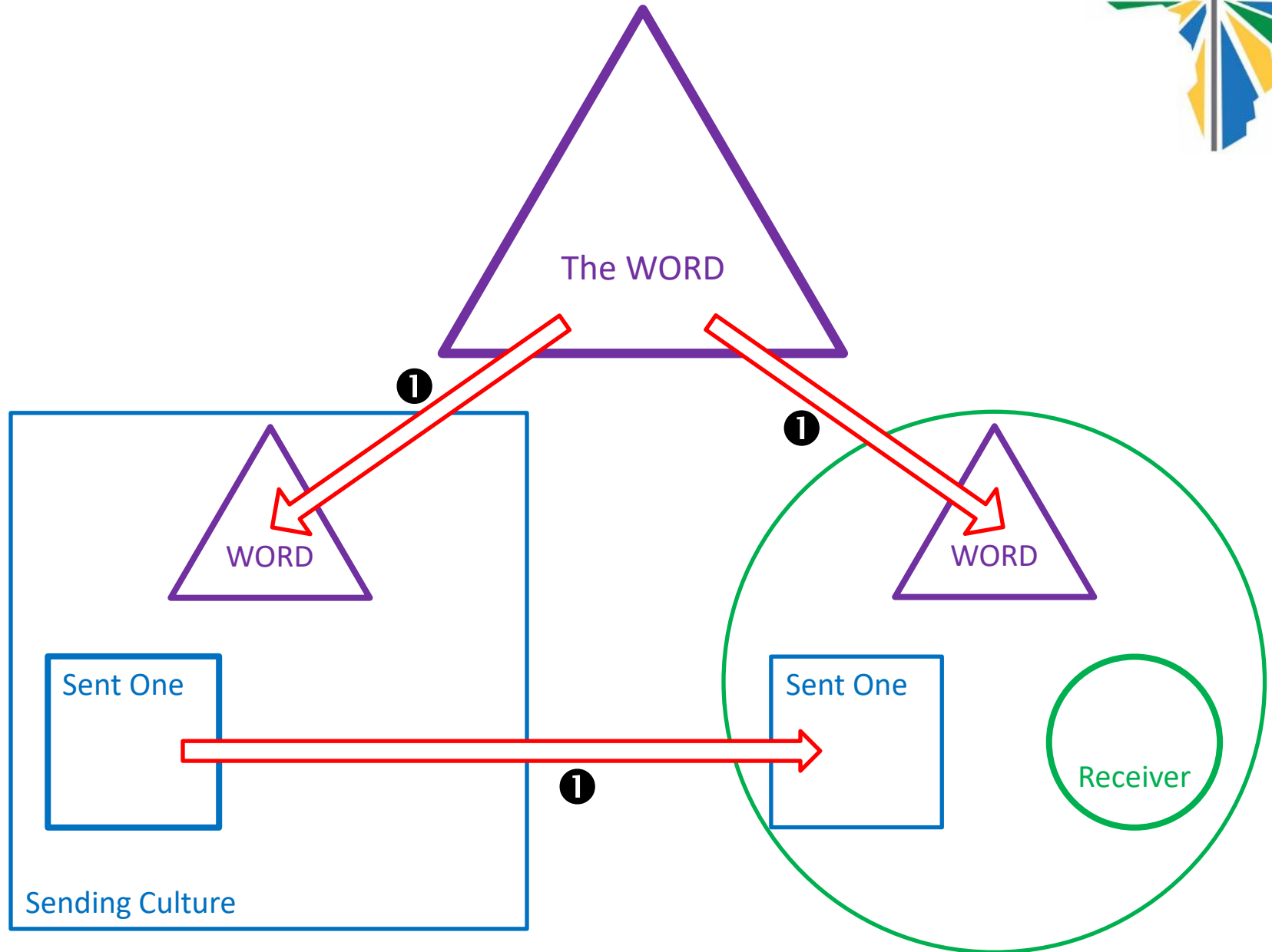


Which “contextualisation”?

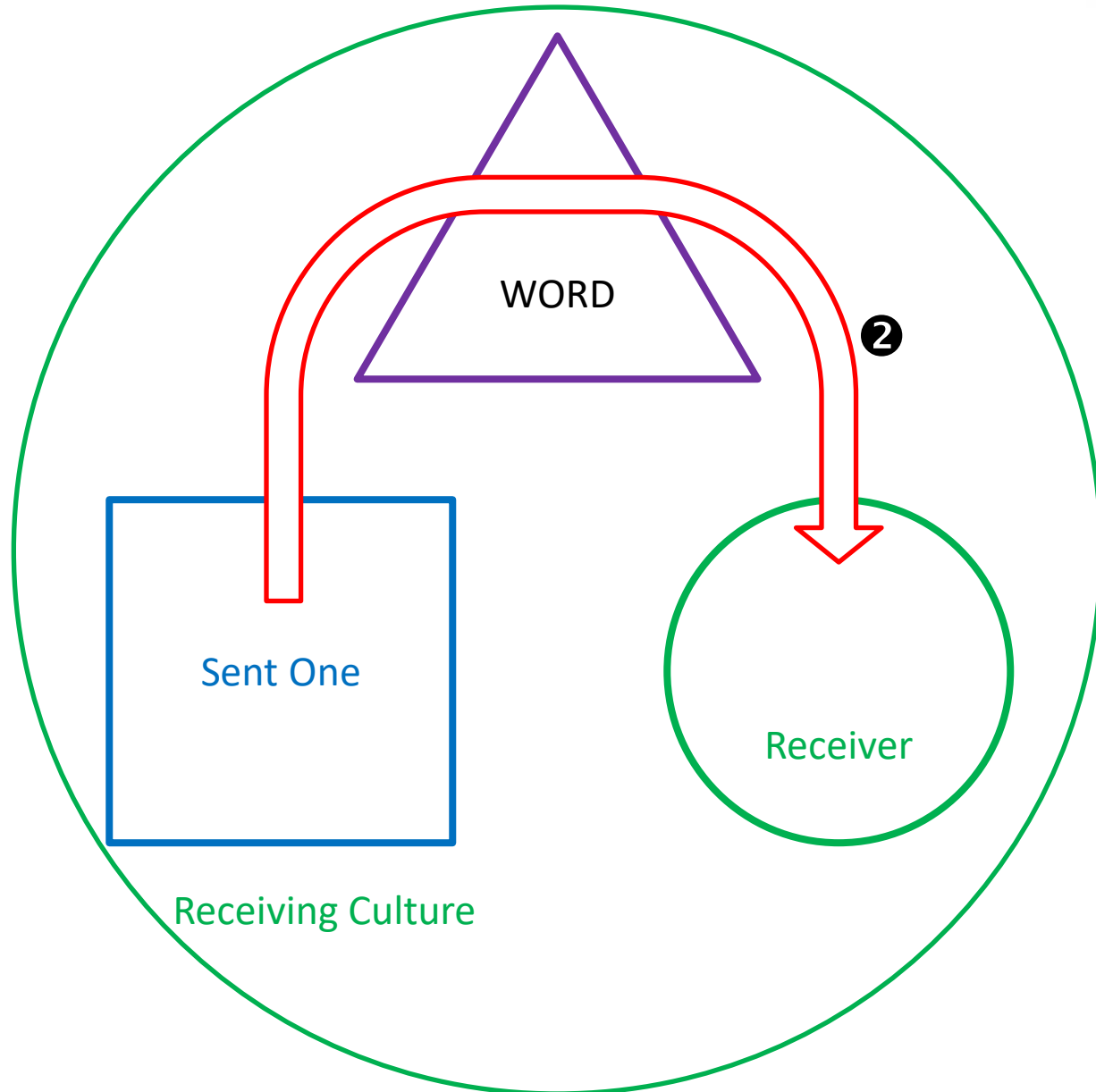


- X1 Incarnational contextualisation (adapting)
- X2 Missional contextualisation (translating)
- X3 Ecclesial contextualisation (indigenizing)
- X4 Reformational contextualisation (transforming)
- X5 Reflectional contextualisation (maturing)
- X6 Universal contextualisation (united worship)

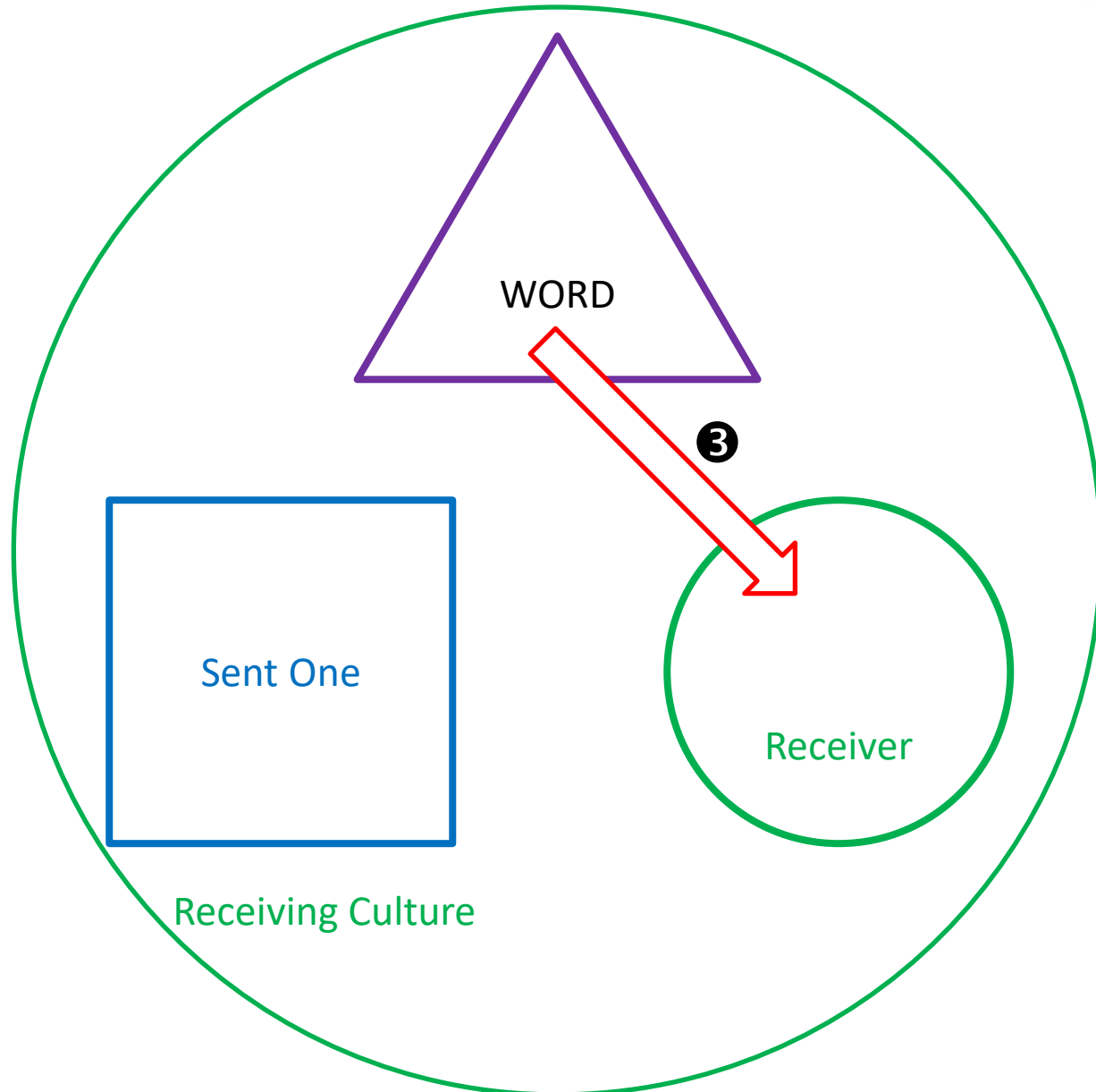
X1. Incarnational Contextualisation



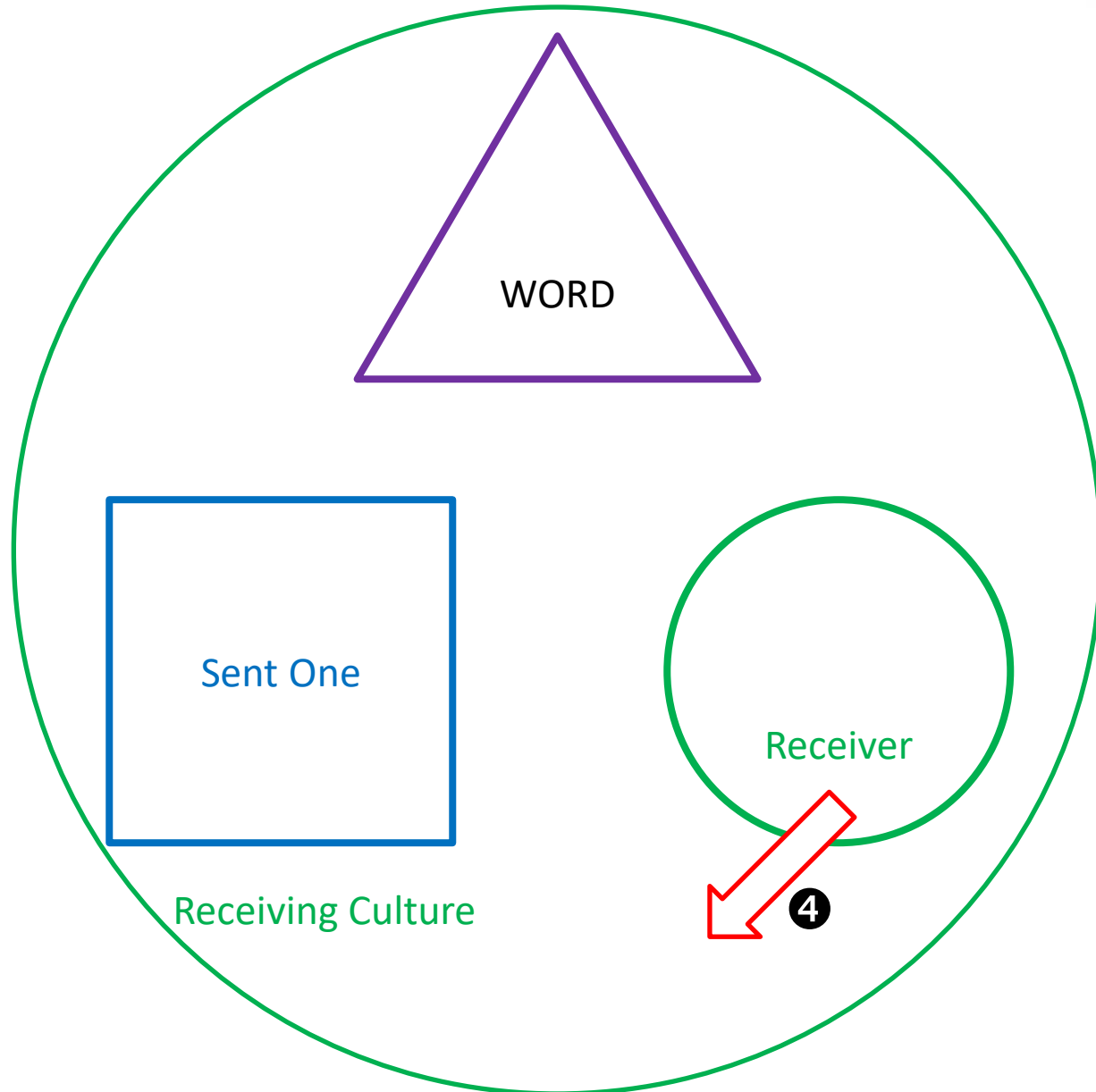
X2. Missional Contextualisation



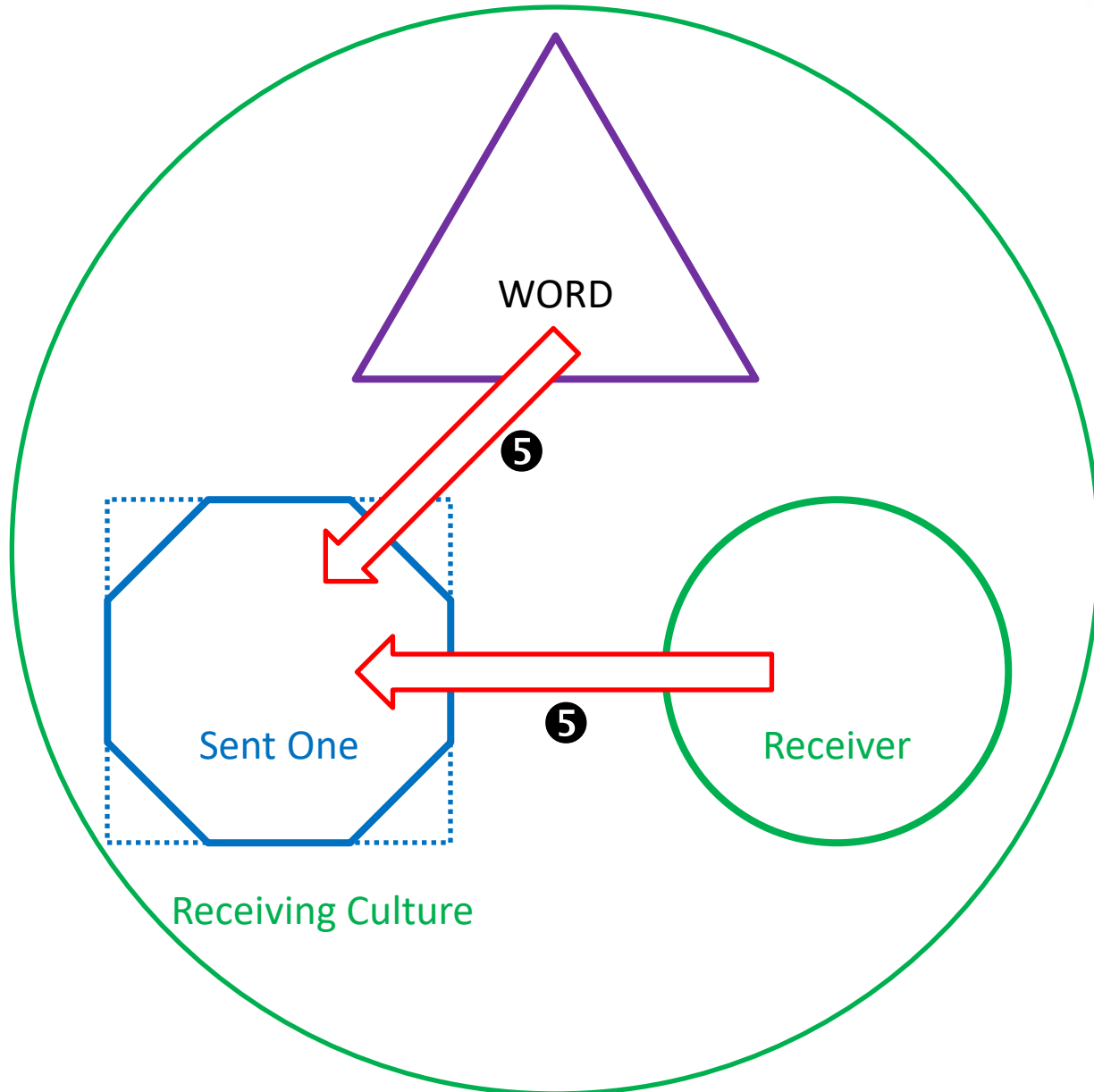
X3. Ecclesial Contextualisation



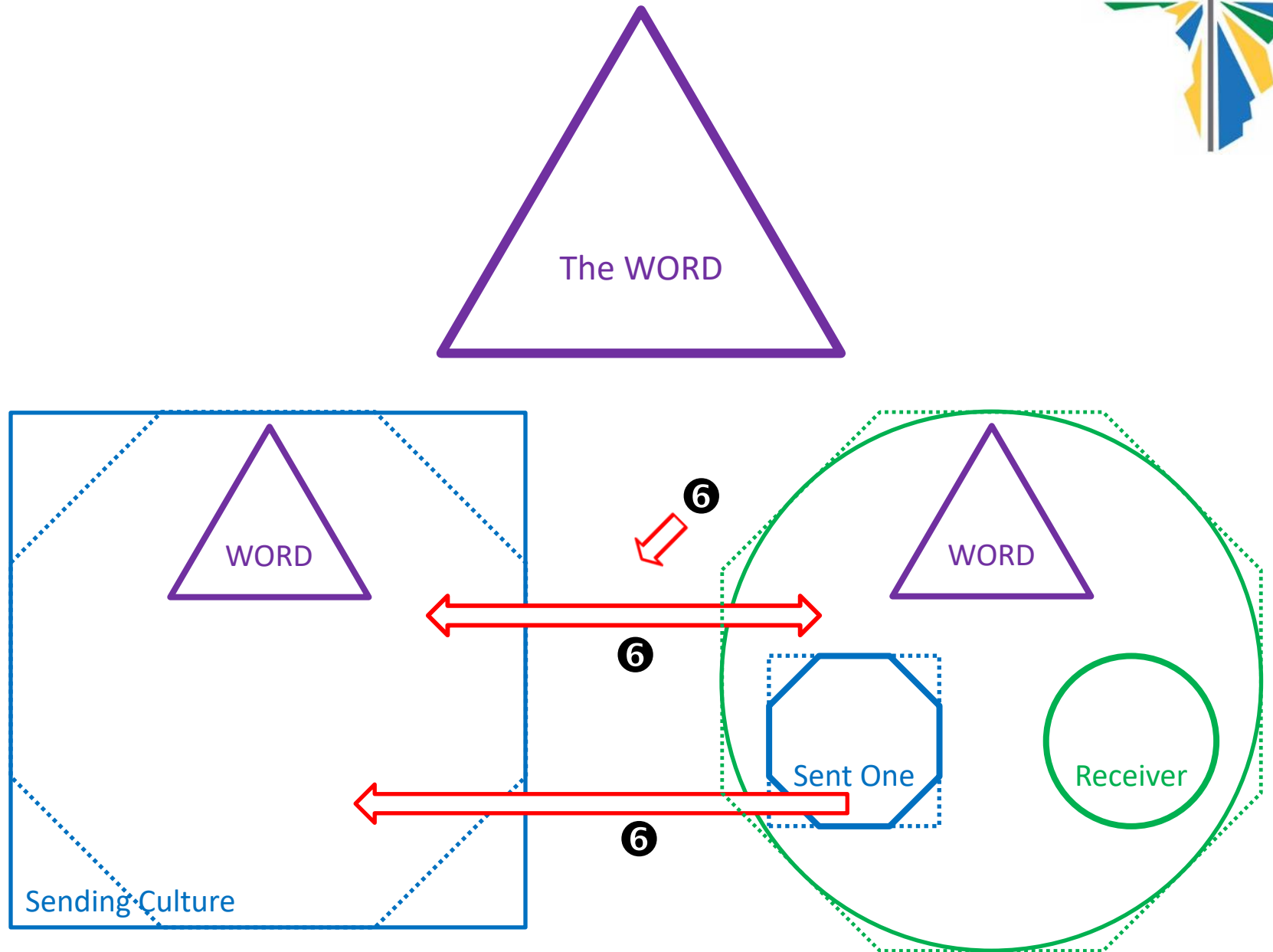
X4. Reformational Contextualisation



X5. Reflectional Contextualisation



X6. Global Contextualisation



Which “contextualisation”?



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How are you using the concept in your ministry?

Sola Scriptura = Scripture Alone



- Scripture is our supreme authority in all spiritual matters, teaching all truth necessary for our salvation and spiritual life, either explicitly or implicitly.
- Scripture is the highest authority on any matter on which it speaks (2 Pet 1:19; cf. Col 2:6-8).
- Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 6.1: “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men...”

Tota Scriptura = Scripture in Totality



- Confessing the whole counsel of God as infallibly and consistently revealed in the entirety of Scripture – all sixty-six books of the canon
- *Sola Scriptura* has a limiting effect, keeping us from adding to the Bible; *Tota Scriptura* has an enlarging effect, keeping us from subtracting from the Bible.
- *Sola Scriptura* and *Tota Scriptura* balance each other to keep us focused on the 66 inspired books in the biblical canon, nothing more and nothing less.

Belgic Confession, article 7



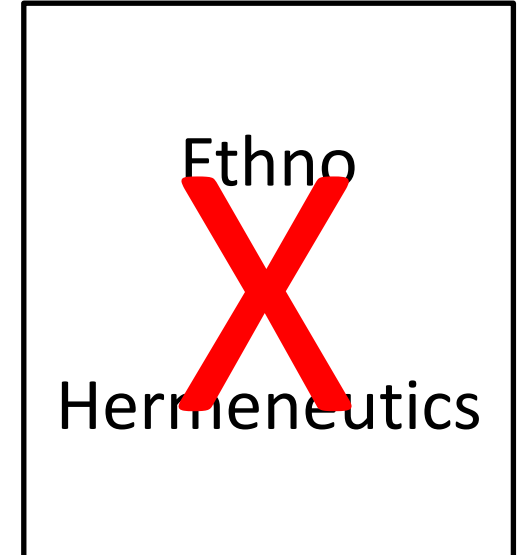
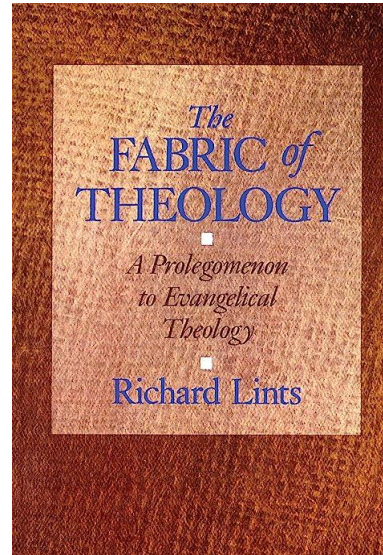
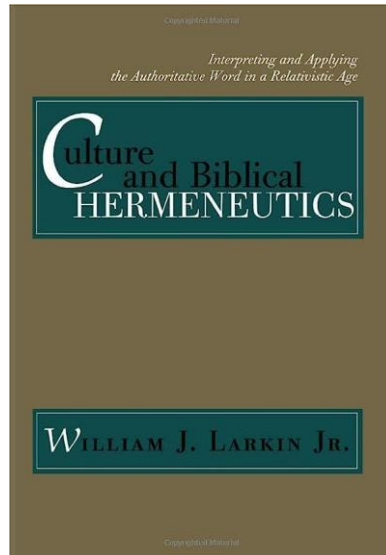
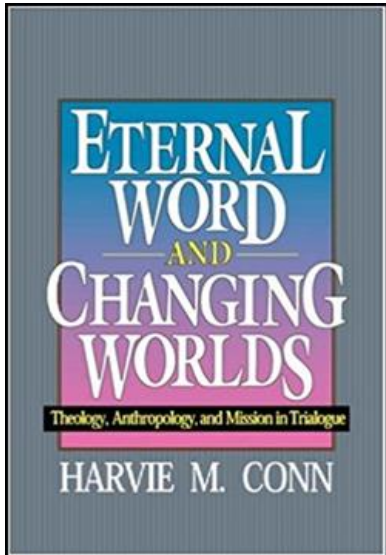
The sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, to be the only rule of faith.

- We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe, unto salvation, is sufficiently taught therein. For, since the whole manner of worship, which God requires of us, is written in them at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures: No, though it were an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul saith. For, since it is forbidden, to add unto or take away anything from the word of God, it doth thereby evidently appear, that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects. ...
- **Therefore, we reject with all our hearts, whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule**, which the apostles have taught us, saying, Try the spirits whether they are of God. Likewise, if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house.

Hermeneutics in Context



- What is your motive in biblical hermeneutics?
- How should the context influence the process?



Example: 2 Tim. 2:20-21



Honourable & dishonourable vessels in the house

“²⁰ Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honourable use, some for dishonourable. ²¹ Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonourable, he will be a vessel for honourable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.”

What is a *House* and a *Vessel*?



Houses in Hellenistic, Western, & African contexts:



- *Vessels* for honorable and dishonorable use:

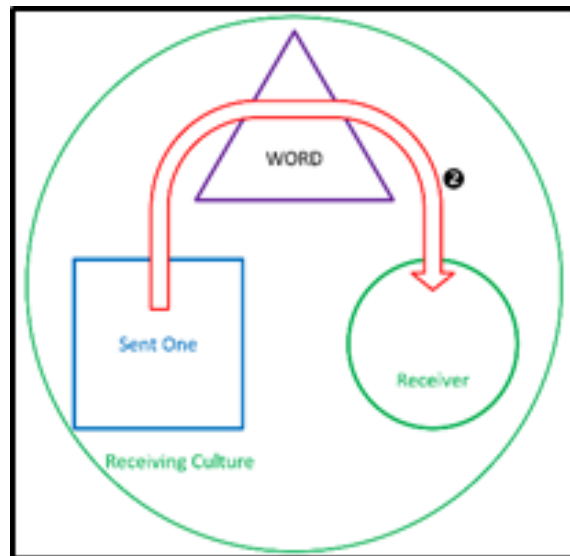


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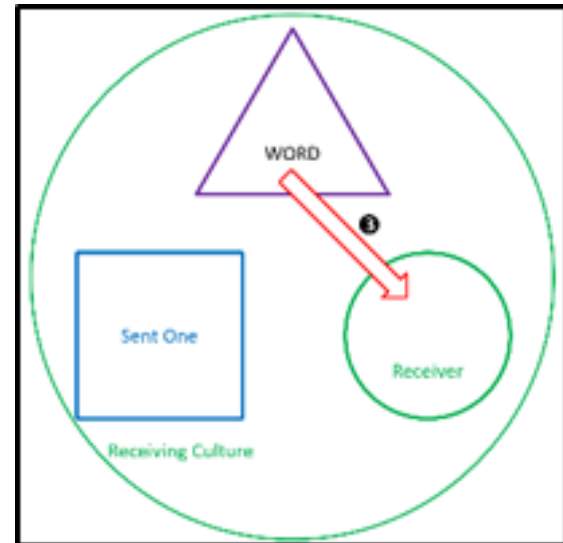


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Missional Contextualisation



Ecclesial Contextualisation



Example II: 2 Tim. 2:25-24a



Faithfully correcting opponents with gentleness

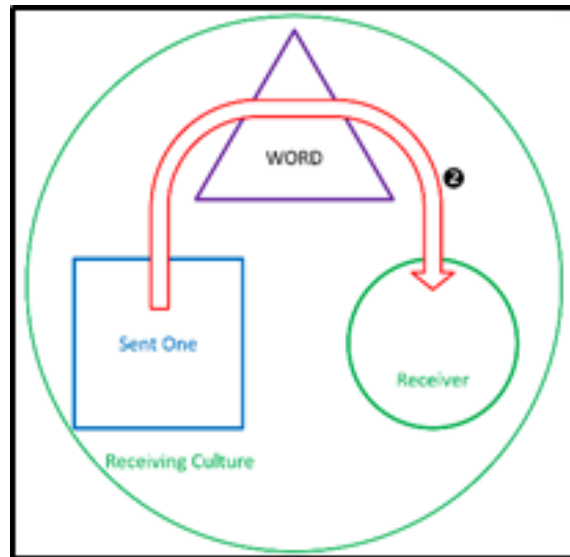
“²⁴ And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,
²⁵ correcting his opponents with gentleness...”

Example: 2 Tim. 2:25-24a

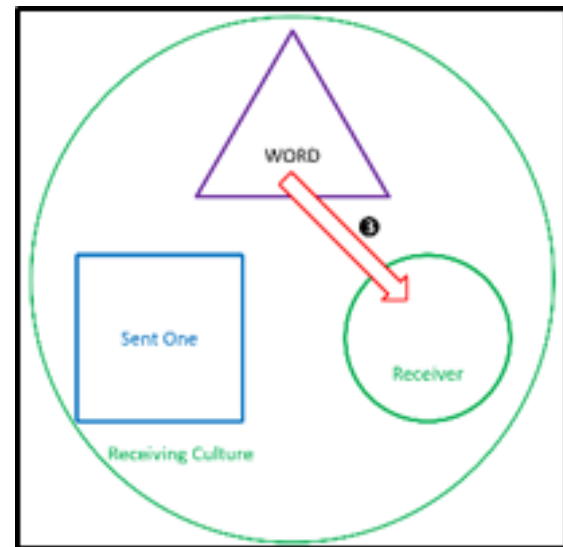


“²⁴ And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,
²⁵ correcting his opponents with gentleness...”

Missional Contextualisation



Ecclesial Contextualisation



Discipleship in Context



- The PERSON of the Educator
 - Incarnational (X1)
 - Reflexive (X5)

“¹⁹ For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. ... ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. ²³ I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.” (1 Cor. 9:19-23)

Discipleship in Context



- The PERSON of the Educator
- Our LESSON content in context
 - Missional (X2)
 - Ecclesial (X3)
- “In order for the gospel to become meaningful to us in our own present life-situation and to others in different places and different cultures in their distinctive life-situations, it must be brought into the diverse contexts of the modern world. It must be contextualized.”
Richard Muller, *The Study of Theology: From Biblical Interpretation to Contemporary Formulation* (1991:202)

Discipleship in Context



- The PERSON of the Educator
- Our LESSON content in context
- Our GOAL of education in context

- Reformational (X4)

“That you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life...” (Phil. 2:15-16a)

- Universal (X6)

“⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose... (Eph. 3:9-11a)

“...until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...” (Eph. 4:13)

Global *Semper Reformanda*?



“Calvinism wishes no cessation of progress and promotes multiformity. It feels the impulse to penetrate ever more deeply into the mysteries of salvation and in feeling this honors every gift and different calling of the Churches. It does not demand for itself the same development in America and England [and Africa and Asia] which it has found in Holland. This only must be insisted upon, that in each country and in every Reformed Church it should develop itself in accordance with its own nature, and should not permit itself to be supplanted by foreign ideas.”

Herman Bavinck, “The Future of Calvinism,” *Presbyterian & Reformed Review* 5 (1894:23)



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**What will you do now to
implement these ideas?**

