

CULTURE SHOCK, Pt 2

Series: What Does a Christian Look Like in the 21st Century? Pt2

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So today before we begin to take a closer look at what a Christian should look like in the 21st century, I would like to remind us all that living in the world but not of it is doable. We can do both!

Biblically, we see that there were actually some serious walls between cultures that scripture had to deal with. One of these was the Gentile culture vs the Jewish culture, then Jewish vs Samaritan and so on.

Another, even more interesting cultural difference is the one between the culture of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament. We see roughly 400 years between the two. That's twice the length of time the United States has existed. How much has culture changed here since the days of George Washington? Come to think of it, how about even since the 1960s?

To be honest, we even have great differences between the "millennial" generation and, say, "baby boomers." And that's only a couple of decades.

What's amazing is that the power of God's word defies all of that. The Bible, with all of its writers, though they were of completely different cultures and generations, still managed to be one in Christ. It's the same message throughout the course of the Bible, from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21.

But I often wondered, what approach should we take in regard to our world culture?

- Should we reject it altogether?
- Should we embrace it?
- Should we try to reform it and make it more Christian?

Well...let's begin with the first idea:

Rejecting Culture

This is the approach where Christians try to separate themselves from the rest of the world because the world is unholy and we are not to conform to the world. So, to do that, we exclude ourselves from it.

An example of this is the **Amish**. They are a community of Christians, located in Pennsylvania, and are mostly recognized for their separation from the society around them. They generally shun technology as well as political and secular involvements.

The Bible never told us to be separatists in our own little world. In fact, it says it is impossible to escape the culture around us.

1 Corinthians 5:9-13 New International Version (NIV) 9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— **10** not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.

I do respect the Amish and the Mennonite cultures and others and understand their desire to escape the pains of this sinful world. But the temptation to become a hidden Christian sub-culture does not coincide with the great commission to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. Separation ignores our shared calling to impact the world around us, to shock the culture in Jesus' name.

**Next... we have the opposite.
Those who want to embrace culture**

This is the type of Christian who tries to bring their culture into their faith in order to heal their culture. And I understand this.

When I was growing up in the 80s, I belonged to the heavy metal culture. We had our own way of speaking, and hand gestures, and the way we dressed was unique to us. But as I grew up the culture changed. It became more aggressive and I felt out of place.

About 11 years ago, I was asked to join a band from my era called Deadly Blessing. They were an 80s based metal band that was experiencing a resurgence of interest in their music in Europe. Their lead vocalist had decided to quit the band because of spiritual issues, and so they asked me to step in and sing for them at a few shows in Germany.

I struggled with this decision at first because it didn't feel right. But I wanted to go. So, I told myself and the Lord that I was going to do this for Him. I was going to help change this culture. I was going to do such a great job of singing and tell everyone that I was a Christian and make this trip a mission's

trip. So, I agreed to do it. We practiced and there was a lot of hype and press releases about me being the new singer and then we were heading off to Germany!

I'll never forget the look on people's faces when we walked through the airport together. I was a rock star. And I loved it. I loved seeing myself in a magazine and signing my autograph. I loved the attention that I was getting, and I was getting it by reliving my old culture.

What happened next was the most difficult thing I ever went through. On the plane ride I developed an infection, even though I put myself on antibiotics and vitamins ahead of time; and no matter how much knowledge I had how to fix such things as a singer, when we entered the stage the next day in front of 6000 people, in front of other bands that I grew up listening to, in front of magazine photographers and video documentarians...I HAD NO VOICE. I failed miserably.

We went home and that was the end of that. I was utterly disgraced and struggled emotionally for quite some time afterward. I always wondered why God allowed this to happen to me when I said I wanted to serve Him through this opportunity.

But now I know....It was because He didn't want me to serve Him this way. He knew I was going to slip right back into the drug culture and the idea of people idolizing me was addictive. God simply had more for me. And I realized this. **We have to be mindful not to use our faith as an excuse to toy with sin.**

I was toying with sin. I was allowing myself to compromise

my faith in order to fit in and all the while I was making the excuse that it was to serve God. I have seen this same mistake made by others through the years. I have known married individuals who have sought to counsel someone of the opposite sex and try to “lead them to the Lord,” when the reality was that they just wanted a position in that person’s life and eventually, as expected, they fell into a sinful relationship. They used their faith as an excuse to toy with sin.

I have known Christians who have said that they wanted to become a bartender or a dealer at a casino and said that *“this was an opportunity to share their faith with a lost world,”* only to be caught up in gambling and alcoholism and helping others do the same.

Reforming our culture.

It’s impossible for us to reform our culture to fit our faith. **We must try**, but ultimately it won’t last. Not until Christ returns will this world look like it should. **But, we can see a harvest, even in the midst of a wicked generation.** I am convinced that every professing Christian has two clear options when it comes to living in their cultures: **Go with the flow or turn to face the tide.**

Head on collision

You see, we can’t run away from culture and we can’t embrace it hoping to change it to be what we want. **What we need to do is Shock the Culture!** We need to intentionally allow ourselves to collide against INDIVIDUALS in the culture around us so that we leave a dent in this world for Jesus.

Think of the term “head on collision.” This phrase is one which originated from everyday use in America traffic situations. It is when two cars ram into each other in an accident. People wonder how two cars could collide face to face without one driver swerving out of the way.

There are four common causes:

- Distracted driving
- Ignoring traffic signs and signals
- Driving while fatigued
- Driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol

We want to have head on collisions with others in life. If we are all driving in the same lane together, things are smooth and we get to our separate destinations. We are going one way...they are going the opposite. But when they cross into our lane of traffic what do we do? Do we swerve away? Put ourselves in park and wait till it's safe again?

Well, that's what we do when someone veers into our lives who is going the wrong way. We avoid the collision. Remember what a head on collision does. It stops that person from going where they were headed. It makes your worlds collide. It shocks their lives.

Remember, why would someone swerve into our lane anyway? Because they are not thinking! They are intoxicated or sleeping at the wheel. They're ignoring all the signs in life, the subtle signals that there is danger ahead.

This is what happens when people come into your lane, maybe not knowing you're a believer because you don't have

your Christian wall up. We need to wake them up. Let them slam into us head on. Be that immovable force in that moment that makes them reassess their lives.

And you see this is why we don't do certain things. It's not because it's the "Christian thing to do," but because it allows us to slam into the cultural norms and make an impact.

So many people think the Bible is a bunch of dos and don'ts. This is completely the opposite of the truth.

Christianity is more about Doing...than Don'ting

Look... **Matthew 22:37** "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' **40** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

You see, that's the standard. That's the thing we can go by to know what **not** to embrace in our cultures.

Does it hurt me? Does it hurt others? Does it hurt God?

So, if we want to know what not to embrace in our culture...run it by Matthew 22:37. We don't need a list.

For instance, do you want to know how to dress appropriately in our 21st century culture? Run it by Matthew 22:37. Ask yourself, does my sexy clothing benefit others or myself? Does it cause others to lust? (After all, to be sexy means to cause someone to want to have sex with us.)

Well, that hurts them. That puts thoughts in their mind that makes them think of you in a way that they should only think of their wife or husband. It feeds into a culture that idolizes the human body and feeds into our need to be desired, something that in the long run, harms us emotionally.

Do you want to know if cursing is wrong for us? Run it by Matthew 22:37.

The name says it all. **It's literally a curse.**

Curse definition: A prayer or super natural invocation for harm or injury to come upon another.

2: an offensive, profane or obscene oath or word.

It's literally related to witchcraft!

CURSING IS A SPIRITUAL THING! We are invoking spiritual means, to focus our anger and hatred into a word and by doing so, it is a way to punish those the curse is directed at. You did, in fact, punish them. That middle finger you shot at them will affect their entire day. Trust me on that. But we forget, vengeance is not ours to take. It's the Lord's. We are hurting them and disrespecting God.

Ephesians 4:29 *Do not let any corrupt word proceed from your mouth. But only what edifies.*

Now the world will tell us cursing is healthy. It releases endorphins, it increases blood circulation and so on. Well, I can snort cocaine and there will be an advantage, too. I will feel great! I can achieve things I couldn't before. But it is

slowly killing me! Engaging in sin will always show physical advantages because it's fleshly. It appeases the flesh.

For the Christian, when we swear out of anger, it feels good. The reason is, we are giving up on God, saying, "I don't care about what you think anymore and THIS is my letter of resignation." It's a way to say, to punish God.

When we do it casually, it's usually a habit from our old days, a holdover from before we were Christians. And we hold onto it because it still ties us to the world. The harder the curse (F bomb), the more of this point we make. I'm wild. I'm not to be messed with. I'm not to be taken lightly. **It's an attitude and condition of our heart. That hurts those around us.**

Pornography is the same. It is a form of adultery and puts images and thoughts into the minds of those who watch it and makes them compare their husband or wife to a fantasy. It also feeds into an industry that takes advantage of young women and men and uses them for their bodies and leaves them with remorse, guilt and shame.

Premarital sex is the same. Think of how many lives were destroyed over sex? How many unwanted pregnancies? How many cheating spouses and broken relationships? Something that was meant to be a blessing, the world has altered and brought pain and suffering.

We could go on and on. We don't need a list of don'ts. We just need to ask ourselves, "**Does It hurt me? Does it hurt others? Does it hurt God?**"

How do we prepare to engage the culture that we live in?

We must immerse ourselves in God's Word. Not just at the moment before we have big opportunities or when we are going through rough patches, but always.

Last week we looked at one of our 4 challenges which was tithing. But today I would like to suggest taking the Bible challenge. We have all heard it said that the Bible is the word of God. Well, why? Because it is how the Lord speaks back to us. We pray, He speaks through His word.

It is to Scripture itself that we must turn, not for a list of cultural do's and don'ts, but for a clear understanding of God and His plans for the world, through the Gospel of his Son. The word helps us know the truth inside and out so we can recognize lies when we hear them.

Our goal as followers of Christ is to actively engage our culture with the Gospel, without allowing the culture's ungodly morals, values, attitudes, and behaviors to infiltrate our lives.