



BAND of BROTHERS – WEEK 10: The Kingdom and Culture

FALL 2021

The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you.

– John 16:19 NLT

- **The Kingdom and Culture**

- What is the role of the church in culture?
- What part are we supposed to play, if any?
- The church seems to have three possible options:
 1. Condemn and try to correct it
 2. Compromise and comply with it
 3. Completely disconnect with it

Don't **hate** the world or retaliate because God loves transforming His enemies into His children

Don't **compromise** your witness for Jesus by conforming to a world you don't belong to

Don't **isolate** yourself from a world that needs to see God's heart incarnate

– Dr. Cody McQueen, "To Keep Us From Falling Away"

- But could there be a fourth option?
 - o We put more emphasis on the culture than we do Christ
 - o The church has become culture-obsessed
 - o We have lost of our Kingdom mandate (Genesis 1:28, Matthew 28:19-20)
- Five important realities concerning the church
 1. The church is **not** the kingdom
 2. The kingdom **creates** the church
 3. The church gives **witness** to the kingdom
 4. The church is an **instrument** of the kingdom

5. The church is the **custodian** of the kingdom

*Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these things in case I am delayed, so that you will know how each one must conduct himself in God's household, which is the church of the living God, **the pillar and foundation of the truth.*** – 1 Timothy 3:14-15 NLT

“This metaphor served to elevate the community of believers as the ‘location’ of God’s presence on earth. The church has become His base of operation in the world.”
– Mark L. Bailey, "A Biblical Theology of Paul's Pastoral Epistles." in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*

- **The pillar and foundation**

- Pillar – στῦλος – *stylos*
a support
a column or pillar that holds up something else
- Foundation – ἐδραῖωμα – *hedraiōma*
Literally: ground
a stay, prop, support
Literally: “The supporting pillar of the truth”
- The truth – ἀλήθεια – *alētheia*
That which is true
What is true in any matter under consideration
 - But Paul has a **specific truth** in mind

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and **truth.*** – John 1:14 ESV

*For the law was given through Moses; grace and **truth** came through Jesus Christ.*
– 1 John 14:17 ESV

*“You sent to John, and he has borne witness to **the truth.**”* – John 5:33 ESV

*“You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know **the truth,** and **the truth** will set you free.”* – John 8:31-32 NLT

*“But I will send you the Advocate — **the Spirit of truth.** He will come to you from the Father and **will testify all about me.** And you must also testify about me because you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry.”* – John 15:26-27 NLT

- We are to “testify to the truth”

- This is the church's job
 - Not to redeem culture
 - Not to institute social justice reform
 - Not to fight for racial equality
 - Not to abolish all cultural inequities
 - Not even to "Christianize" culture
- The church's mission

*To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, **to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light** for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that **through the church** the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. – Ephesians 3:7-10 ESV*

- The **manifold** wisdom of God
manifold – πολυποικίλος – *polypoikilos*
 variegated, marked with a great variety

- The church is not an **activist organization**
- It is an **active and living illustration**...of God's wisdom, truth, love, and power

"The church as a multi-racial, multi-cultural community is like a beautiful tapestry. Its members come from a wide range of colorful backgrounds. No other human community resembles it. Its diversity and harmony are unique." – John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*

"...the church is to be an audio-visual display of God's reconciling work. In this primary way she testifies to God's grace and wisdom. So Paul encouraged living life in Christ in such a way that reconciliation is the dominant feature of church life." – Darrell L. Bock, "A Theology of Paul's Prison Epistles," in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*

...we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. – 2 Corinthians 5:20 ESV

- We are not just to be those who **reconcile**
- We are to be the **reconciled**
- A living demonstration of **God's grace**
- The church should be...
 - ...the pillar and support of the truth
 - ...the bastion of racial equality
 - ...the champion of biblical justice
 - ...true hope for the helpless and hurting
 - ...the salt of the earth – influential

...the light of the world – illuminating

*“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they set it on a stand, and it gives light **to everyone in the house**. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” – Matthew 5:14-16 NLT*

- Another look at 2 Corinthians 5
 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ **reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation**; that is, in Christ God was **reconciling the world to himself**, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. – vs 17-19*
 - In Christ, God reconciled the world to Himself
 - Jesus was the **source** of reconciliation
 - And we are the **proof**
 - Demonstrated by our love (Jn 13:35)
 - Exhibited through our good deeds (1 Peter 2:12)
 - Displayed through our hope (1 Peter 3:15)
 - Evidenced by our diversity (Eph 3:10)
 - Revealed by our gracious speech (Col 4:6)
 - We are to be the greatest testimony to the reality of **reconciliation** and **transformation**
 - We are to be living letters of recommendation
 - You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. And **you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us**, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. – 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 ESV*
 - When words are not enough
 - We will not change the culture through words
 - Without tangible evidence, the **message** of reconciliation is just a theory
 - The **power** of the gospel is in its **proof**
 - Anyone can **promise results** but only God can **produce them**

*When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use **lofty words** and **impressive wisdom** to tell you God's secret plan. For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. I came to you in weakness — timid and trembling.*

*And **my message** and **my preaching** were very plain. Rather than using **clever and persuasive speeches**, I relied only on the power of the Holy*

Spirit. I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God. – 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 NLT

- The proof of God's reconciling power
Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people – none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God.

*Some of you were once like that. But **you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God** by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. – 1 Corinthians 6:9-12 NLT*

- They **were** the message of reconciliation
- So are we!
- As the church, we are...
 - ...the pillar of the **truth**
 - ...the evidence of God's **grace**
 - ...the proof of the gospel's **power**
 - ...and the confirmation of the Spirit's **presence**

- **The early church**

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. – Acts 2:41-47 NLT

- How the church can impact culture
 - Heartfelt devotion to the teaching of God's Word
 - Unwavering commitment to biblical community
 - Faithful participation in corporate worship
 - Prayerful reliance upon God
 - Grateful acknowledgment for His goodness
 - Selfless concern for the needs of one another
 - And a desire to live in favor with all men

*And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, **let us do good to everyone**, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. – Galatians 6:9-10 ESV*

*And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then **Jesus went around doing good** and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. – Acts 10:38 NLT*

- Shouldn't we follow the example of Jesus?
- But what might that look like in everyday life?
- Jesus gives us an idea

- **To the least of these**

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'" – Matthew 25:34-40 ESV

- "You did it to me"
 - We are not called to condemn or correct culture
 - Our job it not to compromise with the culture
 - And we're not to isolate ourselves from culture
 - The culture is not our primary concern
 - Feed the hungry
 - Satisfy the thirsty
 - Welcome the stranger
 - Clothe the naked
 - Heal the sick
 - Visit the prisoners
 - All expressions of love
 - ...that require sacrifice
 - ...the demand impartiality
 - ...that are free from judgment
 - ...and that expect nothing in return

Next Week: The Kingdom and Culture

For Further Discussion

- Jesus put a high priority on visible expressions of love? What does that have to do with sharing the Gospel?
- Discuss the following statement: “The church is not an activist organization, but an active and living illustration of God’s wisdom, truth, love, and power.”
- How can we do a better job of living that out in daily life?



WEEK 11 HOMEWORK: The Kingdom Come

FALL 2021

In this final lesson, we'll study the chronology of the end times, including the Rapture of the Church, the Tribulation, and the other end-time events that come in its wake, including the Second Coming of Christ, and the Great White Throne Judgment. This will be a study of the Kingdom's consummation, complete with Jesus' turning back over all authority to God the Father and the beginning of the eternal state.

- Take some time read slowly and carefully 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. What do you think this passage is describing? What are the key elements that Paul describes concerning this end-times event?

We believe these verses describe the Rapture of the church, an actual historic event that will usher in the end times. Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-55 to glean more insights into what will happen on that occasion. What does Paul describe and why is it significant?

- There is a vast difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming. To see the difference, read Zechariah 14:3-4. How does what Zechariah describes differ from the 1 Thessalonians 4 passage?

Now read Revelation 19:11-21. In these verses, the apostle John is describing the Second Coming of Christ. Write down the key features of this climactic event. How does it differ from what Paul describes in 1 Thessalonians 4?

- Read Matthew 24:15-28. In these verses, Jesus is describing an event that will take place before His Second Coming. It will occur immediately after the Rapture of the church. What are the key attributes of this end-times event?

This is the period called the Tribulation. It is a literal seven-years of time that will be marked by great persecution. Read the following passages and write down what they say about this period.

Matthew 24:21

Daniel 12:1

Jeremiah 30:7

- Matthew 24:29-31 describes what will happen immediately after the period called the Great Tribulation. What does Jesus say is going to happen?