




Responding When Culture Harms

Change and Culture

Integral Mission Forum
6th March 2019

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Definitions

- 'Culture ... is that **complex whole** which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits **acquired** by man as a member of society.' (Tyler (British anthropologist, 1870))
- 'Culture consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) **transmitted** from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves.' (Schwartz, 1992)
- 'Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that **influence (but do not determine)** each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour.' (Spencer-Datey, 2008)

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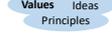
Complex - Layered

-  • What we see
- What is visible / observable
- What is done

-  • What is good
- What is best
- What is bad

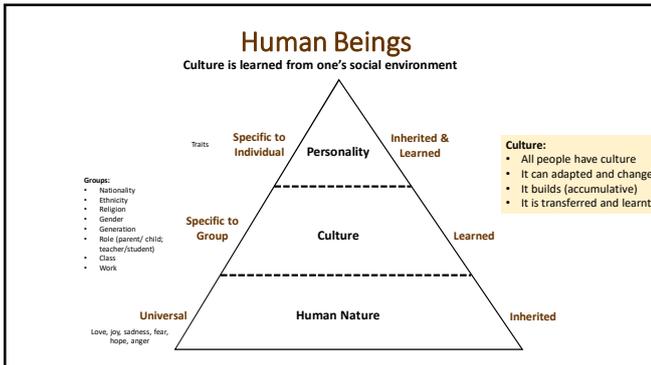
-  • What is true
- What is false

-  • What is real



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Theological

- Leviticus 18:3 *"You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices."*
 - Egypt: followed imperial power, glory, armies and empire
 - Canaan: followed Baal - fertility, sex, prosperity
- Israel was called to be the people of God so as to bless all nations, to reveal God to them and to call them to follow Him.
- The Church (Ecclesia) are people called out to take responsibility, to reflect God to all nations.

Distinctiveness

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Ephesians 4

- Overview:**
 - Vs 1-13 – Urges the church to **unity**
 - Vs 14-16 – Urges the church to grow up in **maturity**
 - Vs 17-32 – Urges the church to reflect a **distinctiveness** in the public square
- Why?**
 - Because there is a spiritual battle and we are God's people who reflect his way
 - It is essential and urgent:
 - Vs 17 – Paul insists on us being a distinct people
 - To be God's new society / new humanity – then we have to show the contrast to the world.
- Not a legalistic distinctive but a much deeper transformational difference.

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Being Distinct: Walking, Dressing and Thinking Distinctively

1. Walking Distinctly

- A new way to walk
- "live" – is a metaphor for walking
 - 2:2 – used to walk in the ways of the world
 - 2:10 – called to walk in good works
 - 4:1 – walk worthy of the calling God has called you to
 - 4:17 – don't walk as the Gentiles do
 - 5:2 – walk in the way of love
 - 5:8 – walk as children of light
 - 5:15 – be very careful how you walk
- Emphasis on a "different" way – a distinctive way

2. Dressing Distinctly

- New set of clothes – put off and put on
- What you wear reflects what you are doing
- Not external only
- 4:24: new self
- 2:15: new self / new humanity – a new way of being human
- You are now a new person – put on what you now are
- This new self is created by God, to be like God, in true righteousness, justice and holiness**
- This is what God intended life to be like
- Col 3:12-13 cloth yourself with compassion, gentleness and love
- What clothes are we walking around?**
 - God wearing us – could he go out...?

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New way of Thinking

3. Thinking Distinctly

- People do what they think
- Assumptions generate behaviours
- Vs 17 & 18 - futility of their thinking, darkened by their thoughts
- Vs 23 - We are to be made new in the attitude of our minds
- Romans 12:2 – be transformed by the renewal of your mind
- Specific instructions linked with motivation and rationale:
 - Vs 25: speak truth – because we are members of one body
 - Vs 26: put a limit on our anger – because the devil gets a foot hold
 - Vs 28: don't steal – so you can share and do good
 - Vs 29: bad talk – rather build people up
 - Vs 30: don't grieve the Holy Spirit – because you belong to him – live to honour him
- Are we living in a transformed thoughtful way**
 - Does my way of acting consistently reflect Christ.
 - Motivational thinking: (vs 32 – be imitators of Christ)
 - Not to avoid harm
 - Not just to help others
 - BUT to reflect Christ**
- Chpt 5 – walk in love, cloth yourself in love and think through the lens of love - be imitators of Jesus**

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Reflection

- To be distinct we need to be like Christ in word and deed so that the signs of Kingdom will be seen by all
 - To act justly**
 - Walk Justly
 - Dress Justly
 - Think Justly
 - To love mercy**
 - Walk with compassion
 - Dress with love
 - Think of others
 - To Walk with Humility**
 - Walk with others
 - Dress with service
 - Think with the desire to enable all to rise to their full potential



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Application in Life

- OT outlines 4 areas that required obedience and distinctiveness
 - **Idolatry** – we need to discern what this looks like today
 - **Perversion** – truth being distorted, corrupted, change from its original design
 - **Destructiveness** to people – exploitation and abuse, misuse and oppression
 - **Callousness** to the poor – hardening of the heart and not caring for the poor (Amos 2:7; Micah 3:2-3; Ezekiel 16:49)

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Avoid or Ignore or Refuse

- Dehumanise or decrease value of the victims
- Exacerbate the victims “poor” behaviour so as to anger the listeners
- Focus on the risks if response was given (play to real or perceived fears)
- Undermine the possible impact of one’s action
 - Overwhelming need
 - Overwhelming required action and consequences
- Blame the victim for their condition – it is their own fault (seeks to let us off the hook to not respond)
- Pay off “guilt” response – give hit and run charity
- Reduce exposure to information about injustice (block off or muffle)
- Draw on cultural, political, religious, economic, social frameworks:
 - Not our tribe, not our people, not our responsibility
 - Not our priority, not our giftings, not good timing
 - We undermine our conviction to respond by justifying that the others has no claim on us

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Is Change Possible?

- Called to disciple the **nations** (Matthew 28:18-20)
 - Nations = ethnē
 - Ethnē = a **people group** based on geography, society, culture – their way of life
- Disciple a people group = **disciple a culture**
 - What we believe informs what we think
 - What we think informs what we do
 - **Romans 12:1-2** – be transformed by the renewal of your mind
 - Change requires **TRUST**
 - Trust is gained by working together
 - Working together enables dialogue
 - Dialogue leads to understanding
 - Demonstration of Gospel and call to Jesus

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