

## RTCWG #1: Acts 17:16-34 CULTURE - READ IT DON'T JUST REACT TO IT

### WHAT IS CULTURE? Important question / don't assume the answer obvious (VID)

- Social Sophistication, refined palate, TS concert 70K SWFT, savvy pop culture, UBIQUITOUS: Culture warrior, culture wars, cancel culture, winning culture, rape culture, counterculture, culture of exploitation, drug culture - **REACTIONARY**  
CULTURE: From Latin *cultura* 'growing, cultivation'; 'tend, cultivate' - Middle English the sense was '**cultivation of the soil**'

BU defined culture as all the ways of life including arts, beliefs and institutions, of a population that are passed down from generation to generation.

- GOD CREATED CULTURE AND HUMANS TO CREATE CULTURE – fallen world – understand that any culture/construct created is marred by sin

CAN'T DENY CULTURE SHAPES PEOPLE (philosophy, education/family/society, reinforced arts, media) – **BACK TO WORD – PICTURE OF A PLANT IN SOIL**

Farmer controls the soil/elements positive influence TASTE / SHAPING / WORLDVIEW  
SO ARE WE CALLED TO REACH CULTURE OR TO REACH PEOPLE?

PPL PRIMARY MISSION: Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. (ethne)

IMP DISTINCTION AC: Our mission is not primarily to "engage the culture" but to "love our neighbor." Our neighbor is not an abstract collective noun, but a real person in a real place.

**MP: The Christian is called by God to reach people with the gospel, in part by reading, redeeming, confronting, and creating culture.**

**VISION OF AWAKEN – bringing a spiritual awakening to LV world thru love of JC**

### **BE AWARE OF OUR CULTURAL MOMENT**

Paul did react – but he read the culture to reach the people.. used it, spoke their language

**MOMENT:** Post-Christian secular progressive urban digital moment.

### 3 PHASES CHRISTIAN SOCIETIES UNDERGO

- Mark Sayers/Philip Rieff 3 First Second and Third World - CHRISTIANITY

**Pre-Christian culture** – highly spiritual, focused on the supernatural, pagan, polytheistic, pantheistic, Roman Empire pre-gospel / places in world today unreached

**Christian Culture:** influence of Christianity, particularly in the West where there has been a fundamental shaping of society based on Christian values. **Christendom**

- **Post-Modernism:** Rejects any notion of objective truth and insists that the only absolute is that there are no absolutes. It rejects metanarratives and embraces relativism, deconstruction, and culture and identity politics. In post-modernism, tolerance is the supreme virtue, and exclusivity is the supreme vice. Truth is not grounded in reality or any authoritative 'text,' but is simply constructed by the individual's mind." Christianity is rejected out of hand because of its truth claims.

**Post-Christian Culture:** An emerging society that carries an anti-Christian posture through the aggressive secularization of society. The fundamental societal institutions of

the west (e.g. family, school, church) that took their meaning and place from a basic Christian worldview shaped by Protestantism are written out of the social order while the secular culture attempts to hold onto the positive social values of Christianity w/o it's Christ.

Mark Sayers – The Christian project continued with its values but without Christianity. It's the kingdom without the king.

### **WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR US TODAY?**

KELLER – For 1000 years Western church mission model was most people in society had some reason or pressure to go to church – **NO LONGER EXISTS (pockets)**

- GEN HELD BELIEFS – belief in moral law / in a God / in afterlife / in sin

We can no longer connect those dots and lead people to faith in Christ because people don't generally believe that anymore.

- o THEY WILL GET THAT AT CHURCH – **THEY AREN'T COMING**

PAST - COME AND SEE NOW IT'S GO AND TELL BRING IT TO THE PEOPLE –

### **READ THE SUBCULTURES AND MICROCULTURES INFLUENCE A PERSON**

LIKE PAUL aware of cultural nuances BUILDING BRIDGES TO REACH THE PERSON

CULTURE VARIES: Culture is not monolithic: UR WORK PL Bible Belt - New Yorker -

South Dakota - Valley Girl - streets Chicago - **WILDLY DIFFERENT / need JC**

- Deeply held beliefs, marketplace of competing ideas, URBANIZATION/TECH

Gospel has the power transform each life, but the approach needs to resonate, to build bridges with the hearer. UNDERSTAND > REACH **NICODEMUS SAMARITAN WOMAN**

**1 Corinthians 9:19-22** For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. <sup>20</sup>To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. <sup>21</sup>To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. <sup>22</sup>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.

### **REIGNITE WHITE-HOT SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND A SPIRIT OF EVANGELISM IN OUR LIVES**

Combine these three things....

Great missional movements begin with white-hot faith.

Paul Mature Christian - boldly preach the power of the resurrection – not influenced

**ROOTS: THE HIPPI MOVEMENT** – Peace and Love, Community, Music, Transcendence, Experience – **RADICAL BOLDNESS/SOLD OUT/ WHITE HOT/FOLLOWING JESUS AND HIS WAY – SPIRITUAL AWAKENING**

People today want to know that Christianity works in your life before they will believe that it's true.

Tim Keller “How to Reach the West Again”

Michael Goheen “The Church and It’s Vocation – Leslie Newbiggin’s Missional Ecclesiology”

Mark Sayers “The Disappearing Church”

Andy Crouch “Culture - Making “Recovering Our Creative Calling”

Mary Eberstadt “How the West Was Really Lost”