

CULTURE ~~WARS~~ ENGAGEMENT

Our goal is be equipped to effectively love God and love others in an ever-increasingly counter Christian culture.

Our Cultural Context:

1. We live in a fallen world populated with broken and sinful people who are being guided by ungodly and deceitful philosophies. (Rom 1:18-32)
2. Our culture has rejected the concept of absolute truth and embraced relativism. (2 Tim 4:3-4)
3. The lifestyles, standards, and actions of our culture reflect the godless value system that the culture has embraced.

Culture War:

- Fight and debate between polarized groups over value, moral, and truth issues
- Fueled by outrage
- Choose to strike back as opposed to turning the other cheek
- Seek to defeat, destroy, or humiliate the opposition

Cultural Engagement:

- Oppose the evils of society in order to be salt and light
Absolutely contend for godly values in the way we live vote
- Choose not only a truthful position, but a graceful tone
- Seek the rescue of our opponents not their ruin
- Desire to convert our opponents instead of destroying them

We are not at war with our ideological opponents—we are at war for them.

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. 1 Peter 3:15

Week 5: Cultural Engagement

Case Study: The Apostle Paul in Athens [Acts 17:16-34]

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly **distressed** to see that the city was full of idols.

Observation 1: Paul was brokenhearted over the state of the Athenian culture.

¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to **debate** with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbling trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" ²⁰ You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." ²¹ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

Observation 2: Paul was not there to win an argument, but to win souls. He was at war for them, not with them.

²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as **I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship**, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

Observation 3: Paul contextualized the gospel message to meet the people of Athens where they were at.

²⁴ "The God who made the world and everything in it is **the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands**. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

²⁸ 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' **As some of your own poets have said**, 'We are his offspring.' ²⁹ "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead." ³² When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." ³³ At that, Paul left the Council. ³⁴ Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

Observation 4: Paul altered his method, but he didn't change the message. Repent and Believe!

Strategy: Truth + Grace

"If we minimize grace, the world sees no hope for salvation. If we minimize truth, the world sees no need for salvation. To show the world Jesus, we must offer unabridged grace and truth, emphasizing both, apologizing for neither." p