

Oct 29, 2016

Colossians 3:1-14

Fruitfulness on the Frontline:

M4: Molding Culture

Jonathan M. Romig

CornerstoneWestford.com

Website: In Colossians 3:1-14, the Apostle Paul challenges us to form a new Christ-centered culture. In light of the resurrection, we form this new culture through a new mindset, realizing all we have in Jesus. A change in mindset is like a one-degree shift. It might not seem big now, but it can lead to a radically different destination over the course of a thousand miles. Sometimes Christians are called to live counter-culturally, countering sexual expression with sacrificial love, offering forgiveness when culture says anger is the best answer. The story of Moriah Peters auditioning for American Idol illustrates this for us today. Our ultimate goal is to help culture flourish. *Culture flourishes when it encounters the freedom we have in Jesus.*

Introduction: (S1-2)

1. "Culture is the way we do things round here."¹ -Derek Worlock, former Archbishop of Liverpool.
2. Culture are the beliefs, customs, arts, sciences, academics, and business that shape our society.
3. The cultures of Boston and Westford share similarities, love of academics, the arts, Redsox, Pats.
4. But they're also quite different, we're suburban, value property, raising families, community sports.
5. Likewise, each one of us has a unique culture in our job, school, neighborhood, and family.
6. As Christians, we can seek to further the message of Jesus by positively influencing our cultures.
7. For most of us, changing culture sounds as difficult as digging the Panama Canal or flying to Mars.
8. In today's passage, the Apostle Paul is encouraging a young church to create a new culture.
9. Colossae is not to have a culture of rules-for-righteousness or using rites to control spirits.
10. Paul is encouraging them to develop a new Christ-centered culture.

I. Changing culture begins with a new mindset. (Col. 3:1-4) (S3)

A. We change culture with the mindset of Christ Jesus. (S4)

1. In chapter 2, Paul tells the believers about their spiritual death and resurrection with Jesus.
2. So now the question is... How should we act? Paul writes, "since, then, you have been raised..."
3. If I and my sin died spiritually with Jesus, and I rose with him too, that should change things.
4. Somehow, somehow, even right now, I am spiritually present with Jesus in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 2:6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, (NIV®) (S5)

5. I am already spiritually in Christ, even though I'm not there physically—**the now, but not yet.**
6. This is why Paul twice says, "set your hearts on things above... set your minds on things above."
7. This doesn't mean "forget about reality" or "be so heavenly minded you're no earthly good."
8. Rather, think about this world the way you imagine Jesus thinks about it.
9. If Jesus is with you spiritually, how would your Monday-morning trip to Dunkin' Donuts change?
 - a) America may run on Dunkin' Donuts but you run on Jesus Christ.
 - b) What changes about your 10am board meeting knowing Jesus is with you?
 - c) How about at lunch time when you sit down for a meal knowing Jesus is with you?
 - d) What about the difficult afternoon email to a subordinate who messed up?
10. Changing the culture of your workplace, family, Thanksgiving meal, begins w/ a new mindset.

(Changing culture begins with a new mindset.)

(We change culture with the mindset of Christ Jesus.)

B. If you change an airplane's flight path by one degree, you'll drastically change where it lands.

1. For every mile you fly, you'll end up about 92 feet to the left or to the right.
2. For every sixty miles you fly, you'll change your landing destination by one mile.
3. If you fly around the earth at the equator, you'll change your destination by 415 miles.
4. Changing your mindset can be your first one degree-shift that leads to a whole new culture.
5. How might you make a one-degree change for the better in your office, family, or in this church?

¹ *Fruitfulness on the Frontline* by Mark Greene. Page 114. Used with permission.

C. I can make a one-degree change by (bulletin pick one): **(S6)**

1. ___ Pray for my coworkers at lunchtime
2. ___ Stop to talk to my neighbors when I go for walks
3. ___ Ask the grocery-store clerk how their day is going
4. ___ Invite a friend out for coffee and really listen
5. ___ Host a new family at church for dinner

(Changing culture begins with a new mindset.)

(As Paul writes, he is countering some false teachings made about Jesus and Christianity.)

(As Christians, we too are called to counter the false teachings of our culture.)

II. Christians are to live counter-culturally. (Col. 3:5-10, 12-14) **(S7)**

A. When culture promotes sexual expression, we offer sacrificial love (vv. 5, 14). **(S8)**

1. Paul calls them to “put to death... sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed.”
2. Sexual immorality (*porneia*) is "every kind of sexual activity outside of marriage." (ESV SB)
3. In the Bible, marriage is designed for one naturally-born man and one naturally-born woman.
4. The first marriage between Adam and Eve was perfectly intimate, loving, kind, and trusting.
5. But when they disobeyed God, they introduced distrust and manipulation into their relationship.
6. Ever since then people have mistrusted marriage but still year for its original intimacy.
7. This leads to physical intimacy without emotional and legal intimacy, single moms, abortions.
8. As Christians, we're called to “put to death” this way of life among ourselves.
9. We're not just to condemn culture, but to offer something better, sacrificial love (*agape*).
 - a) The New Testament writers define *agape* love as God's unmerited love towards us.
 - b) In other words, *agape* love is when God loves us even though we don't deserve it.
 - c) We offer self-less *agape* love to those that feel rejected, unloved, forsaken

(Christians are to live counter-culturally.)

B. In June 2010, Moriah Peters auditioned for American Idol. **(S9)**

1. Going in she knew there was a lot of emptiness and darkness in the industry.
2. But she wanted to follow Jesus and so she said she'd go forward being a light.
3. She auditioned and went through five months of interviews and more auditions.
4. Through it all, she was open about her faith, purity, and girl's Bible study she was leading.
5. She got to the celebrity panel, which loved her voice, but they had a problem with her lifestyle.
6. One of the judges said, “You're trying to be too perfect. You need to go into the world and make mistakes, that way you'll get life experience and then come back.”
7. Another judge noticed she wasn't going to kiss a guy until marriage so she told her to go out and kiss a guy, and then come back.
8. God closed that door, but she didn't get mad, she didn't lash out, she chose to trust God.
9. As she walked out the door, a man came up to her and said he heard what she said on camera.
10. That connection lead her to signing with a label in Nashville and now she has two records.

(She's married now, had her first kiss, and is following after Christ wherever he takes her.)

(When culture promotes sexual expression, we offer sacrificial love.)

(Christians are to live counter-culturally.)

- C. When culture justifies anger, we offer forgiveness (vv. 8, 13) **(S10)**
1. Paul doesn't use abstract words to describe the ways we fall short.
 2. He says, "rid yourselves [of] anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips."
 3. Culture encourages us to act this way when we don't get our way (election, driving, shopping).
 4. Paul, in v. 13, offers the counter-cultural alternative; he says, "forgive one another..."
 5. You know what forgiveness means? *To cancel debt* (Luke 7:42).
 6. When someone owes me, when they've wronged me, we say, "You don't have to make it right."
 7. Why would we ever do that? v. 14 tells us why, "Forgive as the Lord forgave you."
 8. When culture says it's good to get mad, we look to Christ who forgave us (gospel).

(Christians are to live counter-culturally.)

(But why do we do this? What's the end game?)

III. Our goal is to help culture flourish. (Col. 3:11) **(S11)**

(Our goal is not to wage war against culture.)

(Sometimes we speak prophetically to it, but always with the mindset to redeem/restore it.)

- A. Jesus re-defines cultural flourishing as freedom for all in Him. (v. 11) **(S12)**
1. The church at Colossae was likely made up of Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews).
 2. Many of the early churches struggled with unity because of these two different cultures.
 3. Colossae was near a great trade route and would have drawn in foreigners.
 4. Barbarians were non-Greeks and Scythians were violent nomads from modern day Ukraine.
 5. Belief in Christ doesn't destroy culture, but breaks down false barriers of nationalism.
 6. When a family in your school celebrates Cinco De Mayo, you can join the fiesta.
 7. Instead of thinking that I am better than you, we realize that in Jesus we're all saved sinners.
 8. In Christ, we're set free from sin so that we can enjoy and encourage what is good in culture.

(Jesus re-defines cultural flourishing as freedom for all in Him.)

(Our goal is to help culture flourish.)

(Culture flourishes when it encounters the freedom we have in Jesus.) **(S13)**

Conclusion:

1. Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel Ceiling.
2. He once said, "The true work of art is but a shadow of the divine perfection."
3. That means when we create something beautiful, it's a little glimpse of eternity breaking in.
4. This means, Christians should be the best musicians, scientists, artists, and film makers.
5. We should write the most redemptive stories, the most moving poems, the most beautiful songs.
6. The **now but not yet** is the idea that God's kingdom is here in its beginnings but not its fullness.
7. So when I do good things in this life, they actually have an everlasting effect.
8. I think we'll enjoy the Sistine Chapel in a whole new way when Jesus comes back.
9. Each thing we did to help culture flourish will shine on forever.

10. Culture flourishes when it encounters the freedom we have in Jesus.

Preview: Come back next week to hear a message from Ezekiel on being a Mouthpiece for Truth and Justice.

2 Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. (NIV®)