

Christ Community Covenant Church
Corinthians: Spirit Filled Life in a Broken and Fallen World
“Don’t Like the Culture? Make Something New”
Pastor Scott Parr – November 20, 2016

What’s something that you don’t like about the culture that affects you or your family?

Some of the most common problems I hear many of you talk about are things like:

- Schedule: “We’re all too busy”
- Lack of community – “We never have time to connect with people. We live isolated all the time.”
- Phones – “Why are we all at a restaurant and staring at our phones? My kid never gets off her phone.”
- Media
- Drinking and drugs
- Anti-religious environment at school
- Always on video games
- Our family doesn’t talk enough; we fight all the time

And have you ever noticed that just talking about our culture’s problems rarely gets us anywhere? Just analyzing or critiquing rarely gets us very far in culture change.

Today we’re going to talk about what culture is, why it’s so powerful, and how God has wired you to change it for the better, especially in your home for your family, whether your family at home is 1, 4, or 9. What’s at stake here? We can either be swept along by culture in a way that we don’t really want to go and God doesn’t want us to go, or we can join God in transforming the parts of our culture that aren’t pleasing to God.

We’re talking about this because the Corinthians were trying to live differently for Christ in their prevailing culture. They had wild sexual practices that were far from God’s ideal of sex within marriage. They were over-competitive, they were overly litigious. You can’t just be a Corinthian - you have to find a new kind of life in Christ.

What do we do when we don’t like certain aspects of our culture? We can’t avoid culture. It’s all around us. Culture is anything we make of the world. Food. Language. Rules. Technology. You can’t say “I’m not going to eat food.” “I hate pants. I’m not wearing pants.” Thank you for wearing pants today! Our lives are intertwined with culture, and there’s not just one culture, “The Culture.”

So when we say, “I can’t stand how our culture is like this...” we mean that certain aspects of the common culture around us bother us because they go against what we want and go against what God wants. Today I want to share with you a few insights about God and Culture and then what I think is a brilliant insight about the best way to change culture.

Much of this sermon is inspired by Andy Crouch’s excellent book, *Culture Making*.

Insight #1: God made us to create and organize

Read Genesis 1-2 excerpts:... Gen: 1:26: “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; ...v. 28 God blessed them and said “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it...v. 31 and God saw that it was very good. 2:18 God brought every animal to the man to see what he would name them.

So even before sin ever entered the world, God is calling humans to be like him – to create, to organize, to MAKE SOMETHING OF THEIR WORLD. THIS IS CULTURE.

God let Adam have the creative role of naming the animals. God could have named them himself. Adam called it "snake." God might have named it..."Danger Noodle." Adam called it "Guinea Pig." God might have called it "Furry Potato."

Are you more of a creative type or organizer? Doesn't it feel good to make something? Fix something? Clean something? Perform something? This reflects our God-given wiring: God creates and gives order to the world. And he calls us to do the same.

Insight #2: Culture is better than you thought and it's worse than you thought

- Good culture is a gift from God
- In Genesis 1, God creates all the things of the world and the plants and animals and says each day "it is good." But on day 6 he creates Adam, the first human, and he gives him these jobs to cultivate, create, take care of the garden, and he says "It is VERY good." God calls people to CULTURE the world. And the world is better when it is cultured.
- Grain is good...but when you take that grain, grind it, add yeast, salt, water, and bake it..Bread is *very* good.
- Sounds are good... Music (the cultural combining of sounds) is *very* good
- Adam & Eve: in the Garden; God gave them animal skins to wear, a merciful gift from God of a cultural innovation.
- Food – wedding banquet – what is a meal except a creative ordering of ingredients?
- American culture controls you and impacts you way more than you will impact it.
- But in the family, you have tremendous ability to create and transform culture.
- Culture defines for us what's possible and what's impossible. You set the culture of your family, and you say what's possible and impossible. In my house, we don't have video games, making it impossible for my boys to play video games, because I've seen too many young men fill their life with nothing but video games and miss out on too much of the real world. In my house, Friday is "Daddy and the boys day," and so we've defined our culture that my day off is a special day for our relationship, and my kids look forward to it.

When I make my son Isaac's lunch for school, it's often pretty repetitive. I grab two pieces of bread, three pieces of ham, one slice of Provolone cheese for a ham sandwich. I put some carrots, an apple, a Capri Sun, and maybe some Halloween candy in there and call it good. Becki and I are rushing in the morning and it's fast, simple, and fairly healthy. Sometimes Isaac says, "I don't like sandwiches!" He doesn't like the culture of his lunch. But realistically, he's going to keep getting sandwiches quite often, because that's just what works best for the time I have. His critique of my sandwich making won't change that. But one thing might change the culture of his lunch. If I came into the kitchen and saw Isaac cooking eggs and bacon, wrapping cheese with it inside a tortilla, I would think – this is wonderful! He's making his own breakfast burrito for lunch! I would be delighted. And the culture of our family would change.

You see, here's a rule about culture that you have to hear me say this morning:

The best way to change culture for the better is to add more of it. The way to truly transform culture is to make more culture – something new, something better.

And so here's where I want you to start dreaming and get creative. This is why you have a blank canvas in your notes. What new cultural creation could you make that would make your family life better? Is it a new tradition? A new rule? A new way to do holidays? A new way to do meals? A new way to vacation? A new way to give gifts? New boundaries around technology? New priorities of family time? A new practice of being with people rather than being isolated?

A new culture in your family might be a new rule, a new tradition, a new practice. You could start a tradition of praying before bed. Or of reading a Jesus story at breakfast. Or praying for a community group member when you thank God for your dinner.

You want to create more connection with other neighbors? How about you buy a porch swing? A lawn chair? A basketball hoop in your driveway where the neighbors are welcome? A fire pit? A dog that you can walk? A baby?

How about in your weekday world? Create a mom's group? A lunchtime exercise group? A Ralston Valley High School club for fighting modern slavery? A prayer group?

Could you create a new rule with your friends? Phones down when we're together? We don't talk behind each other's back – we always love each other enough to go to the person we have a problem with? Could you create an event? A block party? First Monday night of the month is "have a neighbor over for dinner?" Could you create a neighborhood Facebook page and post positive things you see in your neighbors?

Want to build relationships with your family? How about a big dining table? A camping tent? A ping pong table?

What kind of environment could you cultivate to make healthy relationships grow in your family? Family game night? What do you do with your Sabbath? What if that was family day? Or what if your family fun on the Sabbath was so good that your kids said no to other activities because they didn't want to miss out on what the family was doing. A few times in my life I've invited a young friend to something, and they've been like "sorry, my family is doing something very fun and I don't want to miss out." WOW! I want a family culture like that!

I can do very little to change the culture of America. But I tremendously shape what is possible or impossible for my kids. My block – I have a lot to say about the culture of my block. 20 houses. Do we talk to each other? Do we get together? Do we go outside regularly and chat?

Could the culture of your family be transformed by putting in a physical object? A table; (Insight #3a: a physical cultural thing often creates cultural change.) a fire pit; a ping-pong table, a Wii.; a camper; a tent; a porch swing; a treehouse.

What about surprising your kids with an awesome trip? Go someplace with no cell phone service and no internet. They'll thank you later.

I once asked a group of 7th and 8th graders – tell me about one of the happiest days of your life. Can you guess what they said? Not Disneyland. Not the amusement park. Not the all-day video game fest. Every single story involved people and it involved the outdoors. And often things that went wrong – "We were on this camping trip and it rained the whole time and we just stayed in our tent all day and told stories and played cards" - these were the happiest days of their lives.

We are creating something new again here: the NAOMI mission trip for all ages. Ever felt like vacation was a let-down or a complaining fest? Instead, this spring break, take a beautiful road trip to northern Arizona and spend three days loving and serving some Navajo kids who are sweet but who have had a tough life so far. Some of the happiest days of my life have been days that I've been serving God all day. Isn't Black Friday the worst? How many times have you or people you know complained about this evil consumeristic anti-holiday? What was once a beautiful family time of giving thanks is now this competitive, angst-filled, and sometimes violent shopping war. So don't just complain about it or consume on Black Friday – make something new and better. Make it The Friday of New Experiences or Homemade Gift-Making Friday or Unplugged Friday where you turn off all the lights and electronics and have fun with candles and playing cards. Or take Blessing Bags to Homeless people Friday or Serve a Neighbor Friday or Bake Cookies Friday.

We were made by God to be cultivators, and a big part of cultivating is pruning – cutting back the old so the new can grow. Did you know that in a vineyard, each year the farmer cuts back 90% of the old plant to allow for new growth? What does pruning look like in your life? What can you cut out so that something new and better can grow?

Making a better culture is kind of like cooking. As a young man, even if I had a lot of different ingredients and spices in my kitchen, I still consumed a lot of Totino's party pizzas. But there comes a time when you no longer want to consume the Totino's Party Pizzas that the culture is serving up. And so it's time to take the ingredients at hand and discover how to make something better.

We all have the same life ingredients that we're working with. Time. Money. People. Food. Education. Fun. Recreation. But you don't have to just go along with the worst of our culture. But don't just criticize it – create something better. Make something of your world.

Take a moment to write or draw in your blank canvas – what's an idea you're feeling inspired about right now. My hunch is that it might include some of these key ingredients: love; community; quality time; food; serving; prayer; worship? Then share it with a clump of 3 people around you.

You see we as humans are made in the image of God – we bear God's image. And as image-bearers we make something of this world. We create, we organize, we cultivate. God is creative.

God is also a redeemer. That means that when sin and evil seem to have ruined things, God can reclaim it and make it something beautiful. God can take broken lives and make them beautiful. God can take hopeless circumstances and make them hopeful. God can take ruined relationships and make them stronger than ever.

Jesus Christ, God in human flesh, came into the world he made, full of culture that was both beautiful and evil. Jesus consumed good parts of culture – he feasted at wedding banquets. Jesus critiqued culture – he said “don't be like the Pharisees, who just pray to be heard by others.” Jesus created new cultural rules – “you have heard that it was said, “love your neighbor and hate your enemy” but I say to you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you.” And Jesus took that bread and wine – things that God said were very good – and he made them even better. He gave them a new story and a new meaning.

But the ultimate culture collision was this: Jesus met the worst kind of dead-end of culture – a cross. His death was by crucifixion – a Roman cultural artifact for humiliating and executing criminals. It was the ultimate cultural dead end. Nothing beautiful, nothing redemptive, no hope to offer, nothing about it to call “very good.” It was the ultimate in shame and powerlessness. On the cross, Jesus appeared to be utterly powerless. But in that moment, Jesus was creating an entirely new culture. We should notice that in the most world-changing and culture-changing event that ever happened, The All-Powerful was giving up his power for the sake of the powerless. Romans 5:6 says that while we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. And by this radical, unconventional action, taking on our punishment while he was innocent. Dying and rising back to life on the third day - Jesus was beginning to make ALL... THINGS... NEW.

Revelation 21 Shows a picture of the end times: John saw this vision - Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” ⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!”

God is a maker. How are you going to use your God-given ability to make something of your world? Even just your life at home? And God is a redeemer, making all things new. Are you running up against a dead-end in our culture? Even in the way your family does life? Join God and seek to make something new.

Prayer and Benediction