

Christianity Engaging Culture

WHY?

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. Romans 12:1-2 NLT

“Of the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their kinsmen were at their command.” 1 Chronicles 12:32

Introduction

Why are we presenting this seminar? — what we are saying and what we are NOT saying.

WHAT THIS IS NOT AND WHAT THIS IS

1. *This is not promoting or taking sides politically. This is a seminar to equip followers of Christ to understand the times we are living in and then learn how to engage the culture with GRACE and TRUTH as Jesus did, John 1:14-16*
2. *This is not a forum to promote nationalism or any form of jingoism. To be clear, we thank God for this country but we are first Citizens of Heaven and we know that genuine Christianity has and can grow in any country and any form of government.*
3. *Of course, the topics discussed may overlap with or counter specific political/cultural ideologies (such as - Marxism, Humanism, and Narcissism) but our singular focus is to first understand our culture, stand firm in Biblical worldview, and build a bridge to engage those opposed to such a worldview.*
4. *Our goal is not to win the argument. Our goal is to “put a pebble in their shoe” so that they will be open to reconsidering their worldview for Truth that embraces all reality.*

QUESTION AND ANSWER

QUESTION: *Why should we listen to Christ?*

ANSWER: *Read Colossians 1:15-18 & 2:1-4*

QUESTION: *Why should we listen to & submit to the Bible?*

ANSWER: *In today's culture, the starting place is with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Whom do you say, Jesus is? This will enable us to refer to the authority of the Bible.*

QUESTION: *Why should I trust what the Bible says?*

ANSWER: *Which best describes and explains reality/facts (what we see, smell, touch, hear, and experience) -The Bible or our personal feelings and opinions?*

QUESTION: *How does this advance and reinforce the Gospel message & focus on the mission of the church?*

ANSWER: *The mission of the church is NOT to isolate from culture, but to influence it — to be salt and light. In Jesus' day, salt was "rubbed" into meat to preserve it and keep it from rotting. Likewise, followers of Christ are to be like salt engaged in culture to prevent corruption and to shine like light to illumine the good news of the Gospel for all people., Matthew 5:12-16.*

WHAT?

"Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ."

Colossians 2:8

The Issue At Hand: WARNING: IDEAS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

Case Study #1. Biblical Marriage versus Humanistic Marriage

Case Study #2. Biblical view of human life versus humans are mere animals

Case Study #3. Biblical view of Justice versus social justice

How Did We Get Here?

Starting Point

ROOTS —What is a worldview?

A worldview is a lens through which we digest (understand). A worldview is the way we understand -

1. **Reality** - both material and spiritual
2. **Beliefs** - what is true
3. **Values** - what is good or bad
4. **Behaviors** - what is done

Four themes a worldview addresses

1. **Origins** — where did everything come from?
2. **Morality** — what is right from wrong? Why is there evil and suffering in the world?
3. **Purpose** — What is the goal of life? Is there real meaning and significance to life?
4. **Destiny**— Where is it all going?

Situation	World View	“Fruit”- Truth or Consequences
What is the purpose of life?	Atheist Christian Monist Moral Relativist	?
What do you think of pre-marital sex?	Atheist Christian Monist Moral Relativist	?
Just tell your parents you were not at the party	Atheist Christian Monist Moral Relativist	?

WorldView Practice

The Ultimate Question – “What is Truth”?, Pontius Pilate - John 18

Truth — John 1:14-16

Jesus told a story of two men who built identical houses except for one thing. The rain came pouring down, the flood waters rose, and the hurricane wind ripped in and blew against both houses. One house stood while the other collapsed. What was the difference? The foundation—one was built on sand while the other was built on rock.

Jesus said the one who built his house on the sand was foolish, while the one who built upon the rock was wise.

Building your life on the rock is to build your life on the truth – on the truth of who Jesus Christ is. Which leads me to 3 essential questions: What is truth? Where do you find truth? And what will you do with it when you find it?

Truth Ice Cream¹

1. What is truth? (write down your answer)

A. Coffee is the best flavor of ice cream. (true or false)

B. Coffee ice cream is medicine for diabetics (true or false)

There are two kinds of truth:

The answer to the first question is **subjective truth**—not about the object (coffee), but about me, the subject, personal preference. There is no right or wrong answer—all answers are valid...

Subjective truth may be true for me, but not necessarily true for you.

The answer to the second question is not subjective but an **objective truth**. It is not about the subject's personal preference but based on facts about the object. This is a statement about the object (ice cream).

You may be sincere in answering true to #2, but you are sincerely wrong. I would be wrong, for I have confused ice cream with insulin, and the results could be deadly.

¹ I give thanks to Greg Koukl with STR and author Chris Sherrod for many of these ideas.

Today, some say--- How intolerant of me to say you are wrong. No, it is not intolerance, it is the truth. Tolerance is a virtue that respects all people but not all views.

What is truth? It depends on what kind of truth you are talking about. There are two kinds of truth. – one has to do with a **Matter of Taste** and the other a **Matter of Truth**

2. Does “True Truth” Exist? Rom 1:18-20. (an objective, universal, absolute truth)

Three responses:

A. skepticism – no one can know for sure that there is an objective truth.

ASK: *Are you sure that no one can know for sure?*

If the answer is yes, then the person has just committed intellectual suicide. Because the skeptic is **sure** that no one can know for **sure**. If that is true, then how can he be **sure**?

B. subjectivism –whatever you believe is true for you. -- all truth is relative- there are no absolutes. Subjective truth is based on your opinion, on your feelings.

ASK: *Is that true?* If the answer is yes, then this person has also committed intellectual suicide because saying that there is no absolute truth is actually stating an absolute truth.

NOT ONLY THAT: if there are no objective – absolute truths, then there is no —

A. Right or wrong

B. No such thing as evil

C. NO basis to say that Hitler was wrong in exterminating over 6 million Jews, no basis that September 11, 2011, was wrong, no basis to say that rape or murder is wrong. No basis to say that The BTK killer – Dennis Rader was wrong.

These things would not be a matter of truth but a matter of taste. Who are you to say that these are wrong? All we could say is whatever you believe is true for you.

If there is no objective, absolute truth, then we are directionless. Like having no true north. The words north, south, east, or west would be meaningless. We have no clue who we are or why we are. We have no identity, meaning, or purpose.

The **third option** is that there is objective truth

C. Objectivism — Objective truth is not personal, not invented by man; it is **discovered** by man. Tastes are personal, but truth is not personal

A. Truth by Definition is narrow

ex. Jar full of rocks (how many are there?)

B. True for all – Universal truth --- This kind of truth is universal for all people in all places at all times (even with no one here, it would still be true)

1. Mathematics — $1+1 = 2$

2. Physics —law of gravity (true for all – jump off a building)

3. Morality —torturing babies for fun is always wrong

3. Truth Matters – ideas have physical consequences--- example, try to walk on thin ice. Attitude toward God has eternal consequences.

Truth does not have feelings. Truth is based on facts, not on feelings

“There is no such thing as your truth. There is the truth and your opinion.” Ben Shapiro

Feelings Over Facts?

“The heart never takes the place of the head, but it can and should obey it.”

Abolition of Man by C.S. Lewis

We live in a culture where we think with our feelings, not with our heads or with facts.

Facts do not care about your feelings.

Example: $1 + 1 = 2$. This is a fact. It does not matter if you “feel” it should be different

Example: Males have XY Chromosomes and females have XX Chromosomes. Biological sex is not a theory but a fact. Biology does care about your feelings.

Therefore, we need to adjust our feelings according to facts and help those who struggle in this area to love the body in which they are born.

Clarify terminology: Sex and Gender

Sex and Gender can be interchangeable

Sex refers to biology

Gender can refer to a person's biological sex, but it can also refer to cultural mores about masculine or feminine characteristics.

Facts are Truth. Feelings are important, but feelings are not based on truth but on subjective preferences.

TWO PILLS THAT LOOK IDENTICAL – SAME COLOR, SAME SIZE, BUT ONE IS ASPIRIN VERSUS ARSONIC - TRUTH MATTERS

Attitude towards God — Rom 1:16-20

1. God's wrath – furious
2. the suppression of truth ---

BEACH BALL – In the pool, hold the ball under the water – what happens
If you do take your hands off the ball? To keep the ball underwater
You have to hold it down or suppress it.

TRUTH ABOUT God is evident all over —

“The world is crowded with God. We can ignore Him, but we can't evade Him.”

C.S. Lewis

4. **Christianity is not like ice cream; it is more like insulin** – not a matter of taste but a matter of truth. (Jn 14:6).

Now I, and we Christians, may be mistaken about Jesus Christ – who He is and what He did, but Christianity is not a matter of personal preference – true for me and not for you. Either He is the Lord, or He is a liar or a lunatic, and I would be gravely mistaken.

But if He is the truth, then here are 8 life-changing truths to anchor your life to.

5. **God is Truth** -----8 Truths to Change your Life Act 17:22-31

A. God **Exists** — 17:24

B. God is **LORD**– the ultimate standard for right and wrong; good and bad; moral values originate from Him — 17:24. God is our Moral Anchor!

C. God is **Self- Existent** (I AM); self-sufficient —17: 25

D. God is **Personal** — 17:24-25

E. God chose to create mankind with and for **Purpose**) — 17:26

F. God desires all men and women to be in **Relationship** with Him —17:26-27

G. God made us in His **Image** – image bearers (a unique status as image bearers; a capacity to have a relationship with Him; moral beings with the ability to choose right or wrong). —17:28-29

H. God has provided the **Way** for us to come back to Him — 17:30-31

Response: 17:32-34

We can't evade Him because He keeps popping up –everywhere - in the telescope, in the microscope, and He is evident in the heart of every man. Instead of embracing the truth about God, mankind has suppressed the truth. Why?

The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart--- not an information issue but an issue of the desire of the heart--- Don't want to acknowledge a Creator, a Lord to be accountable to, so we work to hold down the truths about Him. Jeremiah 17:81-0

But there is a day coming in which God will not allow His truth to be suppressed any longer. He has provided us a way to be delivered from the righteous wrath of God through Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; Acts 17:30-31

Repentance – change of attitude – (no longer holding the ball down), a change of allegiance that leads to a new way of life, Luke 3:8

Receive Jesus Christ as savior-rescuer – the one who took God's wrath on Himself in your stead, John 1:10-12.

Closing: Don't be foolish. Be wise – build your life on the truth of God, live in relationship with Him, and enjoy Him

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

<i>Key Points</i>	<i>Scriptures</i>	<i>How does scripture support these points?</i>
<i>Truth Is Not Ice Cream</i>		
Truth matters	Matthew 7:24-29	
Absolute Truth – objective truth is a matter of truth	Romans 1:18-20	
Subjective truth – matter of taste of preference or opinion	Romans 14	
Christianity is based on historic and historical truth	Read the Gospels	
Christianity is like insulin to the diabetic and is unlike ice cream	Luke 19:10	

- 1) *Discuss the statement, "Ideas have consequences" in relation to this topic of truth.*
- 2) *What is objective truth? Give some examples.*
- 3) *What is subjective truth? Give some examples.*
- 4) *Why is it important to know that Christianity is based on historic fact?*
- 5) *How is Christianity more like insulin than ice cream?*
- 6) *What truths from the Acts 17 passage encourage you and or challenge you?*

Christianity Engaging Culture

1. Chosen to be **Salt, Light, and a City** — Matthew 5:14-16

We are not to be conformed to this culture, Romans 12:2

By our life and our lips, Christians are to influence their culture and world
Matthew 5:14-16

The Church: We are to be **SALT** and **LIGHT** - the *conscience* and *guide* to our culture and a **CITY** set on a hill: a place of community, civilization, not chaos

The Church: We are to be “priests” — Holy priests offering up worship to God and Royal priests proclaiming God to this world, 1 Peter 2:5,9

The Church: We are to “Prophets” — The Holy Spirit through the church convicts (exposes) the world regarding SIN, RIGHTEOUSNESS (justice) GOD’s JUDGMENT, John 16:8-11

We are to “*plant wheat*” not bring down condemnation judgment on people. That is not our role or responsibility. See the parable of the Wheat and the Tares, Matthew 13:24-30.

Why? Because the earth is the Lord’s and all it contains! Psalms 24:1

2. What happens when we **lose** our flavor?

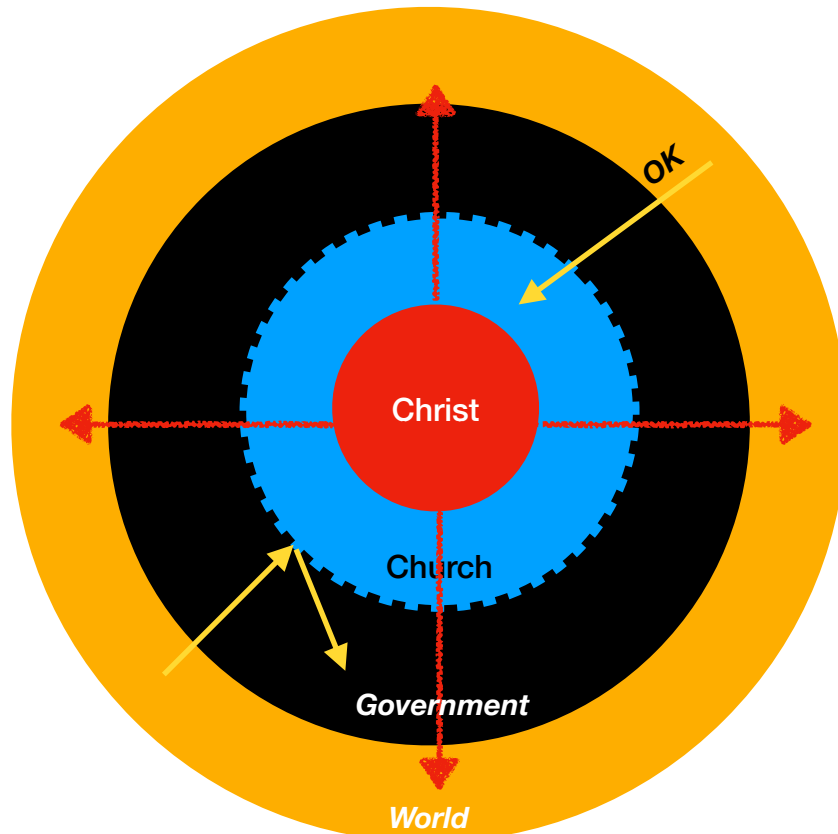
Example: The Tribe of Dan. God had instructed all the tribes of Israel to settle in the land and drive out the Canaanite nations from the land lest they learn their idolatrous ways. The tribe Dan had the responsibility to remove the Philistines (a coastal nation in the land of Canaan). *They lived in the valley of fertile land and along the “Vira Maris” the trade route between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Whoever controlled this trade route controlled the culture and at the time.*

The tribe Dan did not drive out the Philistines. They lived in the hills and were kept from the fertile valley and from the Vira Miras. The result? *The Philistines dictated the culture instead of the Israelites.* The Philistine gods were gods of fertility and material prosperity, — Baal(also Baal-zebub, Jesus used this name to identify satan), Dagon- a fish god, Ashtoroth, goddess of sexuality, and Molech, the god of child sacrifice.

God called the Israelites to be different from the Canaanite culture, to influence the culture not the other way around. When we compromise with the culture we

lose our influence, and our saltiness and the light of the glory of God is diminished.

Jesus
Is King of Kings
All Authority in Heaven & Earth



Influencing the Culture by Jesus — Philippians 2:5-12

A. Jesus willingly chose to sacrifice

1. **status** -- gave up his privileges
2. **independence** -- became dependent upon the Holy Spirit
3. **Immunity** -- subject to suffering, hunger ...

... we must do the same!

B. Jesus came to Seek, Serve, and Save — Luke 19:10

1. **humanity** -- became one of us - we incarnate God truth and grace
2. **servanthood** -- served and loved
3. **death** -- willing to give up his rights, life

... we must do the same!

To have influence in our culture and world we must follow the model of Jesus. We seek to understand the culture. We start where people are in their understanding. We adapt ourselves to our culture in order to relate without compromising truth and biblical authority.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Cultural Relativity versus Biblical Absolutes

RELATIVISM	ABSOLUTISM
Situation Ethics - Scripture yields to culture	Traditionalist - become like the Pharisees
Antinomian - no guiding principles	Mutual Respect - honor each others culture

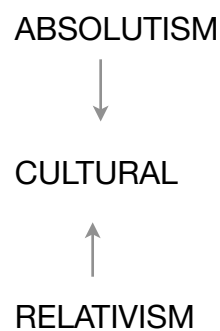
The Bible is God's Word, an eternal, unchanging, authoritative Word that speaks to cultures that change all the time.

We must not confuse cultural relativism with moral relativism.

Cultures are not absolute - they change (for example: length of hair).

Morals are absolute (for example, murder is wrong)

Biblical Authority and Cultural Relativity²



Four Questions to ask ³

1. What is the cultural norm?

Example A: Marriage is not just between a man and a woman

Example B: The dignity of every human being

2. Is the norm in keeping with Biblical principles

3. Is the action in keeping with the norm

4. Does the action violate either the norm or Biblical principles?

HOW? — Discipleship Which Makes Disciples

² Perspectives on the World Christian Movement Unit 11: Building Bridges of Love, Dr. Stephen Grunlan

³ *ibid.*

How can we engage and shine light and spread salt first to the household of God and then be respectful representatives of the Kingdom of Heaven?

Be Aware of Spiritual Warfare

“so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.” 1 Corinthians 2:11

*“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will [a]fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, **2** through the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, **3** men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.”* 1 Timothy 4:1-3

“so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.” James 4:7

“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” 1 Peter 5:8

“You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.” 1 John 4:4

Be Prepared to Give an Answer

“...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a [b]defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and [c]reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better, if [e]God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. For Christ also died for sins once and for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit” 1 Peter 3:15

- #1. Build a reputation of integrity
- #2. Be ready to give an answer
- #3. Engage in dialogue, not a diatribe
- #4. Be prepared to suffer for doing what is right

Be Engaged and Build Rapport

HOW? By Being a Good Ambassador of Christ⁴ /Heaven

“Therefore, from now on, we recognize no one [a]ccording to the flesh; even though we have known Christ [b]according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has [e]committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:16-20

1. *Accurately Informed Mind — Education*
2. *Attractive Manner — Character*
3. *Artful Method — Skill*

Three essential questions that help promote genuine dialogue

1. *What do you mean by that?*
2. *How did you come to that understanding?*
3. *Have you considered this point of view?*

NOW WHAT?

1. Understand the Times — Read the Book of Judges

The Collapse of a Culture

APATHY	APOSTASY	ANARCHY
Ch 1 —————Ch 2	Ch 3 ————— Ch 21:13	Ch 21:14—————Ch 21:25
But you have not obeyed My voice. Judges 2:2	And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that He had done for Israel. Judges 2:10b	In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Judges 21:25

2. Courage quotes

“Have I not commanded you (Joshua) be strong and courageous? Do not tremble or be dismayed for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

⁴ Stand To Reason, Ambassador for Christ series by Greg Koukl

"One of the most cowardly things ordinary people do is to shut their eyes to the facts."
C.S. Lewis

*It is not the critic who counts;
not the man who points out where the strong man stumbled or
where the doer of deeds could have done them better.*

*The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena,
whose face is marred with dust and sweat and blood.*

*At best, he knows the triumph of high achievement;
if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly,
so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls
who knew neither victory or defeat.*

Teddy Roosevelt

4. BE ALL IN

1 Chronicles 1:1-3

1 Chronicles 1:8

1 Chronicles 1:16-18

1 Chronicles 1:32

1 Chronicles 1:38

***"If not now, when?
If not here, where?
If not you, who?"***

RECOMMENDATION

Start "Secular Creed" Small Group based on the book, Secular Creed by Rebecca McLaughlin

Other Resources