

Discussion Post 5
Jennifer Bockerman

Define “culture.” How do you demonstrate your beliefs and values in today’s culture? (Include five places of responsibility in your answer).

Culture is a social construct that is ever evolving based on constant environmental change, human migration/globalization, traditions, and cultural assimilations. Humans respond to these changes by making sense of the world through the creation of tangible objects, practices, or ways of living... Crouch defines the evaluation of cultural change in *integrity*. For example, Crouch describes a building effectively adapting to the requirements of its surrounding and the needs of its occupants. Crouch takes time to distinguish between culture and worldview. Worldview can be viewed as thinking ourselves in to new ways of behaving, and culture is not changed simply by thinking. “Culture is the accumulation of very tangible things—the stuff people make of the world” (Crouch, 2008, p.67).

Culture changes when something new, something tangible, is presented to a wide enough public that it begins to reshape our world. Crouch points out that “if we seek to change culture, we will have to create something new, something that will persuade our neighbors to set aside some existing set of cultural good for our new proposal” (p. 67). If Christians strive to impact the world’s cultural practices, then Christians must present something new.

Moulds cites Hebrews 11:13-16 and Philippians 3:20 noting how some Christians emphasize that we, as Christians, are not at home here on this earth, but that home is in heaven. Then Moulds cites Augustine’s *City of God*, in which Augustine suggests Christians hold dual citizenship on earth, as in heaven. Augustine proclaims a purpose in

our dual citizenship as Christians: that we can be used for God's transforming work here on earth. Moulds also cites Niebuhr's book, *Christ and Culture*, in order to outline historic ways in which Christians have tried to define our role in the public square. As Lutherans, we believe that we live in the paradox of two kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. Luther explains that both Christ's kingdom and culture's kingdom are God's kingdoms. While separate, Christians must exist and interact in both kingdoms. These kingdoms do intersect, while simultaneously remaining separate (Moulds, 2005).

In Ephesians 1:10, "Paul says that God's plan is to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth", but in the meantime, the kingdoms intersect without converging. Moulds goes on the document Luther's accomplishments in building and advancing an education system. "These are the activities of an engaged Christian finding and creating intersections of Word and world, crafting this secular situation where the Law presently prevails into a culture where the Gospel can receive a hearing for its eternal purposes" (Moulds, 2005, p. 13). Moulds concludes with a warning that Christians often either isolate God's two kingdoms from one another or conflate His two kingdoms into one another.

In order to present something new, something from one kingdom into another kingdom, and create an evolved culture will take investment in people and authentic relationships in which we support one another and hold one another accountable. Culture can and will change when Christians tangibly show the world Christ. We can tangibly show love, care, empathy, concern, and support... I can tangibly see God's love in my family and church as people place others' needs above their own and act in love. I can see

God's law of social order at the workplace and in society as people abide by rules set by leaders. I also see acts of love in secular places of employment and in society/culture, and in the political/legal system as I also see God's law of social order within the church and family.

The kingdoms are separate, but they do interact. Christians are called to be equipped with the means to bring about the transformation of society through 'discipling' others; to walk along side them (Menuge, 1999). Menuge points out that love will shape a person's "use" of their office and that this is a form of God's creation in the world. I demonstrate my values and beliefs as a Christian in today's globalized culture by acknowledging and respecting differences and valuing the various cultures, practices, and beliefs from around the world. An open and respectful demeanor allows for conversation, learning, and relationships to develop in our various vocations. The most important way I demonstrate my values and beliefs is by taking the time to develop relationships, show respect, trust, accountability, vulnerability, and love in all vocations: as a family member, as a church member, as a citizen, as a world traveler, as an employee, and friend. When trust and relationships are built, then there a tangible way to show God's love in how we care for one another.

References

Crouch, A. (2008). Culture making: Recovering our creative calling (pp. 50-98).

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books.

Menuge, A. (1999). Niebuhr's Christ and culture reexamined. *Christ and Culture in*

Dialogue. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Moulds, R. (2005). The left and right hands of God: Getting a grip on the public square.

Issues, Winter 2005, pp. 7-16.