

LEARNING HOW TO LIVE IN A NEW CULTURE

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What is culture?

- 1: the **beliefs, customs, practices**, and **social behavior** of a particular nation or people
- 2: a group of people whose shared **beliefs** and **practices** identify the particular place, class, or time to which they belong
- 3: a particular set of **attitudes** that characterizes a group of people

Here are some general characteristics found in most cultures:

- 1: Shyness – He or she is shy as reason for not doing something
- 2: Not giving all information when asked questions, giving part answer
- 3: Shifting blame to others or to circumstances
- 4: Confrontation – Too much or too little
Excessive confrontation brings division in the Body of Christ
Not confronting sin, allows sin to continue
- 5: Façade – Presenting a good front while the unseen parts is not good, pretense
- 6: Using other means to do many things, avoiding personal involvement
- 7: National Pride – Being proud of being a citizen of the nation

These are a few of the things that we see making up culture.

Consider all of these things and how we see them and why we feel we must abide by them.

Do we accept them as if they are laws we must obey?

Are they more important than the Word of God?

What does God say in His Word?

What happens when we accept Christ as Lord of our life.

Joh 3:5-7 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (7) Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Now that we are born again Christians we have entered a new Culture, a Christian Culture.

Now we need to look at our national culture and compare it to the Christian Culture. We will consider the seven items listed above.

What does God's Word have to say?

*Col 3:10-11 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, (11) where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but **Christ is all and in all.***

What this says is that our national culture, whether Philippine or American or any other, belongs to the old man Paul talks about. This is the nature or characteristics of a person who is not saved. Unfortunately this also can apply to a Christian who has not surrendered to the Lordship of Christ. This is a sign of not knowing or accepting the fact of our continuing to be dying daily on the Cross of Christ.

Paul speaks of being transformed to the image of Christ in Romans 12:2

Rom 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

He was speaking to Christians about being conformed to this world. This world is living under the law of culture. When we look at culture we see that those within any culture are expected to conform and live under the ideals of that culture. This is living under the law of that culture. But Paul says we are to come out from under that law based cultural life. Paul says we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Paul gives us an understanding of the renewing of our minds in Eph 4:23-24.

Eph 4:23-24 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, (24) and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

This transformation comes through the Grace of God. God in His great love for us made the way for us to be transformed through the work of Christ on the Cross of Calvary. We have available a three part study on the Cross and the three aspects of the Cross. We recommend reading that study in connection with this study. The first aspect of the Cross brings us to salvation and eternal life. The Second aspect brings to life the new man. The third aspect brings us to the point of transformation. This continues through out our life on this world. The renewing of our minds takes us from the law of our national culture to the life under Grace in the Christian culture.

When we look at the things that make up a culture we find self at the center. The focus of culture is the protection of self. Self centered culture is in opposition to God centered culture. Whatever we do to protect or advance self is sin in the eyes of God. Anything that comes ahead of or in place of God is sin.

God is righteous and holy and nothing we can do in our own strength or wisdom can stand before God.

Now we will begin examining each of the seven characteristics of nation or man created culture.

1: "I am ashamed" "Shyness"

The excuse of being shy is simply an excuse to avoid being ashamed. Before the fall of man Adam and Eve were not ashamed according to Gen 2:25.

Gen 2:25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

However after their disobedience they were ashamed. The Word of God says they were afraid and hid from God.

Gen 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

When we say we are shy or ashamed we are hiding. This is a normal reaction for unbelievers, but it is sin for a believer. What the believer is doing is hiding self. Self is afraid of being discovered and seeks any place to hide. Shyness becomes an excuse to avoid submitting to God.

God has some strong words concerning being ashamed in the eighth chapter of The Gospel of Mark.

Mar 8:34-38 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. (35) For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. (36) For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? (37) Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (38) For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Here is where the third aspect of the Cross of Christ becomes our standard. We are to allow God to bring conviction of our disobedience to His word. Self does not want to be exposed so that its desires and motives are seen. Self wants what satisfies self only. Shyness or being ashamed is a cover-up for sinful self and hides. Fear is at the root. God says we are not to fear or be afraid.

Deu 31:6 Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

1Co 16:13 Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.

2: "Partial answers to questions"

This is another way of hiding and protecting self. When a question is presented the first response is to give an answer that will not cause trouble or accuse self. Many times the real answer is not forthcoming until it has become obvious that the first answers were not the right answer.

At the heart of the matter is that the partial answer is not the truth. Even if taken on its own value it may be true, but it is not the complete truth. A basic principle says that a portion is not the whole, therefore a partial answer cannot be considered as true or false. When it is presented as true it is still not the whole truth. When a Christian speaks his word should be truthful.

Col 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

Mat 5:37 But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

Too often many Christian brothers and sisters will answer yes when the true answer is no. They do not follow the words of Jesus. While this is the accepted practice in many cultures it is still sin in the eyes of God.

3: “Shifting Blame”

The shifting of blame has become an easy way of avoiding the truth and protecting self. There are many ways that the blame or responsibility for some action or problem can be shifted from the one responsible. Blaming another person directly or indirectly is a common way to avoid the truth. The other person can be blamed for causing the problem by direct intention. Another common way to shift blame to another indirectly is to blame circumstances caused by that person. Blaming the problem on circumstances beyond the control of the person is a safe way to protect self.

*Pro 12:17 He who speaks truth declares righteousness, But a **false witness**, deceit.*

*Zec 8:17 Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; And do not love a **false oath**. For all these are things that I hate,' Says the LORD."*

Mat 15:19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

These three passages of scripture show three aspects of speaking falsely. The first is a statement of fact; false witness is deceit, a deliberate attempt to deceive. The second states how God feels about false witness. He uses the strongest objection to false witness, He hates it. The third shows the source of false witness, the heart of man. From these we can see the severity of the sin of bearing false witness. To shift the blame from oneself to another or to supposed circumstances is speaking a lie. This also shows that when someone bears a false witness it is done with deliberate intent, hence deceit. Where is love for a brother or sister? Christ said that we are to love our neighbor as yourself. How can we profess we follow Christ and not love our brothers and sisters?

Mat 22:39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Who are our brothers and sisters in the Lord? Are there any factors that determine who they are? Does nationality, race, age, financial position, education, or position matter or include or exclude any other Christian. God does not look on these things and we should not either.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

This passage tells us that we have no reason to segregate our brothers based on any of the factors mentioned above and in the scripture. God did not make provision in His word for prejudice. His word says we are all one in Christ. We are made in the image of Christ, so we must all be the same. How can it be otherwise? White, black, brown, yellow, or beige we are all His. It does not matter if we are American, Filipino, Japanese, African, or any other race or nationality. We are one in Christ. Amen!

4: “Confrontation”

Confrontation can be a problem when it is taken to the extremes. When it is used without good reason or love it can lead to other problems. Excessive confrontation not handled properly will cause division in the Body of Christ. Absence of proper confrontation of sin in the Body of Christ will result in more sin within the Body of Christ. Sin unchecked leads to a destroyed witness of Christ. Westerners tend to confront more than Asians. Asians generally avoid confrontation while those in America and Europe have little restraint in confronting. Christians have a definite mandate from God’s Word concerning confronting sin. When we hide from sin, whether our own are the sin of a brother or sister in the Lord we allow Satan to enter in and bring death and destruction to the witness of Christ by the Body of Christ. Hiding from sin only allows it to grow and consume us and destroy us.

Mat 18:15-17 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. (16) But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY WORD MAY BE ESTABLISHED.' (17) And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Christ gave us the way of Christian confrontation between two Christians. First is a time of confronting one on one. When this does not resolve the problem, then one or two more confront the problem. If this does not bring resolution then take it before the Church. Each step of the way must be done in love. Without love of the brethren the confrontation will be done outside the will of God and is bound to fail. There is another side to this matter of confronting sin.

Mat 5:23-24 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, (24) leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Mat 7:3-5 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? (4) Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? (5) Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

The other side of confrontation has a very personal side. We find it very difficult to confront the sin in our own life. But we will be quick to see the sin in another person. Christ said we should first deal with our own sin before confronting our brother about his sin. When we look at ourselves we will have a more compassionate look at our brother and his sin. We then can confront our brother with the love of God about his sin. We must confront our own sin before offering gifts to God.

5: “Facade”

What is this word **façade**? The dictionary lists several words to describe façade.

Frontage, front elevation, front, pretense, outward show, public image, impression
Looking at this list we see that the first three are about structures or similar physical items. However the last four refer to how something is seen. What is seen may not be true for all there is and may only give the impression that all is of the same quality or substance. We see much that can be called a façade. When what is seen is not true for the whole it becomes deceit. To present

something as representing the whole by a deceptive façade is sin for Christians. When a person presents themselves as being very religious in front of other Christians while living an obvious sinful life out of sight of Christian brothers and sisters they are deceivers. To show a false front while living in hidden sin is all too common.

Col 2:18-19 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, (19) and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

Col 2:23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

We must trust God to show us through the Holy Spirit the façades in our midst. Many choose to pretend rather than submitting to the Cross and die daily. The third aspect of the Cross can not be faked or pretended. The reality of the third aspect of the Cross will prove itself. We must confront façades with the truth of God's word.

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The work of Satan cannot stand in the face of the Word of God.

6: "Agents"

Perhaps one of the most common practices in man created culture is the use of means other than personal contact to gain favor or benefit. This can be in transacting with the various departments of government, making purchases, seeking services, even in personal matters. By using an in between or agent the first party is removed from any chance of shame if hard questions are asked. This practice is often used to gain unfair advantage in dealing with government services. Many times the agent or insider will take shortcuts that are improper. Using an agent or in-between gives the false sense of removing the first party from committing sin. When an in between person is used in personal matters it takes away the fellowship that is a part of person to person contact. For a Christian this practice is not in the will of God. Closer examination of this practice reveals that all of the five characteristics we have covered thus far are all components of using agents or insiders.

"Shyness" - - Removes the fear of being shamed in front of strangers or even friends.

"Partial answers" - - Allows leaving out possible problem information.

"Shifting Blame" - - Allows blaming the agent when unsuccessful in the endeavor.

"No Confrontation" - - Leaves any confrontation to the agent.

"Façade" - - Causes the person to appear to have a higher place than real.

All of this is not within the will of God for Christians. All of these characteristics have at their heart a false foundation and are not the way Christians are to live. When we take these as our way of

life we are not trusting God to provide our needs. This is not the way to the Kingdom of God. God has promised in His Word to provide all we need. His promises are all we need.

Mat 6:33 *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

Look at what he has promised and has delivered.

Eph 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

God will meet our needs when we seek His Kingdom and forsake the ways and means of the world. Living in the culture of man takes us away from the will of God.

7: “National Pride”

We can replace the word national; with the name of any country and the result is the same. The idea of National Pride is based on the belief of being superior or above others. The problem comes with the second word pride. A search of God’s word reveals what God thinks of pride. With a few exceptions the vast majority of scripture references to pride reveal that God hates pride. Because pride elevates self above God it is sin. Christians should be thankful for the place where God caused them to be born. He placed us where he willed and for His purposes. Sometimes He will send us far from the place of our birth. Again we should be thankful for him placing us according to His will. We are thankful for being born in the US and we feel a sense of responsibility to the nation of our birth. But this must take its proper place and not come at the expense of the work and ministry God has given us. We all should be thankful for all that God has provided throughout our lives. To be proud of who we are is sin and is disobedience at its worst. National Pride encompasses all that we have discussed thus far and much more that is just as far from the will of God.

The following is a list of relevant scriptures concerning PRIDE.
Look at each and see where it speaks to National Pride.

Psa 10:2 The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor; Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.

Pro 11:2 When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom.

Pro 13:10 By pride comes nothing but strife, But with the well-advised is wisdom.

Pro 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

Pro 29:23 A man's pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor.

Isa 25:11 And He will spread out His hands in their midst As a swimmer reaches out to swim, And He will bring down their pride Together with the trickery of their hands.

Mar 7:21-23 *For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, (22) thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. (23) All these evil things come from within and defile a man.*

1Ti 6:3-5 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, (4) he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, (5) useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

2Ti 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: (2) For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, (3) unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, (4) traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, (5) having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Jas 4:6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

1Pe 5:5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

1Jn 2:16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

What has become evident is all we have discussed can be described as compromise of God's Word. Compromise of His word is sin. Self and protection of self is at the heart of compromise. God hates compromise. Compromise destroys our witness and leads others to follow our example. For those who have been called by God to lead and disciple others we have a mandate from God to stand on His word and not comprise.

We come now to the place that we must make a decision. What culture do we live in and what must we submit to the Cross and how do we learn to live in the true Christian culture.

The answer to the question is written in the Word of God . We will find the answer through submerging in the Word and through Prayer. We do not need a cell phone to reach God. He is always available and there is no message that the number we are trying to reach is out of coverage area or unattended. Praise God he is always on the throne.