

Addressing Current Cultural Issues

Change the way the world looks

Presented by Patti Wulfestieg @ Danville, CA 3/9/02

In order to address cultural issues, what must the Christian do?

Culture, as a body of learned behaviors common to a given human society, acts rather like a template (ie. it has predictable form and content), shaping behavior and consciousness within a human society from generation to generation.

The system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning.

Cultural issues facing children/families/church:

Nanny vs. nurture

Spirituality vs Christianity

Beliefs vs truth

Acts 17:16-34; Ezekiel 8:5; John 8:3-11

In order to alter cultural influences, what must the Christian do?

Build community

Instill confidence

Deuteronomy 6:5-9 The Christian education principles discussed in this portion of scripture define culture as

Transgenerational transmission of tradition. Sound familiar?

The Israelites were facing many changes and influences. This portions of scripture was spoken to parents as a command to mentor their children; to help them determine what was appropriate and inappropriate. Previous to this, Moses had been the spiritual teacher teaching the ten commandments and other laws and religious practices. Lets look at some of the areas God used to weave an "alternative" lifestyle into the Jewish people:

Celebrations - Sabbath was not only a release from work, but was a time to focus on God.
Passover was a reminder of God's redemption
Pentecost was a reminder of God's sustenance for His people

Centralized worship - The Tabernacle was a complete representation of God and His holiness.
Even the altars built in the wilderness were a significant memorial

Teaching of God's Word - To be a part of the families everyday life.

How did this help the Israelites? Built community and instilled confidence.

Jesus' style of ministry confirms the words in Deuteronomy. In Matthew 22:37,38, He instructs the disciples that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord thy God with all your heart, strength, and minds, and to love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus taught, but He also accepted people where they were at.

In Matthew 19:13-15, Jesus confronts the disciples in front of the children.

In John 21, Jesus accepted Peter and the disciples though they had failed Him during the Crucifixion (Go fish, let's eat)

He built community and instilled confidence

The apostles and members of the early church also built community and instilled confidence. The influence of the Greek mythology. The teachings in public school.

Paul's encouragement to Timothy (! Tim. 4:12)

Paul's sharing experiences that give meaning to truth. Mars Hill

Paul & Silas sharing the Good News with the jailer (Acts 16)

What are the things kids want to know about "religion." Read list

So what can we do? Be an example in all we do.

Faith - (These words shall be in your heart) Is it your belief that something might happen but you aren't sure or is it conviction and strong assurance that God's Word is true?

Acceptance - (Sit in the house, walk by the way) Relationships and lifestyle evangelism. People search for identity and acceptance. Belonging and self-worth

Obedience - (Do Them) Personal discipline and devotion to God. Knowing He is the only true God would be the strongest defense against idolatry, which was introduced from other influences.

Prayer - (Bind them) The words of God were place in phylacteries, they were a reminder of God's will when praying. they help build relationship with God.

People must be convinced of Christianity's authenticity and its community building characteristic before they will hear it as the only truth. 1 Timothy 4:12-16

Do Some Exercise!

The Bible admonishes us to keep ourselves pure *and* presents a strong case for engaging the culture. Because both are biblical, we should strive to be excellent at both. Which spiritual muscles do you need to tone?

On Purity...

Philippians 4:8 — Paul tells us what should fill our minds.
Colossians 2:8 — Freedom from the world's philosophies.
2 Corinthians 6:17 — Living differently than the world.
1 John 1:6-7 — Walking in the light.

On Being In the World (But Not of It)...

Acts 17:16-34 — Paul's knowledge of Greek poetry and statues gives him an opportunity to share Christ.
Ezekiel 8:5 — God commands the prophet to look at the detestable things of the culture before he can help purge them.
John 8:3-11 — Jesus offends the religious establishment for the sake of a redemptive relationship with a sinful woman.

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Definition of culture:

In order to address cultural issues, what must the Christian do?

_____ vs. _____

_____ vs. _____

_____ vs. _____

Acts 17:16-34; Ezekiel 8:5; John 8:3-11

In order to alter cultural influences, what must the Christian do?

The Christian education principles discussed in Deuteronomy 6:5-9 define culture as:

T _____

T _____ of

T _____

Biblical examples of God's people addressing current cultural issues

A. The Israelites were facing many changes and influences. This portion of scripture was spoken to parents as a command to mentor their children; to help them determine what was appropriate and inappropriate. Previously, Moses had been the spiritual teacher, bringing the Israelites the ten commandments, societal laws, and the understanding of God and their relationship to Him.

Activities and Attitudes God used to weave and "alternative" lifestyle into the Jewish people:

How did these things help the Israelites?

_____ and _____

B. The apostles and early church also built community and instilled confidence. The strongest secular influences came from the Greeks. Knowledge was very important and the public school system incorporated mythology and philosophy in the education of the Greek and Jewish students.

So, what do we do?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

People must be convinced of Christianity's authenticity and its community building characteristic before they will hear it as the only truth. 1 Timothy 4:12-16

Statistics:

Kids are taught how to interact socially by seeing their parents interact with friends, according to 71% of women and 65% of men surveyed. (Child Magazine)

Sharing is an advanced play skill for older children yet 51% of parents expect their toddlers to be able to share their toys. (Yale University Child Study Center)

33% of parents polled reported that their children have worried about safety since the September 11 terrorist attacks.

California has 1,550 year round schools, next closest Texas with 134. The highest students-per-teacher ratios are in California, Arizona, Utah, Oregon, and Washington public schools.

An 8- or 9-year-old girl wants nothing more than to be a 12- or 13-year-old girl.

Something in us doubts God's goodness when our circumstances don't make sense.

We don't believe that God has the best for us because when don't see it immediately.

God's very nature is goodness, mercy, love and faithfulness to His children.

Dive into scripture and find examples of God's wonderful nature.

Take them out of their "comfort zone" but do it with common sense.

Asking strategic questions "Do you want to get well?" "What does God want for us?"
"What would be more important one/two?"

Parents who win losing arguments

"Put a sock in it!" by Wayne Rice. *Living with Teenagers*, Sep 2001 (Vol 23, No 12). Pages 8-9. Topic: PARENTAL AUTHORITY. See also May98-11b.

Let's face it, says youth minister Wayne Rice, author of the book *Cleared for Takeoff*, parents don't usually win arguments with their teenagers. It's not because their teens are unusually argumentative or strong-willed either. Parents allow themselves to get into verbal matches that undermine their authority and box them in.

However, there is a solution to the problem that will declare the parents to be the winners in the ring. The answer is to "put a sock in it."

When your teenager argues with you, just put the equivalent of a sock in your own mouth. In other words, don't answer back. Save your breath. Walk away from the situation. Wise parents who have established their authority with their teens don't have to argue with them. Arguments are counterproductive anyway, and threats, lectures, and protests only erode authority and make parents look powerless in their teens' eyes. Instead of arguing back, parents should calmly remind their teens of the consequences awaiting them if they do not obey, walk away, and then make the consequences stick. After all, the goal of parenting is not to win arguments but to teach teens how to be responsible and make good decisions. Also, when the teen is left to make a decision about how he will respond, he will usually make the right choice and come out a winner.

Obviously, parents will have conflicts with their teens because teens will test the rules and limits that parents set. However, to raise healthy, self-reliant kids, parents must handle

conflict in a focused, careful, and calm manner. Parents must never hit their teens or provoke them to violence. To bridge any anger that parents and teens may be hanging on to, parents should offer a healing time of discussion, forgiveness, confession, listening, affirmation, and prayer.

Conflict is a reality of life, but arguments don't need to be. Actions speak louder than words, so parents can walk away from argumentative teens with their expectations—and authority—intact. ☺

No more Mayberry

"We're not in Mayberry anymore" by David Seel, Jr. *ParentLife*, Aug 2001 (Vol 8, No 2). Pages 18-21. Topic: CHILDREN, NEEDS OF. See also Sep01-13b.

It's an understatement to say that our children aren't growing up in a world or culture that resembles the fictitious Mayberry of the 60's TV sitcom, *The Andy Griffith Show*. The time when a fish-pole and a pail of worms satisfies them is long past. However, we pick the wrong battle when we attempt to simply shield children from the world and try to change their behavior. The real battle is for their hearts.

The world knows the "kid-fluence" these young power-mongers exert. In today's "filiarchy" the children wield much control over consumer spending and family decision-making. Children 12 and under influenced around \$250 billion of their parents' spending in 2000. Kids know brand names, and corporations know that kids know. Youth fashion leader Abercrombie and Fitch courts kid clout as do TV networks such as Nickelodeon and Britney Spears and 'NSync marketers.

Their world is "spiritually toxic." Culture, rather than Christianity, is the defining factor. Children "are growing up in a world where the meaning of life has been reduced to shopping at the mall, where boredom is the greatest fear, and where entertainment is the sole salvation."

"Children do more than lip-synch; they life-synch."

Here, nothing is sacred, and nothing matters—except "whatever."

It may be tempting to go into control mode to try to shield our children from cultural pressures. However, the best ways to counteract the world's effects is to first, "know the enemy," the culture that is trying to capture our children's interests. Second, we must know, understand, reach, and influence our children's hearts according to the dictates of Ro.12:2. We want them to be conformed not "to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of [their] minds."

Instead of exerting a strong-armed approach, we must spend individual time with our children, enjoying their company and teaching them as we go. We must treat their questions seriously and encourage their trust. We must instruct them lovingly, patiently, and gently. When we court our children's hearts and encourage their beliefs, we will see changes in behavior. "For in the end, Mayberry is not a place, but a state of heart." ☺

Homeschool today

"Home sweet school" by John Cloud and Jodie Morse. *Time*, Aug 27, 2001 (Vol 158, No 5). Pages 48-54. Topic: HOME EDUCATION. See also Feb01-10b.

Charter schools and vouchers are getting some noisy press these days. Meanwhile, probably over one million homeschoolers nationwide just quietly go about their business, averaging in the 75th percentile on the Iowa Basic Standardized Test (public schoolers average at the 50th) and posting average scores of 2000 on the SAT (The general population garners 1019 on the average). The homeschooling lobby in Washington is one of the most effective, and 75% of universities, many of which recruit homeschoolers aggressively, have instituted policies dealing with homeschool applicants. Currently, homeschoolers (with an 11% annual growth rate) make up 4% of the

