



Life Group Work Sheet (Leader's Guide)

Culture

November 17, 2013

Getting to Know Each Other

1. Today was the last sermon in the Fingerprint series. How has this series helped you understand who we are as a church? How has it challenged you?

As people explore these questions, it may be helpful to remind them what the seven core values were: (1) Bible (2) Community (3) Gospel (4) Outreach (5) Discipleship (6) Family (7) Culture. A follow-up question would be, "These points not only describe who we are as a church but who we desire to be. What is Faith Church's strongest value? Which needs the most improvement?"

Our New Family

Read John 17:15-19.

2. What does Jesus' prayer here tell us about the role of Christians in culture? How do Jesus' words prepare us to engage culture?

Jesus seems to make clear that Christians are to remain in the world, but are not to be influenced by the world. By God's grace, much of culture today is redeemable (we will get into what we mean by that later on). It has been twisted from its original good state, and as such, must be repaired. Yet it need not be completely abandoned.

A helpful way to make this point is to refer to extreme examples on both sides of the argument. For those who are against popular culture to the point of legalism, you can point to the Amish or even KJV-only churches. On the other end of the spectrum, you can point to many post-modern churches that deny the existence of hell, approve of homosexual marriage, and use profanity in their church services in order to be "relevant."

Jesus' words prepare us to engage culture by helping us recognize the balance that must be struck. In v. 15, Jesus tells us that we will remain in the world. In order to be effective at ministry, we must engage the world (cf. Paul in 1 Cor. 9:20). At the same time, in v. 16, Jesus points out that we must not be a part of the world. As followers of Christ, there will be irreconcilable differences between our worldview and beliefs and every single culture on earth.

Receive. Reject. Redeem.

As Christians, critical thinking is essential for engaging our culture and world. While attempting to classify different parts of our culture, it is helpful for us to place aspects of our culture in one of three categories: receive, reject, or redeem.

3. When we say "receive," we refer to those things that are a part of God's common grace revealed in culture. Write down one or two examples that would fit this category.

A good example is different technological items, such as a smartphone. We don't need to have a "Christian" smartphone; an iPhone or an Android will do just fine.

4. When we say "reject," we refer to those things that are a part of culture that are sinful and not beneficial. Write down one or two examples that would fit this category.

Parts of culture that are completely unredeemable, such as pornography fit into this category.

5. When we say “redeem,” we refer to those things that are a part of culture that are not bad in and of themselves, but can be used either wickedly or positively. Write down one or two examples that would fit this category.

It is my conviction that all of the examples below (except for maybe #9) fit into this category.

Look at the following issues of culture and identify which classification we should put them in. As you are discussing these in your Life Groups, ask the following questions for each different area:

This has the potential to be a really edifying (and fun) conversation. If you feel comfortable in the role, I would encourage you to play the role of “Devil’s Advocate” in your conversations with the group.

Is this a part of culture that Christians can/must receive, reject, or redeem?

What is your reasoning for your position?

Is it possible for believing Christians to have a different position? Think of the reasons someone would have for the other two categories.

Moving forward, how does your conclusion play out in your everyday life?

6. **CHRISTMAS.** While no believing Christian would say that Santa is the main part of Christmas, Christian approaches to Santa certainly vary. Santa isn’t going away anytime soon as a part of our culture. How should Christians respond?

A few talking points: the idea of Santa Claus is based off an actual Christian Saint, Saint Nicholas. Nicholas lived in the 3rd century in modern-day Turkey. He was a bishop in the ancient church and attended the Council of Nicaea in 325. The legends of Santa Claus come from his gift-giving nature.

This question may provide the widest range of opinion, as you will have some who are on the “receive” side while others would be on the “reject side.” Try to help the members of your group understand the other positions of people in your group. For those on the extreme positions, encourage them to consider the benefits of moving closer to the center of the spectrum (i.e., toward a “redeem” mindset).

7. **SEX.** Christian perspectives on sex and sexual pleasure certainly vary as well. Our culture is one of the most sexually charged cultures in history. How should Christians respond to this emphasis on sex and pleasure in culture?

Many Christians throughout history have done a terrible job regarding this issue. While the church is starting to do a better job on its teachings on sex, it still has a ways to go (praise God for Pastor Kurt’s “Solomon on Sex” series!). Many in your group may be uncomfortable with this conversation. For those in mixed groups, this especially may be the case.

I want to encourage you to not skip over this question. You may not go as in-depth in your discussion as you will on the others, but it is important for your group to have a discussion on this topic (you could argue that skipping this question would just be a form of “rejecting”!).

Scripture tells us that sex and sexual pleasure within the bounds of marriage are a gift from God. While God places stipulations on that pleasure (the bounds of marriage), he does so for our good. Keep that in mind during your discussion on this question.

In the end, you will probably have less variety of spectrum with this question. Those who “receive” need to be challenged, as do those who simply “reject.”

8. **MUSIC AND MOVIES.** Music is a gift from God, but it is often used by secular musicians to speak of sex, idolatry, debauchery, pride, and a number of other vices. How do Christians respond to this emphasis in music? The same is true for television and movies. How do Christians respond to movies filled with vulgarity, sex, drugs, and violence? Should we only listen to Christian music and only watch Christian movies?

This is another question that would provide a wide variety of opinions. Encourage everyone in your group to try to understand the viewpoints of the others in the group. Those that reject every movie that doesn’t have singing vegetables in it are wrong, just as those who will watch every single movie that comes out are

wrong. Again, secular movies and music and television have redeeming values, but we must think critically in these areas.

9. **COMFORT AND SECURITY.** A quick survey of television commercials and advertisements in newspapers will tell you that our culture highly values being comfortable and secure, more than most cultures in the world. Should this emphasis on comfort and security be a part of our church's culture? How should Christians respond?

The desires for comfort and security are given to us by God, and as such are not necessarily wrong. Yet our culture in the US has taken these two desires and made them into gods in and of themselves. As such, we will do anything and everything to make sure that we are comfortable and secure, to a degree that no other nation in history has ever experienced.

This question may take a bit more time to unfold for your group, as this is such an insidious issue in our culture that many in your group may not even think that it is wrong. (If that is the case, point out that American culture tends to elevate these two areas into gods in their own right). I would encourage you to do some thinking on this question before you meet with your Life Group so that you are prepared for any questions that may arise.