

# The Christian Man

## Culture: The Role of a Christian Man in Our Current Culture

Rough Transcript

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Good morning men. Please turn in your bibles to Matthew Chapter 26, Verse 52. So I don't know if you saw, this has nothing to do with anything, but I'm fascinated by it. Steve McQueen drove a green Mustang in the movie "Bullitt". I think it's one of the great chase scenes of all time. Anyway, most people do. That car got hidden away. Someone bought it for \$3,500. They were the only person who responded to the ad when it was put up for sale in one of the motor magazines, and it sat in that person's garage for 40 years. And it sold here in Orlando, just this week down at the Meachum Auction, for I think it was \$3.4 million. Wow.

I don't know. I just thought that was really cool. Yeah, and it hasn't been restored or anything. Were you there?

You saw it on TV? Okay. All right. So anyway, I, don't know. Let's see, what does that have to do with bible study? We're going to study a truth today that you heard 40 years ago, but you didn't act on it. It's been tucked away and now we're going to bring it to life. How's that? Okay, we're going to do a couple shout outs today. The area director, shout out goes to Greg English in Arizona, Glendale, the area northwest of Phoenix. Brett Clemmer and I were there this week for four days. Ministry with Greg, another area director, Craig Mayer there and two regional directors, the man that handles the southwest and then the man that handles the west coast also lived there. And Braden Randall, our development director went in, too, and we had a great time with Greg there in Phoenix this week. This is my seventh time speaking this week. So busy week.

And then we have a shout out today that goes to the Bible Discussion Network in Clinton, Tennessee. This is a new group of six men. They're meeting on Thursday nights at 7:30 PM at the home of Richard Lyons, the leader. And so they're trying to guide and disciple brothers and sisters in Christ. And show them the teachings of our savior and Lord Jesus Christ. So would you join me in giving both Greg and then also the Bible Discussion Network a very warm rousing Man in the Mirror welcome. Yeah. One, two, three. Hoo-ah.

Welcome. We're so glad to have you as part of our bible study. All right, so the series is the Christian man and today we in the 9th of the 10 issues that men say matter most, culture. We're going to be looking at the role of a Christian man in our current culture. And then also as we get started, I want to just say ... how many of you are reading the bible through, cover to cover, this year in some way or another? Oh that's amazing. And how many of you feel like you're where you need to be? Like up to date. Okay. And how many feel like you're behind a little bit?

So just remember if you do feel like you get behind, give yourself a get out of jail free pass card and just go ahead and pick up on the current day. And you know, 70% of reading the bible cover to cover is better than 0% of reading the bible cover to cover. Okay. All right, so I want to get that out there.

## THE STANCE CHRIST TOOK TOWARD CULTURE AND WHAT OUR STANCE SHOULD LOOK LIKE

I think the first thing we're going to talk about here is the stance that Christ took toward culture and then talk about what our stance should look like as well. So the problems that the 24 men who helped form the table of contents for this book, they voted culture is one of their very top issues. Some of those men are here, I've recognize them before. It's kind of dumb to recognize them every time, so I'm not going to do it every time.

But their questions do illustrate how difficult it is or can be for a Christian to know how to interact with today's culture. Here are some of them. On what basis do I accept shifts in culture? How can I stay true to my faith when so many around me are abandoning theirs? That's a big deal, right? How do I deal with social media and digital addiction? How should Christians mix politics and faith, or should we? Why do we still have black churches, white churches, and Hispanic churches? How can I engage culture without coming off as critical? I want to be a Christian who makes a difference, but I don't want to be belligerent about it. How can I engage with such a rapidly vacillating culture? And so on. So when you look at the current climate, it's lots of issues. Hey, can I just say this?

It's always been this way. This is not something new. I mean, I keep hearing about, "Oh, everything's so different now." No, it's not. If anything it's a little tamer than some of the times that I've, even in my own lifetime, it's a little tamer than it's been from time to. I mean, we were burning cities down when I was in high school, you know, building bomb fallout shelters so we wouldn't get blown up. Actually, I had a neighbor who had a fallout shelter. It wasn't big enough for us, so we were in trouble. But anyway, I thought it was cool. But, nevertheless, it is a very challenging culture.

And can I just say this? If the problems that we face could be solved by human logic, government, or social media or news broadcast of opinion, these groups that get together and they have four people talking about ... if the problems that we face could have been solved by these means, they would have been solved by now. So we must need some other solution. Historically, the most powerful influence on culture has been the church of Jesus Christ, the body of Christ exercising their gifts. And so I want us to take a look at how that came to pass. So how is it that Jesus interacted with the culture? Because he's the leader of the church, right?

And so at Matthew Chapter 26, Verse 52, the first thing we see is that Jesus was not opposed to culture the way it was. In fact, it's kind of surprising to me that someone, as opposed to the current culture, would not want to actually replace it with another culture. So what Jesus did, we see in this text, and I'm going to read from the book itself. The Roman soldiers came to arrest him and Peter, he drew out his sword, and Jesus said, "Put your sword back in it's place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my father and he will at once put at my disposal more than 12 legions of angels?" So Jesus did not come to replace the existing culture. He did not come to overthrow the existing culture. But that's not all. He didn't come to embrace the culture either. You know in the time of Jesus, the Essenes was religious sect that had withdrawn from the culture, and they were living up in the Qumran area. In the caves where they found the dead sea scrolls, a lot of them were scribes and that's where they did their work. But they had completely withdrawn from culture.

And then the Sadducees, another religious sect, neither the Essenes or the Sadducees believed in the resurrection. The Sadducees though they had embraced the culture. They had become very Hellenistic. The technical word, I've used it here before, but probably not in a decade, syncretism. The blending or merging of different belief systems together. And so you have all these different things going on, and Jesus, he did not withdraw from culture at all. And he certainly did not embrace the culture. In fact, he addressed every single possible cultural issue of his time. And we should, too. He addressed government, he addressed adultery, he addressed sexual immorality. He addressed all these different things. You read through the sermon on the mountain, you find these things and elsewhere he was extremely involved. Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's, give unto God what is God. He was very involved in commenting on the culture.

Buddy never embraced it. So neither should we. So we have these three positions to either overthrow or replace the culture. No. To withdraw from the culture, no. To embrace the culture, no. What does that leave? It leaves engage the culture. So the stance that Jesus Christ takes towards culture is to engage the culture, to let the yeast of the gospel work itself down into the existing order of things, and then change it to have an impact on it for good. So how did he do that? Well, he did that with his teaching. Yeah. And you should talk to people. That makes sense. But when you think about this, so Jesus spoke 34,450 words. All right. That's only about five hours of total teaching. You could deliver that in about 10, 30 minute sermons.

So yeah, I'm sure he did a lot more teaching than that. But where he actually spent his time was meeting the practical needs of the people. And I'm going to give you an example and turn with me if you would to Matthew 15, Verse 30. Since I've put it in the book, I'm going to go ahead and read it again for the book. Matthew 15, Verse 30; great crowds came to him bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many and laid them at his feet and he healed them. So he was involved in helping meet the physical needs of people. So homeless people, poor people, and sick people. The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking, and the blind seeing, and they praise the God of Israel. And when we follow the example of Jesus and serve others in the community who have problems, people will praise the God of Israel.

Reading on, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people. They have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way." And so this is the stance of Jesus. You know, he met the practical needs of people at the same time he was showing how the gospel applied to every aspect of their lives. And so the answer for us then, or what stance we should take, what ours should look like, is that it should be personal engagement. Personal engagement with the problems that we see people have. And not just with words, yes words, but also personal action and taking some personal responsibility. Now you can't do everything. And so we'll talk about that in a moment.

But the fact that you can't do everything doesn't mean that you have the ability to do nothing. I mean, you do have the responsibility to do something if you want to be a living out to your fingertips Christian, okay? So here's the Big Idea then. Well, I'll just go ahead and give you the Big Idea. So God wants each of us to go find some unredeemed corner of culture and claim or reclaim it for the glory of Jesus Christ. **God wants each of us to go find some unredeemed corner of culture and claim or reclaim it for the glory of Christ.** And the reason that I've said some unredeemed corner is that, look, if there are 500 people focused on a particular problem, say teenage crisis pregnancy, in your community online or here, if your community has marshaled the resources of the body of the Christ and really have a lot of people working on crisis pregnancy, then guess what? There's some other unredeemed corner, somebody's

working on that corner to redeem it, go find some other unredeemed corner of culture and work on that. Maybe it's addiction. We'll get to some of these problems here in just a second. So that's the Big Idea for the day.

#### PICKING YOUR BATTLES: A CASE STUDY IN RACIAL RECONCILIATION

So next, let's talk about picking your battles. Because as I just said, you can't do everything. And so I want to do a little case study here in racial reconciliation. But as I begin, the question is, "Oh okay, I understand all these problems, but what can I do? I'm just one man." I remember my father, I've told this before, I'm sure. Yeah, I remember saying this before, but my father was a mild-mannered man. He is the most moral man, or as moral as any man I've ever known, and I think that's where Pete and I got this high integrity kind of ... integrity's my life work. I mean, we're a couple of straight arrows, you know, and our other brother, too. Except when it came to watching the news, the evening news. Man, he would sit there and he would scream and he would yell at that TV set.

I was thinking, "Wow, who is this man? That's supposed to be my dad." He would be yelling, all these different culture issues that got him so upset. And I'm guessing, but I think it was just the frustration that he didn't have the ability to move the needle on these things, and yet they were so important to him. And so what I think is important here is to pick your battle, on something where you actually can move the needle. It doesn't have to be the biggest issue in the world. It just needs to be something where you can personally make an impact. And so, I'm going to tell you that in 1980 we had what the national news called a race riot here down near Paramour Street. And there was some vandalism, there was some looting, the sheriff of Orange County at the time, we lived in the same neighborhood. Somebody threw a brick through his windshield. So I mean there was some violence and so forth.

And I remember coming home, as a 31 year old Christian. All right, so lots of guys in their 30s man, this is a great time to pick an issue, in your 30s. It's just a great time to pick an issue, or sometimes more often to have an issue pick you, which is what happened to me in this area. But I had been under the influence of a man named Tom Skinner, who was an African American evangelist. And he, I don't know, long story for another time, but he and I had become best friends. And so I was under his influence and I came home for lunch that day. I heard about this disturbance and we had an African American woman who came once a week to help with housecleaning. And I was embarrassed. It was awkward, she lived right down next to Paramour Street where all this is going on, okay. And so it's embarrassing and awkward for me.

So, haltingly I said to her, "Merthie, what do you think it's going to take for all of us to be able to work this out and live together.? And she said, "Oh, I don't know." And I said, "Well, do you think we're ever going to get this figured out?" She said, "Oh, I don't know." And then I said, "Well, what keeps you going? What gives you hope?" She said, "Oh, I don't know." And then with her drooped shoulders, she shuffled off into the room next to where I was sitting and I was overwhelmed. I had a little office at the house and I went in and shut the door and I just sobbed for about a half an hour. And finally I said, "God, I just feel like you're trying to say something to me. What is it that you want me to do? How do you want me to respond?"

Well, I can't change Orlando. But I had an idea. I had a friend who was an African American professor at Rollins College, Alzo Reddick. He became a politician here as well. And so Alzo and I were friends, and so I asked Alzo to lunch and I said, "Hey Alzo, here's my idea." And I said, "What do you think? What if we invited some African American men and some white guys to come to a meeting right over here at Rollins

College? We'll get a room, with the idea not that we're going to change the Orlando, but that we would basically try to change ourselves. Just build some relationships." He liked the idea. We invited 40 men, 20 black, 20 white and half came. 20 men came, exactly 10 black and 10 white. And then at the meeting, which was lasted all Saturday morning, it was clear that we had two groups.

One group wanted to take the city, wanted to do some tasks, wanted to take action. The other half said, "No, we don't even know each other. Let's get to know each other first. And then let's see what happens." Well, I was under the influence of Tom Skinner because Tom, his whole thing was if you want to change your city, you have become to each other what you want the city to become and that will create a model that will be so powerful that other people will want to be part of it. So I was under his influence. And so I was able to steer the group to the idea of getting to know each other first. And then we lost half the group. So we invited 40, 20 came, and now we're down to 10 exactly.

Five black. Exactly five white. God has a nice way of working things like that out. And so we met together every Saturday morning. Well, not every Saturday. One Saturday morning a month for five years. And we got to know each other. And I didn't think I was a racist until we started meeting. I mean, yeah, I grew up in a home where if I'd ever made a racial slur or an ethnic slur, I'd still be black and blue. So I didn't think I had any prejudices at all. But I remember sitting at that table and I said, "That is the most stupid thing I've ever heard anybody say in my life." And so I would poke and then they would poke back. And then the next month I would say something and somebody'd say, "You got to be kidding me. You white guys are all alike."

And I'd say, "Well, maybe we are, but so are you black guys, all alike." But we broke it down and it was intentional. It was intentional, you see. And then after just a really a few weeks, something happened, we started falling in love with each other. I mean we started actually enjoying each other, 17 of us went on a weekend men's retreat up to North Carolina. We went out and one of the guys had a roof problem. We all went out and put new roof on his house. Well I watched, they did that. We put two guys through seminary, we helped at least two guys. I was trying to think of the names, of a third guy. I think we helped three guys start ministries. And we really did have a significant, we changed ourselves and then also other people saw what was going on and they were impacted, too. And so it's an example, you see, of today's big idea. God wants each of us to go find some unredeemed corner of culture and claim or reclaim it for the glory of Christ.

**CALL TO ACTION: WHAT IS THE CORNER OF CULTURE THAT TOUCHES YOUR HEART?**

All right, so let's have a little call to action here. What is the corner of culture that touches your heart? By the way, if you want to ... I mean racial reconciliation is just one example, but if you are interested, in the book you can read more about the story I just told you. And there is a three week racial reconciliation challenge in there and I'd encourage you to do it if this is one of the areas of our world today that is of interest to you. You know the issues, right? Reading from the book, education, school violence, protecting innocent children, the economy, federal deficits, school debt, finding a job that pays well, racism, politics, human trafficking, the environment, poverty, social justice, fatherlessness, divorce, homelessness, gang violence, immigration, social media, bullying, internet scams, sex scandals, police shootings, abortions, disputes over how to define marriage and gender issues.

We already said something about teen pregnancy. Serving single moms. You know the issues. Here's the question for you, what is the issue that makes you want to pound the table? You know, what is the thing that really gets you fired up? The one that makes your blood move fast and the one if you could actually

do something about it, it would put a smile on your face. If you know Jesus Christ, why didn't he just beam you up? I mean, why are you still here? What good are we unless we are taking this gospel and we are using it to marinate the culture, or whatever the right word is, to help change the culture around us? Just like Jesus did in the stance that he took when he engaged the culture. Yes, he talked about the gospel, but he did it in such a way that he was meeting the needs of people so that there was some authority to what he had to say, because he was helping people, not just telling them what they ought to do.

He was actively engaged. And that's exactly what our call to action is, too. I mean I don't need to date me, you can look at me and date me, but when I was first getting started, I had been a Christian for like a year, maybe two. And there was a group, there were six of us who started a small group. So I've been in small groups right from the very beginning. And I was looking at this again today, I've shown this here before once, but I was looking at this today and I said, "You know, I guess I was a systems theory guy and a model builder from the very beginning," because this is a model and I was thinking about this this morning. Although the words are different, this is actually the exact same model that I used today. In fact, it's the exact same model we use here at the Bible study today.

Not that it's important that you see all of the things, but at the top it says, "The Concept." I took this and I presented it to our small group at an IHOP down on East Colonial Drive one day and I say, "Hey look, we're all going to be involved in our business, our church, and our family. But we also have these three other areas, education, civic affairs and politics. Why don't we each take a different area? One different area and then kind of pour ourselves into that." And so the concept, it says at the top to monitor the community from a spiritual viewpoint. And if I was rewriting it today, I would say to engage the community from a spiritual viewpoint. So that top circle on the left, that's our group, okay. And we're meeting and then we're also each individual guys.

And so the little circles around the individual guy, those are the different interests or people that we're involved with. And each line, I'm a great model builder, man. This is so cool. You're going to love this. Right there it says that the length of the line from the guy out to the interest represents different depths of commitment and involvement. Does that rock? I mean, does that rock? Let's have a round of applause for Pat Morley. So anyway, but that's what we're saying. From here, you know, this is our group and the table. That's your group, but you're an individual guy, too. So, you're going to be involved in your work, your family, and your church. But what is the area of culture that is, the corner of culture, that is either unredeemed or needs to be re-redeemed?

Got it in mind? All right, so here's the Big Idea about it. **God wants each of us to go find some unredeemed corner of culture and claim or reclaim it for the glory of Jesus Christ.** Now one way we do that is by having our bible study. And we have leaders in this bible study, and we are for the first time ever in 34 years, we're going to this morning actually commission publicly one of our new leaders. Yeah, 34 years. And I just had this idea, but I thought it was pretty good. He just had it this morning. So I'm going to ask Marq Neasman to come up if you would please. And Mark is our newest table leader. So Marq is a husband, a father of two children, a business consultant. Came to Orlando to be the quarterback at the UCF football team. First of all, I want to say thank you for serving this unredeemed corner of culture that really needs work here. This is a big job, you really picked the big one here. And I want to welcome you as a leader and then also would like to just pray a prayer to commission Marq's ministry here at the bible study. Would you join me for that?

First of all, for this topic of culture, Father, we do ask that you would use each of us. We all want to make a difference. But we all tend to ask the same question too, you know, we're just one guy. What can we do? Well, Lord, you can show us what that is. And I hope that you will use the message today to help each of us think through what that might be. And then Lord, for Marq, we just would ask that you would anoint him, that you would bless him with a great abundance, that you would let the natural leadership skills that he has build into the lives of men, that they might know you fully, that they might be leaving surrendered lives, and that you would use him to help them be the godly men, husbands and fathers that they so long to be. And we ask this and we commission him and give him your blessing in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.