

IV

SAMPLE LESSON 2



UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES SERIES

Culture

2

What is Culture?



What is Culture?



Chapter 2 Syllabus

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2 In Class In Class At Home At Home	DISCUSS Questions for Chapter 2.3–2.4 EXPLORE Activity: Aspects of Culture READ Chapter 2.5–2.6 ANSWER Questions for Chapter 2.5–2.6	24–25 25 ST 37–41 SM 28
3 In Class In Class At Home At Home	DISCUSS Questions for Chapter 2.5–2.6 EXPLORE Activity: Worldview + Action = Culture READ Chapter 2.7–2.8 ANSWER Questions for Chapter 2.7–2.8	26–27 27 ST 42–46 SM 32
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Student Textbook (ST) Student Manual (SM) Enrichment Activity (A)

Chapter 2

OVERVIEW

Culture surrounds everything we voluntarily do to create the world around us. It is a way of life with its own communication styles and daily activities. Culture grows from beliefs and choices. It shapes how people speak, act, and live. It reflects beliefs about truth, goodness, and life's meaning, which are seen in four aspects of culture: ideas, champions, institutions, and artifacts. Ideas spread through champions, such as teachers, celebrities, politicians, and athletes. Cultural ideas spread through institutions such as families, churches, schools, businesses, and government. Culture appears in the artifacts of daily life: trends, art, music, books, values, celebrations, morals, and how people spend time and money. Cultural archaeologists study the patterns and artifacts that reveal how people think, live, and decide what makes life worthwhile.

Throughout history, Christians have engaged in cultural transformation by living out the biblical worldview in ways that shape the beliefs and habits of others. William Wilberforce and his son, Samuel, effectively worked to abolish the slave trade. Cultural transformation can take time, as Ida Scudder discovered in her work to transform health care for women in India. Christians who are present and involved in culture understand that change happens in both short- and long-term approaches. Christians engage culture aware of its beliefs, metabeliefs, *ethos*, and practices. Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* offers five historical approaches to culture. Still, the fifth view, Christ the transformer of culture, best describes an effective approach. Culture can be renewed through Christians displaying the gospel: Christ's death and resurrection for our redemption and restoration, which brings healing to both individuals and to society.

PREPARATION P

- Lesson 2:** Preview **PS 2.2 Aspects of Culture** to become familiar with the activity. Obtain a handheld whiteboard, marker, and eraser for each group of 3–4 students. Pads of paper can be used if whiteboards aren't available.
- Lesson 3:** Make one copy of **TR 2.3 Worldview + Action = Culture Answer Key** for yourself.
- Lesson 4:** Make a copy of **TR 2.4 Cultural Transformation Action Plan** for each student and one copy with the **Possible Answers** for yourself.
- Lesson 5:** Make one copy of **TR 2.5 The Way of Life Bible Study Answer Key** for yourself.
- Lesson 6:** Access and preview the videos listed on Lesson 6. See the inside back cover of this manual for video-streaming instructions.
- Lesson 7:** Make one copy of **TR 2.7 Minute to Change It? Answers** for yourself. Preview **PS 2.7 Minute to Change It?** to become familiar with the activity. Obtain a cup or a desk bell for each team of 3 students, and a timer.
- Lesson 8:** Make a copy of **TR 2.8 Chapter 2 Test** for each student.

LESSON MATERIALS

Presentation Slides

PS 2.2 Aspects of Culture
PS 2.7 Minute to Change It?
PS 2.7 Chapter 2 Review

Teacher Resources

TR 2.3 Worldview + Action = Culture Answer Key
TR 2.4 Cultural Transformation Action Plan and Answers
TR 2.5 The Way of Life Bible Study Answer Key
TR 2.7 Minute to Change It? Answers
TR 2.SG Chapter 2 Study Guide
TR 2.8 Chapter 2 Test
TR 2.A Sabrina's Story

Lesson 1:

Chapter 2.1–2.2

Review the Chapter 1 Test. Have students turn to page 28 in the student textbook. Read the objectives to the class. Go over the answers to the Discussion Questions for Chapter 2.1–2.2 on page 24 in the student manual. Have students turn to **Activity: Ten Truths**. Read the directions. Assign the homework.

OBJECTIVES

- ➊ Students will be able to describe what culture is and how it is studied. [2.1]
- ➋ Students will be able to explain how humans reflect and shape culture through their interactions with the world. [2.2]

ENRICHMENT

- ✦ Have students read the article **Christ Does Not Merely Stand Against Culture; He Transforms It** by Jeff Myers, in the online Teacher Resources.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the correlation between a biblical worldview of *culture* and *agriculture*? [2.1]

The word *culture* originates from the word *agriculture*, which is the care and cultivation of the land. In Genesis, God commanded Adam and Eve to cultivate the garden and take care of all of creation. This command extends to us as we are to cultivate a healthy, thriving society through our habits, values, and practices.

2. In your own words, what is culture? [2.1]

Answers will vary, but should include the idea that culture is the way of life for a people group, including methods and styles of communication and activities. People often describe their culture with the choices people make including trends, moral decisions, and lifestyles. Culture is what people voluntarily do, such as socialization, education, celebrations, traditions, food, occupations, communication, and religion. Culture also consists of the spoken and unspoken beliefs, practices, and other cultural patterns.

3. In what ways are all Christians to be cultural anthropologists? Explain the reasons why. [2.1]

A Christian can be like a cultural anthropologist by studying the details of culture to gain a deeper understanding of people. As a Christian observes the beliefs and values that form habits, communications, and celebrations, this leads to a deeper understanding of culture. Then, a Christian can thoughtfully be like salt that preserves health and goodness, and like a light that shines God's truth and beauty in culture.

4. Which beliefs motivated William Wilberforce to oppose the slave trade, and what resulted from his efforts? [2.2]

Wilberforce believed that all humans are created by God as his image-bearers. Wilberforce was outspoken about the atrocities of slave trading as a violation of human rights and dignity. He proposed that Parliament abolish slavery. Though it took years, through perseverance to uphold his Christian beliefs, Wilberforce's efforts led to the abolition of slavery.

5. How do the daily choices people make accumulate to shape culture? [2.2]

Our deeply held beliefs guide our decisions and actions. The daily choices people make reflect what they value and believe to be true. The daily choices include how we spend our time and money, the ways we communicate, and the activities we choose to support or neglect. Repeated actions and habits accumulate to form cultural patterns and traditions passed through the generations.

Activity

TEN TRUTHS

OBJECTIVE:

Students will be able to self-assess the beliefs they hold to be true and experience how individual beliefs can influence culture.

PREPARATION:

- Materials needed: pencils and paper
- Time required: 25–30 minutes

PROCEDURE:

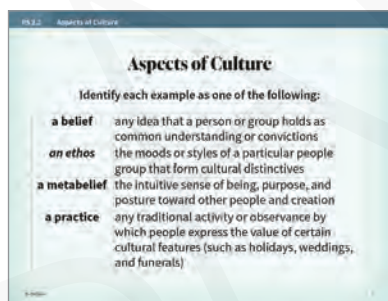
1. Explain that students will work individually to create a list of ten brief statements they believe to be true and are comfortable sharing with the class. Each statement begins with the prompt, “I believe . . .” These statements may pertain to one’s faith or to any belief they hold to be true. For example, statements may include what one holds to be true about God, creation, or faith. Statements may also include what one believes to be true about food, hobbies, or daily life decisions. Allow up to 7 minutes for students to complete the list.
2. Guide students to mark three belief statements they choose to share with a classmate. Have students prepare to share these statements beginning with “I choose to share this belief with you because . . .” or “I choose this as an important truth to share with you because I believe . . .” Allow students up to 2 minutes to select three statements and prepare an explanation.
3. Have students find a partner. Guide pairs to share in a conversation about the three statements they each chose and why they chose them. Encourage pairs to ask questions and offer responses. Allow up to 6 minutes for conversations.
4. In a class discussion, ask for a volunteer to introduce their partner to the class and share one belief statement they heard from their partner. The introduction can be framed as “I spoke with (the partner’s name), and he or she believes (briefly explain the belief statement). I chose to share this statement with you because . . .” Answers are to be respectful and concise. Ask for another volunteer to repeat the introduction procedure. Continue the introductions as time allows.
5. Conclude the activity by asking the following questions in a class discussion or as an exit ticket activity:
 - How did this exercise sharpen your awareness of beliefs that are supported with knowledge and important to share with others? **Answers will vary, but should include how beliefs are shared in culture.**
 - What insight did you gain from this activity about how sharing your personal beliefs can influence culture? **Answers will vary, but should include how shared beliefs are powerful in cultural transformation.**

Lesson 2: Chapter 2.3–2.4 P

Read the objectives to the class. Go over the Discussion Questions for Chapter 2.3–2.4. Have **PS 2.2 Aspects of Culture** available. Have handheld whiteboards (or pads of paper), markers, and erasers for each group of 3–4 students available. Have students turn to **Activity: Aspects of Culture** in the student manual. Read the directions. Assign the homework.

OBJECTIVES

- ❶ Students will be able to categorize different approaches for biblically engaging with culture, both individually and corporately. [2.3]
- ❷ Students will be able to explain how beliefs about God are reflected in three aspects of culture: *ethos*, practices, and metabeliefs. [2.4]



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What deeply held cultural beliefs did Ida Scudder encounter in India, and how did she address them in a way that demonstrates how Christians can pursue cultural transformation? [2.3]

Ida encountered a deeply held cultural belief in India that men could not assist women in childbirth, which left women with a life-threatening lack of medical care. Ida understood that flawed cultural beliefs and behavior would require short-term and long-term solutions. Ida went to medical school to become a doctor and train other women. This long-term plan led to solutions as biblical truth influenced new relationships, beliefs, and habits.

2. What is a biblical approach to dangers in culture without being fearful? Explain. [2.3]

Since some aspects of culture may pose dangers, Christians can pray for discernment and seek wise counsel to guide them in how to approach cultural influences. Christians must exercise the ability to distinguish between truth and error, right and wrong, and good and bad, and to determine the best approaches to promote what is true, right, and good in culture.

3. In what ways did the apostle Paul demonstrate a wise presence and involvement in engaging culture? [2.3]

Paul didn't retreat from culture but engaged in culture with a God-centered purpose. Paul observed culture, listened, and learned from people about their ideas and beliefs. Then Paul demonstrated how we are to speak Truth to people in ways they can understand. *Capital T* Truth refers to sharing about Jesus and the healing he offers.

4. What factors do and do not lead to long-term cultural formation? [2.3]

Long-term cultural changes are most often not the result of political or civic changes. Sustainable cultural change results from people engaging with culture in ways that ultimately reveal the truth that points people to spiritual healing through Christ. Long-term changes also address needs and build relationships. These changes influence worldviews through families, churches, schools, and communities, which serve as the centers of relationships in the community.

5. What distinguishes a belief from a metabelief, and what is an example of each? [2.4]

A belief is any idea held by a person or group as an accepted understanding or conviction. It is what one believes to be true, such as the existence and nature of God, the value of people, and what happens to us when we die. A metabelief is one's intuitive sense of being, purpose, and posture toward other people and creation. These are like *gut instincts*, which influence one's sense of right and wrong. These unspoken assumptions influence the way we live and interact with one another, such as how we behave in a crowd.

6. In what ways is *an ethos* evident in cultural practices? Give examples. [2.4]

An ethos is evident in cultural practices when one senses the mood or characteristics of a particular group of people stemming from beliefs. *An ethos* is evident in cultural practices such as holidays, weddings, and funerals. Practices occur in daily routines at home, school, or work where a mood or style based on beliefs is evident. If Christians in a school or business believe that work is worship and that gratitude fosters joy, then someone new entering that school or business will sense the joy and gratitude in the ethos.

Activity

ASPECTS OF CULTURE

OBJECTIVE:

Students will be able to classify key cultural concepts and formulate examples.

PREPARATION:

- Materials needed: PS 2.2, a handheld whiteboard (or pad of paper) for each group of students, markers, and erasers
- Time required: 25–30 minutes

PROCEDURE:

1. Divide the class into teams of 3–4 students. Give each team a whiteboard, a marker, and an eraser. Have each team select a scribe or share the responsibility among team members to write their answer on the whiteboard.
2. Display slide 1 on PS 2.2 Aspects of Culture and have a volunteer read each definition. Explain that each slide contains an example of one of the following aspects of culture: a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice. When each example is displayed, allow teams 1 minute to discuss, write the correct aspect of culture on their whiteboard, and prepare a brief reason for their choice.
3. Display slide 2. Have teams read the example and work together to identify one of the four aspects of culture. Have scribes write their answer, and turn the whiteboard facedown when finished.
4. For each team, ask the scribe to hold up their answer and share the reason for the choice. Then display slide 3 to reveal the correct answer. Discuss any questions or incorrect answers. Have scribes tally one point for each correct answer.
5. Display slide 4 and continue in the same manner through each example. Conclude by having teams share their point totals and announce the winning team.
6. In a class discussion or an exit ticket, have students respond to the following question: How can understanding these four aspects of culture help you navigate a new cultural setting? **Answers will vary, but should include that one's understanding of the four aspects of culture guides one in observing and understanding people in a new culture.**



Portfolio Artifact Opportunity: Have students identify a cultural practice that demonstrates a belief, an ethos, or a metabelief. Suggest that students include a photo with a caption explaining the cultural aspects of this practice as an artifact in their student manual.

Lesson 3:

Chapter

2.5–2.6 P

Read the objectives to the class. Go over the Discussion Questions for Chapter 2.5–2.6. Have students turn to **Activity: Worldview + Action = Culture** in the student manual. Have a copy of **TR 2.3 Worldview + Action = Culture Answer Key** available. Read the directions. Assign the homework.

OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Students will be able to analyze how culture shapes ideas, leaders, artifacts, and institutions, and explain how Christians can actively promote goodness and truth within these areas. [2.5]
- ▶ Students will be able to evaluate the five approaches to culture that have influenced Christians throughout history. [2.6]

ENRICHMENT

- ★ Have students read **What's a Christian to do with Culture?** by John Stonestreet, a Colson Center Breakpoint article, in the online Teacher Resources.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what four areas of culture do cultural patterns form and grow, and how would you briefly describe each one? [2.5]

Cultural patterns form and grow through . . .

- a. ideas: thoughts, plans, or suggestions about something one can think or do.
- b. champions: influential people in culture who spread ideas by teaching others or representing ideas, such as teachers, politicians, athletes, or celebrities.
- c. artifacts: any human-made thing, tangible or intangible, such as works of art, books, and new philosophies.
- d. institutions: cultural organizations or groups of people, such as the family, church, school, businesses, or sports clubs.

2. What is the unique role and influence of institutions in culture? Give an example. [2.5]

An institution is a school, business, organization, church, or media outlet, or any place where people gather to work, communicate, socialize, learn, worship, or interact as a community. Institutions uniquely contribute to preserving culture because ideas become a durable, sustainable influence on society's beliefs and values when upheld by institutions. The church is an example of an institution that upholds ideas.

3. Of the five historical approaches to culture that Christians have taken, how does the *Christ against culture* approach compare with the *Christ of culture* approach, and what are the strengths and the downsides? [2.6]

This first approach focuses on Scripture that instructs Christians not to love the world. Some Christians, such as the Amish, build separate schools, businesses, and communities to shield themselves from harmful influences. Followers are loyal to Christ over culture, while isolated from the people Christians are called to love and serve. This second view is the opposite. It identifies Christ with culture's highest moral goals: reason, justice, creativity, and human progress as God's work in the world. Christians appreciate the good in culture but may be tempted to follow a religious agenda with an uncritical acceptance of one's culture as uniquely blessed by God.

4. How does the *Christ above culture* compare with the *Christ and culture in paradox* view? Explain the strengths and downside. [2.6]

The first view focuses on obedience to Christ and the goal of pointing others to God for more obedient lives. Christians take sin seriously while still actively participating in society. However, this view can backfire when Christians work with nonbelievers to improve culture but underestimate how deeply culture shapes people's assumptions. The second view sees Christians living in the

paradox of a broken world that will not be restored until Christ returns. While it is difficult to live in a broken world, this view denies that there is hope and restoration while we wait.

5. What is the *Christ, the transformer of culture* approach? How is it unique from the other approaches? [2.6]

This view embraces hope that culture can be renewed and restored through the redemptive work of Christ. This view acknowledges we live in a world where humanity's sin nature needs the healing that Christ offers. Lives and cultures can be transformed through the work of Christ in culture to restore the good, the right, and the beautiful. The gospel message of Christ's death and resurrection for our redemption and restoration heals not only individuals but also the structures and practices of society.

Worldview	Aspect of Culture	Action	Culture
Worldview: The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation.	Aspect of Culture: Religion	Action: The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation.	Culture: The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation.
Worldview: The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation.	Aspect of Culture: Education	Action: The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation.	Culture: The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation.
Worldview: The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation.	Aspect of Culture: Art	Action: The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation.	Culture: The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation.
Worldview: The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation.	Aspect of Culture: Science	Action: The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation.	Culture: The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation. The individual believes that the world is a broken place, and that God desires the good for his creation.

Activity

WORLDVIEW + ACTION = CULTURE

OBJECTIVE:

Students will be able to demonstrate how beliefs inform actions that shape culture.

PREPARATION:

- Materials needed: TR 2.3 and pencils
- Time required: 25–30 minutes

PROCEDURE:

1. Have students form groups of 3–4 students. Using the chart *Worldview + Action = Culture* in the student manual, explain and discuss the examples in each column. Refer to TR 2.3 *Worldview + Action = Culture Answer Key* to guide conversations.
 - a. **Worldview:** In this column, describe an internal aspect of an individual's worldview. It can be a belief, a value, or a statement that represents a belief or value.
 - b. **Aspect of Culture:** This column identifies how the individual's worldview will become evident in one of the four following aspects of culture:
 - idea
 - artifact
 - champion
 - institution
 - c. **Action:** In this column, have students describe one possible way this individual's worldview could be demonstrated through an action in the given aspect of culture.
 - d. **Culture:** In this column, describe a possible outcome of this individual's worldview and actions as influential in the culture.
2. Have groups read and work together to complete the chart, filling in each blank with possible responses. Allow groups up to 20 minutes to discuss and complete the chart. Remind students that these are possible scenarios and there are no right or wrong answers.
3. Have students share their answers with the class.
4. In a class discussion or an exit ticket, ask students the following question: What conclusions can you draw from this exercise about the influence of an individual's worldview on culture?

Lesson 4:

Chapter

2.7–2.8 P

Read the objectives to the class. Go over the Discussion Questions for Chapter 2.7–2.8. Have students turn to **Activity: Cultural Transformation Action Plan** in the student manual. Have copies of **TR 2.4 Cultural Transformation Action Plan** available and one copy of the **Answers** for yourself. Read the directions. Assign the homework.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to compare how culture shapes beliefs, values, and behaviors with how Christ-centered discipleship actively transforms lives. [2.7]
- Students will be able to discuss how Christians can respond to cultural challenges, issues, and needs through the lens of a biblical worldview. [2.8]

ENRICHMENT

- Have students read **A Tale of Two Halftime Shows** by Timothy Fox in the online Teacher Resources.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways does culture shape beliefs, values, and behaviors in people? [2.7]

Culture has a powerful influence in shaping what society values and how those beliefs are shared through practices, and by communicating what is accepted and ignoring what is not. These cultural experiences happen through school, entertainment, social media, and advertising. Society communicates expectations for what people are to think, be, and do in the culture.

2. How are Christians called to build countercultural experiences that lead to transformation? [2.7]

Christianity offers a different source of beliefs and values grounded in what God says is good, true, and beautiful. Christians share a vision of what life can be when the character and teachings of Christ reshape our desires. We invite others to share in our countercultural practices, which include worship, prayer, Bible reading, serving others, and reordering our priorities to align with God's priorities.

3. What does it mean for Christians to see culture as part of our Christian mission? [2.8]

In order to transform culture, Christians share Christ and the biblical worldview beyond the church walls into life, where we display values and habits patterned after Christ. Our faith influences every aspect of life, from work to school and relationships. Christians teach and reflect a calling to cultivate healing and point others toward what is good, true, and beautiful.

4. What does it mean for Christians to take culture seriously? [2.8]

Christians are to analyze culture through awareness and understanding of people, their actions, and their needs. Rather than avoiding people who uphold a nonbiblical worldview, a Christian seeks to engage in conversations that lead to healthy conversations. Through seeking to listen and engage with humility, Christians reflect God's love to others.

5. What is involved in creating a new culture? [2.8]

Creating a new culture involves addressing challenges and issues with effective, creative ideas. We can respond to issues with solutions that promote human flourishing, actions that beautify where people live, and service that restores health and growth. Cultural transformation happens through daily decisions to bring truth, goodness, health, and healing to culture.

Activity

CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE:

Students will apply an engaged biblical approach to a cultural issue and design a plan that reflects appreciation for what is good, right, and beautiful.

PREPARATION:

- Materials needed:
TR 2.4, student textbooks, and pens
- Time required:
30–35 minutes

PROCEDURE:

1. Divide the class into groups of 3–4 students. Have each group select a scribe.
2. Using TR 2.4 Cultural Transformation Action Plan, allow 8 minutes for groups to read and complete Step 1. Have groups discuss the questions to identify and form their description of a cultural issue; it may be an actual cultural issue in their community or a possible issue. Guide the scribes to document the group's decisions on TR 2.4.
3. Have groups read and discuss Step 2, and allow 8 minutes to use the questions to analyze their issue as if it is occurring in their own community. Remind scribes to document the group's reasons and decisions on TR 2.4.
4. Then have groups read and discuss Step 3 to develop the vision and an action plan to create a new culture. Allow 8 minutes for groups to discuss and document.
5. Conclude the class activity by asking a volunteer from each group to give a summary of their cultural transformation action plan to the class.



Digital option: Consider allowing students to post their Cultural Transformation Action Plan on a digital classroom discussion board and inviting others to respond to it.



Extended learning opportunity: Allow students to continue developing their Cultural Transformation Action Plan and follow through to complete the project. Guide groups on next steps toward completing their cultural transformation project and on opportunities to involve others. Have students attach a copy of their completed plan to their student manual as a portfolio artifact.

Lesson 5:

Chapter 2.9–2.10 P

Read the objectives to the class. Go over the Discussion Questions for Chapter 2.9–2.10. Have students turn to **Activity: The Way of Life Bible Study** in the student manual. Have one copy of **TR 2.5 The Way of Life Bible Study Answer Key** available for yourself. Read the directions. Optional: Assign **TR 2.SG Chapter 2 Study Guide** to prepare for Chapter 2 Test.

OBJECTIVES

- ❶ Students will be able to describe how the lives of Christians reflect Christ through obedient living that promotes healing and flourishing in society. [2.9]
- ❷ Students will be able to summarize their own cultural experiences and discuss how Christians can engage culture with a raised awareness of a biblical worldview's influence. [2.10]

ENRICHMENT

- ★ Have students read **Love Thy Neighbor and Change Thy Culture** by John Stonestreet, a Colson Center Breakpoint article, in the online Teacher Resources.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **How does a Christian's approach to culture with caution and separation compare with presence and involvement?** [2.9]

When a Christian remains distinct or above others, this posture doesn't represent Christ well or draw others to him. An approach of caution and separation can appear judgmental. By comparison, a posture of presence and involvement means a willingness to love and serve others, displaying kindness and concern, with empathy for others' needs and hurts.

2. **What is an example of a situation that might require a short-term change in culture?** [2.9]

Christians propose short-term cultural changes to address immediate problems. For example, they may be willing to serve by helping a community recover from a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, tornado, or fire to rebuild what was lost. A short-term change may propose new laws that correct an issue, promote human flourishing, or provide justice for those in need.

3. **When does a long-term cultural formation plan make sense? Give an example.** [2.9]

Long-term cultural formation works over time as people grow to understand Christ's good and redemptive work for healing in lives. For example, a community with a history of poor education and adult illiteracy may affect people's ability to obtain good, sustainable jobs to provide for their families; a long-term plan may be an adult literacy program. Results may take years to see, but the benefits accumulate to help improve people's lives and families.

4. **What does the Hebrew term *derek* mean to a Christian's way of life?** [2.9]

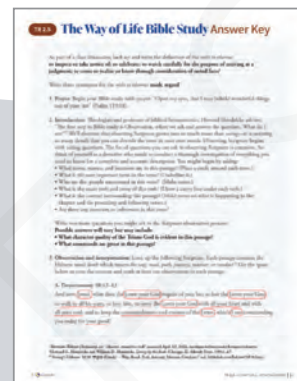
Derek is a Hebrew word that describes an overall way or direction in one's life journey. For Christians, both Old and New Testament passages emphasize faithful patterns of living by following Christ through life. Reflecting Christ's character and nature, known as *abiding in Christ*, happens through daily Bible reading, prayer, worship, teaching, and fellowship with other Christians.

5. **What is involved in one's commitment to imitate Christ rather than culture?** [2.9–2.10]

Christ is our ultimate model for living. Our obedience matters, but also our humility is important. We aren't called to be perfect Christians. We're called to yield our lives to God's love and leadership in daily decisions. Then, we allow the Holy Spirit to shape our character as we seek opportunities to serve Christ and proclaim his message of love through the gospel.

6. What are some of the ways that we reflect Christ in culture? [2.10]

We reflect Christ by seeing and responding to the physical and spiritual needs of others. We actively connect others with the help they need. We pray and listen, pointing them to Scripture for truth and guidance. Care is a way to love others and, even in the small ways, display God's goodness.



Activity

THE WAY OF LIFE BIBLE STUDY

OBJECTIVE:

Students will be able to analyze and apply Scriptures that describe the path of Christian living that aligns with God's values, truth, and beauty.

PREPARATION:

- Materials needed: TR 2.5, dictionaries, Bibles, pens, and colored pencils
- Time required: 25–30 minutes

PROCEDURE:

1. Students may work individually or in pairs. Have students look up the verb *to observe* in a dictionary and note its definition, including two synonyms. Refer to TR 2.5 The Way of Life Bible Study Answers, and guide students to write their responses in The Way of Life Bible Study in the student manual. Then, lead a class discussion in response to the following questions:
 - What does it mean *to observe*? Answers will vary, but should include that when observing, one inspects, notices; to celebrate; to watch carefully for the purpose of judgment; to realize or know through noted facts.¹
 - What are you doing when you are observing text? Answers will vary, but should include the idea that observing is more than just seeing the words. It involves noticing details, looking up definitions, scanning the context, noticing any inferences, and taking notes.
2. Invite students to pray as a class, individually, or with their partner as an important first step in any Bible study. Then, allow students 5 minutes to read the Introduction quietly and write three additional questions to aid in observation. Ask for volunteers to share their questions.
3. Have students look up each passage in the study, mark terms, and note all observations.
4. Have students share their answers and discuss with the class.



Extended Learning Opportunity: Encourage students to continue exercising the skill of observation by providing the following additional verses. Have students look up each passage and practice making observations as part of this study of the Hebrew word *derek*:

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| • Genesis 24 | • Exodus 33:12–14 | • Deuteronomy 1:29–33 |
| • Deuteronomy 28:9 | • Joshua 1:8 | • 1 Samuel 18:14 |

Encourage students to attach their additional observation to their student manuals as artifacts of learning.

¹ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “observe,” accessed March 31, 2026, merriam-webster.com/dictionary/observe.

Lesson 6:

Videos P

In this lesson, students will view interviews of various Christian educators and authors. Each expert answers specific worldview questions. These videos will allow students to expand their knowledge and provide biblical answers to thought-provoking questions. The following videos will be used in today's lesson:

1. Do Worldviews Affect Behavior? (T. Almon, 3:51)
2. What Is Culture? And Why Does It Matter? (McDowell, 4:44)
3. How Should Someone with a Biblical Worldview Relate to Their Culture? (Kunkle, 5:57)
4. Is Culture Always A Bad Thing? Should We Avoid It? Can We Avoid It? (McDowell, 3:04)

Play the videos in the order listed above. Before each video, direct students to read the questions in the student manual for that video so they know what to listen for. During and after the video has been shown, students should write their answers to the Discussion Questions. It may be necessary to play the video again so students can answer all the questions. Go over the questions for the first video. Play the next video. Continue in this manner until you play the last video and discuss the questions.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITY

- ✦ Use **TR 2.A Sabrina's Story** for an additional in-class or alternate learning activity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Video 1: Do Worldviews Affect Behavior?

1. What does it mean when we say "Ideas have consequences."?

What we believe to be reality shapes what we believe to be true about the world, which in turn shapes our behaviors.

2. How can secularism affect our behavior?

Secularists believe that humans are material beings, not embodied souls made in God's image with value. They might view a human or some humans as less valuable than others, which could have harmful outcomes.

3. How can postmodernism affect our behavior?

If a postmodernist claims their own reality and attempts to live it out in the real world, they may learn the hard way that their own ideas were not reality.

4. If ideas have consequences and bad ideas have victims, as the speaker said, what is the solution?

We must evaluate our ideas against reality to see whether they align.



Video 2: What Is Culture? And Why Does It Matter?

1. How does the speaker define culture?

It is a set of beliefs, ideas, attitudes, and practices that characterize a certain group of people, such as a small group, workplace, or a family.

2. How do we take cultural aspects for granted?

Culture is natural for us, like fish in water. We absorb different aspects of culture without realizing it.

3. How does Romans 12:2 help us have a biblical perspective on culture?

It encourages us to be intentional about our beliefs, attitudes, and actions as we live in the culture around us and to be transformed through God's Word.

4. How can we live with a counterculture mindset?

We are to "think Christianity," analyzing movies, films, songs, videos, books, and other social media that come through culture and shape us in ways we don't realize.

5. What are we to do with nonbiblical ideas that we have absorbed from our culture?

We are to take thoughts captive for Christ and be transformed by the renewing of our minds through the Word, prayer, and conversing with other Christians.



Video 3:

How Should Someone with a Biblical Worldview Relate to Their Culture?

1. According to the speaker, what is the first way that a biblical worldview helps us to think about our culture?

It gives us a clear perspective on how culture is part of God's original plan and how we are to be involved.

2. How does the speaker describe humans according to a biblical worldview?

God is the Creator. He made humans in his image, and also creators, or sub-creators, called to create culture, to make the world around us beautiful and more functional.

3. How can we exercise our responsibility to be makers and not takers in culture?

Our skills and talents are opportunities to build culture, as gifts we can give back. We are not to view culture just for what it gives us, but for what we give to build culture.



Video 4:

Is Culture Always A Bad Thing? Should We Avoid It? Can We Avoid It?

1. Does the speaker describe culture as a good or a bad thing? What is their reason?

Culture is not always good or bad.

2. What is the origin of culture?

God made us to be subcreators, which includes creating culture.

3. Why should Christians avoid talking about culture as “us vs. them”?

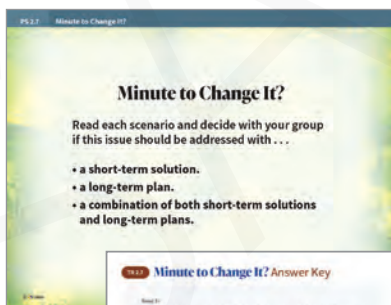
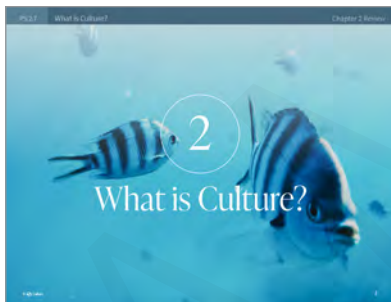
Christians are called to be part of culture and to recognize that there are healthy and unhealthy aspects of culture in a church, as there are outside the church.

4. How are we to “think Christianly” about the culture around us?

We intentionally engage culture in our family, school, and sports, to make it better as we bring God's ways. We listen to songs, watch movies, and engage with social media with awareness, or a *filter*, of what is biblical and what is not.

Lesson 7: Activity and Chapter Review P

Have students turn to **Activity: Minute to Change It?** in the student manual. Display **PS 2.7 Minute to Change It?** Read the directions and guide students in the activity. Display **PS 2.7 Chapter 2 Review.** Allow students to discuss chapter concepts, take notes, and use **TR 2.SG Chapter 2 Study Guide** as needed. Assign the Chapter 2 **Pin Point** reflection prompt in the student manual.



CHAPTER 2 REVIEW

Key Terms

culture
cultural anthropologist
belief
ethos
practice
metabeliefs
artifacts
institution
secularization
derek

Key Names

Samuel Wilberforce
William Wilberforce
Ida Scudder
H. Richard Niebuhr
Francis Schaeffer
L'Abri

Key Verses

Acts 17:26
Jeremiah 29:7
Galatians 6:9
Matthew 6:9–13
Deuteronomy 10:12–13

Key Works

Notes Toward the Definition of Culture by T. S. Eliot
Christ and Culture by H. Richard Niebuhr
The Last Christian on Earth by Os Guinness

Activity

MINUTE TO CHANGE IT?

OBJECTIVE:

Students will be able to summarize how engagement in cultural changes can begin with brief conversations to share ideas.

PREPARATION:

- Materials needed: PS 2.7, timer, paper, pencils, and one cup, desk bell, or buzzer for each team of 3 students, optional: TR 2.7
- Time required: 25–30 minutes

PROCEDURE:

1. Display slide 1 of PS 2.7 Minute to Change It? and divide the class into teams of 3 students. Each group should decide on: a scribe, a spokesperson, and a bellringer, who may flip a cup or raise a hand if a bell or buzzer is not available.
2. Display slide 2, Cultural Issue 1, and ask a volunteer to read the scenario. Have teams briefly determine the best strategy from the list below to address the cultural issue and ring the bell when they have an answer. Identify the first team to ring their bell as *the round 1 advantage team*.
 - short-term cultural changes
 - long-term formative changes
 - a combination of both
3. Put 1 minute on the timer and explain that when you say *begin*, each team will use their selected strategy to map out a brief plan to address Cultural Issue 1; the teams' scribes document their ideas in notes, a list, or a diagram. After 1 minute, conclude the planning sessions with *stop!*
4. Then, call on the spokesperson for the round 1 advantage team, who has 1 minute to present their team's plan to address the issue to the class, who represents *the community* listening and evaluating the ideas. Then, when you say *stop*, the other teams have 10 seconds to ring their bell and declare a challenge. The first challenging team to ring the bell becomes *the round 1 challenging team* and has 1 minute for their spokesperson to present their strategy and plans on the issue to *the community*. After 1 minute, say *stop*.
5. Considering the presentations of both the advantage team and the challenging team, the remaining class members, as *the community*, participate in a vote by raising their hands to decide which team presented the best approach. Votes are counted, and the scribe for the round 1 winning team tallies one point for their team.
6. Display slide 3 with the next cultural issue and repeat the procedure for Cultural Issue 3.
7. When all issues are discussed or 5 minutes remain, recognize the team with the highest points. Then conclude the activity with the following question in a class discussion or an exit ticket: Since cultural issues cannot be addressed in a minute, what is a one-sentence summary of what you learned about engaging cultural issues in this activity? **Answers will vary, but should include that it only takes a minute to engage in culture by sharing ideas that can lead to cultural transformation that improves lives.**



Extended learning opportunity: Post TR 2.7 Minute to Change It? in the digital classroom for students to discover some real-life examples of people who solved these issues and their outcomes.

Lesson 8: Chapter 2 Test

Distribute **TR 2.8 Chapter 2 Test** to each student and allow time for them to complete the exercises. Students who finish early may start reading Chapter 3. Assign the homework: students are to read 3.1–3.2, answer the **Anchor Question**, and then the Discussion Questions.

Notes

2

What is Culture?



What is Culture?

Chapter 2 Syllabus and Checklist

Lesson	Assignment	Page
1 In Class In Class In Class At Home At Home	☐ REVIEW Chapter 1 Test ☐ DISCUSS Questions for Chapter 2.1–2.2 ☐ EXPLORE Activity: Ten Truths ☐ READ Chapter 2.3–2.4 ☐ ANSWER Questions for Chapter 2.3–2.4	25 ST 33–37 26
2 In Class In Class At Home At Home	☐ DISCUSS Questions for Chapter 2.3–2.4 ☐ EXPLORE Activity: Aspects of Culture ☐ READ Chapter 2.5–2.6 ☐ ANSWER Questions for Chapter 2.5–2.6	27 ST 37–41 28
3 In Class In Class At Home At Home	☐ DISCUSS Questions for Chapter 2.5–2.6 ☐ EXPLORE Activity: Worldview + Action = Culture ☐ READ Chapter 2.7–2.8 ☐ ANSWER Questions for Chapter 2.7–2.8	29–31 ST 42–46 32
4 In Class In Class At Home At Home	☐ DISCUSS Questions for Chapter 2.7–2.8 ☐ EXPLORE Activity: Cultural Transformation Action Plan ☐ READ Chapter 2.9–2.10 ☐ ANSWER Questions for Chapter 2.9–2.10	33 ST 46–52 34
5 In Class In Class	☐ DISCUSS Questions for Chapter 2.9–2.10 ☐ EXPLORE Activity: The Way of Life Bible Study	35–37
6 In Class In Class In Class	☐ WATCH Videos ☐ ANSWER Video Questions ☐ DISCUSS Video Questions	38–39
7 In Class In Class	☐ EXPLORE Activity: Minute to Change It? ☐ REVIEW FOR Chapter 2 Test	40 41
8 In Class At Home At Home	☐ TAKE Chapter 2 Test ☐ READ Chapter 3.1–3.2 ☐ ANSWER Questions for Chapter 3.1–3.2	ST 53–58 41

Student Textbook (ST)

Chapter 2.1–2.2



space below, write a question or idea that expresses what you wonder or hope to learn from this chapter. As you gather information, artifacts, and evidence of your experiences, prepare to summarize your learning through the **Pin Point** reflection at the end of the chapter.

1. What is the correlation between a biblical worldview of *culture* and *agriculture*?

1. What is the correlation between a biblical worldview of *culture* and *agriculture*?

2. In your own words, what is culture?

3. In what ways are all Christians to be cultural anthropologists? Explain the reasons why.

4. Which beliefs motivated William Wilberforce to oppose the slave trade, and what resulted from his efforts?

5. How do the daily choices people make accumulate to shape culture?

Activity

TEN TRUTHS

OBJECTIVE:

You will be able to self-assess the beliefs you hold to be true and experience how individual beliefs can influence culture.

PREPARATION:

- Materials needed: pencil, and paper
- Time required: 25–30 minutes

PROCEDURE:

1. Work individually to create a list of ten brief statements you believe to be true and are comfortable sharing with the class. Have each statement begin with the prompt, “I believe . . .” These statements may pertain to your faith or to any belief you hold to be true. For example, statements may include what you hold to be true about God, creation, or faith. Statements may also include what you believe to be true about food, hobbies, or daily life decisions. You have 7 minutes to complete the list.
2. Then, choose and mark three belief statements to share with a classmate. Prepare to share these statements beginning with “I choose to share this belief with you because . . .” or “I choose this as an important truth to share with you because I believe . . .” You have up to 2 minutes to select three statements and prepare an explanation.
3. Find a partner. Then, in a conversation with your partner, share about the three statements you each chose and why. You have 6 minutes for this conversation, and you may ask questions and offer responses as time permits.
4. In a class discussion, your teacher will call on volunteers to introduce their partner to the class and share one belief statement they heard from their partner. The introduction can be framed as “I spoke with (the partner’s name), and he or she believes (briefly explain the belief statement). I chose to share this statement with you because . . .” Answers are to be respectful and concise. Your teacher will call on volunteers to repeat the introduction procedures as time allows.
5. Conclude the activity by discussing the following questions:
 - How did this exercise sharpen your awareness of beliefs that are supported with knowledge and important to share with others?
 - What insight did you gain from this activity about how sharing your personal beliefs can influence culture?

CH 2

Chapter 2.3–2.4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What deeply held cultural beliefs did Ida Scudder encounter in India, and how did she address them in a way that demonstrates how Christians can pursue cultural transformation?

2. What is a biblical approach to dangers in culture without being fearful? Explain.

3. In what ways did the apostle Paul demonstrate a wise presence and involvement in engaging culture?

4. What factors do and do not lead to long-term cultural formation?

5. What distinguishes a belief from a metabelief, and what is an example of each?

6. In what ways is *an ethos* evident in cultural practices? Give examples.

Activity

ASPECTS OF CULTURE

OBJECTIVE:

You will be able to classify key cultural concepts and formulate examples.

PREPARATION:

- Materials needed: PS 2.2, a handheld whiteboard (or pad of paper), markers, and erasers
- Time required: 25–30 minutes

PROCEDURE:

1. Your team of 3–4 students will each receive a whiteboard, a marker, and an eraser. Select a scribe or share the responsibility among your team members to write your answer on the whiteboard.
2. On slide 1 on PS 2.2 Aspects of Culture, listen as a volunteer reads each definition. Each of the following slides contains an example of one of the following aspects of culture: a belief, an ethos, a metabelief, or a practice. When each example is displayed, teams have 1 minute to discuss, write the correct aspect of culture on the whiteboard, and prepare a brief reason for your choice.
3. When slide 2 is displayed, read the example and work together to identify one of the four aspects of culture. Have the scribe write your team's answer and turn the whiteboard facedown when finished.
4. When called to do so, your team's scribe will hold the whiteboard to display your team's answer and share the reason for the choice. Your teacher will display slide 3 to reveal the correct answer. Discuss any questions or incorrect answers. Have the team scribe tally one point for each correct answer for your team.
5. Your teacher will display slide 4 and continue in the same manner through each example. Conclude by totaling your team's points. Your teacher will announce the winning team.
6. In conclusion, discuss the following question with your class: How could your understanding of these four aspects of culture help you in a cultural setting that is new to you?

CH 2

Chapter 2.5–2.6

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what four areas of culture do cultural patterns form and grow, and how would you briefly describe each one?

2. What is the unique role and influence of institutions in culture? Give an example.

3. Of the five historical approaches to culture that Christians have taken, how does the *Christ against culture* approach compare with the *Christ of culture* approach, and what are the strengths and the downsides?

4. How does the *Christ above culture* compare with the *Christ and culture in paradox* view? Explain the strengths and the downsides.

5. What is the *Christ, the transformer of culture* approach? How is it unique from the other approaches?

Activity

WORLDVIEW + ACTION = CULTURE

OBJECTIVE:

You will be able to demonstrate how beliefs inform actions that shape culture.

PREPARATION:

- Materials needed: TR 2.3 and pencil
- Time required: 25–30 minutes

PROCEDURE:

1. With your group, refer to the following Worldview + Action = Culture Chart. With your class, review the example together and discuss the contents of each column.
 - a. **Worldview:** In this column, you will describe an internal aspect of an individual's worldview. It can be a belief, a value, or a statement that represents a belief or value.
 - b. **Aspect of Culture:** This column identifies how the individual's worldview will become evident in one of the four following aspects of culture:
 - idea
 - champion
 - artifact
 - institution
 - c. **Action:** In this column, describe one possible way this individual's worldview could be demonstrated through an action in the identified aspect of culture.
 - d. **Culture:** In this column, describe a possible outcome of this individual's worldview and actions as influential in the culture.
2. Then, work with your team to complete the chart, filling in each blank with possible responses. There are no right or wrong answers.
3. When called to do so, share your responses with the class.
4. Discuss the following question with your class: What conclusions can you draw from this exercise about the influence of an individual's worldview on culture?

Worldview (internal)	Aspect of culture	Actions (external)	Culture (outcome)
Example: An influential educator serving on the school board believes, “Truth is what you decide is true for you.”	idea	Example: In making challenging decisions, this person listened well and accepted other perspectives but was unable to articulate the beliefs and knowledge that supported his decisions. Over time, the decisions made were inconsistent responses to the school’s needs.	Example: People saw and felt the confusion and uncertainty on the school board. The community’s once-held values seem to be in question.
Example: An accomplished athlete believes it is God’s purpose for her life to represent the sport well, and that God deserves the glory for her success.	champion	Example: In an interview following a recent victory, the athlete publicly credited God for her success. In later interviews, she shared her faith in Christ and how it guides her to live with integrity.	
A film director holds agnostic beliefs and feels that religion divides people and hinders human progress.	artifact		
A town council member declares, “I don’t believe our town should spend limited budget funds to renovate the community center. Families need to find other places to gather for recreation.”	institution		

Worldview (internal)	Aspect of culture	Actions (external)	Culture (outcome)
	idea		
	champion		
	artifact		
	institution		

CH 2 Chapter 2.7–2.8

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways does culture shape beliefs, values, and behaviors in people?

2. How are Christians called to build counter-cultural experiences that lead to transformation?

3. What does it mean for Christians to see culture as part of our Christian mission?

4. What does it mean for Christians to take culture seriously?

5. What is involved in creating a new culture?

Activity

CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE:

You will apply an engaged biblical approach to a cultural issue and design a plan that reflects appreciation for what is good, right, and beautiful.

PREPARATION:

- Materials needed: TR 2.4, student textbook, and pen
- Time required: 30–35 minutes

PROCEDURE:

1. Working with your group, use your copy of TR 2.4 Cultural Transformation Action Plan for notes and select a scribe to document your group's plan on your copy of TR 2.4.
2. Read and complete Step 1. Discuss the questions with your group to identify and describe a cultural issue; it may be an actual issue in your community or a possible one. Have your group's scribe document the issue on TR 2.4.
3. Read and discuss Step 2 and use the questions to analyze your issue as if it is occurring in your own community. Have your scribe document reasons and decisions on TR 2.4.
4. Then read and discuss Step 3 to develop the vision and an action plan to create a new culture. Discuss and document the steps.
5. When asked to do so, have a volunteer from your group give a summary of your group's cultural transformation action issue and plan to the class.

CH 2 Chapter 2.9–2.10

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does a Christian's approach to culture with caution and separation compare with presence and involvement?

2. What is an example of a situation that might require a short-term change in culture?

3. When does a long-term cultural formation plan make sense? Give an example.

4. What does the Hebrew term *derek* mean to a Christian's way of life?

5. What is involved in one's commitment to imitate Christ rather than culture?

6. What are some of the ways that we reflect Christ in culture?

Activity

THE WAY OF LIFE BIBLE STUDY

OBJECTIVE:

You will be able to analyze and apply Scriptures that describe the path of Christian living that aligns with God's values, truth, and beauty.

PREPARATION:

- Materials needed: dictionary, Bible, pen, and colored pencils
- Time required: 25–30 minutes

PROCEDURE:

1. You may work individually or with a partner. Use the dictionary to research the verb *to observe* and note the definition, including two synonyms, in the study below. Discuss the following questions with your class:
 - What does it mean *to observe*?
 - What are you doing when you are observing text?
2. Before continuing with the study, pray as a class, individually, or with your partner, as prayer is an important first step in any Bible study. Then, read the Introduction and write two additional questions to help you with observations.
3. Look up each passage in the study in your Bible, observe the context, mark terms in the study below, and note all observations as instructed.
4. Be prepared to share your answers and discuss with your class.

THE WAY OF LIFE BIBLE STUDY

As part of a class discussion, look up and write the definition for the verb *to observe*:

Write two synonyms for the verb *to observe*:

1. Prayer: Begin your Bible study with prayer: “Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of your law” (Psalm 119:18).

2. Introduction: Theologian and professor of biblical hermeneutics, Howard Hendricks advises, “The first step to Bible study is Observation, where we ask and answer the question, What do I see?” We’ll discover that observing Scripture grows into so much more than *seeing*—it is noticing details so that you can *describe* the verse in your own words. Observing Scripture begins with asking questions. The list of questions you can ask in observing Scripture is extensive. So think of yourself as a detective conducting a thorough investigation of everything you need to know for a complete and accurate description. You might begin by asking:

- What terms, names, and locations are in this passage? (Place a circle around each term.)
- What is *the most important* word in the verse? (Underline it.)
- Who are the people mentioned in this verse? (Make notes.)
- What is the main verb and tense of this verb? (Draw a curvy line under each verb.)
- What is the context surrounding this passage? (Make notes on what is happening in the chapter and the preceding and following verses.)
- Are there any contrasts or inferences in this verse?
- Write two more questions you might ask in the Scripture observation process:
 - ---
 - ---

3. Observation and interpretation: Look up the following Scripture. Each passage contains the Hebrew word *derek*, which means *the way, road, path, journey, manner, or conduct*. Use the space below to note the context and mark at least ten observations in each passage.

A. Deuteronomy 10:12–13

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways [*derek*], to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?

B. Joshua 22:5

Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways [*derek*] and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

What truths are presented in these passages that you could explain to another person?

What issue in your culture or in your own circumstances do these truths address? Explain.

4. Application: Look up John 14:6. Based on the truths you have learned about living in the way of the Lord, answer the questions applying John 14:6.

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

How could you apply the truths you have learned in these passages?

What issue in your culture or in your own circumstances do these truths address?

5. Conclusion: Why is it good to think about how the Scripture applies to your life? To your culture?

CH 2 Videos

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read the discussion questions before each video is played and listen for possible responses.

Video 1: Do Worldviews Affect Behavior?

1. What does it mean when we say “Ideas have consequences.”?

2. How can secularism affect our behavior?

3. How can postmodernism affect our behavior?

4. If ideas have consequences and bad ideas have victims, as the speaker said, what is the solution?

Video 2: What Is Culture? And Why Does It Matter?

1. How does the speaker define culture?

2. How do we take cultural aspects for granted?

3. How does Romans 12:2 help us have a biblical perspective on culture?

4. How can we live with a counter-culture mindset?

5. What are we to do with nonbiblical ideas that we have absorbed from our culture?

 Video 3: How Should Someone with a Biblical Worldview Relate to Their Culture?

1. According to the speaker, what is the first way that a biblical worldview helps us to think about our culture?

2. How does the speaker describe humans according to a biblical worldview?

3. How can we exercise our responsibility to be makers and not takers in culture?

 Video 4: Is Culture Always A Bad Thing? Should We Avoid It? Can We Avoid It?

1. Does the speaker describe culture as a good or a bad thing? What is their reason?

2. What is the origin of culture?

3. Why should Christians avoid talking about culture as “us vs. them”?

4. How are we to “think Christianly” about the culture around us?

Activity

MINUTE TO CHANGE IT?

OBJECTIVE:

You will be able to summarize how engagement in cultural changes can begin with brief conversations to share ideas.

PREPARATION:

- Materials needed: PS 2.7, timer, paper, pencil, one cup, and desk bell or buzzer
- Time required: 25–30 minutes

PROCEDURE:

1. Your teacher will divide the class into teams of 3 students. Read slide 1 of PS 2.7 Minute to Change It?. With your team, decide on a scribe, a spokesperson, and a bellringer, who may flip a cup or raise a hand if a bell or buzzer is not available.
2. On slide 2 of PS 2.7, listen as a volunteer reads Cultural Issue 1. Briefly discuss with your team the best strategy from the list below to address this cultural issue; ring the bell when your team has an answer.
 - short-term cultural changes
 - long-term formative changes
 - a combination of both
3. The first team to ring their bell is identified as *the round 1 advantage team*. Your teacher will set the timer for 1 minute, and when your teacher says *begin*, each team will use its selected strategy to map out a brief plan to address Cultural Issue 1. Have team scribes document their ideas in notes, a list, or a diagram. After one minute, your teacher will conclude the planning session with *stop!*
4. Then, your teacher will call on the spokesperson for the round 1 advantage team, who has 1 minute to present their team's plan to address the issue to the class, who represent *the community* listening and evaluating the ideas. Then, when you hear *stop*, other teams have 10 seconds to ring the bell and declare a challenge to present a correct or better answer. The first challenging team to ring the bell becomes *the round 1 challenging team*; their spokesperson has 1 minute to present their strategy and plans on the issue to *the community*.
5. The remaining class *community* will consider both presentations of the advantage team and the challenging team, and decide by raising hands in a vote which team presented the best approach. Votes are counted, and the scribe for the round 1 winning team tallies 1 point for their team.
6. When your teacher displays slide 3 with the next cultural issue, repeat the procedure. Continue in the same way through the remaining cultural issues.
7. When all issues are discussed, or 5 minutes remain, recognize the team with the highest points. Then, be prepared to discuss this question: Since cultural issues cannot be addressed in a minute, what is a one-sentence summary of what you learned about engaging cultural issues in this activity?

Chapter 2 Review:

Take notes during the slide presentation.



CHAPTER 2 PIN POINT

Consider everything you have read and learned since your **Anchor** ideas at the beginning of the chapter. Select three to five terms, ideas, or concepts that are most significant to you and your understanding of Christianity's influence on culture. Write a summary in the space provided.

Key Terms

culture
cultural
anthropologist
belief
ethos
practice
metabeliefs
artifacts
institution
secularization
derec

Key Names

Samuel Wilberforce
William Wilberforce
Ida Scudder
H. Richard Niebuhr
Francis Schaeffer
L'Abri

Key Verses

Acts 17:26
Jeremiah 29:7
Galatians 6:9
Matthew 6:9–13
Deuteronomy
10:12–13

Key Works

Notes Toward the Definition of Culture

by T. S. Eliot

Christ and Culture by H. Richard Niebuhr

The Last Christian on Earth by Os Guinness

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What is Culture?

1. Swimming in Culture

► **OBJECTIVE:** You will be able to describe what culture is and how it is studied.

Imagine it's a hot summer day, and you're at the beach with your friends. One friend brought a volleyball, another a football, and someone brought a wireless speaker blasting music. After a while, the scorching sand sends everyone running into the ocean to cool off. Soon, everyone is splashing in the waves, swimming, and laughing.

There's a funny thing about the ocean: you can't get in without getting wet. Culture works the same way. It's like the water we live in that quietly shapes our words, beliefs,



values, behavior, and assumptions. But unlike the ocean, we can't step out of culture. It surrounds us constantly—at home, at school, online, in our music, our words, and our relationships. Whether we realize it or not, we're swimming in it every day.

A Chinese proverb states: "If you want to know what water is, don't ask the fish." Fish don't notice the water because they have never lived without it.¹ In the same way, we often don't notice our own culture because it feels natural and ordinary to us.

Understanding culture begins with awareness that provides insight to understand the choices and beliefs we make. As we engage with the world, we experience culture that reflects values and a way of life. Wherever people live together and decide what matters, our perception of reality forms in a continual but often unrecognized cultural exchange of beliefs, ideas, and knowledge.²

The biblical worldview of culture. In their book, *A Practical Guide to Culture*, authors John Stonestreet and Brett Kunkle describe culture formation: "People make culture and are, in turn, shaped by culture, but equating them with culture is wrong and can even be dangerous. . . . Culture is what people *do* as people."³ The Biblical metanarrative describes this dynamic of people shaping culture and culture shaping people. As the summit of God's creation, our most accurate identity is found in Christ as we are God's image-bearers (Genesis 1:27, Colossians 1:17). God "made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place" (Acts 17:26). This means every culture exists within the Triune God's sovereign purposes (Isaiah 45:7, Daniel 4:35, Ephesians 1:11). Because God is knowable and personal, Scripture declares with all of creation that we can know who God is and who he made us to be.⁴ Then, we consider what engaging with culture means and how to live faithfully as God's people in the world.

The word *culture* comes from the Latin *cultura*, which originally meant *agriculture*—the careful cultivation of land. This connects directly to God's first command to Adam and Eve: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). Just as they were called to cultivate the garden, culture is about what *we* cultivate in society—our habits, values, and practices.

How does a Christian perspective on culture differ from the rest of the world? God commanded the Israelites living in Babylon: "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:7). Spoken to exiles in a hostile



culture, this command reminds Christians to seek society's welfare. This counter-cultural approach is God's plan for his people to bring peace; the world may not seek the welfare of an enemy nation that's enslaved them (Luke 6:35–36, Romans 12:17–18). But before engaging culture, we need first to understand it—what is culture?

Culture in reality. **Culture** is *the way of life of a people group, including the methods of communication and the activities of a particular civilization*. Culture surrounds us, growing

from our choices and shaping how we speak, act, and live. It is formed and passed on through families, schools, churches, and governments. More than trends or the arts, culture is found in everyday life—what people value, celebrate, and call right or wrong. It is never neutral; it reflects beliefs about truth, goodness, and life's meaning. These patterns quietly shape how people think and live, carrying assumptions about human nature and what makes life worthwhile.

🔑 culture: the way of life for a people group, including methods of communication and the activities of a particular civilization



Thinking about culture. Theologian Kevin Vanhoozer points out, “Culture refers to everything that humans do voluntarily as opposed to involuntarily (e.g., by nature, reflex, or instinct).”⁵⁵ In his book *Culture Making*, author Andy Crouch explains: “culture is what we make of the world.”⁵⁶ Culture-making is something everyone participates in. Poet and essayist T. S. Eliot examined culture in *Notes Toward the Definition of Culture*, stating that culture is “that which makes life worth living. And it is what justifies other peoples and other generations in saying . . . that it was worthwhile for that civilization to have existed.”⁵⁷ While Christ makes life worth living, Eliot points to culture's role in shaping our quality of life. Culture is the shared habits, customs, and institutions of a group, shaped over time by the beliefs and practices a community values and preserves.

Those who see what others miss. A scholar who studies culture analytically is called a **cultural anthropologist**, *one who studies society's cultural details, such as social institutions, language, law, politics, religion, art, and technology*. Cultural anthropologists observe changes in culture by what a society celebrates, ignores, and protects; they examine culture through communication, books, clothing, food, art, and institutions.

In a way, all Christians are to be cultural anthropologists, observing culture carefully rather than merely reacting emotionally. Wise engagement uncovers the beliefs behind cultural patterns. Scripture calls believers to be “salt” and “light” (Matthew 5:13–16) while not being shaped by the world (1 Peter 2:11). Navigating this tension means asking deeper questions, evaluating values through Scripture, and remaining aware of our own influences. This thoughtful engagement allows Christians to act with both conviction and humility. But before exploring how to respond, let's first understand how culture develops.

2. How Does Culture Develop?

► **OBJECTIVE:** You will be able to explain how humans reflect and shape culture through their interactions with the world.

Imagine being a teen in a rural village in West Africa. One night, men raid your home and pull you from your sleeping mat. Fear and confusion grips as you are torn from your family, unsure if they are still alive. You are captured, bound, and forced to march for days toward the coast. In a massive ship, you are shoved into a dark, cramped hold with hundreds of others. The air is thick with the stench of sickness and despair—a scene historians call *the Middle Passage*. Days blend into nights as the ship crosses the ocean, and slowly it sinks in—the life you once knew is gone. From the perspective of an enslaved teen, this voyage marks the start of a life of relentless labor, unimaginable loss, and an unknown world.

In the late eighteenth century, Britons widely accepted the transatlantic slave trade as economically profitable.⁸ Slavery drove commerce and thrived under powerful political interests, embedding itself deeply in the culture. Yet British politician **William Wilberforce** (1759–1833) saw the slave trade—a culturally accepted practice—as a violation of human rights and dignity. Guided by his Christian faith, he devoted his life to ending the transatlantic slave trade. Wilberforce declared:

“So enormous, so dreadful,” he told the House of Commons later, “so irremediable did the Trade’s wickedness appear that my own mind was completely made up for Abolition. Let the consequences be what they would, I from the time determined that I would never rest until I effected its abolition.”⁹

Wilberforce’s proposals to abolish slavery, submitted to Parliament in 1823, faced repeated opposition.¹⁰ Yet he persevered in promoting what was good and right for God’s image bearers. In 1833, just before his death, Parliament passed the Abolition Act ending the slave trade, and by 1840, Wilberforce’s tireless efforts had achieved the complete abolition of slavery across all British Empire territories.¹¹

Culture forms with beliefs that lead to actions. Wilberforce’s commitment illustrates how deeply held beliefs can shape actions that influence a society’s culture. His conviction that enslaved people were fellow bearers of God’s image motivated years of advocacy and political effort, despite resistance. These repeated actions—rooted in moral and theological beliefs—gradually shifted public conscience and political will, showing how commitments that lead to action can help transform culture.



Culture formation begins with deeply held beliefs and grows from human activity. People act according to what they think is true and valuable. Repeated actions influence others over time and create patterns that become traditions, expectations, and social norms.



Samuel
Wilberforce
(1805–1873),
by George
Richmond,
1868

Culture is passed down through generations. Cultural change doesn't stop with one generation. **Samuel Wilberforce** (1805–1873) grew up in a Britain already shaped by his father's fight against slavery. As Bishop of Oxford, he stepped into the major debates of his time. In one speech to Parliament about sugar prices, he condemned manipulating the market when it put human lives at risk.¹² Like his father, William Wilberforce, Samuel grounded his convictions in the moral truth of God's Word. What one generation fights for can shape the culture the next generation builds on. Culture passes through generations, reinforced by the daily decisions.

Ordinary people shape culture. Culture is not just shaped by famous people or dramatic events. Every person contributes to culture through everyday choices—how we spend our time, what we buy, the media we consume, the causes we support, and the injustices we ignore. Culture grows through family priorities, community traditions, and the values practiced in schools and businesses. Culture reflects what ordinary people choose to do with their influence each day.

Cultural transformation happens over time. As individuals and communities consistently act on their beliefs, ideas people support grow stronger; ideas they ignore fade away. As beliefs change, so do behaviors, and those behaviors gradually reshape institutions and social expectations. People use the word *culture* to describe the beliefs and decisions expressed through our views on the value of human life, race, sexuality, and relationships. Culture surrounds the actions and decisions made through politics, religious freedom, and justice. Culture is expressed through the arts, entertainment, and technology we share. Authors Stonestreet and Kunkle clarify that “Culture includes the good, the bad, the morally neutral, and the morally complex.”¹³ People build institutions to reinforce the beliefs they share about how we care for humanity and the world around us, gradually turning those beliefs into cultural norms. For example, every two years the world comes together for the Olympics, which displays shared and unique cultural values, experiences, and relationships. Technology companies such as Amazon, Google, and Apple demonstrate how ideas can form into businesses that shape culture by transforming how we communicate and shop.

Ultimately, culture develops through how people answer questions about truth, morality, and human purpose, which frames the kind of society they build. William and Samuel Wilberforce show how deeply beliefs can shape culture. The Christian voice grounded in biblical truth can influence culture in powerful ways. Yet people use the word *culture* when talking about politics, entertainment, social media, art, or morality. Let's consider the various ways to biblically engage with different aspects of culture.

3. Faithful Approaches to Culture

► **OBJECTIVE:** You will be able to categorize different approaches for biblically engaging with culture, both individually and corporately.

The man pounded on the door, yelling, “Please help! My wife is in labor, and she is in terrible pain. We need help to deliver the baby!” Ida rushed to the door, explaining that she wasn’t a doctor, but her father, Dr. Scudder, could come at once. The man refused: “I cannot let a man help my wife.” He walked away, and later that day, his wife died in childbirth.¹⁴ This tragedy may seem unthinkable today, yet it occurred in a culture where social and religious norms kept male doctors from treating women, even in life-or-death situations.

This true story describes the culture Ida came face-to-face with in 1892, shortly after graduating from D. L. Moody’s school. While visiting her father’s medical mission in India, Ida saw how deeply held beliefs could lead to devastating consequences.

Confronted with this view of culture’s power to shape important decisions, Ida recognized a profound need: women in India lacked access to medical care. From that moment, a clear sense of purpose began to form. So she went to medical school to become **Dr. Ida Scudder** (1870–1960) and dedicated her life to meeting that need for women’s medical care.¹⁵

So how can Christians engage culture? The first step, according to authors Colson and Pearcey in *How Now Shall We Live?*, is for Christians to understand culture as the shared patterns of belief and behavior that shape a society.¹⁶ Culture reflects both good and broken elements. Some practices align with God’s design—others reveal flawed beliefs, as Ida Scudder saw. This mix creates tension as Christians seek to live faithfully without being shaped by the world.

The apostle Paul instructs believers not to be conformed to the patterns of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:1–2). Christians are advised not to walk in the way of the wicked (Psalm 1:1, Proverbs 4:14–15). At the same time, Scripture calls Christians to bring compassion, pursue justice, seek the good of others, and represent God’s truth within the societies where they live (Micah 6:8, Matthew 7:12, 1 Peter 2:12).

Caution and separation. Some Christians see culture’s greatest danger as its quiet influence, subtly shifting what feels normal or acceptable over time. In this view, much of culture’s influence may seem hidden beneath the surface, like an iceberg where only the tip is visible, but the dangers are unseen.¹⁷ Since aspects of culture may present hidden dangers, Christians can use discernment to navigate cultural influences. *Discernment is the ability to distinguish between truth and error, right and wrong, good and bad, and to prefer*



Native Indian
village near
Calcutta, India,
1893

what is true, right, and good. Scripture helps Christians think with discernment about how they participate in the culture around them (Proverbs 1:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:21–22).

These choices aren't rooted in fear. Instead, wise choices are the results of understanding that what we let shape us matters for our faith. Exercising discernment and making wise decisions about culture is part of living faithfully.

 **belief:** any idea that a person or group holds as a common understanding or conviction



Presence and involvement. Scripture calls Christians not to retreat from culture in fear or timidity, but to actively engage, remembering we are equipped by the Holy Spirit with power, love, and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). Those who are in Christ are new creations, empowered by God to engage the culture in a way that is God-centered, not self-centered (2 Corinthians 5:17, Philippians 2:3). Paul shows how to engage

culture wisely: he observed, listened, and learned, then spoke Truth, which is Jesus, in a way people could understand (Acts 17:16–34). God calls his people to act on behalf of those being led toward harm (Proverbs 24:11–12). Christians who seek to transform culture can increase the presence of biblical truth by participating in education, service, and public advocacy for God-honoring causes. This conviction drove young Ida Scudder to become a doctor, overcoming gender barriers to challenge deeply rooted cultural norms and save countless lives.¹⁸

Short-term change. Like Dr. Ida, some people seek to change culture by addressing immediate, visible problems—harmful policies, urgent needs, or unjust laws. These short-term efforts can bring quick, tangible results. Yet lasting cultural change happens when people dig in for the long haul with humble perseverance (Ecclesiastes 7:8). Dr. Ida combined both approaches: she provided immediate medical care for women in need while also laying the foundation for enduring change by establishing a medical school to train future generations of female doctors.

Long-term formation. Culture changes when people grounded in Truth understand needs and build relationships. Over time, their actions shape the beliefs, habits, and character of those around them. As authors and influencers on cultural change, Warren Smith and John Stonestreet write, “The true strength of a society, however, comes from its ‘middle,’ in those activities and institutions that exist between the individual and the government.”¹⁹ Long-term change comes not from a single policy or campaign, but from influencing worldviews through families, churches, schools, and communities—where sustained relationships and repeated practice transform culture.

Shaping culture requires habits and actions sustained over a lifetime (Galatians 6:9). As Dr. Bill Brown of the Colson Fellows program observes, “A good Christian life is made

up of good Christian days.”²⁰ Daily habits gradually form the nature of the surrounding culture which shapes faithful individuals. Now let’s explore how beliefs appear in the rhythms and patterns of everyday life.

4. God and Culture

► **OBJECTIVE:** You will be able to explain how beliefs about God are reflected in three aspects of culture: ethos, practices, and metabeliefs.

Every culture is built on a foundation of beliefs. A **belief** is *any idea that a person or group holds as a common understanding or conviction*. People act according to what they think is true about the world, human nature, and what gives life meaning. When those beliefs are shared throughout a community and repeated across generations, they form the patterns we call *culture*.

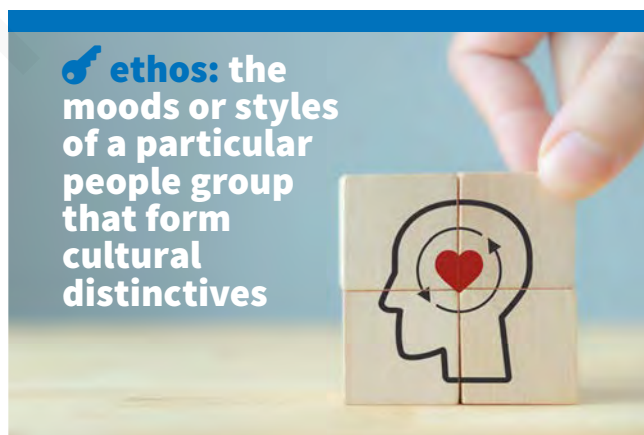
No belief shapes a culture more deeply than what its people think about God. What a society believes about God shapes its understanding of truth, morality, authority, human dignity, and life’s purpose. Josh and Sean McDowell note that, “Our ethics, morals, social and civic responsibilities, and the capacity to love and be loved come from the fact that we are made in God’s relational image.”²¹ These convictions may appear in religious or philosophical teaching, but also quietly shape everyday life. Even those who rarely discuss religion live according to beliefs about God, moral truth, and the purpose of human life.

Beliefs about God. When a society believes in a personal, moral Triune God, people recognize real moral accountability. Seeing humans as God’s image-bearers gives human life inherent worth and shapes laws and institutions to protect it. When cultures reject or redefine God, they seek meaning elsewhere—through power, progress, freedom, or self-expression—and focus on immediate human concerns without considering an afterlife.²²

As such, debates about law, human rights, and social responsibility often reflect deeper disagreements about whether moral truth comes from God or from human preference.

Ethos. Every culture also develops an *ethos*, which is *the moods or styles of a particular people group that form cultural distinctives*.

Ethos is the Greek word referring to the character or spirit of a people. While beliefs provide the intellectual foundation of a culture, *ethos* expresses the emotional character that grows from those beliefs. If God is seen as holy and just, a culture may develop a strong sense of moral accountability. If God is viewed as distant or irrelevant, cultural attitudes may shift toward personal independence and self-definition. Over time, these attitudes become instinctive, guiding what feels honorable or shameful without conscious reflection.



Practices. Beliefs and attitudes eventually take visible shape through repeated actions. A **practice** is *any traditional activity or observance by which people express the value of certain cultural features, such as holidays, weddings, and funerals*. Through these repeated activities, which often include special foods, dances, or special clothing, societies reinforce the

ideas and values that hold them together. Familiar practices such as high school dances and ceremonies influence our beliefs and values.

Religious belief often shapes these practices in obvious ways. That's why cultural anthropologists study a culture's celebrations, sacred days, and communal rituals for insight into what that culture believes about God, creation, and the destiny of the human soul. When core beliefs weaken, those practices often shift. Christmas offers a clear illustration. For centuries, the holiday centered on the

 **practice:** any traditional activity or observance by which people express the value of certain cultural features, such as holidays, weddings, and funerals

Incarnation—the belief that God entered human history in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:9–14). Today, many of the outward forms remain: decorations, gatherings, and gift-giving, for example. But for a growing number of Americans, the theological heart has been lost. The Christmas tradition survives, while the belief that gave it meaning fades. Practices can continue even after their significance has quietly drained away—a culture can go through the motions long after it has forgotten why they mattered.

Metabeliefs. Beneath beliefs, *ethos*, and practices lies a still deeper layer: the assumptions people hold about reality itself. These are called **metabeliefs**, which describes *the intuitive sense of being, purpose, and posture toward other people and creation*. Metabeliefs are the unspoken cultural rules guiding how we interact with the world. When people gather in a crowded stadium for an athletic event, metabeliefs inform them about how much space to allow between themselves and others. Subtle cues are observed and reinforced by others' responses. When visiting a college campus, a prospective student may be highly aware of how students interact—these metabeliefs shape campus culture. And on the first day of a new job, metabeliefs are often the first clues someone has about a workplace's culture.

Why this matters. Cultural behavior does not emerge randomly. Actions, attitudes, and traditions all grow from deeper convictions about reality and purpose. In particular, religious convictions shape our understanding of all areas of life and become the unspoken metabeliefs that are more felt than spoken.²³ Cultures shaped by belief in a just and purposeful Creator tend to assume that life has meaning and that human actions carry genuine weight. People treat others as significant because they exist within a world made with intention (Psalm 8:3–5, Proverbs 3:19). In cultures that have rejected belief in God, people may assume that meaning must be invented rather than discovered. Moral responsibility is defined by personal preference or social agreement rather than divine

authority. These assumptions run so deep that most people never notice them—these are the metabeliefs.

These internal beliefs do not stay inside a person. They move outward into habits, traditions, institutions, and the physical world people build around themselves. Let's examine how the convictions of ordinary men and women quietly shape the environments we inhabit, the objects we make, and the institutions we pass on to the next generation.

5. How Culture Shapes Our World

► **OBJECTIVE:** You will be able to analyze how culture is shaped by ideas, leaders, artifacts, and institutions, and explain how Christians can actively promote goodness and truth within these areas.

Culture never changes because of one person's ideas. For an idea to influence society, it must move beyond private thought and spread through people, the things they create, and the organizations that preserve cultural patterns over time. John Stonestreet and Brett Kunkle, in *A Student's Guide to Culture*, identify four areas that especially reveal how this happens: ideas, champions, artifacts, and institutions. Let's consider these four elements that make up culture.

Cultural change begins with ideas. An *idea* is a *thought, plan, or suggestion about what to do; something you imagine or picture in your mind*. Ideas answer questions most people rarely stop to examine: What is true? What is good? What does it mean to be human?

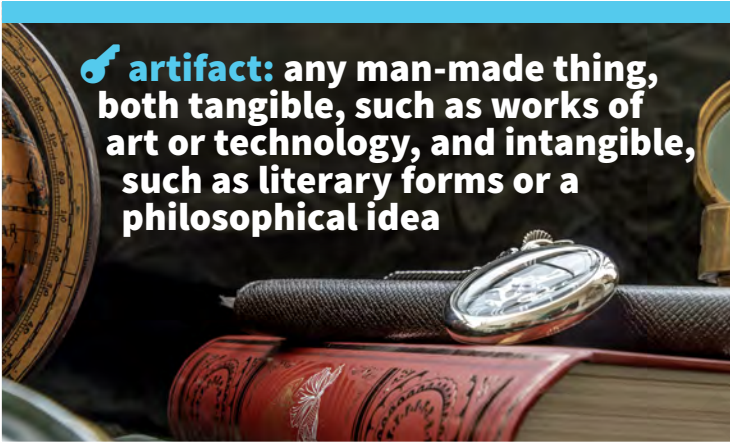
Because ideas shape how people understand the world, they shape behavior.²⁴ When enough people hold the same ideas, those ideas begin forming social expectations and cultural norms. What a society believes about human dignity, freedom, or justice eventually shows up in how that society organizes itself. Ideas often originate in small circles—among scholars, religious leaders, or writers—and, when they strike a chord with others, they begin to spread. For Christians, this matters because if ideas shape culture, then communicating biblical truth about God, humanity, and morality is not separate from cultural engagement; it is the beginning of it.

Champions spread ideas. Ideas are shared by the people who hold them. *Champions* are *individuals or leaders who advocate for particular ideas and encourage others to adopt them*. Some champions are teachers or pastors who carefully explain ideas.

Others are writers, artists, or public figures who carry ideas into broader conversations. They translate complex concepts into something ordinary people can understand and act on. Throughout history, champions have influenced humanity for both good and ill. For



example, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels promoted socialist policies through their work, *The Communist Manifesto*, which ultimately became the cornerstone ideas of the socialist



artifact: any man-made thing, both tangible, such as works of art or technology, and intangible, such as literary forms or a philosophical idea

and communist movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²⁵

The enormously harmful effects of their teachings are difficult to measure. Compare this influence to that of Johannes Gutenberg, discussed in the previous chapter, whose printing press expanded literacy by making Bibles far more accessible to the masses.

The people who work, lead, and teach are influencers and champions for the ideas they embrace. Often, they associate with institutions where they

share their ideas through books and social media—in roles such as educators, lawmakers, and business leaders. These cultural influencers may be politicians or activists who steer which patterns are preserved and which are quietly abandoned, sometimes unintentionally, but often deliberately. Entertainers and athletes often carry influence in culture. Author and philosopher Corey Miller makes the case that cultural revolutions are grounded, primarily, in college campuses where the thoughts of the next generation of leaders are formed by the current campus leaders.²⁶

Artifacts carry ideas. An **artifact** is *any human-made thing, both tangible, such as works of art or technology, and intangible, such as literary forms or a philosophical idea*. Artifacts include books, buildings, tools, technologies, and creative works like music, stories, and films. They carry ideas across generations, shaping daily life—books reach readers; films shape how a generation imagines love or justice; and technology transforms habits. Clothing and tools paint a picture of daily life and occupations. Just think of how quickly cell phones and social media have changed the world! Many cultural shifts don't happen through dramatic events but through artifacts that quietly change what we value and how we work and communicate. Christians are called not just to evaluate artifacts but to create them, using their talents as artists, engineers, writers, and entrepreneurs to shape culture with purpose and conviction.

Institutions preserve culture. Ideas gain their greatest durability when they become embedded in an **institution**. These are *any organization of cultural significance that preserves or promotes cultural features, such as schools, churches, athletic leagues, and social clubs*. Schools pass ideas to new generations. Governments establish laws that reflect moral assumptions. The media shapes public conversation. Churches teach spiritual truths and form moral understanding. Once ideas enter institutions, they often remain influential for generations.

Christians are called to engage these institutions. Teachers, journalists, business leaders, public servants, and church leaders all help shape the organizations that influence society

(Romans 12:6–8, 1 Peter 4:10). Through integrity, competence, and commitment to truth, believers can influence institutions in ways that promote justice, compassion, and wisdom.

Christians share truth and goodness. Understanding how culture moves through ideas, champions, artifacts, and institutions helps explain why Christian faith cannot stay private. What believers hold about God, truth, and human dignity shapes how they think, speak, create, and lead. Ideas are taught, leaders emerge, creative works are produced, and institutions gradually reflect the values people live out over time. Christians who pursue truth, goodness, and love in their daily work contribute to the formation of culture in ways that may shape generations they will never meet. Not only *can* we speak to the issues of the day, but we *must*; we are *called* to do so, and we *cannot abandon* that purpose.²⁷ We have the one true faith that can share truth with the world (Jude 3).

Christians have always had to wrestle with what faithful cultural engagement looks like in practice. We’ve explored several broad approaches, but in the next section, we’ll examine five specific approaches that seek to reflect Christ’s example in culture.

6. Historical Approaches to Christian Culture

► **OBJECTIVE:** You will be able to evaluate the five approaches to culture that have influenced Christians throughout history.

How should Christians relate to the culture around them? It’s not a simple question. Culture reflects both God’s good creation and humanity’s brokenness (Genesis 1:31, Romans 3:23). The same human creativity that produces beauty, knowledge, and order can also be twisted by sin into injustice, pride, and idolatry.

Faithful Christians have often disagreed about how to respond to this dichotomy. Should we embrace, challenge, transform, or step back? Living in culture means navigating this tension—seeking to influence the world by overcoming evil with good and resisting the culture’s attempts to shape us into its mold (Romans 12:2, 12–17). Believers are reminded, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). Yet they are also told to live within society, submit to authority, and do good things in it (Jeremiah 29:7, 1 Peter 2:13–17).

Theologian and author **H. Richard Niebuhr** (1894–1962) examined these tensions in his influential book *Christ and Culture*. Niebuhr observed that

Christians historically respond to culture in recognizable patterns. His framework, described in the following five views, helps explain why different Christian traditions emphasize different ways of engaging the world.



Christ against culture. The first approach emphasizes separation. Culture is seen primarily as corrupt or hostile to Christian faith, and believers should maintain distance from it to preserve their faithfulness (1 John 2:15–17). Scripture strongly warns against worldliness, cautioning believers not to love the world or its desires (James 4:4).

Historically, some Christians have built alternative institutions: schools, economic



networks, and communities designed to shield members from harmful influences. The Amish, for example, separate from society and live according to the *Ordnung*, a set of accepted behaviors and customs.²⁸ The strength of this view is its seriousness about loyalty to Christ over cultural pressure. Its limitation

is isolation. Distance from culture can make it harder to understand the people Christians are called to love and to communicate the truth to them.

Christ of culture. The second approach moves in the opposite direction. Instead of separating from culture, it closely identifies Christ with a culture's highest moral ideals. Reason, justice, creativity, and social progress are viewed as expressions of God's work in the world, encouraging Christians to partner with others in pursuing these goals.

This perspective values what theologians call *common grace*—*God's goodness shown to all creation*, including those who reject the gospel.²⁹ It encourages us to love creation and appreciate cultural achievement and cooperation for the common good. The risk? It can lead to an uncritical acceptance of one's culture as uniquely blessed by God. The danger is that, like those who stand to respect the flag but disrespect their responsibilities as citizens, it can lead to a worship of form over substance. This is what Jesus criticized in the Pharisees who painstakingly measured out every ounce of their tithe but ignored what the tithe is really about, which is justice, mercy, and faith (Matthew 23:23). Today, this may look like attending church on Sunday without taking to heart what it means to live out the rest of the week as a follower of Christ.

Christ above culture. The third approach focuses on the Christian's faith and relationship to God over and above one's cultural participation. This view attempts to keep a clear distinction between them. Christ stands above culture as its ultimate authority. Christians may cooperate with cultural institutions, work, contribute to civic life, and teach, as long as it does not compromise their perceived priority on obedience to God.

This view takes sin seriously while still allowing meaningful participation in society. However, this view can underestimate how deeply culture quietly shapes the assumptions of those who live within it, even as they attempt to remain faithful. Its downside is significant when Christians trust and align with nonbelievers to form a good society, but

it results in a society that is against Christ. German Christians during the rise of Nazism provide a sobering reminder. Many were sincere Christians who intended to remain faithful but underestimated how nationalism and submission to Hitler's evil regime shaped their perspective until it was too late.³⁰

Christ and culture in paradox. The fourth approach emphasizes the ongoing tension between God's redemptive work and the world's brokenness. Believers are citizens of God's kingdom while still living in a fallen world that cannot be fully redeemed until Christ returns (John 17:14–16). They participate in cultural life while remaining cautious about the possibility of lasting reform.

This view acknowledges the difficulty of faithful living by recognizing that obedience isn't easy and perfect justice cannot be achieved by human effort. Its danger, however, is resignation—when change feels unlikely, the drive to engage can fade. Yet Scripture calls Christians to persevere in doing good (1 Corinthians 15:58, Hebrews 12:3–4). As Timothy Keller observes, “[Culture] doesn't change easily or without a fight. But it can, in the end, be changed.”³¹

Christ, the transformer of culture. The fifth approach holds that culture can be renewed, or converted, through the redemptive work of Christ. This conversionist approach acknowledges that humanity's sin nature needs the transformation available to us through Christ's redemptive work on the cross. Transformed lives are the work of Christ in the culture to restore the good, right, and beautiful, not just replace culture with something different.³² The gospel message of Christ's death and resurrection for our redemption and restoration speaks not only to individuals but also to society's structures and practices. Jesus taught us to pray for these internal and external transformations in what is known as *the Lord's Prayer* (Matthew 6:9–13). Christians are called to engage actively, influencing ideas, institutions, and daily life to reflect our Triune God's truth and goodness. The goal is restoration, offering real hope while requiring patience and humility, as cultural change is slow and often incomplete.

These five approaches reveal disagreement among Christians about how to engage culture. Yet they all point to guiding Biblical truths: culture is always shaping us—through our habits, values, and everyday practices.³³ That's why this question matters. To respond wisely, we need to understand how culture forms us, and how the Christian faith speaks into that process.



7. Shaped by Culture or Shaped by Christ?

► **OBJECTIVE:** You will be able to compare how culture shapes beliefs, values, and behaviors with how Christ-centered discipleship actively transforms lives.

No one develops beliefs, habits, and desires in a vacuum. Families, schools, communities, media, and traditions all shape how people see the world and live within it. We are surrounded by constant social media messages that quietly shape priorities, self-image, and daily choices. Formation is not optional. The only question is: Who or what is doing the forming?



Consider the Jesus Movement—a countercultural awakening in the midst of cultural turmoil. The nation shuddered with chaos and confusion in the late 1960s—the Vietnam War and cultural divisions on every front. Meanwhile, “the hippies who plunged into the Pacific Ocean during that summer sunset in 1970 didn’t . . . even know what a revival was [and] were not acquainted with Christian vocabulary words like revival or

salvation or sanctification . . .” Jesus was healing the lives of young people in record numbers. “It was the largest public movement of the Holy Spirit in the United States since the celebrated revivals of the nineteenth century. More people were baptized during the Jesus Revolution than in any time since people started keeping records.”³⁴

Culture as a formative power. These countercultural transformations remind us that culture shapes people powerfully, communicating what society values through practices and shared experiences. Education, entertainment, advertising, and technology all contribute. Stories, products, and habits influence ideas of success, happiness, and identity. One recent study revealed that social media has shaped what teenagers think they need to look like in order to be accepted by others.³⁵ In *The Anxious Generation*, author Jonathan Haidt argues that the shift to cell phone and device dominance in the lives of teenagers is the single largest cause of adolescent mental health issues.³⁶

What culture promises and what it produces. Most cultures promote a vision of the “good life” that emphasizes success, happiness, freedom, or self-expression. Through stories, advertisements, and public recognition, these visions guide what people strive for. Over time, they shape how individuals measure self-worth: career achievements can become the main measure of value, personal fulfillment the highest moral priority, and freedom defined as the ability to follow one’s desires without limits.

The outcomes, though, do not always match the promises. A culture that promises happiness through consumption may produce dissatisfaction instead. A culture that prizes individual autonomy may struggle with loneliness and fractured communities. In fact, a recent Gallup poll revealed that 20 percent of adults feel lonely “a lot of the day.”³⁷

Recognizing this gap between promise and product invites a deeper question: Are the goals a culture promotes capable of delivering what they promise?

Christian discipleship as countercultural. Christianity offers a different pattern. While culture shapes people by appealing to their desires, Christian discipleship aims to reshape those desires according to the character and teachings of Christ (Psalm 37:4, Matthew 5–7). Christian faith is more than accepting certain beliefs about God; it involves a process of transformation that touches every area of life. Through worship, prayer, obedience to Scripture, service to others, and participation in Christian community, believers learn to reorder their loyalties and priorities (2 Corinthians 3:18, Hebrews 10:24–25).

These practices gradually shape how Christians understand identity, purpose, and hope. Rather than defining themselves through achievement or status, believers begin to see their identity in relation to Christ. Rather than pursuing self-centered fulfillment, they learn to value humility, love, and faithfulness. This process is called *discipleship*, a lifelong journey of learning to follow Christ.

Competing loyalties in everyday life. Because both culture and Christian faith shape our desires, believers often face real tension between these influences. Resisting cultural pressures can feel overwhelming, since these norms reflect the majority's values. When everyone around you chases the same goals and measures success by the same standards, it's easy for a Christian to feel out of step—and pressured to conform.

Christian formation, by contrast, can feel daunting. Following Christ often means resisting cultural expectations and questioning widely accepted definitions of success. Humility, sacrifice, and service frequently clash with cultural priorities such as status, convenience, and personal recognition.

This tension surfaces in everyday life decisions about careers, relationships, and purchases—decisions that often reveal whether cultural expectations or Christian convictions are actually guiding a person's life. We need wisdom and discernment to know which influences align with biblical truth and which require resistance (James 1:5).

This discernment begins with prayer and honest self-examination (Psalm 139:23–24). Christians are to seek God in prayer and ask questions about what is actually shaping their habits and desires: What am I learning to love? What am I learning to ignore? What goals do I instinctively pursue?

Which habits are forming my character? These questions help reveal patterns of formation that often go unexamined. Habits form character, and character shapes the direction of a life. Awareness of cultural formation helps Christians live more intentionally as they examine their influences rather than simply drifting with the expectations of the society around them.



Clearly, culture forms people in powerful ways, so Christians cannot afford to drift through life without examination (2 Corinthians 13:5). Recognizing how formation works is only the first step. The next question—“What can I do about it?”—forces us to think clearly about the specific challenges, issues, and needs that our culture presents and ask, “How does a biblical worldview require that I respond?” We will explore that question more deeply in the next section.

8. Responding to Cultural Challenges

► **OBJECTIVE:** You will be able to discuss how Christians can respond to cultural challenges, issues, and needs through the lens of a biblical worldview.

 **secularization:**
the movement of
a culture away
from religious
identification and
values as religion
loses cultural
relevance and
significance

Cultural challenges arise in the context of political disagreements or moral controversies and reflect deeper questions about truth, purpose, and what it means to be human. Cultural conflicts often grow from worldview conflicts. For example, *Critical Social Justice* (CSJ) is a system of thinking that believes that society is unequal and unfair to different groups of people. Pastor and author Voddie Baucham Jr. believes that CSJ is not simply a politically divisive issue, but one of opposing worldviews.³⁸

The outcome is a cultural conflict which has affected Christians; the term *progressive Christianity* describes a movement that has fundamentally become a different religion apart from mainstream Christianity with views and teachings that no longer align with biblical truth.³⁹

God created humans to cultivate the world, shaping societies with creativity, order, and cooperation. Yet human sin has twisted culture, leading to injustice, confusion, and the misuse of power. The biblical story of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration helps us understand both the good design and the brokenness in culture. In contrast, a purely secular worldview that ignores God offers no framework for understanding the intelligent design for moral and cultural order.

Understanding secularization. Secularism is a nontheistic and materialistic worldview that advocates for a culture free from religion’s influence.⁴⁰ Contemporary Western culture significantly reflects the influence of **secularization**, which is *the movement of a culture away from religious identification and values as religion loses cultural relevance and significance*. Individuals and governments increasingly treat religious belief as a private matter. Religion is not to influence discussions about education, public policy, science, or cultural development. Faith may exist in a secularized society but is expected to stay a non-factor in public matters. Over time, the results show a population disconnecting with religious ideas and convictions.

Christian thinker Os Guinness warned in his book *The Last Christian on Earth* that in complete secularization, people see faith as irrelevant.⁴¹ When Christianity functions only as a private belief rather than a framework for living, its ability to shape culture shrinks. This is often referred to as a *post-Christian society*, where a society gradually loses sight of the moral and spiritual foundations on which its institutions were originally built. If Christians believe those foundations are crucial for a flourishing society, then cultural engagement is a calling, if not a mandate. Let's discuss three steps we can intentionally take to participate in transforming culture:

Step 1: Culture and the Christian mission. Christ is Lord of all creation, and his authority extends beyond private spirituality into every area of life. The gospel addresses not only individual salvation but also the restoration of relationships, communities, and societies. Christian faith carries a commission to take the gospel public (Matthew 28:19–20). Christians work in businesses, teach, create art, conduct research, write laws, and serve their communities. Each of these activities provides opportunities to reflect God's character through honesty, creativity, justice, and compassion.

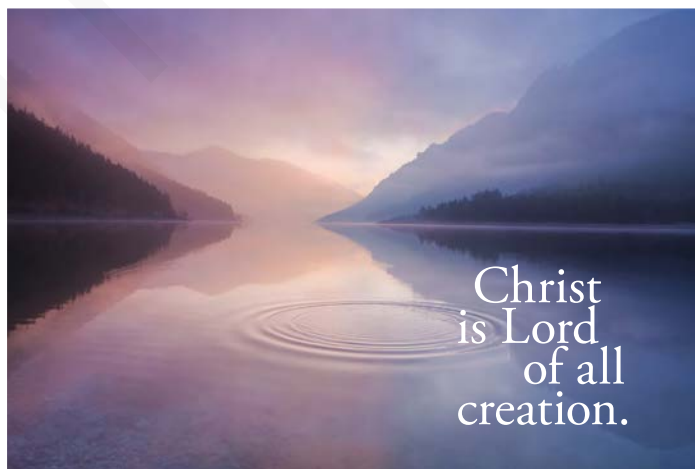
Faithful cultural engagement nourishes human activity that is part of God's good creation, reflecting the human calling to cultivate the world and develop thriving communities (Genesis 1:28, 2:15). Therefore, today's Christians are not to remain on the sidelines of culture. As Professor J. Gresham Machen comments:

The Christian cannot be satisfied so long as any human activity is either opposed to Christianity or out of all connection with Christianity. Christianity must pervade not merely all nations, but also all of human thought. The Christian therefore cannot be indifferent to any branch of earnest human endeavor. It must all be brought into some relation to the gospel.⁴²

Step 2: Taking culture seriously.

Faithful cultural engagement begins with learning to read culture before seeking to write it. Christians who want to influence their community consider the thoughts, values, and concerns that shape public conversation.

Francis Schaeffer's (1912–1984) work at the international fellowship of **L'Abri** offers one model of Christian community that aims to equip people with a biblical worldview as they prepare for cultural engagement.⁴³ Rather than dismissing the ideas of those who reject Christianity, Schaeffer created a community where people from various backgrounds can ask hard questions about faith, philosophy, and culture. Questions are thoughtfully addressed to show how biblical truth speaks to modern moral and intellectual issues, aiming to persuade skeptics to embrace the Gospel's Truth.⁴⁴



In Acts 17:16–34, Paul demonstrated this model for cultural transformation as he observed the religious practices of the Athenians, quoted their poets, and used familiar ideas as starting points for explaining the gospel. He did not approach the culture



with contempt or fear but engaged it with understanding and patience. Such engagement requires humility: listening before speaking, asking before answering, and communicating truth clearly.

Step 3: Creating new culture. Responding to cultural challenges is also an opportunity to engage in cultural formation through creativity. When people produce works of beauty, wisdom, and excellence, they help shape the cultural environment around them. Artists, writers, educators, entrepreneurs, and community

leaders all form culture through original creations. New institutions, artistic works, and community practices can introduce ideas that improve quality of life—ones that reflect integrity, compassion, and wisdom. These contributions can shape society over time as people encounter examples worth imitating (James 1:19).

Cultural renewal grows from the everyday faithfulness of people who live in accordance with the character of Christ. Let's consider how ordinary Christians—through humility, service, and love—can reflect God's goodness and contribute to the healing of culture.

9. Lives That Heal Culture

► **OBJECTIVE:** You will be able to describe how the lives of Christians reflect Christ through obedient living that promotes healing and flourishing in society.

Culture is shaped by the beliefs people display in their daily lives. True belief doesn't just talk; it acts. When Christians practice honesty, humility, service, and love in ordinary situations, those habits influence the communities around them. Obedience to God's commands shapes character, relationships, and institutions. Faithful living is itself a form of cultural engagement. How Christians treat others, how they work, how they handle conflict, and how they pursue justice can quietly shape a society's moral direction. God seeks to heal the world which has been broken by sin, and we can assist in that work.

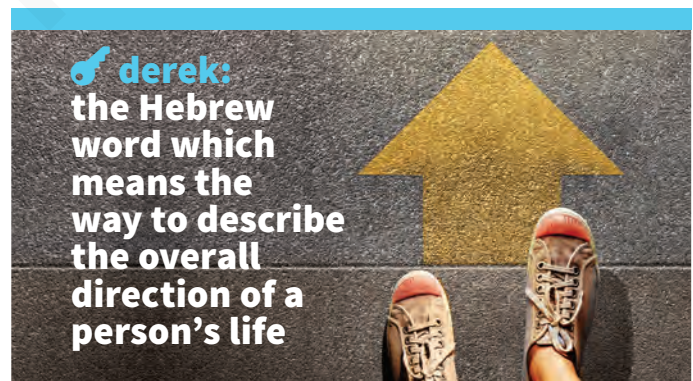
Revisiting the four patterns of response. Reflecting on the four approaches from earlier, we see how our lives connect to God's call to participate in his healing work.

- **Caution and separation** emphasize distinctiveness. Olympic-level athletes don't represent their nation well by adopting their nation's average lifestyle or eating habits. They stand apart not to condemn others, but to inspire them. Business owners serve best by offering excellent products, not lousy ones. Excellence in any endeavor, by definition, means limiting exposure to influences that compromise genuineness.

- **Presence and involvement** require that Christians show up. Withdrawal abandons the people and places where the gospel is most needed. Faithful engagement means remaining in the world as a witness, serving others, and pointing toward truth through work, creativity, and daily life. Where there is despair, show up with hope. Where there is brokenness, show up with healing. Where there is apathy, show up with concern. Christians are not to abandon the world or assume that change is impossible (Galatians 6:9–10, 1 Peter 2:12). Instead, we are called to remain present within society as witnesses to God’s renewing work.
- **Short-term change** addresses visible problems. Christians using this approach work to correct injustices or address moral concerns with an eye toward alleviating symptoms of disease or brokenness. This requires compassion. You don’t show up and say, “I can’t believe you fell into that mud puddle.” Rather, you say, “Oh, I hate it when that happens. Let me give you a hand.”
- **Long-term formation** focuses on restoration through Christ’s redemptive work, combining truth and love. It recognizes that lasting cultural change requires patience and sustained faithfulness, seeking to transform underlying beliefs and worldviews rather than merely generating activity. This is what schools do. As Frederick Douglass is reported to have said, “It is easier to build strong children than repair broken men.”

Human societies are complex, and habits formed over generations are not easily changed. Meaningful transformation unfolds gradually as individuals and communities live faithfully over long periods of time. Through steady acts of compassion, honesty, and justice, believers contribute to the healing of relationships and institutions around them.

Derek: The way of obedient living. Just as a map guides a traveler along a particular route, a biblical worldview helps believers understand where they are going and how they are to live along the way. The Bible frequently describes such faithful living as a path or direction. *Derek* is *the Hebrew word which means the way to describe the overall direction of a person’s life*. Scripture repeatedly calls God’s people to walk in his ways and follow the path he has set before them (Deuteronomy 10:12–13, Psalm 119:1–4, Isaiah 40:3). The idea of *derek* reminds us that obedience is not a single decision but a direction for life characterized first through salvation found in Christ alone (Acts 4:12). Jesus, God’s Son, fulfilled God’s mission for the forgiveness of our sins (John 3:16). He willingly gave his life on the cross for our redemption (Matthew 26:52–56, Mark 10:45, Luke 22:42, John 10:18). Through trusting in Christ, our sins were buried in his sacrificial death, and through his resurrection, we



are raised to walk in new life (Romans 6:4). When one puts their trust in Christ, they are living a new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Abiding in Christ results in bearing fruit that glorifies God (John 15:4–11). The New Testament identifies Jesus himself as *The Way*

(John 14:6). There is no other way to be saved from our sins but to receive Christ as Savior (Romans 6:23). To follow Christ is to walk a path—a *way*—through life that reflects Jesus, the Father’s lovingkindness, and the outcome of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. This allows our lives to be shaped by the Triune God—his teachings, his character, and his purposes (Ephesians 2:8–9).



Stained glass, Jesus the Good Shepherd

Imitating Christ rather than culture. The ultimate model of faithful living is Christ himself. Jesus lived within a broken world yet remained fully obedient to God (John 6:37, 8:29, 14:31). His life demonstrated humility, compassion, truthfulness, and sacrificial love. Following Christ means learning to imitate his character rather than adopting the patterns of the surrounding culture. This requires surrender to God’s authority and trust in his purposes, even when cultural expectations point elsewhere.

The Holy Spirit shapes this obedience in us to not withdraw from culture, but to live faithfully in culture, reflecting God’s goodness in the places where we live and work (Romans 12:1–2).

Cultural brokenness creates real needs, including poverty, injustice, loneliness, and spiritual confusion. Faithful Christians display the beauty of a transformed life by caring for others, both practically and spiritually. In the final section, we’ll explore how Christians respond to these challenges.

10. Awareness in Culture Care

► **OBJECTIVE:** You will be able to summarize your own cultural experiences and discuss how Christians can engage culture with a raised awareness of a biblical worldview’s influence.

You probably don’t remember life before smartphones. Today, more than 95 percent of teens own one.⁴⁵ But when you got your first phone, did you ask yourself, “Should I even own a phone?” “How might this shape my thoughts, habits, or relationships?” “Could it have any negative effects on me?”⁴⁶ Few of us asked those questions. Why? Because smartphones feel ordinary—expected. In fact, not having one can seem strange or even isolating.

This is culture at work. Culture doesn’t just influence what we do; it shapes what we don’t even think to question. When something becomes an ordinary part of life, we tend to accept it without reflection. Smartphones aren’t just tools we use—they’re part of the cultural environment we live in, quietly shaping how we communicate, spend our time, and understand the world around us.

That's why studying culture matters. When you begin to recognize its influence, you can start to ask important questions, including: Why do I think this way? Where do my beliefs come from? As we have explored throughout this chapter, culture grows out of beliefs, metabeliefs, patterns, practices, and habits. What a society thinks about truth, meaning, and human dignity shapes its attitudes, its artifacts and institutions, and, eventually, how it treats people—especially those who are struggling.⁴⁷ Because we are called to help heal the world, Christian engagement with culture cannot remain as ideas. Belief has to transform into actions. The shift from understanding to action—and from conviction to care—is where cultural engagement becomes tangible.

For Christians, care means both actions and words. It means meeting practical needs and addressing deeper spiritual ones. When believers serve others in ways that reflect God's character, they provide a visible example of a life shaped by Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26, 15:12, 16:13).

Physical care as cultural witness. The most immediate needs are physical. Food, shelter, medical care, education, and protection from harm are essential for a flourishing life. When these needs are unmet, both individuals and entire communities suffer. Christians have a long history of responding to those gaps. As discussed in the previous chapter, during ancient plagues, early Christians stayed behind to care for the sick when others fled.⁴⁸ They took in orphans and supported widows who had no family to rely on.⁴⁹ These instincts gave rise to hospitals, schools, and charities that shaped Western civilization, all rooted in the conviction that every person bears God's image and is worthy of kindness (Psalm 82:3).

That conviction still matters. When Christians help a family, support a student, or advocate for the unjustly treated, they aren't just doing good; they are affirming human worth. Meeting physical needs becomes a form of witness. Jesus reminded his disciples of the eternal beauty of their care for others: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, . . . 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me'" (Matthew 25:34–40).

Spiritual care as cultural witness. People are not only physical; they also hunger for meaning, forgiveness, and purpose. Spiritual care meets these needs by pointing to the Truth and hope found in Christ through sharing the gospel, teaching Scripture, praying, and welcoming community. It requires patience. The goal is not to win arguments but to help people encounter Jesus through genuine relationships.



Physical and spiritual care belong together. A person fed but spiritually lost is only partly helped. A person who hears the gospel but is left hungry may struggle to receive it. Both matter, because people are both body and soul.



Care in everyday spaces. While cultural influence does come from institutions and public figures, culture is shaped most often in everyday spaces: homes, classrooms, workplaces, and neighborhoods. A parent teaching honesty, a teacher helping a struggling student, an employer paying fairly, or a neighbor showing up in crisis all form culture. These quiet actions rarely make headlines, but they add up, creating communities marked by honesty, compassion, and responsibility. This care helps develop notably different environments from those where these qualities are rare.

Care as participation in God’s restorative work.

Christian care is not ultimately about fixing problems; it is focused on reflecting the character of a God who is himself compassionate toward suffering and committed to restoring what sin has broken. When believers serve others with love

and humility, they are participating in something larger than their own efforts.

Christians are not called to solve everything. They are called to be faithful with what is in front of them: providing a meal, offering friendship, or sharing the truth. These simple acts of care contribute to healing within communities and, over time, point others toward the source of the love that inspires them. Psychologists James Fowler and Nicholas Christakis have demonstrated that every act of giving ripples out three degrees—affecting the friends, families, and acquaintances of both the giver and the recipient.⁵⁰

The patterns of culture care described in this chapter grew from centuries of Christians living, serving, and sometimes dying within the cultures around them. The next chapter traces that history—exploring how the church has engaged culture over time, and what those examples can teach believers today.

In the next chapter, we’ll explore the stories from history of Christians who championed biblical worldview ideas, who engaged with culture to raise morality, the dignity of human lives, and the value of freedom. The outcome of their faithful work is still evident today. Their faith, courage, and obedience left a path for us to follow in shaping culture.

ENDNOTES – 2

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Aspects of Culture

Identify each example as one of the following:

a belief	any idea that a person or group holds as common understanding or convictions
<i>an ethos</i>	the moods or styles of a particular people group that form cultural distinctives
a metabelief	the intuitive sense of being, purpose, and posture toward other people and creation
a practice	any traditional activity or observance by which people express the value of certain cultural features (such as holidays, weddings, and funerals)

Example 1:

At Sam's bar-mitzvah, his family and friends gathered for a traditional ceremony. Sam wore special clothes and sang memorized portions of the Torah in Hebrew. Then, everyone celebrated his new status as an adult in his Jewish community with a meal featuring special foods.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 1:

Answer: a practice

This event includes traditional activities and observances that express the family and culture's values and habits.

At Sam's bar-mitzvah, his family and friends gathered for a traditional ceremony. Sam wore special clothes and sang memorized portions of the Torah in Hebrew. Then, everyone celebrated his new status as an adult in his Jewish community with a meal featuring special foods.

Example 2:

Several signers of the United States Declaration of Independence acknowledged God's existence but did not view God's involvement with creation and humanity as a significant factor in culture.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 2:

Answer: a belief

A group inside the signers held a common perspective about God.

Several signers of the United States Declaration of Independence acknowledged God's existence but did not view God's involvement with creation and humanity as a significant factor in culture.

Example 3:

When the mother with two small children and a fussy baby entered the checkout line at the grocery store, the three people ahead of her willingly yielded their space in line so she could check out quickly.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 3:

Answer: a metabelief

Without having to discuss it, people took a common posture toward a person in a specific sort of situation.

When the mother with two small children and a fussy baby entered the checkout line at the grocery store, the three people ahead of her willingly yielded their space in line so she could check out quickly.

Example 4:

A supporter of the social gospel posted the following statement on social media:

“If we eradicate the evils in our society,
like poverty and racism,
we will usher in Jesus’ return.”

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 4:

Answer: a belief

This statement is an idea held with conviction by the author.

A supporter of the social gospel posted the following statement on social media:

“If we eradicate the evils in our society, like poverty and racism, we will usher in Jesus’ return.”

Example 5:

Although the meeting was adjourned,
the disappointment and sadness remained
as a small group spoke quietly on one side of the
room and a few others gathered to comfort someone.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 5:

Answer: *an ethos*

**Disappointment and sadness are creating
a common mood among a group.**

Although the meeting was adjourned,
the disappointment and sadness remained
as a small group spoke quietly on one side of the
room and a few others gathered to comfort someone.

Example 6:

The wedding was not extravagant, but everyone wore their best clothes. The pastor read from the Bible and asked everyone to join him in praying for Mr. and Mrs. Jackson as they began their new life together as husband and wife. They celebrated with dinner and the bride's cake for dessert.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 6:

Answer: a practice

This was an event that included traditional activities, clothing, food, and religious activities for a cultural observance.

The wedding was not extravagant, but everyone wore their best clothes. The pastor read from the Bible and asked everyone to join him in praying for Mr. and Mrs. Jackson as they began their new life together as husband and wife. They celebrated with dinner and the bride's cake for dessert.

Example 7:

The drivers honked frequently and routinely while navigating their small cars through the crowded street, which was already full of pedestrians and small motorcycles. But no one seemed angry; everyone continued on their way as usual.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 7:

Answer: a metabelief

People intuitively communicated to other drivers by using their horns in a culturally accepted manner.

The drivers honked frequently and routinely while navigating their small cars through the crowded street, which was already full of pedestrians and small motorcycles. But no one seemed angry; everyone continued on their way as usual.

Example 8:

While sharing about her faith, the speaker explained that Jesus Christ is God's Son, who lived a sinless life, and willingly died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Through Jesus, we can have eternal life with God.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 8:

Answer: a belief

The speaker expressed an idea held with conviction.

While sharing about her faith, the speaker explained that Jesus Christ is God's Son, who lived a sinless life, and willingly died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Through Jesus, we can have eternal life with God.

Example 9:

Though all of the athletes were district champions, they knew this was a tough state competition between two well-matched teams.

The parents and fans gathered could feel the tension and apprehension before what was sure to be a close game.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 9:

Answer: *an ethos*

**Tension and apprehension are creating
a common mood among a group.**

Though all of the athletes were district champions,
they knew this was a tough state competition
between two well-matched teams.
The parents and fans gathered could feel
the tension and apprehension before
what was sure to be a close game.

Example 10:

In Cory's new hometown near the coast, she noticed how the families in her neighborhood all gathered for a Saturday meal, but men sat at one table and the women at the other. The foods served were mostly fish caught off nearby shores.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 10:

Answer: a practice

Cory was noticing traditional activities and customs which expressed the people's values.

In Cory's new hometown near the coast, she noticed how the families in her neighborhood all gathered for a Saturday meal, but men sat at one table and the women at the other. The foods served were mostly fish caught off nearby shores.

Example 11:

Carter hadn't expected his aunt and uncle's divorce earlier that year. When he arrived at the Thanksgiving family reunion, his cousins seemed different, and everything felt off without his aunt there.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 11:

Answer: *an ethos*

**The divorce affected the mood
among the family group.**

Carter hadn't expected his aunt and uncle's divorce earlier that year. When he arrived at the Thanksgiving family reunion, his cousins seemed different, and everything felt off without his aunt there.

Example 12:

As the crowd near the stadium's entrance grew larger, several people stepped back to create space for new arrivals, while almost everyone stayed aware of maintaining space between people in a growing crowd.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 12:

Answer: a metabelief

People were acting intuitively without any discussion or instructions.

As the crowd near the stadium's entrance grew larger, several people stepped back to create space for new arrivals, while almost everyone stayed aware of maintaining space between people in a growing crowd.

Example 13:

The crowd gasped and then grew quiet.
The promising new runner on the varsity cross country team had slipped on the course, dropping from first to third place. But then, everyone cheered wildly when she recovered and crossed the finish line back in first place.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 13:

Answer: *an ethos*

The crowd's mood was collectively changing based on the common cultural event.

The crowd gasped and then grew quiet.

The promising new runner on the varsity cross country team had slipped on the course, dropping from first to third place. But then, everyone cheered wildly when she recovered and crossed the finish line back in first place.

Example 14:

Representatives of the congregation spoke at a press conference. They identified themselves as fundamentalists who were there to defend orthodox Christianity against the liberal views that proposed teaching evolution in public schools.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 14:

Answer: a belief

The group was expressing a shared idea that they held with conviction.

Representatives of the congregation spoke at a press conference. They identified themselves as fundamentalists who were there to defend orthodox Christianity against the liberal views that proposed teaching evolution in public schools.

Example 15:

On his first day at a new school, the teacher observed a student picking up a piece of trash in the parking lot, and another student holding the door open for a friend with an armload of books. A few teachers then stopped by his classroom to introduce themselves.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 15:

Answer: a metabelief

**The new teacher was observing
the unspoken, intuitive behaviors
in a new group.**

On his first day at a new school, the teacher observed a student picking up a piece of trash in the parking lot, and another student holding the door open for a friend with an armload of books. A few teachers then stopped by his classroom to introduce themselves.

Example 16:

The Cedarville Founders Day Parade is an annual town celebration, almost as big as the Fourth of July. Kids decorate their bikes, the high school band leads the parade through town, and someone retells the story of how the town was founded by its first residents.

Is this a belief, *an ethos*, a metabelief, or a practice?

Example 16:

Answer: a practice

This event includes traditional activities in a celebration that expresses the community values and history.

The Cedarville Founders Day Parade is an annual town celebration, almost as big as the Fourth of July. Kids decorate their bikes, the high school band leads the parade through town, and someone retells the story of how the town was founded by its first residents.

Minute to Change It?

Read each scenario and decide with your group if this issue should be addressed with . . .

- a short-term solution.
- a long-term plan.
- a combination of both short-term solutions and long-term plans.

Issue 1:

As a freshman in a prestigious art college, Jordan realized there were few, if any, other Christians among students or professors. Jordan planned to earn a graphic design degree and was paying college tuition by selling a weekly comic strip she drew for a local newspaper back home. Her comic strips were gaining popularity and had been picked up for publication by online media outlets. Jordan wondered how to pursue her education and cover her expenses without compromising her faith in Christ.

What is her best approach?

Issue 2:

Marcus lived in Chapman, a small town where he and his parents worked at the town's foremost employer, a potato processing plant. But two years ago, the plant closed, leaving Marcus, his parents, and 375 other plant employees without jobs. Many of these newly laid-off employees were like his parents, near retirement age. Marcus knew he could move elsewhere to find a job, but decided to stay for a while, realizing many people now had critical needs.

What is Marcus' best approach?

Issue 3:

Recent seminary graduates Jason and Sarah rented a small suburban apartment near a large city. While looking for jobs, they soon discovered most of their neighbors were refugees who had recently fled their home country due to war. Their neighbors' issues and needs included trauma, hunger, unemployment, a lack of skills, language barriers, and illiteracy, to name a few. Most of the refugees held to a primitive religion practiced in their homeland, which gripped many in fear and uncertainty.

What will be Jason and Sarah's best approach?

2

What is Culture?

Chapter 2.1 ■ Swimming in Culture

- The story of friends swimming in the ocean shows that culture . . .
 - ▶ surrounds us at home, school, church, and everywhere people gather.
 - ▶ affects everyone as it shapes our words, beliefs, and behaviors.
- Cultural anthropologists seek to understand changes in people's ideas, beliefs, and values through what they celebrate and what they ignore. God designed people to shape culture when and where they live, and culture shapes people (Acts 17:26).
- *Cultura*, Latin for *agriculture*, reflects God's plan for humans to steward creation by seeking the welfare of the city where we live (Jeremiah 29:7).
- T. S. Eliot, in *Notes Toward the Definition of Culture*, states that culture is that which makes life worthwhile.
- Christians prepare to engage culture by studying patterns and beliefs that inform culture.



Chapter 2.2 ■ How Does Culture Develop?



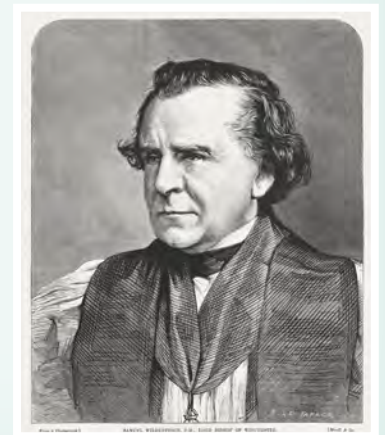
- **William Wilberforce**, guided by Christian values, courageously shaped culture through his work to abolish the slave trade.

- Culture develops through . . .

- ▶ changes resulting from deeply held beliefs that shape decisions and actions over time.
- ▶ reinforced beliefs, decisions, and practices that are passed down to the next generation by what is upheld and what is ignored.
- ▶ growth in family priorities, community traditions, and values practiced in groups.

- People build institutions that represent the beliefs, values, and decisions they uphold.
- People use *culture* in different ways to describe the actions or nature of . . .
 - ▶ views on the value of human life, race, sexuality, and relationships.
 - ▶ politics, religious freedom, and justice.
 - ▶ the arts, entertainment, and technology.
 - ▶ how we care for humanity and creation around us.

- William's son, **Samuel Wilberforce**, carried forward his father's beliefs and actions in upholding Christian morality and valuing human life.



Chapter 2.3 ■ Faithful Approaches to Culture

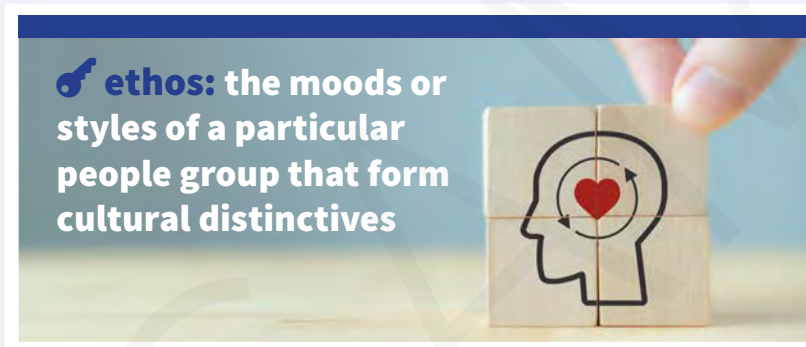
- **Dr. Ida Scudder's** story shows one individual's biblical approach to address cultural beliefs that diminished the care of women and children.
- Christians can biblically engage with culture by . . .
 - ▶ examining the shared patterns of belief and behavior in culture.
 - ▶ balancing the tension between our need as Christians to resist ungodly patterns with God's call for us to be light in a dark world.
- An approach of caution and separation from culture may avoid some cultural influences, but . . .
 - ▶ should not stem from fear of culture.
 - ▶ should rise from wisely discerning what cultural influences we allow to shape us, as they also influence our faith.
- An approach to culture with presence and involvement reflects our position as God's image-bearers, entrusted to participate in God's restorative work.
- Short-term changes in culture address immediate needs of harm, urgency, or injustice.
- Long-term approaches to cultural formation involve actions grounded in truth and sustained habits through relationships and practices (Galatians 6:9).



Dr. Ida Scudder, 1899 {{PD-US}}

Chapter 2.4 ■ God and Culture

- Culture is the result of people acting through generations on shared beliefs about what gives life meaning.
- Beliefs about the existence and nature of the Triune God foundationally shape a culture and are evident through . . .
 - ▶ shared beliefs about truth, morality, authority, human dignity, and life purpose.
 - ▶ actions that reflect a belief in real moral accountability.
 - ▶ care for human lives viewed with value as God's image-bearers.
- *Ethos* reflects the emotional character that grows from those beliefs.



Chapter 2.4 ■ God and Culture, continued

- Practices are the visible, repeated actions that represent or reinforce the cultural beliefs, such as religious celebrations, weddings, funerals, and other milestones in life.
- Metabeliefs form the undercurrent of cultural expectations and are often nonverbal communications about how one behaves toward and around others.
- By observing a group's beliefs, you can identify how they are reflected in its *ethos*, practices, and metabeliefs.



🔑 practice: any traditional activity or observance by which people express the value of certain cultural features, such as holidays, weddings, and funerals



🔑 metabeliefs: the intuitive sense of being, purpose, and posture toward other people and creation

Chapter 2.5 ■ How Culture Shapes Our World

- Cultural influence spreads through . . .
 - ▶ ideas in books, media, and speech.
 - ▶ champions or leaders.
 - ▶ artifacts, such as art, technology, clothing.
 - ▶ institutions such as schools, churches, and governments.
- Ideas spread through champions or leaders who teach, endorse, promote, or demonstrate their beliefs and values through influential messages or practices, such as . . .
 - ▶ teachers, professors, and authors.
 - ▶ athletes and coaches.
 - ▶ entertainers and performers.
 - ▶ political leaders or activists, often on college campuses.
- Artifacts carry ideas to other people and into future generations through . . .
 - ▶ books and media.
 - ▶ art and utensils.
 - ▶ forms of communication and technology.
 - ▶ clothing and tools of occupations.
- Institutions such as schools, universities, churches, government, and businesses shape culture by representing and promoting beliefs, ideas, values and practices.

 **artifact:** any man-made thing, both tangible, such as works of art or technology, and intangible, such as literary forms or a philosophical idea



 **institution:** any organization of cultural significance that preserves or promotes cultural features, such as schools, churches, athletic leagues, and social clubs



Chapter 2.6 ■ Historical Approaches to Christian Culture

- Author and theologian **H. Richard Niebuhr**, in his book *Christ and Culture*, created a framework of five categories to compare . . .
 - ▶ the patterns of how Christians respond to Christ through history.
 - ▶ the resulting different approaches to how Christians engage culture.

Pattern name:	This approach to culture . . .	Christian Actions:	Strengths:	Limitations:
1. Christ against culture:	emphasizes Christians should separate from culture to preserve faithfulness	build separate institutions: schools, business networks, social groups, and uphold specific rules	loyalty to Christ over culture; commitment to faithfulness	isolation and difficulty in understanding the people Christians are called to love
2. Christ of culture:	closely identifies Christ with the highest moral ideals of a particular culture	focus on justice, reason, creativity, and social progress as expressions of God's work	values common grace, care for humanity, and God's goodness shown to all creation	risk of uncritical acceptance; values gradually supersede or replace biblical teaching

Chapter 2.6 ■ Historical Approaches to Christian Culture, continued

Pattern name:	This approach to culture . . .	Christian Actions:	Strengths:	Limitations:
3. Christ above culture:	connects the Christian faith and cultural participation with clear distinctions; upholds Christ as the ultimate authority	engage in day jobs and institutions without compromising obedience to God	takes sin seriously; allows cultural participation	Christians become legalistic; underestimate culture's influence, creates vulnerability to cultural shifts
4. Christ and culture in paradox:	emphasizes tension between God's redemptive work and culture's brokenness	participate in culture with an uncertainty of reform until Jesus returns	realistic about the difficulty of faithful, obedient living; acknowledges human efforts cannot achieve perfect justice, only Christ redeems	results in resignation, depletes motivation when change seems unlikely until Christ returns
5. Christ the transformer of culture:	emphasizes cultural renewal through Christ's redemptive and restorative work, known as <i>conversionists</i>	engage in culture confident of Christ's transformative work, restoring culture to what is good through the gospel's power	acknowledges humanity's sin and Christ's powerful redemptive work on the cross to restore broken lives	offers real hope in Christ, but requires humility and patience (Matthew 6:9–13)

Chapter 2.7 ■ Shaped by Culture or Shaped by Christ?

- Culture shapes people subtly but powerfully through . . .
 - ▶ repeated practices and shared expectations.
 - ▶ entertainment, advertising, and social media.
 - ▶ educational institutions and relationships.
- Culture's expectations can create anxiety and mental health strain with pressure to keep up.
- Culture appeals to desires with promises that fail to produce, such as:
 - ▶ vision of a successful, ideal life, but fails to fulfill.
 - ▶ idea that materialism brings happiness, but it leads to dissatisfaction.
 - ▶ goal of autonomy provides fulfillment, but leads to loneliness and fractured communities.
- Christian life offers a different pattern of life habits through . . .
 - ▶ discipleship that aligns desires with Christ's teachings.
 - ▶ a transformation process that addresses all areas of our lives.
 - ▶ practices such as Scripture reading, worship, and service that focus priorities.
- Christians face challenges with cultural expectations but can seek wisdom and discernment through prayer and self-assessment of habits.
- Christians character formation occurs in the midst of culture and life experiences as we're challenged to live with wisdom and intentionality.

Chapter 2.8 ■ Responding to Cultural Challenges

- The biblical metanarrative of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration best explains the reality of God's good design in creation and culture's brokenness.
- Secularization in culture is evident through . . .
 - ▶ pressure to keep matters of faith and religion private.
 - ▶ culture's disconnection of religion and faith with ordinary life matters.
- Christian author Os Guinness, in *The Last Christian on Earth*, expressed secularization's results as . . .
 - ▶ people no longer view faith as relevant.
 - ▶ Christianity functions only in one's private life.
 - ▶ society loses sight of the moral and spiritual foundations of culture.

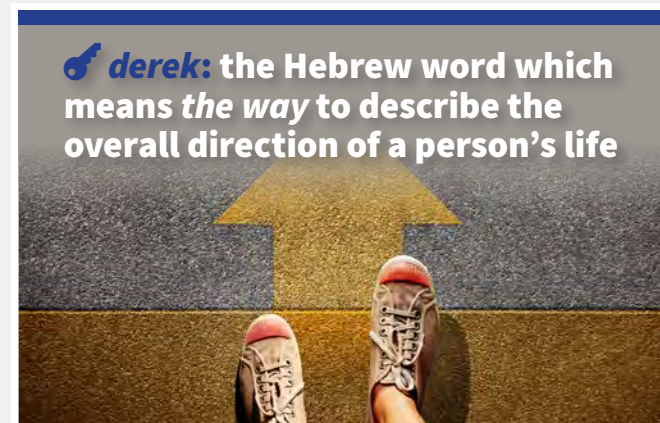
 **secularization:**
the movement
of culture away
from religious
identification and
values as religion
loses cultural
relevance and
significance

Chapter 2.8 ▪ Responding to Cultural Challenges, continued

- Christians can view the mission of faithful cultural transformation as . . .
 - ▶ upholding Christ with authority over all of life and creation.
 - ▶ embracing the gospel of Christ as powerful in restoring lives and reconciling broken relationships.
 - ▶ bringing salvation as well as restoration into all aspects of life that promote thriving in relationships, communities, and societies.
 - ▶ any activity that is part of God's good creation.
 - ▶ seeking to understand culture rather than react to it.
- Christian author and theologian **Francis Schaeffer** established the international fellowship called **L'Abri** as a model of an effective Christian community where one can address questions about faith, philosophy, and culture.
- Christians respond biblically to cultural challenges when they avoid sitting on the sideline and engage in building new culture through creating new works of beauty, wisdom, and excellence that influence the surrounding culture.

Chapter 2.9 ■ Lives that Heal Culture

- Cultural engagement reflects Godly character through . . .
 - ▶ honesty, humility, and servant-hearted love.
 - ▶ obedience to God in relationships and institutions.
 - ▶ faithful living: treating others with respect, working diligently, addressing conflict well, pursuing justice biblically.
- Caution and separation is . . .
 - ▶ an approach to culture that may avoid exposure to cultural negativity but creates distance from people and places Christians are to love, influence, and serve.
- Presence and involvement is . . .
 - ▶ an approach where Christians maintain community involvement, equipped with the gospel and biblical tools for engagement.
- Short-term changes in culture may address immediate, visible problems.
- Long-term culture formation requires Christ's redemptive work, truth and love, consistently faithful habits and practices.
- *derek*:
 - ▶ Hebrew word to describe *the way* of faithful living (Deuteronomy 10:12–13) that begins with new life through salvation in Christ alone.
 - ▶ abiding in him through the power of the Holy Spirit.



Chapter 2.10 ■ Culture Care

- Studying culture matters because it helps you recognize its influence, leading you to ask important questions.
- Culture exists everywhere we live and work, and in the habits, customs, and institutions we've established.
- Ideas shape culture when they spread to people through created items or communication.
- Christians care for culture with words and actions because God cares about the world.
- People are both body and soul. Meeting the physical cares and needs of humanity includes . . .
 - ▶ providing food, shelter, education, and protection from harm that impedes flourishing.
 - ▶ following in the history of Christians as individuals who care for others in ways that lead to flourishing.
 - ▶ considering the needs of God's image-bearers in establishing cultural institutions that foster restoration.

Possible answers may include:

Worldview (internal)	Aspect of culture	Actions (external)	Culture (outcome)
Example: An influential educator serving on the school board believes, "Truth is what you decide is true for you."	idea	Example: In making challenging decisions, this person listened well and accepted other perspectives but was unable to articulate the beliefs and knowledge that supported his decisions. Over time, the decisions made were inconsistent responses to the school's needs.	Example: People saw and felt the confusion and uncertainty on the school board. The community's once-held values seem to be in question.
Example: An accomplished athlete believes it is God's purpose for her life to represent the sport well and that God deserves the glory for her success.	champion	Example: In an interview following a recent victory, the athlete publicly gave God credit for her success. In later interviews, she shared about her faith in Christ and how it guides her to live with integrity.	People expressed admiration and respect for the athlete, not only for her athletic accomplishment but also for the respectable character of a successful athlete. People considered her a role-model for the next generation.
A film director holds agnostic beliefs and feels that religion divides people and hinders human progress.	artifact	The film director agrees to direct a television series that portrays people rejecting faith in God and pursuing human efforts that oppose faith-based beliefs and values.	People view the series with the words and actions that oppose a faith in God. Some recognize the agnostic perspective, and others don't know how to address the doubts the series raised.

Possible answers may include:

Worldview (internal)	Aspect of culture	Actions (external)	Culture (outcome)
A town council member declares, "I don't believe our town should spend limited budget funds to renovate the community center. Families need to find other places to gather for recreation."	institution	The town council candidate expressed his beliefs and values to potential backers and was successful in gathering support to reduce civic funds to renovate the community recreation center.	People saw the values expressed and the outcome for the families in the community. People felt the decision depleted confidence in the community's value and support of families as important in the community.
<i>Answers will vary.</i>	idea	<i>Answers will vary.</i>	<i>Answers will vary.</i>
<i>Answers will vary.</i>	champion	<i>Answers will vary.</i>	<i>Answers will vary.</i>

Possible answers may include:

Worldview (internal)	Aspect of culture	Actions (external)	Culture (outcome)
<i>Answers will vary.</i>	artifact	<i>Answers will vary.</i>	<i>Answers will vary.</i>
<i>Answers will vary.</i>	institution	<i>Answers will vary.</i>	<i>Answers will vary.</i>

Cultural Transformation Action Plan

Step 1: Identify and describe an aspect of your culture where you can engage in transformation as part of your Christian mission.

What is the cultural issue? Describe.

Where is this taking place?

Who is involved or affected?

Step 2: Seriously analyze the cultural issue from several perspectives.

What thoughts are influential?

What values are involved?

What is the concern if we don't address this transformation?

What questions need to be answered?

Step 3: Develop the first action steps to create a new culture.

What does the vision for new culture look like? What's changed, new, or different?

What ideas can be developed into tangible aspects of culture: works of beauty, wisdom, and/or goodness will be evident in transformation?

What or who is necessary for these ideas to develop into improved quality of life? What steps do we need to take to put this transformation plan into action?

Possible answers may include:

Step 1: Identify and describe an aspect of your culture where you can engage in transformation as part of your Christian mission.

What is the cultural issue? Describe. A brick wall in the community has become the target for graffiti containing inappropriate content and personal information about students at the high school. Despite efforts to clean up the graffiti and repaint the brick wall, it remains a public vandalism hotspot.

Where is this taking place? The light-colored brick wall is about six feet high and runs for about one-third mile alongside a major road near the high school. The wall is adjacent to a neighborhood where families live. Graffiti covers most of the brick wall.

Who is involved or affected? Many people drive on this road, alongside this wall on the way to school, work, and a nearby shopping center. Students are tempted to engage in graffiti, which is vandalism of public property; people are subjected to inappropriate images while driving on the road; students are harmed when their names and phone numbers are painted on the wall.

Step 2: Seriously analyze the cultural issue from several perspectives.

What thoughts are influential? As it continues, community awareness, curiosity, tolerance and even acceptance of the graffiti activity increases, which fuels students' temptation to engage further. No one is sure who is responsible for addressing this escalating situation.

What values are involved? The graffiti normalizes public vandalism. It displays acceptance of defamation of public property and even someone's character. It encourages poor character as students are peer-pressured to engage in the activity. Homeowners are affected.

What is the concern if we don't address this transformation? The tolerated, or even accepted acts of public property vandalism could spread to nearby homes, schools, and shopping centers. The home values in the neighborhood behind the wall could decline. Students engaging in vandalism on public property could face consequences from the school and the police, and even accumulate juvenile criminal record.

What questions need to be answered? Who is currently responsible for the maintenance of the brick wall? Who needs to be involved in generating solutions? Are there any homeowner associations willing to get involved? Although more students are intrigued by the graffiti wall, are there students who are opposed to graffiti as an accepted part of culture? If solutions are presented, who are the decision-makers for a long-term solution that halts the graffiti activity?

Possible answers may include:

Step 3: Develop the first action steps to create a new culture.

What does the vision for new culture look like? What's changed, new, or different? **A vision for cultural improvement regarding the brick wall involves a plan to halt the graffiti activity in a way that reduces cultural tolerance/acceptance of it, and replaces the graffiti with a positive cultural experience and promotes restoration of the community values, including respect for people and public property.**

What ideas can be developed into tangible aspects of culture: works of beauty, wisdom, and/or goodness will be evident in transformation? **Suggestions include forming a grass-roots group of high school students with a vision for cultural improvement and restoration of values. The ideas begin with the high school art students and other student groups exploring ideas to transform the wall into a planned art mural.**

What or who is necessary for these ideas to develop into improved quality of life? What steps do we need to take to put this transformation plan into action? **The student groups need to meet to identify a list of contacts that include the art teacher, school administration, neighborhood homeowners, city officials responsible for the wall, and parents. Students are assigned the tasks of making these contacts to invite key supporters to a future meeting. The students formalize the tasks and needs, including financial needs, in a plan to present at the meeting. The goal is to generate support for the newly formed student group's project to eliminate graffiti and replace it with a positive art mural for the community.**

As part of a class discussion, look up and write the definition of the verb *to observe*:
to inspect or take notice of; to celebrate; to watch carefully for the purpose of arriving at a judgment; to come to realize or know through consideration of noted facts¹

Write three synonyms for the verb *to observe*: **mark, regard**

- 1. Prayer:** Begin your Bible study with prayer: “Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of your law” (Psalm 119:18).
- 2. Introduction:** Theologian and professor of biblical hermeneutics, Howard Hendricks advises, “The first step to Bible study is Observation, where we ask and answer the question, What do I see?”² We’ll discover that observing Scripture grows into so much more than *seeing*—it is noticing so many details that you can *describe* the verse in your own words. Observing Scripture begins with asking questions. The list of questions you can ask in observing Scripture is extensive. So think of yourself as a detective who needs to conduct a thorough investigation of everything you need to know for a complete and accurate description. You might begin by asking:
 - What terms, names, and locations are in this passage? (Place a circle around each term.)
 - What is *the most important* term in the verse? (Underline it.)
 - Who are the people mentioned in this verse? (Make notes.)
 - What is the main verb and tense of this verb? (Draw a curvy line under each verb.)
 - What is the context surrounding this passage? (Make notes on what is happening in the chapter and the preceding and following verses.)
 - Are there any contrasts or inferences in this verse?

Write two more questions you might ask in the Scripture observation process:

Possible answers will vary but may include:

- What character quality of the Triune God is evident in this passage?
- What commands are given in this passage?

- 3. Observation and interpretation:** Look up the following Scripture. Each passage contains the Hebrew word *derek* which means *the way, road, path, journey, manner, or conduct*.³ Use the space below to note the context and mark at least ten observations in each passage.

A. Deuteronomy 10:12–13

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?

¹Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “observe, transitive verb” accessed April 12, 2026, merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/observe.

²Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991), 47.

³Strong’s Hebrew: 1870. דֶּרֶךְ (Derek) -- Way, Road, Path, Journey, Manner, Conduct,” n.d. biblehub.com/hebrew/1870.htm.

In the context, this was spoken by God in his presence to Moses on Mt. Sinai as God was giving Moses instructions on the two tablets that are to be contained in the Ark. These instructions were given by God to Moses for him to give to Israel so they would know God and what he asks of them and why—for their good.

B. Joshua 22:5

Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

In the context, these verses were spoken by Joshua to Israel to remind them of the instruction that God spoke to Moses and to remind them of who God is, who they are, and what God expects of them. God is good.

How would you explain the truths from the above passages to another person?

God is holy and just. God made humans as embodied souls capable of knowing him and understanding what he expects of us. God give us his commandments to follow his ways because he love us and he wants what is best for us. God's way is the best path for life.

What issue in your culture or in your own circumstances do these truths address? Explain.

Answers will vary but may include how God's love for me (for my community) compels me (us) to walk in his ways, keep his commandments, to cling to him, and to serve him with all of my heart and soul because of love. We can trust God to show us the good way to go.

4. **Application:** Look up John 14:6. Based on the truths you have learned about living in the way of the Lord, answer the questions applying John 14:6.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

How could you apply the truths you have learned in these passages?

Jesus is God—I AM. Jesus is *derek*—the way and the path for our lives to follow him. Jesus is Truth to answer all of life's questions. Through Jesus, I can have goodness in life now and an eternal relationship with the Triune God.

What issue in your culture or in your own circumstances do these truths address?

Jesus demonstrated humility and patience as he yielded his will to the Father's will for his life. I can ask the Lord to help me to be humble, patient, and yielded to God's will for my life. I can follow Jesus' example and trust that God's purposes will be accomplished.

5. **Conclusion:** Why is it good to think about how the Scripture applies to your life? To your culture? Answers will vary but should include how the Bible is God's Word that guides us in knowing God, who he made us to be, and how we are to live in his ways.

Issue 1:

As a freshman in a prestigious art college, Jordan realized there were few, if any, other Christians among students or professors. Jordan planned to earn a graphic design degree and was paying college tuition by selling a weekly comic strip she drew for a local newspaper back home. Her comic strips were gaining popularity and had been picked up for publication by online media outlets. Jordan wondered how she would pursue her education and provide for her expenses without compromising her faith in Christ. What is her best approach?

Possible answers may include a combination of short- and long-term goals. In the short term, Jordan continues her education and seeks out a local church to join a Christian community. In the long term, Jordan could consider the growing interest in her comic strip an opportunity to express her faith, using its characters, themes, and topics to communicate biblical truths. For more information on such an example, see “How Johnny Hart Taught Millions About Easter in the Sunday Funny Papers,” at breakpoint.org.

Issue 2:

Marcus lived in the small town of Chapman, where he and his parents worked at the town’s foremost employer, a potato processing plant. But two years ago, the plant closed, leaving Marcus, his parents, and 375 other plant employees in the town without jobs. Many of these newly laid-off employees were like his parents, near retirement age. Marcus knew he could move elsewhere to find a new job, but decided to stay, realizing many people in this town now had critical needs. What is Marcus’s best approach?

Possible answers may include that Marcus’s best approach is primarily a short-term solution to address the immediate needs of families without work and those with critical needs. Marcus could reach out to an established, reputable ministry with a biblical worldview located in a nearby, larger city that has the tools and experience to help him implement the best short-term solutions for families in his small town. For more information on such an example, see [Our Calling.org](http://OurCalling.org).

Issue 3:

As recent seminary graduates, Jason and Sarah rented a small suburban apartment near a large city. While looking for jobs, they soon discovered most of their neighbors were refugees who had recently fled their home country due to war. Their neighbor’s issues and needs included trauma, hunger, unemployment, a lack of skills, language barriers, and illiteracy, to name a few. Most of the refugees held to a primitive religion practiced in their homeland, which gripped many in fear and uncertainty. What will be Jason and Sarah’s best approach?

Possible answers may include a long-term plan to address what appears to be a long-term situation. Jason and Sarah have a heart for missions, along with the skills and training to establish a faith-based ministry in this community to address needs on multiple fronts. While this is a long-term plan that may have some short-term results, it will likely take years to establish. For more information on such an example, see [For the Nations](http://FortheNations.org) refugee outreach ministry at ftnro.org.

Print one **TR 2.A Sabrina's Story** for each pair of students. Read the objective to the class. Complete the activity.

Objective: Students will be able to analyze and respond to a friend's narrative describing a recent culture change.

Preparation:

- Materials needed: TR 2.A and pencils
- Time required: 40–45 minutes

Procedure:

1. Remind students that part of preparing to engage with culture includes reflecting on their own cultural experiences and encouraging others to reflect on theirs. Organize students into pairs and distribute a copy of TR 2.A Sabrina's Story to each pair.
2. Have pairs read the narrative as if it were a letter from a good friend. Then, have students work together to answer the following questions in the student manual:
 - What was Sabrina's reason for writing the letter?
 - What are some of the good aspects she experienced in her new culture?
 - What are some aspects that seemed different to her?
 - What metabeliefs and practices did Sabrina encounter in her new culture?
 - What are some specific examples of new beliefs she has discovered? **Answers will vary.**
3. Remind students that even as they live within a particular cultural setting, they may have already experienced—or will experience—cultural change. Drawing on what they learned in Chapter 2, have them reflect on their own experiences or respond to Sabrina's Story with fresh insights. Individually, have students decide on a method of written response and write a response of 500–600 words. Students can choose to:
 - a. Respond to Sabrina's letter with observations and questions as if they were responding to a friend's letter.
 - b. Write an original letter or narrative that relays their reflections on a cultural change they experienced, such as a move to a new town.

Dear friend,

Since moving from the Washington, DC area to a small town in Argentina two years ago, I've experienced notable differences between the two countries. Some of these things result from cultural differences, while others result from economic hardship that leads to stronger stewardship.

In the US, convenience is everywhere. This makes it easy to purchase or replace things when needed. In Argentina, there aren't as many options; it takes longer to get things, if they can be gotten at all. Because of the economy, people tend to fix things before buying new ones. For informal social gatherings, guests bring their own dishes instead of using disposables. This reduces the burden of hosting and helps if the host doesn't have enough dishes. Since the weather is fairly mild, many Argentínians line-dry laundry. While this is also done in the US, many families have the convenience of dryers. Soda and beer bottles are reusable in Argentina whereas they are often recycled in the US.

The biggest difference by far is American individualism versus Argentinian collectivism. For instance, families in the US generally only gather for holidays and birthdays. In Argentina, families gather for a long lunch and hang out every Sunday. Friends typically get together at least twice a week, and some every day. Every Saturday we have a large *asado* (BBQ) with all our friends. This leads to multigenerational friendships since all our kids play together (and the grandparents and great-grandparents are also friends, though this may be more of a small-town thing). There are always spontaneous gatherings, and it's not uncommon to drop by people's houses unannounced (they know you're home if your front window shade is open). In the small rural areas, people love to drive around the town just to see what everyone else is up to. For better or worse, everyone knows everyone else's business, though they are supportive and try to help whenever they can.

In the smaller towns, there is wonderful support for building community much like small towns in the US. While there are government-run organizations and clubs, most are run by volunteers through nonprofits. Sports clubs are a popular choice. Our town is served by two primary sports clubs that contribute significantly through adult and children's classes, camps, well-maintained facilities, and a variety of events and games. There are also interest clubs, like our aviation club with two tiny prop planes (you could not pay me to go up in one!). If you show interest in something, people are willing to share or teach you. For example, I visited a leatherworking shop, and the owner is giving me free lessons (and he and his wife have unofficially adopted me). It is common for friends to start businesses together, so there's a remarkable amount of entrepreneurship. We always support these new businesses and prefer to buy from them rather than from online retailers or large companies. Even teenagers raise money to send their entire class on a trip together every year.

Generally speaking, culture in the US is achievement oriented, which has probably been a part of the country's success. In the cities however, it seems that many businesses replace relationships.

Here, if your car breaks down, friends and family help. My husband plans people's trips and helps with technology issues. Everyone uses their skills to help each other (this felt like a lot to me at first, but it's a give-and-take. People have dropped everything to help us when we needed it). It's nice to feel the strong social safety net that I didn't have in Washington DC.

Meals are social gatherings and take much longer than they did in DC. We start with *picada*, which is like charcuterie. Then there's barbecue and dessert after (with Coke and *fernet*, a cultural beverage made from herbs for digestion). These gatherings usually start at 9 pm and end as late as 3 am on average. Schools let out for families to eat lunch together. Then there's *siesta*, where everything in the town closes until 4 or 5 pm. Many people have *merienda*, a light snack at 5 pm. Dinner is always later than in the US. I typically ate meals at 6 pm, but here, 9 pm is early. Many restaurants don't open until then. During group meals, men usually sit at one end of the table and women at the other. I was used to couples sitting together and the genders intermixing. While uncomfortable at first, it feels normal now and is surprisingly helpful. This way, the women can have girl talk, and the men can have the male equivalent, though cross-table discussions are still common, and both genders take care of the children.

Even though Argentinians get up early (the work day often starts at 8am), nightlife is a big part of the culture. Since *asados* don't end until 1 to 3 am, the clubs here don't open until 1 am, and sometimes people don't show up until 3 am and dance until 6 am. When friends gather, they almost always share a traditional herb drink called *mate*. It's kind of like tea, but as an American, it's uncomfortable how they pass it around and have everyone drink from the same straw.

Argentinians always want to be outside. Unless it's raining, everyone is outside when they're free. People sit in front of their houses and shops to socialize. Even when inside, they open windows. Everyone hangs out in parks and plazas (there's a small plaza in every neighborhood and larger ones in more commercial areas). There aren't usually subdivisions here. Housing and businesses are all intermixed. People live, work, walk, eat, study, socialize, bike, and ride horses around every area.

There's a greater focus on relationships in Argentina and a relaxed pace of life compared to American efficiency. People take the time to stop and greet each other. For example, when I went to the immigration office in Córdoba city, every employee who came in in the morning stopped to have a short conversation and give *besos* (a standard greeting of kisses representing warmth and familiarity) to the woman helping me. People in rural towns are very patient, unlike what I experienced in the DC culture. For example, if you don't drive the moment the light turns green, people will honk. Here, minor inconveniences don't make people angry. Even in Buenos Aires, before I spoke much Spanish, the coffee shop barista was super patient and helped me pick what to order.

Of course, there are other minor differences, like fashion, but the last big difference I'll mention is about communication. Argentinians are very passionate and expressive. Like Italians, they are known for talking with their hands. They can get loud in group settings, and what Americans may view as interrupting is often considered just participating. Argentinians can be a bit more informal and love using nicknames. When greeting people, Argentinians always give *besos* on one cheek.

Sabrina's Story

The only exception is that when men meet for the first time, they shake hands like in the US. Argentinians use a lot of endearments with everyone, and when I was admitted to the hospital in a nearby large town, the older doctor kissed me on the top of the head before sending me to bed. As an American, it's both strange and nice how so many people treat you like family.

I love and appreciate both countries and cultures, though I experience a mix of culture shock and relief upon returning to the other. I only get homesick for Argentina, but the US feels more natural.

Have you had experiences with another culture too? I'd love to hear about it!

Your friend,
Sabrina

Chapter 2 Study Guide

1. From a biblical worldview perspective, what is the meaning of *culture*?

2. In what ways are Christians to be like cultural anthropologists?

3. In what ways do our daily decisions reflect and shape culture?

4. When considering cultural transformation, what are the primary approaches for a Christian to consider?

5. What is the correlation between beliefs and a society's metabeliefs and practices? How do these reflect a culture's perspective on God?

6. What is the relationship between a practice and an *ethos* in culture?

7. What are considered examples of a culture's artifacts? How do cultural artifacts tell the story of cultural changes?

8. In what ways do institutions contribute to cultural development and change?

9. Compare and contrast the *Christ against culture* view with the *Christ and culture in paradox* view.

10. Compare and contrast the *Christ of culture* view with the *Christ above culture* view.

11. In what ways is the *Christ the transformer of culture* view more realistic and effective for Christians who seek to grow as Christ's disciples through cultural engagement?

12. How does the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13) help us to engage with culture and seek cultural transformation?

13. In what ways does culture subtly but powerfully influence people to pursue life apart from God?

14. What are the patterns in the Christian life that offer a path toward personal transformation in Christ?

15. What is secularization, and what are the outcomes for culture?

16. What is the significance of Deuteronomy 10:12–13? What important questions does this passage answer for anyone, but especially for a Christian who desires to be a cultural transformer?

17. How does an understanding of the Hebrew term *derek* change one's approach to personal and cultural transformation?

18. What does it mean for a Christian to increase their cultural awareness?

19. With a raised awareness of your own cultural experiences, in what ways can you grow as a cultural transformer to promote God's mission?

20. Read and study the key terms, verses, works, and names listed in the student manual.

1. From a biblical worldview perspective, what is the meaning of *culture*? [2.1]

The word *culture* originates from the word *agriculture*, which means to care for and cultivate the land. This reflects God's design from the beginning of creation for humans to care for creation and all that is in it. Culture is everything we voluntarily do to create the world around us. Culture reflects ideas, beliefs, and values; cultural changes reflect what people celebrate and what they ignore. God designed culture to reflect his goodness and beauty, promoting human flourishing. Culture exhibits what we do to make life meaningful.

2. In what ways are Christians to be like cultural anthropologists? [2.1]

Cultural anthropologists study the cultural details of societies, including social institutions, language, law, politics, religion, art, and technology. Christians are to be like cultural anthropologists who:

- seek a deeper understanding of people to care and serve as part of God's mission.
- observe the beliefs, values, and habits that shape culture.
- discover ways to bring God's goodness, known as being *salt*, and to reflect God's character and light through celebrating beauty in culture.

3. In what ways do our daily decisions reflect and shape culture? [2.2]

Everyone has deeply held beliefs and values that shape their words and actions. The choices a person makes about what they say, do, and how they spend their time and money are daily decisions that, over time, reflect the influence of culture. Culture, in turn, is shaped by repeated patterns in our lives as we live out our beliefs and values in relationships, daily decisions, and our responses to cultural challenges.

4. When considering cultural transformation, what are the primary approaches for a Christian to consider? [2.3]

Christians are to engage with culture with the purpose of transformation and not retreat from culture. Christians should consider how culture develops over time, while recognizing that approaches to cultural change can be categorized in several ways:

- short-term solutions that address immediate needs.
- long-term plans that accomplish goals for change over years, and possibly generations.
- a combination of both short-term solutions and long-term plans to address a broad area of changes needed in the culture.

5. What is the correlation between beliefs and a society's metabeliefs and practices? How do these reflect a culture's perspective on God? [2.5]

Beliefs are ideas that an individual or group holds as common understandings or convictions, such as beliefs about God. Beliefs inform the metabeliefs, which are the intuitive sense of being, purpose, and posture toward other people and creation. A society reflects its general beliefs about God through metabeliefs, which are communicated through what is accepted and what is ignored. Culture can accept that God exists or ignore God with a secularized perspective.

6. What is the relationship between a practice and an *ethos* in culture? [2.4]

A practice is any traditional activity or observance through which people express their cultural beliefs and values, such as holidays, weddings, and funerals. It can also be celebrations like birthdays and graduations, as well as the recognition of historical events, such as fireworks on July 4th. Practices can be as simple as the regular routines established at home, church, school, or in the workplace. An ethos is the mood or style of a people group that shapes cultural distinctives and is often evident in and during cultural practices.

7. What are considered examples of a culture's artifacts? How do cultural artifacts tell the story of cultural changes? [2.5]

Cultural artifacts are any man-made things, both tangible (such as works of art or technology) and intangible (such as literary forms or philosophical ideas). Cultural artifacts include historical sites, native tools, structures, clothing, and art. Artifacts such as computers, laptops, smartphones, and business or shopping centers reflect cultural changes.

8. In what ways do institutions contribute to cultural development and change? [2.5]

Institutions are organizations of cultural significance that preserve or promote cultural features, such as schools, churches, athletic leagues, and social clubs. The family, the home, and aspects of government are also institutions. Media and social media are also institutions that can change culture through teaching, sharing, and shaping ideas, beliefs, and values.

9. Compare and contrast the *Christ against culture* view with the *Christ and culture in paradox* view. [2.6]

In *Christ against culture*, Christians:

- isolate from culture in separate institutions.
- remain loyal to Christ over culture.
- have difficulty understanding the people we are called to serve.

In *Christ and culture in paradox*, Christians:

- recognize the need for Christ's redemptive work in fallen humanity, broken due to sin.
- participate in culture, realistic about challenges, but uncertain about cultural change.
- become discouraged when change seems unlikely without hope until Christ returns.

10. Compare and contrast the *Christ of culture* view with the *Christ above culture* view. [2.6]

In *Christ of culture*, Christians:

- Identify Christ with the highest moral ideas, like justice, reason, and creativity.
- value God's common grace for humanity and goodness shown through creation.
- risk uncritical acceptance of cultural values that can replace biblical truth.

In *Christ above culture*, Christians:

- connect their faith with cultural participation, holding Christ as ultimate authority.
- take sin seriously to the point of legalism, which comes across as judgmental in culture.
- underestimate the influence of cultural shifts, vulnerable to yielding to culture's poor decisions.

11. In what ways is the *Christ the transformer of culture* view more realistic and effective for Christians who seek to grow as Christ's disciples through cultural engagement? [2.6]

- Christians view culture as God's good design in creation and as his call for us to engage culture as stewards.
- Christians base cultural transformation on the gospel: sharing the reality of humanity's sin problem and the healing available to all through Christ's redemptive work.
- Christians approach culture as part of the biblical metanarrative: Creation–Fall–Redemption–Restoration, which prepares people for cultural transformation.
- Christians respond to people as God's image-bearers, reflecting God's love with humility, compassion for the lost and hurting, and exemplifying biblical virtues.

12. How does the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13) help us to engage with culture and seek cultural transformation? [2.6]

Jesus models how praying for ourselves and others begins with praise for our Heavenly Father, who is holy and in charge of all creation. When we pray, we seek his good plan and will for ourselves and all of humanity; we look toward Christ's return and his kingdom. We seek God's provision. We ask God's forgiveness for our sins, thanking him that he sent his Son, Jesus, to redeem and restore us. We ask for his help to forgive others who sin against us. We engage culture seeking his protection and power provided by his Holy Spirit.

13. In what ways does culture subtly but powerfully influence people to pursue life apart from God? [2.7]

Culture influences people through shared experiences and relationships that appeal to human desires. Culture also powerfully influences people's ideas through advertising, social media, entertainment, technology, and career and educational goals.

14. What are the patterns in the Christian life that offer a path toward personal transformation in Christ? [2.7]

Answers will vary, but should include:

- a. A personal relationship with the Triune God through salvation found through trusting in Christ alone for the forgiveness of one's sins.
- b. Discipleship that leads us away from anxiety and toward Christ's teachings.
- c. A habit of abiding in Christ through dependence on the Holy Spirit to guide us in wise daily decisions.
- d. Personal habits of Bible reading, prayer, worship, and fellowship with other Christians.

15. What is secularization, and what are the outcomes for culture? [2.8]

Secularization is the movement of culture away from religious beliefs, identification, and values. Secularization has occurred when people no longer see faith-based beliefs and practices as relevant or significant in culture.

16. What is the significance of Deuteronomy 10:12–13? What important questions does this passage answer for anyone, but especially for a Christian who desires to be a cultural transformer? [2.9]
Although Deuteronomy 10:12 was written to Israel, these are God’s words, spoken to Moses, that can answer important questions for all people. These biblical truths equip Christians to live on a faithful path in life and to be cultural transformers:
Who is God? He is the LORD, the ultimate reality over all of life.
What does God ask of us? We are asked to fear the Lord our God, to walk in obedience to him, to love and serve the LORD.
How are we to love God? We are to love God with all of our heart, soul, and actions to obey God’s commands.
Why does God ask these things of us? God wants us to experience his goodness.
17. How does an understanding of the Hebrew term *derek* change one’s approach to personal and cultural transformation? [2.9]
Derek describes a path, the way, or one’s direction in life. As Christians, we have biblical truth and the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives to guide us in a faithful pattern of living that follows Christ and to walk in ways that reflect his character. We abide in Christ through daily Bible reading, prayer, worship, teaching, and fellowship with Christians. As we engage in culture, we exemplify God’s light and love, which promotes cultural transformation and healing.
18. What does it mean for a Christian to increase their cultural awareness? [2.10]
Answers will vary, but should include how a Christian can adopt a posture of presence and involvement in culture, seeking to understand the nature and needs of people around them, offering to serve when possible, and being willing to love and to listen to others in their life issues.
19. With a raised awareness of your own cultural experiences, in what ways can you grow as a cultural transformer to promote God’s mission? [2.10]
Exemplifying godly character promotes God’s mission and cultural transformation. Godly character reflects honesty, humility, and servant-hearted love. We promote God’s goodness and truth in relationships. Through faithful living, we treat others respectfully, work diligently, address conflict well, and pursue justice biblically. While a Christian’s approach in culture may appear countercultural, the outcomes produce restoration and healing. Christians seek wisdom and discernment in engaging culture, but we are not to be timid; the Holy Spirit equips us with power, love, and a sound mind.
20. Read and study the key terms, verses, works, and names listed in the student manual.

Name _____

_____/79 = _____ %

Matching [Each correct answer is worth 1 point.]*Match each item to the correct answer.*

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. Deuteronomy 10:12 | A. the intuitive sense of being, purpose, and posture toward other people and creation |
| ___ 2. Jeremiah 29:7 | B. says that God made all people from every nation to live in a certain time and location |
| ___ 3. Matthew 6:9–13 | C. any man-made things, both tangible, such as works of art or technology, and intangible, such as literary forms or philosophical ideas |
| ___ 4. Acts 17:26 | D. any idea that a person or group holds as common understanding or convictions |
| ___ 5. Galatians 6:9 | E. Jesus taught us this prayer as an example of seeking God for the transformation of ourselves, others, and the world around us. |
| ___ 6. <i>derek</i> | F. “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” |
| ___ 7. metabeliefs | G. “And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.” |
| ___ 8. artifacts | H. the moods or styles of a particular people group that form cultural distinctives |
| ___ 9. <i>ethos</i> | I. “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” |
| ___ 10. belief | J. the Hebrew word which means <i>the way</i> to describe the overall direction of a person’s life |

Multiple Choice [Each correct answer is worth 1 point.]*Circle the best answer(s) from the choices below.*

11. Culture is best described as . . .
- the activities in a particular civilization.
 - the way of life for a group of people.
 - human beings who popularized certain beliefs that became a religion.
 - the methods and styles of communication.
 - the result of extensive research data and expert opinions.

12. A society reflects its beliefs about God primarily through which of the following aspects of culture?
 - a. through the society's metabeliefs
 - b. through influential environmental leaders in society
 - c. through shared cultural practices such as weddings and funerals
 - d. through cultural anthropologists
 - e. through the support of institutions where beliefs are taught and practiced

13. Of the following, who changed culture by taking a stand in the abolition of slavery in England?
 - a. H. Richard Niebuhr
 - b. T. S. Eliot
 - c. William Wilberforce
 - d. Kevin Vanhoozer
 - e. Samuel Wilberforce

14. What applications can be made from Bible verses that use the Hebrew word *derek*?
 - a. God's way is for us to live abiding in Christ, obey and love him, and serve others with all of our heart and all of our soul.
 - b. Life provides a variety of paths to follow, from which one can choose.
 - c. A life of obedience to God begins with salvation and continues as a lifelong commitment to follow him—not just in momentary decisions, but through a consistent, godly path.
 - d. There is a right way and a wrong way to live.
 - e. God's people were required to gather weekly at the temple to learn how to live.

15. Which of the following is considered a cultural artifact?
 - a. an outdoor museum of restored native structures
 - b. works of art
 - c. an annual celebration celebrating a community's history through food and dance
 - d. the philosophical ideas that inspired the founding of a new business school focused on technology and communications
 - e. all of the above

16. Which of the following are examples of institutions that promote a thriving culture?
 - a. local governments that discourage new businesses and resist growth
 - b. mission-minded churches and organizations
 - c. healthy schools supported by community leaders
 - d. limited access to, or support for, recreation centers, athletic leagues, and facilities that promote community well-being
 - e. people actively promoting growth through media with integrity, excellence, and commitment to truth

17. Which of the following represents recent artifacts that show changes in our habits affect culture?
 - a. school and work completed on a laptop personal computers
 - b. food sourced from crops grown on farms
 - c. connecting with friends on social media
 - d. selecting clothing that protect us in various weather conditions
 - e. locating directions using a smartphone

18. Modern culture subtly but powerfully shapes people with promises of the “good life” apart from God in which of the following ways?
 - a. isolates groups to focus specifically on the needs of their people
 - b. practices that are shared and appeal to human desires
 - c. advertising, social media, and career achievements
 - d. beliefs and ideas that are privately held
 - e. educational goals, entertainment, and technology

19. Christians can approach cultural transformation in which of the following ways?
 - a. forming a committee to evaluate data and conduct extensive surveys
 - b. discerning short-term solutions that can address immediate needs
 - c. making some phone calls to meet with influential people
 - d. realizing that long term plans accomplish cultural change over years, possibly generations
 - e. developing a combination of both short- and long-term solutions to address needs and promote cultural changes

True or False [Each question is worth 1 point.]

Indicate if each statement is true or false. If the statement is false, change the underlined word(s) to make it true.

___ 30. The biblical worldview does not encourage Christians to retreat from culture; it encourages us to engage in culture’s transformation. _____

___ 31. Culture consists of everything that humans do involuntarily to make life meaningful. _____

___ 32. An example of a cultural practice is an annual Fourth of July community picnic and fireworks show. _____

___ 33. Dr. Ida Scudder’s medical mission in India brought improved medical care for women and children through both short-term and government-led cultural changes. _____

Matching [Each correct answer is worth 1 point.]

Match each item with one of corresponding view of Christ in Culture from H. Richard Niebuhr's book, Christ and Culture. Some views will be used more than once.

- A. Christ against culture
- B. Christ of culture
- C. Christ above culture
- D. Christ and culture in paradox
- E. Christ, the transformer of culture

In this view, Christians . . .

- 20. value Christian morals and virtues as much as, or even above, biblical teaching. ____
- 21. focus on Christ's redemptive work and hope to restore culture to what is good, right, and beautiful. ____
- 22. understand the tension of faithful living in a broken culture, which means they believe culture may not experience healing and restoration until Christ returns. ____
- 23. participate in culture with legalism or to impose their views on the vulnerable. ____
- 24. risk becoming isolated and finding difficulty in understanding the people Christians are called to love. ____
- 25. are conversionists who acknowledge humanity's sin and the real hope we have in Christ, while approaching cultural change with humility and patience. ____
- 26. maintain loyalty to Christ by building separate schools, businesses, networks, and social groups. ____
- 27. focus on reason, justice, and moral ideals of a particular culture, the same as or even above biblical teaching. ____
- 28. participate in culture with uncertainty of good outcomes, which results in resignation until Christ returns. ____
- 29. engage with culture while maintaining a distinctly Christian morality but may underestimate culture's influence on their own lives. ____

Fill-in-the-blank [Each question is worth 4 points.]

Fill in the missing word(s) to complete each statement.

- 34. In some ways, Christians are to be _____ to better understand beliefs and values, to gain a deeper understanding of people we serve on God's mission, and to celebrate the goodness and beauty in artifacts and institutions.

35. Culture is changed by what people _____ and what they _____.
36. Culture develops over a _____ period of time but is shaped by the patterns, practices, and habits, reflected in our _____ decisions.

Short Answer [Each question is worth 3 points.]

Answer the following questions using one or two complete sentences.

37. What is the main idea at the core of the Hebrew word *derek*?

38. Using your own words, what is culture?

39. In what ways is secularization evident in culture?

Essay [Each question is worth 5 points.]

Answer the following questions with at least one paragraph.

40. Why would **Christ, the transformer of culture** approach be preferred over other Christian approaches to culture? What steps can Christians today take to apply this view toward personal transformation in their own life?

41. In your own words, describe what it looks like for a Christian to engage with culture in a way that reflects godly character.

Matching [Each correct answer is worth 1 point.]

Match each item to the correct answer.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <u>F</u> 1. Deuteronomy 10:12 [2.9] | A. the intuitive sense of being, purpose, and posture toward other people and creation |
| <u>I</u> 2. Jeremiah 29:7 [2.1] | B. says that God made all people from every nation to live in a certain time and location |
| <u>E</u> 3. Matthew 6:9–13 [2.6] | C. any man-made things, both tangible, such as works of art or technology, and intangible, such as literary forms or philosophical ideas |
| <u>B</u> 4. Acts 17:26 [2.1] | D. any idea that a person or group holds as common understanding or convictions |
| <u>G</u> 5. Galatians 6:9 [2.3] | E. Jesus taught us this prayer as an example of seeking God for the transformation of ourselves, others, and the world around us. |
| <u>J</u> 6. <i>derek</i> [2.9] | F. “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” |
| <u>A</u> 7. metabeliefs [2.4] | G. “And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.” |
| <u>C</u> 8. artifacts [2.5] | H. the moods or styles of a particular people group that form cultural distinctives |
| <u>H</u> 9. <i>ethos</i> [2.4] | I. “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” |
| <u>D</u> 10. belief [2.4] | J. the Hebrew word which means <i>the way</i> to describe the overall direction of a person’s life |

Multiple Choice [Each correct answer is worth 1 point.]

Circle the best answer(s) from the choices below.

11. Culture is best described as . . .
- a. **the activities in a particular civilization.** [2.1]
 - b. **the way of life for a group of people.** [2.1]
 - c. human beings who popularized certain beliefs that became a religion.
 - d. **the methods and styles of communication.** [2.1]
 - e. the result of extensive research data and expert opinions.

12. A society reflects its beliefs about God primarily through which of the following aspects of culture?
 - a. **through the society's metabeliefs** [2.4]
 - b. through influential environmental leaders in society
 - c. **through shared cultural practices such as weddings and funerals** [2.4]
 - d. through cultural anthropologists
 - e. **through the support of institutions where beliefs are taught and practiced** [2.4]

13. Of the following, who changed culture by taking a stand in the abolition of slavery in England?
 - a. H. Richard Niebuhr
 - b. T. S. Eliot
 - c. **William Wilberforce** [2.2]
 - d. Kevin Vanhoozer
 - e. **Samuel Wilberforce** [2.2]

14. What applications can be made from Bible verses that use the Hebrew word *derek*?
 - a. **God's way is for us to live abiding in Christ, obey and love him, and serve others with all of our heart and all of our soul.** [2.9]
 - b. Life provides a variety of paths to follow, from which one can choose.
 - c. **A life of obedience to God begins with salvation and continues as a lifelong commitment to follow him—not just in momentary decisions, but through a consistent, godly path.** [2.9]
 - d. **There is a right way and a wrong way to live.** [2.9]
 - e. God's people were required to gather weekly at the temple to learn how to live.

15. Which of the following is considered a cultural artifact?
 - a. an outdoor museum of restored native structures
 - b. works of art
 - c. an annual celebration celebrating a community's history through food and dance
 - d. the philosophical ideas that inspired the founding of a new business school focused on technology and communications
 - e. **all of the above** [2.5]

16. Which of the following are examples of institutions that promote a thriving culture?
 - a. local governments that discourage new businesses and resist growth
 - b. **mission-minded churches and organizations** [2.5]
 - c. **healthy schools supported by community leaders** [2.5]
 - d. limited access to, or support for, recreation centers, athletic leagues, and facilities that promote community well-being
 - e. **people actively promoting growth through media with integrity, excellence, and commitment to truth** [2.5]

17. Which of the following represents recent artifacts that show changes in our habits affect culture?
- a. **school and work completed on a laptop personal computers** [2.5]
 - b. food sourced from crops grown on farms
 - c. **connecting with friends on social media** [2.5]
 - d. selecting clothing that protect us in various weather conditions
 - e. **locating directions using a smartphone** [2.5]
18. Modern culture subtly but powerfully shapes people with promises of the “good life” apart from God in which of the following ways?
- a. isolates groups to focus specifically on the needs of their people
 - b. **practices that are shared and appeal to human desires** [2.7]
 - c. **advertising, social media, and career achievements** [2.7]
 - d. beliefs and ideas that are privately held
 - e. **educational goals, entertainment, and technology** [2.7]
19. Christians can approach cultural transformation in which of the following ways?
- a. forming a committee to evaluate data and conduct extensive surveys
 - b. **discerning short-term solutions that can address immediate needs** [2.3]
 - c. making some phone calls to meet with influential people
 - d. **realizing that long term plans accomplish cultural change over years, possibly generations** [2.3]
 - e. **developing a combination of both short- and long-term solutions to address needs and promote cultural changes** [2.3]

True or False [Each question is worth 1 point.]

Indicate if each statement is true or false. If the statement is false, change the underlined word(s) to make it true.

- T 30. The biblical worldview does not encourage Christians to retreat from culture; it encourages us to engage in culture’s transformation. _____ [2.3]
- F 31. Culture consists of everything that humans do involuntarily to make life meaningful. _____ **voluntarily** [2.1]
- T 32. An example of a cultural practice is an annual Fourth of July community picnic and fireworks show. _____ [2.4]
- F 33. Dr. Ida Scudder’s medical mission in India brought improved medical care for women and children through both short-term and government-led cultural changes. _____ **long-term** [2.3]

Matching [Each correct answer is worth 1 point.]

Match each item with one of corresponding view of Christ in Culture from H. Richard Niebuhr's book, Christ and Culture. Some views will be used more than once. [2.6]

- A. Christ against culture
- B. Christ of culture
- C. Christ above culture
- D. Christ and culture in paradox
- E. Christ, the transformer of culture

In this view, Christians . . .

- 20. value Christian morals and virtues as much as, or even above, biblical teaching. B
- 21. focus on Christ's redemptive work and hope to restore culture to what is good, right, and beautiful. E
- 22. understand the tension of faithful living in a broken culture, which means they believe culture may not experience healing and restoration until Christ returns. D
- 23. participate in culture with legalism or to impose their views on the vulnerable. C
- 24. risk becoming isolated and finding difficulty in understanding the people Christians are called to love. A
- 25. are conversionists who acknowledge humanity's sin and the real hope we have in Christ, while approaching cultural change with humility and patience. E
- 26. maintain loyalty to Christ by building separate schools, businesses, networks, and social groups. A
- 27. focus on reason, justice, and moral ideals of a particular culture, the same as or even above biblical teaching. B
- 28. participate in culture with uncertainty of good outcomes, which results in resignation until Christ returns. D
- 29. engage with culture while maintaining a distinctly Christian morality but may underestimate culture's influence on their own lives. C

Fill-in-the-blank [Each question is worth 4 points.]

Fill in the missing word(s) to complete each statement.

- 34. In some ways, Christians are to be cultural anthropologists to better understand beliefs and values, to gain a deeper understanding of people we serve on God's mission, and to celebrate the goodness and beauty in artifacts and institutions. [2.1]

35. Culture is changed by what people _____ **celebrate** _____ and what they _____ **ignore** _____. [2.1]
36. Culture develops over a _____ **long** _____ period of time but is shaped by the patterns, practices, and habits, reflected in our _____ **daily** _____ decisions. [2.2]

Short Answer [Each question is worth 3 points.]

Answer the following questions using one or two complete sentences.

37. What is the main idea at the core of the Hebrew word *derek*? [2.9]
The word *derek* describes *the way* or path of consistent, faithful living that begins with trusting in Christ and continues by abiding in him through the power of the Holy Spirit, resulting in a fruitful life.
38. Using your own words, what is culture? [2.1]
Answers will vary, but should include that culture surrounds us with ideas and artifacts; that it consists of everything we voluntarily do to create the world we live in; and that it reflects our values and beliefs through the patterns and practices we share.
39. In what ways is secularization evident in culture? [2.8]
Secularization is evident in culture when people rarely mention religion, faith, or church outside the home or church. God, faith, and church are seldom mentioned in ideas or institutions, and secularized practices may often replace faith-based practices.

Essay [Each question is worth 5 points.]

Answer the following questions with at least one paragraph.

40. Why would *Christ, the transformer of culture* approach be preferred over other Christian approaches to culture? What steps can Christians today take to apply this view toward personal transformation in their own life? [2.6–2.7]
This approach begins with a strong view of the goodness of creation but also acknowledges the corruption due to human sinfulness. Therefore, it best fits the biblical sequence of Creation–Fall–Redemption–Restoration. This view also rightly prepares the Christian to view culture as a part of God’s design for our work in this world. We are to compassionately reflect the difficulties of the fallen human nature and the healing that is available to us through Christ. It begins with a personal relationship with Christ through salvation and continues by abiding in him through the power of the Holy Spirit in daily decisions, cultivating a heart that seeks God’s thoughts and desires to reflect biblical virtues. As our lives display his love and faithfulness, we demonstrate that Christian beliefs are relevant to every area of life, leading to personal and cultural transformation.

41. In your own words, describe what it looks like for a Christian to engage with culture in a way that reflects godly character. [2.9–2.10]

Answers will vary, but should include how cultural engagement reflects godly character through presence and involvement that reflect honesty, humility, and servant-hearted love. Christians are to engage in culture to reflect God's goodness, truth, and beauty in relationships. Through faithful living, Christians treat others with respect, work diligently, address conflict well, and pursue justice biblically. While a Christian's approach in culture may appear countercultural, the outcomes are often restoration and healing. Christians are to use wisdom and discernment in engaging culture, but we are not to be timid; the Holy Spirit equips us with power, love, and a sound mind.