

Understanding the Times Series Book IV: Culture Overview

Course Description: *Culture*, the fourth volume in the four-part Understanding the Times series, explores how Christians transform culture by building their lives on a personal relationship with Christ, relying on the Holy Spirit, and embracing the truth of God's Word. This foundation equips believers to advance God's mission for human flourishing.

Culture is understood as a way of life—the patterns of decisions, beliefs, and behaviors that shape individuals and communities over time. As Christians reflect God's values, they promote what is good, right, and beautiful through ideas, beliefs, and practices that reflect the character of Christ. Each chapter presents real-world examples of Christians who have shaped culture, giving students opportunities to analyze lived experiences and apply key insights to their own lives. Daily coursework emphasizes student-led, collaborative learning through the ongoing development of an interactive portfolio in the Student Manual, a required course component.

This course uses the Bible (ESV) and the Student Textbook as primary texts to:

- strengthen students' relationship with the Triune God and develop skill in navigating Scripture as the ultimate source of Truth, guiding all areas of life through the Holy Spirit.
- highlight the gospel's power in cultural transformation as believers bring Christ's message of redemption and restoration into cultural engagement.
- affirm that all people are God's image-bearers, which shapes how we view and engage others in God's mission of human flourishing.

Chapter 1: Introduction

- 1.1 A Good Neighbor
- 1.2 All Choices are Worldview Choices
- 1.3 The Christian Worldview's Focus
- 1.4 When Worldviews Collide
- 1.5 The Christian Cultural Mandate
- 1.6 A History of Positive Change
- 1.7 Cultural Engagement as Worship
- 1.8 Restoring Culture
- 1.9 The Character of Christian Caring
- 1.10 Christian Care in Real Life

Chapter 2: What Is Culture?

- 2.1 Swimming in Culture
- 2.2 How Does Culture Develop?
- 2.3 Faithful Approaches to Culture
- 2.4 God and Culture
- 2.5 How Culture Shapes Our World
- 2.6 Historical Approaches to Christian Culture
- 2.7 Shaped by Culture or Shaped by Christ?
- 2.8 Responding to Cultural Challenges
- 2.9 Lives That Heal Culture
- 2.10 Awareness in Culture Care

Chapter 3: Christianity and Culture: A History

- 3.1 Christianity and Truth in Culture
- 3.2 Human Rights and the *imago Dei*
- 3.3 Christianity and the Abolition of Slavery
- 3.4 Christianity and the Dignity of Women and Children
- 3.5 Christianity and the Development of Education
- 3.6 Christianity and the Development of Modern Medicine
- 3.7 Christianity and the Development of Modern Charity
- 3.8 Christianity and the Foundations of Modern Science
- 3.9 Christianity and Cultural Contributions to the Arts
- 3.10 Continuing the Work of Cultural Faithfulness

Chapter 4: Christianity and Culture: A Plan

- 4.1 Living with Intentionality and Purpose
- 4.2 Seeing Culture Through A Biblical Lens
- 4.3 Understanding Culture: Texts, Patterns, and Trends
- 4.4 The Biblical Metanarrative and Cultural Engagement
- 4.5 A Biblical Plan for Cultural Engagement
- 4.6 Forming Habits of Cultural Engagement
- 4.7 The Gospel Transforms Culture
- 4.8 Communication for Cultural Influence
- 4.9 Personally Engaging Culture
- 4.10 Changing Culture Together

Chapter 5: Culture and Ethics

- 5.1 Culture Needs a Moral Compass
- 5.2 Studying How We Ought to Live
- 5.3 Moral Realism Reflects Reality
- 5.4 Sin as the Root Cause
- 5.5 Grounded in God's Character
- 5.6 Ethical Hierarchies
- 5.7 Engaging Culture with Faithful Presence
- 5.8 Ethics in a Nonbiblical Worldview Culture
- 5.9 Issues of Personhood
- 5.10 Personal Ethics That Promote Flourishing

Chapter 6: Path to Transformation

- 6.1 How One Group of People Can Change the World
- 6.2 Shalom, Sin, and the Four Key Relationships
- 6.3 The Path From Brokenness to Flourishing
- 6.4 God's Path for Cultural Formation
- 6.5 Cities of Men and Cities of God
- 6.6 Barriers to Renewal
- 6.7 Trust and Credibility
- 6.8 Practicing Community Renewal
- 6.9 Competing Visions
- 6.10 A Path Forward

Chapter 7: Human Dignity

- 7.1 The Value of Human Life
- 7.2 The *imago Dei* in Human Life
- 7.3 Competing Views
- 7.4 Abortion and Personhood
- 7.5 Valuing Women and Children
- 7.6 When Human Life Becomes a Question
- 7.7 Devaluing Human Dignity
- 7.8 Defending Human Dignity
- 7.9 God's Heart for the Vulnerable
- 7.10 Humanity, Truth, and Life

Chapter 8: Made for Relationship

- 8.1 The Theology of Relationships: It Begins With God
- 8.2 Friendships, Singleness, Dating, and Marriage
- 8.3 Healthy Marriages, Families, and Culture
- 8.4 The Family: God's Good Design
- 8.5 Four Key Relationships that Shape a Thriving Culture
- 8.6 The Nature of Humanness and Human Emotions
- 8.7 Navigating Conflict in Relationships
- 8.8 Building Trust and Affirming Dignity in Relationships
- 8.9 Defending God's Design for Marriage
- 8.10 The Beauty of Flourishing Relationships

Chapter 9: Sexuality

- 9.1 Why Identity Matters
- 9.2 God's Design for Human Sexuality and Gender
- 9.3 Marriage Between One Man and One Woman
- 9.4 Biblical Truths and Personal Brokenness
- 9.5 Cultural Conflicts With the Biblical Worldview
- 9.6 Outcomes of Current Cultural Trends
- 9.7 Winsome Approaches that Bring Hope and Healing
- 9.8 Engaging in the Battle
- 9.9 Care that Brings Restoration and Redemption
- 9.10 God's Goodness Reflected in Human Identity

Chapter 10: Race

- 10.1 How Does the *imago Dei* Shape Christian Ethics?
- 10.2 Human Unity That Expects Human Differences
- 10.3 The Importance of Understanding Racism
- 10.4 Racism in History
- 10.5 Current Issues in Racism
- 10.6 Examining Critical Race Theory
- 10.7 Responding to Critical Race Theory
- 10.8 Models for Racial Healing
- 10.9 Engaging with Culture to Bring Racial Healing
- 10.10 Christians Bring Care in Healing

Chapter 11: Politics

- 11.1 How Does Politics Influence Culture?
- 11.2 What Is a Biblical Worldview of Politics?
- 11.3 God's Design for Equality, Justice, and Authority
- 11.4 The Role of Sin, Obedience and Decision-Making
- 11.5 What Are Other Worldview Approaches to Politics?
- 11.6 Should Christians Engage in Politics?
- 11.7 What Should Christians Do?
- 11.8 Engaging Cultural Challenges Christians Face in Politics
- 11.9 How Can Politics Help Families and Culture?
- 11.10 Opportunities for Cultural Transformation Through Politics

Chapter 12: Religious Freedom

- 12.1 What is the Meaning of Freedom?
- 12.2 Worldview Questions and Religious Freedom
- 12.3 Protecting Humanity
- 12.4 Persecution: Religious Freedom Under Attack
- 12.5 Causes of Religious Persecution
- 12.6 Biblical Truth, Persecution, and Oppression
- 12.7 The Cost of Persecution
- 12.8 Engaging Culture for Religious Freedom
- 12.9 A Personal Response to Religious Freedom
- 12.10 The Champions for Religious Freedom

Chapter 13: Justice

- 13.1 God's Design for Justice and Human Flourishing
- 13.2 How Does the Bible Approach a Fallen World?
- 13.3 Champions of Biblical Justice
- 13.4 What is the Government's Role in Justice?
- 13.5 Biblical Worldview Approaches to Justice
- 13.6 Nonbiblical Worldview Approaches to Justice
- 13.7 Aspects of Justice
- 13.8 Justice in Communities
- 13.9 Restorative Justice and Reform
- 13.10 Biblical Justice Leads to Cultural Transformation

Chapter 14: The Arts & Entertainment

- 14.1 The History of Art & Entertainment in Culture
- 14.2 The Arts Express Humanity in Culture
- 14.3 The Age of Enlightenment and Culture Today
- 14.4 A Biblical Worldview of Arts & Entertainment
- 14.5 The Arts in Spiritual Formation and Worship
- 14.6 How Do Arts & Entertainment Shape Culture?
- 14.7 How Can Christians Transform the Arts & Entertainment?
- 14.8 Biblical Truth in a Decadent Culture
- 14.9 Personal Engagement with Arts & Entertainment
- 14.10 Wisdom and Discernment Lead to Flourishing

Chapter 15: Technology

- 15.1 Changes in Technology Affect Culture
- 15.2 Worldview Approaches to Technology
- 15.3 The Ups and Downs of Technology
- 15.4 Formulating a Wise Approach to Technology
- 15.5 Engaging the Cultural Challenges in Technology
- 15.6 How Can Christians Engage in Research, AI, and Technology?
- 15.7 A Vision for Positive Uses of Technology
- 15.8 Promoting Biblical Truth in the Future of Technology
- 15.9 Christians Thinking About the Future of Technology
- 15.10 Claiming Technology's Role in Culture for Good

Chapter 16: Responding to Poverty

- 16.1 Poverty in Culture
- 16.2 How God's Image-Bearers View Human Needs
- 16.3 The Causes of Poverty
- 16.4 The Responses to Poverty
- 16.5 A Biblical Framework for Poverty Care
- 16.6 Nonbiblical Approaches to Poverty Care
- 16.7 Moving From Poverty to Flourishing
- 16.8 Stewardship, Community, and Creativity
- 16.9 Engaging Culture to Restore Goodness and Beauty
- 16.10 Small Steps Toward Big Changes

Chapter 17: Creation Care

- 17.1 Truth That Saves Lives
- 17.2 A Biblical Worldview of Creation Care
- 17.3 Approaches to Environmental Care
- 17.4 A Plan for Stewardship
- 17.5 Healthy Habits that Change Culture
- 17.6 Innovative Plans in Creation Care
- 17.7 The Environment and the Economy
- 17.8 Engaging the Environmental Challenges in Culture
- 17.9 Outcomes for Human Flourishing
- 17.10 Creation Care that Leads to Good and Beauty

Chapter 18: Conclusion

- 18.1 A Biblical Worldview for Human Flourishing
- 18.2 The Patterns of Cultural Engagement
- 18.3 Engaging Culture for Lasting Transformation
- 18.4 Evaluating Cultural Transformation
- 18.5 A Testimony of Cultural Transformation

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