

Christ and Culture

Richard Niebuhr's classic *Christ and Culture* describes five ways Christians relate to society:

1. "Christ against culture" (no engagement with each other)
2. "Christ of culture" (the church adopts what the culture embraces)
3. "Christ above culture" (following Jesus on Sunday and cultural norms on Monday)
4. "Christ and culture in paradox" (using culture to advance the church)
5. "Christ transforming culture" (leading culture to adopt holistic biblical values).

Except for the third option, which seems clearly to be hypocritical, there are times when each of the others is appropriate. With pornography, substance abuse, and other sinful behavior, we should choose "Christ against culture." With appropriate technology, we should choose "Christ of culture." With popular but not sinful media, we should choose "Christ and culture in paradox." And at all times we should embrace "Christ transforming culture."

So, where do we draw the line? When do we engage culture, and when do we endorse it? We should always remember that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15), but he never became one (Hebrews 4:15). How do we follow His example today? How do we make Christ the central character in cultural transformation?

First, we intercede for our city, our culture and for our world. Second, we become "salt and light" manifesting the faithful presence of Christ (Matthew 5:13-14), trusting Him to do through us what we cannot do alone.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, NIV translation.

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"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:13-16

This month AP4C is highlighting the ***Christ, Culture and the City***. It is our intention for believers from all ethnic, socio-economic and denominational backgrounds to unite in prayer and use this guide as a catalyst for our on-going prayer and the advancement of Christ's Kingdom.

Let these Scriptures and your time with God renew your heart for our Metroplex. Please prepare your heart before you begin to pray through the AP4C categories.

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SALVATION

“Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

Acts 4:11-12

- Pray that our city will recognize its need for a Savior.
- Pray that the body of Christ will become bold in sharing the Gospel without compromise.
- Pray for a great outpouring of God’s Spirit (Isaiah 60:1-2) that would transform Greater Dallas.
- Continue to pray for the salvation of individuals within your sphere of influence.

DISCIPLESHIP

“When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among My people, if My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:13-14

- Praise God for groups around Dallas who are changing the culture by living for Christ in a counter-cultural way.
- Pray that believers will humble themselves before the Lord. Transformation in our culture starts with us. We need to admit our need of God (James 4:10).
- Pray for God to call many more people to personal and community intercession for our city.
- Pray that the body of Christ will seek God’s face. To seek God’s “face” is to seek a closer relationship with him than you have right now; to seek Him with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13).
- Pray for God to heal our land, beginning in Dallas (Psalm 46).

COMMUNITY

“I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are one— I in them and You in Me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.” John 17:22-23

- Pray for unity in the body of Christ. It is through this unity that our culture will see that God sent His Son into the world (John 3:16).
- Pray that believers will live by the Spirit, and that the world will take notice (Galatians 5:22-23).
- Pray for Jesus to be exalted in our city, that He would be the center of the cultural conversation (John 12:32).
- Pray for believers to view work as a mission field, not separating secular and spiritual.

TRANSFORMATION

“So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

- Praise God for the spiritual awakening occurring around the world, as millions of people are being transformed by His saving love.
- Pray that, as we serve our city and engage our culture, God’s unconditional love will transform lives for His glory.
- Pray that people of our city would see Christ as their example and follow obediently (Philippians 2).