

“Clash of Cultures”

Clash #2- Kingdoms in Conflict

INTRODUCTION

The church has always faced the tension of being “in the world but not of the world,” balancing separation that preserves holiness with contact that generates influence. Certainly the Christian in modern times is likely to experience a clash of cultures. This study examines the way God desires Christians to approach living amongst a non-Christian culture so that we avoid compromising our faith, while drawing others toward a relationship with Christ.

Ice Breaker (Optional):

What foreign cultures are you familiar with?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

The Nature of “culture”

The concept of “culture” involves a group’s values and their expression of those values in their practices (e.g. customs and rituals). The “Christian culture” should reflect our value of God and His Word, and as such, will differ from cultures that don’t share that value. Within the spectrum of Christianity we will find various expressions of faith, be that in style of worship, manner of dress, or preferred Bible translation, but nonetheless all can be identified as part of the Christian culture.

Be separate but not isolated

Q1. Read 2Corinthians 6:14 to 7:1; John 17:14-15; Matthew 5:13-16

As we search the whole counsel of God we may find apparent contradictions. The Bible (2 Corinthians 6:17) tells us to come out from them (unbelievers) and be separate, while in John 17:15 Jesus’ prayer to the Father is that He not take us out of the world. From what does 2 Corinthians 7:1 call us to be purified? What are some specific “contaminants” that are prominent in the culture we live amongst? What is forfeit by attempting to remove ourselves altogether from the culture of unbelievers?

Be inclusive but not compromising

Q2. Read Leviticus 19:34; Philipians 2:15

“Reaching the lost” is done by you and I in the everyday world around us. While we need to be diligent about preserving our own holiness, we must also recognize the need to reach those who do not yet know

God. What makes it difficult to be light in the world and still keep yourself separate from influences that would compromise your faith? Who would you identify as an “alien” among you and how can you “love them as yourself?” (see Leviticus 19:34) Is there some way your group can participate together in reaching out to the “alien” in love?

Be relevant but not conformed

Q3. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 1 Corinthians 10:27-33

Paul gave us an example of a relevant life without compromise. In 1 Corinthians 9:23 what does he reveal as his motivation for the various ways he presents himself to those of different cultures? In 1 Corinthians 10:27-33 Paul addresses the practice of eating meat sacrificed to idols. What are some ways we may be able to apply the same principles in our own lives? Have you ever found yourself in a situation where your choices were determined by how you would be judged by others? In what ways does your group help you to be conformed to Christ and not the world?

WRAP-UP

While it is true that we are citizens of heaven, we are still resident on the earth, and as we live in a culture that doesn’t share our values, we are challenged to influence others without compromising our faith. This means we will be separate with respect to things that contaminate our bodies or spirits, while remaining in relationships that allow us to be salt and light in the world. God also commands us to love the aliens and welcome the unbelievers in such a way that they can observe Christ in and through us and be drawn to a relationship with Him. And finally, like Paul, we should remain relevant to the extent that we can, while maintaining a clear conscience, with the motivation that others might be saved.

Memory Verse

...I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.
1 Corinthians 9:22b ESV

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs:

Challenge: Read Daniel chapters 1, 3 and 6 looking for the ways Daniel and his friends navigated a godly life in a foreign culture.

