

Calvary Church: Coordinated Curriculum 2007-2008

Romans: The Transforming Power of the Righteousness of God



Think about it



Talk about it

Something to think about and talk about

Engaging Culture part 1

How should we relate to our culture?

This is a subject that comes up regularly in the church as well as in conversations with parents.

Since our culture does not espouse the same values we do, and in many instances is opposed to our values, how should we relate? What should we allow our children to be involved in?

When we think about this subject it is not just about moral values, but philosophical or thought processes as well. And it appears to me that there are at least 5 reactions or responses:

1. Ignore—it's just a fad, it will go away
2. Fight—it's evil, let's try to push back the philosophical time clock
3. Acquiesce—it's the way it is, let's make the best of it
4. Accept—it's the way it should be
5. Engage—it's here, let's interact, learn and make a difference

Put another way:

I think some people see culture as *intimidating* and so they seek *isolation*. They fear the affects of culture on themselves and their children, so they seek to create an isolated environment to protect their children. And while there may be some things we need to protect our children from (like sinful behavior), is isolation the best solution?

Others are not fearful, but definitely weary of the affects of culture so they seek to *instruct* their children so as to provide *insulation* from the affects of the world around them. This is how I often thought of my role as a parent. To instruct my boys in the way they should go—not fearing the world, but trying to prepare them to not be affected by the world.

Now that our boys are older, I think there is another approach. Rather than isolation or simply insulation I want my sons to be influencers. This requires intentionality—*intentionally influencing* others. Rather than the reactive approach—insulate them so they will not be affected by the world. I want to be proactive—help them intentionally influence those around them.

There may be a place or a time for each of these three approaches. But I think the last is the ultimate goal. Too often we seek isolation simply for our own benefit and forget that we have been placed here to be witnesses (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). When we simply seek to instruct for insulation we again forget that God has called us as His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). The intentionality I am speaking of means that we (and our children) need to evaluate the use our time, money, and energy to determine how best to invest our influence. This may require choosing not to do certain things (even isolation from certain activities) in order to do better things.

In the next post we look at ways that we and our children might be intentional influencers.

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[Engaging Culture part 2](#)

In order to engage our culture in a strategic way, we must invest our influence with intentionality.

In thinking through this concept we may at times walk a tight rope. So let's look at biblical instruction on this issue.

First, notice the progression in thought

I Corinthians 6:12 "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but ***I will not be enslaved by anything.*** (ESV)

I Corinthians 10:23 "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," ***but not all things build up.*** (ESV)

As we seek to be influencers and as we seek to help our children be influences, we must understand that some activities (good or evil) may be enslaving—may take control. But we should only have one Master.

Other activities are not evil but they are not what is best for us.

Second, notice the context into which we are to be influencers

Matthew 10:16 "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. (ESV)

Romans 16:19b but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. (ESV)

Titus 1:15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. (ESV)

I Corinthians 14:20 Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. (ESV)

These passages make it clear that there are things in the world or culture around us that we must understand and need to be able to deal with wisely, yet in purity.

So how do we not only engage but influence our culture? A few key ideas:

Key #1: The Power of Integrity

An authentic life of integrity speaks volumes even to the most antagonistic.

Key #2: The Power of the Word and the Spirit

The ability to influence our world doesn't come primarily from us, but from God by way of the Spirit through the Word. We must know the Word and live the Word.

Key #3: Building community—the Power of Love

Our culture is one of isolation, so we as believers need to understand that love is a powerful influencer. We should not simply see people as target of the gospel message, but as people loved by God, created for His glory.

Key #4: Focus on the Essentials—the Power of Priority

Focusing on minutia makes Christianity look weak and useless. We need to understand what the fundamental truths are, and while we can believe many more things, and we should seek to continually grow in our understanding of God and His Word—we shouldn't expect the world to believe as we do. Let's not fight the world for all our beliefs, but let's keep investing our influence in the most strategic ways possible.

People want to know if a relationship with God really works, will it help them, will it give meaning to life, will it place them into community. We can provide those answers, we can influence those around us, but it requires intentional investment.

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