

Engaging in God's world

Learning how to live a faithful Christ-centered life of discernment fleshed out in relationships.

Overview of the Class:

- Discuss the two extremes that we can go to when reacting to our culture without discernment. (Cont.)
- Discuss what some of the barriers are within our culture to our interaction with culture.
- Define culture, and take a step back to look at how God interacts with the world.

Engaging in God's world

A Schedule of Classes:

Topics to Be Covered:

- How do we tear down the walls (barriers) and build bridges into the culture and peoples lives?
- A Current Battleground for truth: Science
- Lives lived out in the context of our world and culture.
- Sharing our faith and answering objections in a winsome way.
- Worldviews in conflict: Common worldviews and how they interact with a Biblical worldview.
- An Apologetic lifestyle in our postmodern culture.
- Hospitality in a world of Isolation.

Engaging in God's world

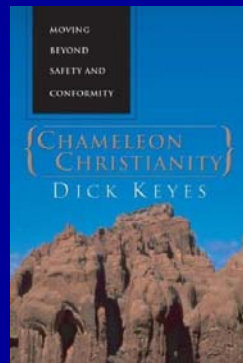
Recommended books:

1. *How Should We Then Live?* by Francis Schaeffer
2. *How Now Shall We Live?* by Chuck Colson & Nancy Pearcey
3. *Total Truth* By Nancy Pearcey
4. *The Universe Next Door* by James Sire
5. *Engaging in God's World* by Cornelius Plantinga
6. *Understanding Youth Culture* by Walt Mueller
7. *Eyes Wide Open* by William Rominowski
8. *Still Bored in a Culture of Entertainment* by Richard Winter.
9. *Inside the mind of Unchurched Harry and Mary* by Lee Strobel
10. *The Soul of Science* by Nancy Pearcey & Charles Thaxton

Barriers to Engagement

Barriers within ourselves and the Church

- *Chameleon Christianity* by Dick Keyes: An overview of reacting without discernment.
- We tend to go to two extreme in our interaction with the world, that are both equally harmfully to the mission and life of Church.
- Keyes says that this reaction is not unique to Christians at all that actually any minority group which is at odds with the Popular culture will go to the same two ends of the spectrum.



Barriers to Engagement

Barriers within ourselves and the Church

The two reactions:

1. Accommodation or compromise.
 - Keyes use the illustration of a chameleon, which seek safety by blending in so as not to attract notice.
 - In the end we are reducing the Gospel and our witness to what our culture find to be comfortable and acceptable.

Barriers to Engagement

Barriers within ourselves and the Church

The two reactions:

2. Retreat, dissonance, or tribalism
 - Keyes uses the analogy of a musk ox, which rally around in a tight defense circle when the herd is threatened by predators like wolves.
 - Most within the tribe don't interact in a significant social way with non-Christians except when of necessity.
 - Evangelism becomes artificial, if not insensitive and belligerent.

Barriers to Engagement

Barriers within our culture

Modern vs. Ancient (What's more reliable?)

- Scientific Modern man has the answers that were previously answered by religion.
- This modern thinking has seeped into many churches and denominations affirming to the world and culture around us that “modern” truth is more valid than religious beliefs.
- Old = naïve. The only truth we can know is of the physical universe and there is no room within the physical universe for miracles and the supernatural.

Barriers to Engagement

Barriers within our culture

Problem of authority

- Postmodernism leveled the playing field
- There is no transcendent truth
- This has led to an irreverence especially among Gen X and Millennial generations.
- This also means that no style can be judged better than another. There is no standard for good literature, art, architecture or music.

Barriers to Engagement

Barriers within our culture

Problem of authority

- Mixed up morals
- 1. Because there is no transcendent truth, there is also no transcendent moral law to uphold.

Some of the consequences of this are:

1. Morality is left up to the individual.
2. Morality within our culture and country then became simple by popular vote. Majority rules.
3. The loss of morality leads to a loss of public accountability.

Barriers to Engagement

Barriers within our culture

Practical Idolatry

- Because of how God made man to be a worshiping creature man in the loss of truth will turn to other things to worship.

We see in our culture:

1. idols of the mind
2. idols of the will
3. idols of the heart

Barriers to Engagement

Barriers within our culture

Practical Idolatry

Psalm 135:15 The idols of the nations are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. 16 They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; 17 they have ears, but cannot hear, nor is there breath in their mouths. 18 Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.

Barriers to Engagement

Barriers within our culture

Truth vs. Belief

- The Privatization of Religious belief
- Postmodernism teaches that pluralism is the way it ought to be in the sense that there is no one truth that describes reality.

Some of the consequences of this are:

1. The belief that every person has the right to his or her own views.
2. A loss of confidence in reason and skepticism.

Barriers to Engagement

Barriers within our culture

Scepticism.....

Dear God by Sara McLaughlin,

Dear God,

Don't know if you notice, but...

*Your name is on a lot of quotes in this book,
Us crazy humans wrote it, you should take a look,
And all the people that you made in your image,
Still believing that junk is true
Well I know it ain't, and so do you*

Barriers to Engagement

Barriers within our culture

Scepticism.....

Dear God by Sara McLaughlin,

Dear God,

*I can't believe in...I don't believe in...
I won't believe in heaven and hell.
No saints, no sinners, no devil as well.
No pearly gates, no thorny crown.
You're always letting us humans down.
The wars you bring, the babes you drown.
And it's the same the whole world 'round.*

Barriers to Engagement

Barriers within our culture

Scepticism.....

Dear God by Sara McLaughlin,

*The hurt I see helps to compound
That Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
Is just somebody's unholy hoax
And if you're up there you'd perceive
That my heart's here upon my sleeve.
If there's one thing I don't believe in....
It's you...Dear God.*

Barriers to Engagement

Barriers within our culture

Some of the Current Cultural Battlegrounds for truth:

1. Science
 - Evolution vs. Intelligent Design,
 - the Creation
2. Ethics
 - Abortion
 - war (Just war theory)
3. Politics & Law
 - Homosexuality

Engaging in God's world

How does God relate to our world and culture

What is Culture? (And "pop-culture"?)

- "A network or system of shared meaning in society, a conceptual collection of ideals, beliefs, and values, ideas and knowledge, attitudes and assumptions about life that is woven together over time and is widely shared among people." - Romanowski
- It is a map or grid of reality that people use to interpret their experience and guide their behavior.
- It is a way of life that is rooted in a common worldview.

Engaging in God's world

How does God relate to our world and culture

What is Culture? (And "pop-culture"?)

- It is the "texts" of everyday life; a manifestation of a way of life and thinking.
- So Popular Culture is the manifestation of life and thinking that is most common over a majority group
- Ultimately, at the root of popular culture is an interplay of worldviews.
- And at the root of it God plays a role in this meaningful discourse about life that culture is made up of.
- Although non-Christians don't recognize God as being part of the ongoing cultural discourse, he is.

Engaging in God's world

How does God relate to our world and culture

What is "Common Grace"?

- Common grace is God's overall, general graciousness to his creation in restraining sin, allowing even unbelievers to know truth, and have God given gifts and have a sense of the divine.
- Herman Bavinck wrote, *"there still remain in man certain traces of the image of God.... Reason is a priceless gift. Philosophy is an admirable gift from God. Music is also a gift from God. Arts and sciences are good, profitable, and of high value. The state has been instituted by God.... There is still a desire for truth and virtue, and for natural love between parents and children. In matters that concern this earthly life, man is still able to do much good."*

Engaging in God's world

How does God relate to our world and culture

What is "Common Grace"?

1. The gifts we see in unregenerate man are gifts from God as a result of his gracious restraint of sin.
2. Despite man's fallenness man creates good aspects of culture and civilization (although distorted by sin)
3. the image of God is not completely lost. It is distorted and corrupted by sin. So as God restrains sin we get glimpses of the goodness of the image of God in man.

Engaging in God's world

How does God relate to our world and culture

Does this minimize sin? What about "Total Depravity"?

- It doesn't minimize sin because it still confirms that this is not saving grace and doesn't give the unregenerate the capability of doing any good that is worthy of righteousness. (it is more civil good as opposed to a saving good.)
- The term "total depravity" from a reformed perspective does not mean that sinful man is as bad as he possible could be but that our whole being or humanity is corrupted by sin
- All acts of goodness in the framework of God's common grace are still tainted by sin.

Engaging in God's world

How does God relate to our world and culture

God's Common Grace

- God as part of his acts of his providence is restraining sin. (God has and does restrain sin in people's lives and at times gives them over to their sin according to his purposes.)
- God uses external means to restrain sin as well.

***Romans 13:3** For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.*

Engaging in God's world

How does God relate to our world and culture

God's Common Grace

- God uses external means to restrain sin as well.
1 Peter 2:13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.
- The earth and culture are God's creation that he maintains and directs in such a way as to restrain sin.
- Culture is part of God's common grace to his enemies and loved ones alike.

Engaging in God's world

How does God relate to our world and culture

What is "General Revelation"?

- Revelation is God revealing himself and is necessary for humans to know God.

Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. 26 Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. 27 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Engaging in God's world

How does God relate to our world and culture

What is "General Revelation"?

- God reveals himself in a general way and in a special or particular way (Through his word)

God generally reveals himself to his creation in 3 ways:

1. God reveals himself in the creation.
2. God reveals himself in his providence
3. God reveals himself through the moral conscience (the law).

Engaging in God's world

How does God relate to our world and culture

What is "General Revelation"?

- This general revelation from God is not enough for sinful man to arrive at the true and saving knowledge of God.
- Natural reason from general revelation can never guide man to God because sin distorts man's view of General Revelation.
- But it does leave man without excuse and accountable to God for their disobedience.
- Continuing revelation from God in the natural order makes civic virtue possible (thus general revelation is part of God's common grace)