

How to Reach the Lost Without Caving to Culture

We are in a cultural war. Can you feel it?

In the U.S., the battle seems to be waged between political parties, but I propose we are fighting over something much more significant: the very fabric of our culture. In the midst of combat, the Lord is opening the door for believers to become cultural architects—noble leaders who will shape culture and inspire collective reasoning that creates healthy, happy, safe and prosperous communities for generations to come!

Isaiah 60:11 (NASB) says, “Your gates will be open continually; they will not be closed day or night, so that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession.”

This is the season to influence kings in order to shape history! Many believe that if we want to influence culture, we must emulate it. However, our Isaiah 60:1 mandate is to arise and shine, not to arise and reflect. It’s important that we not mirror modern culture, but rather lead it. The question of the hour is, how do we reach a society that has largely normalized sin and evil?

On Aug. 20, 2019, as I was preparing to lead prayer at Bethel Church, I heard this phrase in my spirit: “Prepare for reentry!” I stood there trying to understand the God-ordained context of this proclamation. Abruptly, the prodigal son’s story began to play in my head like a film. The solutions to our current challenges began unfolding before my eyes.

The lessons we can learn from the estranged son’s pilgrimage home are paramount for influencing culture. This story teaches the church to welcome home the lost without bending to the

forces of darkness, who'd like nothing more than to normalize sin and defile God's bride. Sometimes in our love for people, we undermine the process of repentance by renegotiating the terms of returning. We turn the farm into a brothel to entice the prodigals to come back home because we fear our holy standard is keeping them away.

However, the father didn't accept his son's sinful lifestyle to woo the boy homeward. And his son respected his father's nobility and understood he couldn't bring his immoral lifestyle to the father's farm. No, instead there is an unspoken understanding in the story that the son must acknowledge his sin and forsake the lifestyle of perversion in exchange for his family's noble virtues. Sometimes, in our zeal, we mistakenly believe the goal of God is to get prodigals back in the church building, when in fact God's goal is repentance—to change their way of thinking, leading them to agree with the Father's noble lifestyle.

The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 2:4 that God's kindness leads to repentance, which then leads to restoration. But reentry without repentance isn't restoration. It is human sympathy, not God-ordained compassion. The confession of sin is paramount in the reentry process because it's the catalyst for grace, which brings the power to change. The apostle John put it like this, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8-9). In other words, you can't experience cleansing without confession. There it is, short and sweet: Confess your sins, and He does the rest.

The Good News is that when we confess our sins, Jesus gives us the power that changes our nature so we never have to sin again! God is able to fix your root issues, cleanse you from impure motives and release you from all addictions. He has power over anything that would imprison you, punish you or

reduce you.

Our response to a prodigal culture that finds itself stuck in the muck of normalizing sin must be loving and anchored in truth, which sets people free. If we lose sight of truth, we will become like the social club—a nice place for people to gather. This is not love, but rather a cruel trap, as we leave people shackled to sin instead of providing a pathway to freedom.

I want to encourage you to arise and shine in this unique occasion—to make a powerful choice not to simply react to the strategies of darkness, but rather to respond with powerful displays of virtue and love. The Lord is looking for “solutionaries” who will engage culture and bring kingdom answers to the world’s greatest problems. This is our divine opportunity, our heavenly call and our responsibility as sons and daughters of a good and righteous King!

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