

A dark, atmospheric street view of a city, likely New York City, with tall buildings lining the street. A bus is visible in the foreground, and the text "ENGAGING CULTURE" is overlaid in white with a yellow horizontal bar behind it.

ENGAGING CULTURE

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How do we respond to the rapid changes in our moral landscape?

Poverty – Same Sex Marriage – Racism
Sex Slavery – Immigration – Persecution
Abortion – Orphans – Pornography
Identity – Gender – Violence – Religion
Morality – Worldviews – Media – Arts

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Romans 1:28-32

People who “are filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness . . . haters of God . . .

³² who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death,

not only do the same

but also approve of those who practice them.

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How should we respond to a society that approves of people doing what God has labeled as wrong?

How do you engage people who have a different worldview than you, different beliefs, and even a different morality?



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Three common approaches to culture

1. Delighted by culture: Assimilate

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.



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Three common approaches to culture

1. Delighted by culture: Assimilate
2. Offended by culture: Withdraw

Colossians 4:5-6 (NET)

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunities.

⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer everyone.

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Three common approaches to culture

1. Delighted by culture: Assimilate
2. Offended by culture: Withdraw
3. Distressed by culture: Engage

Acts 17:16-34 (NIV)

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.

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¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.

¹⁸ Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

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¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak?"

²⁰ "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean."

²¹ For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

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²² Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;

²³ "for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:

²⁴ "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

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²⁵ "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

²⁶ "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,

²⁷ "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

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²⁸ *"for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'*

²⁹ "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

³⁰ "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

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³¹ "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

³² And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter."

³³ So Paul departed from among them.

³⁴ However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

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How did Paul engage the cultures around him?

- He cared about them; he was distressed (v. 16-17)
- Sought to understand the culture (v. 23)
- Sought to find common values & beliefs (vv. 22-23)
- Positive about the truth he found (v. 22-31)
- Knew and quoted their sources (vv. 23,28)
- Communicated the Jesus' resurrection (vv.18, 30-31)

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How should we respond to our changing culture?
How do we engage in conversations about it?

- Be distressed, and care about people
- Seek to understand the culture
- Start where they are. find common ground in values, beliefs, etc.
- Be confident in the truth God has revealed
- Know and use their sources
- Communicate the Gospel clearly