

# Godly Culture

Foundations  
for a  
Biblical  
Worldview

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# Godly Culture

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# No. 1: What is Culture?

## **N**O 1. WHEREIN WE DEFINE CULTURE FROM A BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

Once God had completed His creative work, making the universe and man, He focused His attention on delineating His purposes for man in the earth. As expressed in the previous chapter, God obtains glory and pleasure from communion and relationship with man. He also obtains glory and pleasure by the ongoing extension of his kingdom in the earth.

**Godly culture.** God purposed for Adam and his offspring to spread out from Eden and bring God's divine government to all of the earth. The scriptures explain it this way:

*". . . Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Genesis 1:28 KJV)*

Genesis 1:28 is often referred to as God's Cultural Mandate. It is sometimes spoken of as the Old Testament forerunner to Christ's Great Commission in Matthew 28:19. Godly culture is the infusement of God's principles, God's ideas, God's life, God's government into all the earth.

**Culture defined.** The word culture has several meanings. Culture is most commonly defined as the enhancement of a person's intellectual, social and artistic faculties through the educational process. Someone who has been educated at a school of high academic and social standards, one whose experience includes a liberal education of science, art, literature, history, language and

music is often considered to be a cultured individual.

But culture also refers to the collective behavioral attributes, arts, beliefs, institutions, governmental forms and religious expressions of a community of people or a nation at a given point in time. At the root of the word culture is the Latin word *cultura* which is based in the word worship. At the heart of every culture then is what or who the people of that culture worship.

Archaeological findings on ancient cultures demonstrate the central role of religion in the communities of man since the beginning of time. The Hebrews built their culture around their religious practices, their ceremonies and their ideas of God. After the canonization of scripture, Europe's culture grew around the Catholic Church based in Rome. Rome's ideas of God and man ruled Europe for over a millennium where even kings in distant countries acknowledged the authority of the pope.

American culture has had various expressions over the course of nearly four hundred years. New England's Puritan roots based in the Holy Scriptures grew deep in the first century and a half of colonization. Puritan ideas of God and man laid a firm foundation for the fundamental principles of freedom which we still enjoy today. The Puritan idea of God and man included the concept that all men were created equal before God.

Culture in America's southern states also has a deep religious base. But many Southerners, in order to justify the institution of slavery for so many years, adopted the religious idea that the African race was created inferior to the white race. In this way, the institution of slavery could continue to be justified while white men declared their own freedom from England. Thus, the early

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southern version of God and man is slightly different from the northern version. Nonetheless, many in the North, including the Puritans, also accepted the view that the black race was not made in the image of God. Many early Puritans even owned slaves. Later, in order to create a Union, the states of the North willingly compromised, allowing slavery to continue for another seventy five years. Two hundred years later the idea of racial inferiority is so deeply embedded into the American culture that we are still striving to overcome the social and political outfall of our racial prejudices even in the early part of the 21st century.

South American culture developed in a different way. While slavery did once exist on a mass scale, racism is not as nearly pronounced. South America developed under the influence of the Catholic Church, not the Reformation. South Americans gained their freedom much later in history than North Americans. The Reformational ideas of God and man have had little impact upon South American culture until recently. Thus the need to justify slavery in South America was not nearly as strong as it was in North America. As a consequence, the idea of one race being inferior to another did not develop there the way it has here in North America.

Such is the way ideas about God and man shape culture.

American culture, like all cultures, is continually evolving. Today we worship material things. Jesus referred to such worship as the worship of mammon. He said that no man can serve both God and mammon (Luke 16:13). Renowned teacher and Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer has said that the gods of modern America are personal peace and prosperity. The behavioral attributes, arts, beliefs, institutions, governmental

forms and religious expressions in modern America are a reflection of the gods of personal peace and prosperity that we worship today.

Nations also have sub-cultures within the larger culture. Our nation in particular is noted for its many cultural expressions. Ethnic peoples tend to cluster themselves together in small communities bringing with them the religious and cultural expressions of their native homelands from the old world. It usually takes several generations for members of the smaller community to become completely assimilated into the larger culture.

There are several words related to the word culture. Cult, based in the Latin word cultus is a particular form of worship. It can also be the devotion or homage paid to a person such is a cult hero. Such a hero would be considered to have a cult following. A derivative of cult is the word occult originating from the Latin occultis, which refers to secret religious expressions involving the supernatural realm.

Cultivate, based in the Latin cultiva terra means the labor and attention paid to land for the purpose of increasing fertility and bringing forth a harvest. Husbandry is an associated word. Cultivation can also be the process of educating the mind, manners and faculties, the refinement of an individual.

Cultures can also be microscopic organisms grown in a small dish in a laboratory for scientific or medical research. Such cultures are studied by doctors and scientists to learn about the ways which bacteria and other micro-organisms grow and develop.

## No. 2: How are Cultures Formed?

### **N**O 2. WHEREIN WE DESCRIBE HOW CULTURES ARE FORMED.

Like crops grown for harvest and organisms grown in a laboratory, regional and national cultures are also cultivated. There are three basic elements which contribute to a nation's culture. First, the ideas, philosophies and religion of a nation's people are like seeds which are sown. Essentially all philosophies can be distilled down to two simple views—a view of God and a view of man. Second, these idea seeds, these views of God and man, are sown into the culture by a variety of sowers. Sowers can be individuals, institutions, organizations and even governmental bodies which promote their philosophies—their respective views of God and man. The third contributing element to culture is the human heart which is like the soil into which these idea seeds are sown and cultivated.

Idea seeds come in many forms. Evolution, the idea that man is simply the biological product of eons of natural selection, teaches that God, if He even exists, has little or no involvement in our day to day lives. Such ideas of God and man foster a disrespect for human life and eventually lead to animalistic behavior in society. Socialism, a political philosophy, is the idea that men's lives are best managed not by themselves but by a large benevolent state which controls the means of production and distribution of goods and commodities. Christian philosophy teaches that God made us and calls us to personal accountability and self-government under his benevolent Kingship. There are multitudes of ideas that bombard us every day, shaping our culture. In later chapters, we will explore this topic more fully.

Idea seeds are sown in many ways. Some idea seeds are sown through schools, colleges and universities. Some idea seeds are sown through television, movies and the performing arts. Other idea seeds are sown in newspapers, magazines and periodic journals. Still others are sown through music and other diverse forms of artistic expression.

Some idea seeds are also planted by the Church.

There are many types of soil (Matt 13:18-23). Human hearts, where these ideas take root, also come in many forms. Some are selfish. Some are greedy. Others are proud, lustful or bitter. Some are hard. Some are soft. Some are racially prejudiced. Some, too, have been redeemed and are in the process of being re-shaped or re-aligned by God's ideas.

Depending upon what kinds of idea seeds are sown and the conditions of the corporate heart of a nation, a culture will be corrupt, honorable, or something in-between.

**Culture and geography.** Culture can also be compared to the soul or personality of the individual. Though certainly not eternal like a human soul, a nation's culture is the corporate personality of a people. Even as man's soul, his true self, is the living by-product of both the dust of the earth and man's spirit (Gen 2:7), so culture is the result of ideas and philosophies of a group of people interacting with the natural resources of the area.

For example, some communities are built along rivers or lakes. Others are built in the mountains. Still others spring up in the rolling countryside or on the plains. Wherever a community springs up, a culture will be formed which will reflect the community philosophy or religion and the regional land

## No. 3: What was the Culture of Eden?

and climatic attributes. A fishing community built along the Maine seashore will deviate greatly from a resort community built in the Colorado Rockies. A community's soul or culture then is the by-product of that community's religious ideas and philosophies, and the regional land characteristics.

### **N**o 3. WHEREIN WE INTRODUCE THE CULTURE OF EDEN AND EXPLAIN GOD'S COMMISSION TO ADAM.

**Edenic culture.** The culture of Eden was an expression of the marriage between an uncorrupted creation and the presence of the living God. God's ideas and philosophy mingled with the goodness of the earth and Eden was formed. God intended Edenic culture to reflect his views of himself and the crown of creation—man. He intended for Adam to adopt his ideas as well. God designed Eden to become an extension of his heavenly culture on the earth.

In Eden God made every tree to grow out of the ground that was good for food and pleasant to the sight (Gen 2:8). God's provision for Adam was complete and abundant. In Eden God did more than just meet Adam's physical needs, He also provided a harmonious and agreeable environment for him. God gave Adam the responsibility of tilling and keeping the garden (Gen 2:15) demonstrating even before Adam's fall that idleness is not compatible with God's divine order. God provided Adam a companion (Gen 2:22). God also came and fellowshiped with Adam (Gen 3:8).

God's and Adam's relationship was honest and pure. Sin had not yet entered Adam's soul. Adam functioned according to God's

design—his spirit, soul and body in perfect harmony with himself and his Maker. Adam's internal self-government functioned well under God's divine government. Edenic culture centered around the ethically perfect relationship between God and Adam. Adam no doubt could say "Divine government—how glorious it is!"

One river flowed out of Eden and just outside of Eden the one river branched into four rivers (Gen 2:10). Rivers normally converge with a downstream flow—two rivers merging into one and continuing downstream together like the Mononaghela and the Alleghany forming the Ohio. But Eden's river did not demonstrate the principle of downstream convergence. Instead, Eden's river divided outwardly into four branches as it flowed downstream from Eden.

Since the beginning of mankind's days on the earth, men have utilized rivers for transportational arteries, carrying goods and products for barter and trade. Rivers have always been a link between cultures in diverse places. Rivers are avenues of commerce for the world. When cultures interact with one another ideas and philosophies are exchanged and cultural patterns and expressions are altered and transformed.

Eden's river branched into four rivers. Four is the number of the earth. The Scriptures refer to the four corners of the earth (Isa 11:12) and the four winds (Jer 49:36). The earth has four seasons. The prophet Ezekiel had a vision of four, four-faced creatures, each face looking in a different direction, north, east, south and west, the four points of the compass. Each of the four creatures had the face of a man (the crown of creation), an ox (domesticated animal), a lion (wild animal) and an eagle (bird of the air). Bible scholars commonly agree that these four faces represent the four gospels of Matthew,

## No. 3: What was the Culture of Eden?

Mark, Luke and John, each book telling Christ's story in a slightly different way and each book written to a different audience, suggestive of reaching out to the varied cultures of the world in four different directions. Some scholars also suggest that these faces represent four features of God's earthly creation.

Could it be that this unusual river, this transportational artery leading out of God's earthly sanctuary, was meant to carry God's glorious Edenic culture to the four corners of the earth? Revelation 22:1 speaks of another river, a river that flows out from the throne of God. God's throne is His seat of government. Is it possible that this culturally transmitting avenue of commerce and ideas that flowed from Eden and broke into four, had been designed by God to carry the gospel of Eden, the good news of "Divine government—how glorious it is!"—the idea of a heavenly culture on earth—outwardly across creation until God's glory covered the earth as the waters covered the sea?

Such an analysis can be little more than measured speculation but one thing is certain, God did intend for His glory and His government to cover the earth. Edenic culture and the ethically perfect relationship which God and Adam enjoyed were meant to be shared with and enjoyed by every one of Adam's children until the Creator of all things rolls up the heavens like a scroll and calls His own unto Himself.

**God's mandate for Adam.** Imagine that you are the very first human to ever draw the breath of life. You are the first man to walk on the earth, the first man to feel the soil between your toes, to sense the sun's warmth on your back, to see the clouds drift across the sky above you. Suddenly you are there, alive, conscious. Where had you been before? Had you been somewhere else? No.

There is nothing in your memory that recalls anything but this moment you awoke alive for the very first time.

Adam and Eve are the only two people to ever have had such an experience. All other souls came from the womb, grew up gradually into adulthood, and slowly developed their awareness of self, world and God. Even Christ himself.

As Adam contemplated his instant life, he must have certainly sensed the presence of God. Only speculation can craft what that scene must have been like. There he stood, not knowing who he was or why he was there. Questions must certainly have flooded his mind.

Then the defining moment came. God's voice spoke, the voice of Adam's Maker, clarifying His purposes for the man He had just made. Scripture gives no indication of a preliminary introduction. We have no record of God walking up to Adam and saying, "Hi. I'm God. I just made you. Welcome to my creation. We're going to do some neat stuff together."

There is no record of any such encounter. This is not to say that one didn't happen. For all we know God and Adam could have had a conversation similar to the one just described. But if they did, God did not deem such an exchange significant enough to tell us about it.

No, according to what the scriptures tell us, God simply struck out with his first commandment.

*". . . Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over*

## No. 4: What is Fruitfulness?

*the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."*

Genesis 1:28 KJV

**God's very first words to man.** What God is telling us by the structure of these passages is that He places a priority on these particular ideas. God did not mince His words. He did not beat around the bush. These are the very first words God ever spoke to man and they define how God chose to relate to Adam. The manner in which these passages are set up, the obvious deletion of any introductory comments by God, also tell us something about God that we need to understand.

God is not cultivating a familiarity with Adam here. He does not even seem to be interested in dealing with Adam on a relational level at first. As God's story unfolds through the Scriptures we quickly learn that God does indeed desire relationship and communion. But here—God's very first words to man—we learn that in the beginning, God is all business. He has just invested His energy and power in creating the earth and man. He is serious about defining His purpose. He does not want there to be any question as to why mankind has been created.

God's fourfold message for Adam defines Adam's relationship not only to God but also to the earth. We must pay careful attention to what God has to say.

### **N**O 4. WHEREIN WE INTRODUCE THE CONCEPT OF FRUITFULNESS.

**1. Be fruitful.** Fruitfulness is at the core of God's purpose for man. Productivity is God's very first theme. God did not begin the relationship by telling Adam that he loved him. God did not spend time reassuring Adam of his care or concern that everything would be alright. There was no need for such an explanation. Adam had not yet fallen prey to sin and rebellion. Adam was completely secure in his relationship with God.

The English word for fruitful is taken from the Hebrew word *parah* which means to bear fruit, to bring forth, to grow and increase.

Fruitfulness is not a foreign concept to the believer. Christians are taught to view fruit in spiritual terms. Galatians speaks of the fruits of the spirit, character traits cultivated through study, prayer, worship, fellowship and Christian service. Certainly God is referring to this kind of fruit here.

But is this the only kind of fruit that God is speaking of? When taken in context with the other commands given, it is likely that God meant for Adam to produce more than just spiritual fruit. God also tells Adam to multiply, to fill the earth, to subdue the earth and to have dominion over all things.

How can Adam fulfill such commands if spiritual fruit is his only concern?

God never intended for man to be idle. He did not create man just to frolic all day in the garden and enjoy spiritual fruit. The first job that God gave Adam to do was tilling the garden (Gen 2:15). God's employ-



## No. 5: What is Fullness?

ment of Adam in the garden occurred before Adam sinned, before he had even been introduced to the two unique trees in the garden.

Adam's first task involved the use of his hands. Men's hands are holy instruments, a representation of man's whole self. God's hands are blessed (Ps 143:5) and He blesses the works of our hands (Job 1:10). We are created to be satisfied with and rewarded from our labors (Ps 128:2; Prov 12:14). We are to ask for God's blessing upon the works of our hands (Ps 90:17). Lifting up our hands to God is a sign of how we present all of our labor to the Lord as an offering of worship (Ps 63:4; 88:9).

One of the most illustrative pictures of fruitfulness in the scriptures is the Proverbs woman. The Proverbs woman is a willing worker (31:13). She plants and harvests (31:16). She crafts and creates (31:19). She gives to the poor (31:20). The scriptures say that her hands are fruitful and bring her praise (31:31).

Many modern day Christians view work as secular and ministry as sacred. But our forbears, the Puritans, viewed all work as sacred. Whatever they did, they did unto the Lord. The Puritans made no distinctions between the two. To them, everything was to be consecrated unto the Lord. In fact the word "secular" is not found in the Bible. Secularism is not even a Biblical concept. The idea of a distinctive between secular and sacred comes not from Christianity but from the world. It is a device designed to keep God out of every area of life. Ideas such as secularism and their power over the minds of men will be discussed in later chapters.

The ideas or seeds of the Puritan "work ethic" begat the wealthiest culture ever in the history of the world. The Puritans believed in using their hands to cultivate eve-

rything they touched. Whether a farmer cultivating the soil for a harvest or a cabinet maker cultivating a piece of wood, refining it, improving it, bringing out its best qualities, putting it to its best use, the Puritan cultivated all to the glory of God.

Work is the lifeblood of fruitfulness. Retirement and recreation should never be the goal of a believer. While Sabbaths and vacations are necessary and important, a Christian should look forward to a long life of fruitful work and productivity. In so doing he will glorify God and extend His kingdom in the earth.

### **N**O 5. WHEREIN WE INTRODUCE THE CONCEPTS OF MULTIPLYING IN NUMBER AND THE IMPORTANCE OF FULLNESS.

**2. Multiply, fill the earth.** God's next directive seems quite clear. God commanded Adam to procreate, to reproduce himself over and over again. Man is made in God's image and God is here revealing His intention that all the earth be permeated with his image. Every time a new life is brought forth, God's image is reintroduced to the world.

Children are a blessing of the Lord.

*As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.*  
(Ps 127:4-5)

Jesus loves children and equates them with

## No. 6: How Do We Subdue the Earth?

the kingdom of God.

*... Jesus ... said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Mark 10:14*

The English word for multiply is taken from the Hebrew word *rabah* which means to enlarge or excel and to increase over a process of time. The English word for fill is taken from the Hebrew word *mala* which means to be full of in a wide application.

God is a God of fullness. His plan is for all the earth to be filled with his glory (Num 14:21). As the Scriptures declare,

*... let the whole earth be filled with his glory ... (Ps 72:19)*

Also,

*... The earth is the LORD'S, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein (Ps 24:1)*

Fullness is God's way. In Moses's day God's glory filled the wilderness tabernacle (Ex 40:34-35). God himself fills both heaven and earth (Jer 23:24). He desires for our lives to be filled with His goodness (Lev 25:19; Ps 81:10). He created Israel to blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit (Isa 27:6). In God's presence there is fullness of joy (Ps 16:11).

God prophetically describes the coming of Christ as that which fills his house with glory (Hag 2:7). The very first public act of Jesus occurred at the wedding celebration in Cana. There He directed the servants to fill six stone jars with water which he then turned into wine. Imagine six stone jars filled with wine. The image certainly conjures up the idea of lavish abundance.

While preaching to the multitudes Jesus determined that the crowd to which he was ministering was hungry. From the crowd He gathered five loaves and two fishes, blessed them and fed five thousand souls. After all had eaten, twelve full baskets were left over (Mark 6:30-44).

Jesus follows the example of His Father who does all things with fullness and abundance. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ (Col 2:10) and He fills all things (Eph 4:10). We who believe have received His fullness (John 1:16) and are to go out to the world in His fullness (Rom 15:29).

God blesses the giver by giving back with a fullness pressed down, shaken together and running over (Luke 6:38). The Scriptures clearly portray a God who is not miserly or conservative in His blessings, but abundantly rich.

Filling the earth with men made in the image of God is paramount in God's plan.

### **N**o 6. WHEREIN WE INTRODUCE THE CONCEPT OF MAN'S ROLE IN SUBDUING THE EARTH.

**3. Subdue the earth.** God's third directive is for Adam to subdue the earth. The English word subdue is taken from the Hebrew word *kabash* which means to tread down, to conquer, to bring in to bondage and to keep under.

What God is saying is that man's task is to conquer the earth. God intended for Adam and his progeny to bring the earth under subjection. Adam and his multiplied descendants are called to gain control of, prevail over and to render submissive all of the

## No. 7: How Do We Take Dominion?

earth. Mankind is meant to use the earth and its resources to promote God's culture. God designed for the earth to be developed by man, for man to draw out of the earth materials and resources to design and build. God is the Creator and man is made in His image. It is not out of character for man to utilize all that God has given him to improve his environment.

In many ways, history has demonstrated at least a partial fulfillment of this mandate. Men have cleared forests and utilized the timber to build homes and structures. Sand, gravel and related products have been employed to build roads and cities. Miners have drawn ores from the ground and perfected their use, fashioning iron, steel and other materials. Deep wells have been sunk into the earth, releasing crude oil and natural gas. The net result of all of these developments has been a better, more comfortable world for most people.

Unfortunately, due to the entry of sin into the human race, much abuse has also occurred. Forests have been destroyed without re-planting and strip mines have left ugly scars upon the landscape. But sinful man's misuse and exploitation of the earth's resources do not negate God's mandate to subdue the earth. Subduing the earth implies the use of divine self-government to manage God's gift of the earth.

Subduing also refers to the cultivation of land. God expected Adam to till the soil, plant crops and husband the harvest. Man's food supply has always depended upon his ability to plant and grow crops, to manage the earth. God never intended for the earth to be lord over man but man to be lord over the earth.

### **N**o 7. WHEREIN WE INTRODUCE THE CONCEPT OF MAN'S GOVERNMENTAL DOMINION OVER CREATION.

**4. Have dominion over the earth.** God's fourth directive for Adam is for him to have dominion. The English word dominion is taken from the Hebrew word *radah* which means to tread in pieces, to subjugate, to prevail against, to reign, to rule over.

*Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet (Psalms 8:6)*

At first glance it seems as if God is almost re-iterating or re-stating his previous command. But here God is referring more to a governmental role. Dominion is the power or the right of governance and control. Dominion involves the exercising of authority, lordship, sovereignty and influence. In this directive, Adam is given the responsibility of managing the other living creatures.

This command also consists of the enculturation of the earth with God's principles which at this early stage in history, Adam unquestionably understood. Having dominion implies active involvement and participation in the day to day administration of the earth. God desired for his kingdom to be extended through Adam and to the uttermost parts of the earth and therefore, man's institutions and governmental forms are to reflect the Creator's design.

As explained in *Chapter Four - Man*, God created Adam to serve as his vice-regent over the earth. Aside from fellowship with God, Adam's chief role is stewardship as God's under lord.

# No. 8: Summary of Material

## **N**O 8. WHEREIN WE SUM- MARIZE THIS STUDY AND PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF MATTERS DISCUSSED.

**God's mandate reviewed.** In God's very first words to man He commissioned Adam to carry out His mandate and purpose for the earth. In these first words there is no initial mention of fellowship. All four of God's commands to Adam involve his role as lord over the earth.

**Summary of the Godly Culture series.** God created Eden to be an extension of heavenly culture on earth. He planned for Adam, Eve and their descendants to spread the gospel of Eden—God's own ideas of how man should relate to Him and His government—throughout all the earth until one day God's glory would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. God gave Adam, his vice-regent, four directives for fulfilling his plan—1) be fruitful, 2) multiply and fill the earth, 3) subdue the earth and 4) have dominion over the earth.

### **Thoughts to consider:**

1. Godly culture is at the very forefront of God's purposes.
2. Culture involves the arts, beliefs, institutions, governmental forms and religious expressions of a people.
3. Worship is at the heart of every culture.
4. Godly culture is the impregnation of the earth with God's government, His ideas, His ways, His glory.
5. God designed Adam to be a vice-regent and steward over the earth,

carrying out God's directives and extending Godly culture through God's government and rule.

In developing a Christian world view it is imperative that we grasp the original purposes of God for man in the earth. God made man for the earth and the earth for man. God desires for man's culture, his artistic expressions, his institutions and his governmental forms to reflect and extend His glory.

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<http://www.markwweaver.com/eightarenas/1-worldview/05-culture/culture-menu.htm>

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