

## Faith, Family, and Freedom

### "The Cultural Mandate"

Genesis 1:28 1 NLT

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*"Then God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.'"*

*"The so-called 'separation of church and state' is one of the greatest lies ever sold to the American people. It was never in the Constitution, never in the Bill of Rights, and never intended by our founding fathers. Yet, today, it's wielded as a weapon to silence Christians, remove God from the public life, and usher in a godless society. This isn't neutrality. It's hostility towards the gospel." - Paul Newberger*

Psalms 33:12

*"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."*

If that's true, then cursed is the nation that rejects him, and make no mistake, this lie has led us down a cursed path. Christ never called us to compartmentalize our faith. He didn't say, *"Follow me on Sunday, but leave me out of politics, education, and business."* No - Jesus commanded us in Matthew 28:19-20 to "go and make disciples of all nations." "All nations" means government, culture, and every area of life. The idea that Christians should sit down, shut up, and stay quiet in the public square is not only unbiblical, it's demonic. Satan delights when believers are silent because silence gives him the stage to corrupt society unchecked.

Right now we have a window of time to rebuild liberty in our country. God has been gracious - he's opened doors. The gospel is going out light-years ahead of where we *have* been, and we need to be grateful for that. But we also need to realize that windows open and windows close, so we need to strike while we can, and be bold and courageous. Like Paul Newberger said, we need to be in the public square, declaring, not politics, but the gospel and the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Today we're talking about three pillars of our cultural mandate - faith, family, and freedom. Matthew 28:17 says that we are to "go therefore and make disciples." Why do we call that the Great Commission? The word *commission* means *to commit somebody to go*. It means we're ordaining or approving someone - we're calling them out and setting them apart for a particular service. So when we talk about the Great Commission, we're talking about the great orders that Jesus gave to his disciples, and also to *us*. When we talk about the cultural mandate, we're talking about us being back out in the world and being absolutely unashamed of who we are in Jesus Christ.

Faith, family, and freedom are three foundational pillars that a just and righteous society, culture, or nation are built upon. And as we talk about rebuilding our liberty, we're talking about taking back ground that the enemy has taken. When the Church of Jesus Christ stepped out of the public square and out of our leadership role, the devil was happy because he simply backfilled where we gave up ground. Anywhere that Christians - businessmen, teachers, attorneys, fathers, moms - step away from our God-called anointing to take authority and ground in this earth for the Kingdom of God, the enemy immediately fills in that space.

In 1602, Pilgrims put together the Mayflower Compact that talked about their role in winning the world to Jesus and advancing the kingdom of God. Many of our early documents make amazing references to God and evangelism, and about how we're here to perpetuate the gospel of Jesus. So we need to understand that if we're not out there speaking about who we are, then we are actually *capitulating*. We're giving ground to the enemy and we're saying this isn't important enough for us to be out there telling people about our faith.

Whatever we fall in love with becomes the center of our life. Whenever we were born again and fell in love with Jesus, we said, *"You're the only thing I need in this moment. I need You. I don't need a fix. I don't need stuff. I just need You, because if I have You, everything else will find its place. If You're the center of my world - the center of my universe - then everything else will find order after that."*

Without being solidly grounded in the three pillars of faith, family, and freedom, our culture will be set adrift by every wind or wave of ideology or philosophy, and tossed back and forth as the book of James says - literally tossed between opinions, having no foundation and no place to land. As in an unseen undertow, we're all soon pulled out into a vast ocean of unbelief, debauchery, and bondage. By the time we look up, we don't even recognize where we are, because we're so far from where we started.

*Unbelief* is refusing to believe in God, and his Word characterizes that as *distrust* or having a lack of faith. Unbelief is considered a *sin* as it limits what God wants to do in our life, and it breaks God's heart. We come to Jesus because of faith, and we walk out our Christian life by faith. We're not moved by what we see, what we feel, or by the currents of culture. We're moved by the Word of God and by standing in faith on that Word, and as we do, we find a sure footing on good ground. We find something that's solid in a world that's like shifting sand. We find solid grounding in God's Word and in our faith, trust, and belief in it, and if not, then we're living in *anti-faith* - in a place of unbelief.

Revelation 2:18 NIV 1984

*"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolators, and all liars - their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."*

This is a list of bad things that will keep us from inheriting the kingdom of God, and it includes *cowardice* - the lack of courage, boldness, fortitude, heart and passion that says, *"I don't care what the world says. This is what God says, so I'm gonna stand with that - not with the world or the culture. I'm not going to go with every wave and wind that comes down the pike - no matter what's happening."*

Bible reading is essential to our Christian life and growth, and by it we understand God's will. We may think we know something about Scripture, but as we continue to read it, the Holy Spirit will breathe upon a word, a sentence, a phrase, a verse, a passage, a book, or a letter and it will come to life in fresh ways that we've never seen before. We can read a Bible verse a thousand times and it can say a thousand different things, like layers that are getting peeled back, and suddenly we see something different that can change our life, moving us from *un-belief* to trusting faith, believing, and *knowing* - where we *know in our knower*.

Romans 13:13-14 NIV 1984

*"Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."*

Debauchery is whatever is *anti-family* - not just our natural family that we go home with and that we love, but also our spiritual family of believers that we have covenant relationships with. Whenever we have excessive indulgence and sensual pleasures or behavior marked by moral corruption and self-indulgence, that's debauchery - when we make it all about *"me, myself, and I."*

The bottom line is whatever we can do to please God and honor him by reflecting and radiating who he is to a broken world. It's not about *us* - It's about him - and it's about *them*. When we take care of our walk with Jesus, he takes care of *us*. *We* don't, he does. And then he sets us in a place where we can help others and become a conduit of his grace, a conduit of his mercy, a conduit of his love. So it's not about *me, me, me* - it's about *him, him, him*, and *them, them, them*. And somehow we get to participate *with him* and become a conduit through which he flows and touches other people's lives.

He flips the script, and we clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and we don't think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. When we put on Christ, and come into the room, people aren't looking at *us* and going, "*Wow, there's a super-Christian right there. I wish I was like them.*" No, they see *Jesus*. They see something *different*, and culture ought to be able to look at us and say, "*there is something different.*" Not that we're *weird*, but there's something *different*, something *life-giving*, something *hopeful*. When they come in the room, something shifts. The atmosphere changes. Why? Because of the presence of Christ.

There should be something that is transformative about somebody's life that they are not the same person they used to be because they are *growing*. The Greek language puts it as, "*they are grown and they are growing.*" They are saved and they are being saved at the same time. They are victorious and they are gaining victory. They are loved and they're learning to love. They *are* perfect and *being* perfected at the same time - that's sanctification. That's the "*working out.*" That's where we *participate* with him - we *partner with Jesus* in this endeavor to grow.

The word *bondage* literally means *captivity - being captivated* - it's anti-freedom. Of the sermons preached in the colonies in the beginning years of our nation before 1774, there were six that focused primarily on freedom. Of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights, none of those were new ideas. The writers were drawing from sermons that had been preached for the previous several decades in the colonies. It was pastors and preachers that were teaching these principles of liberty and freedom, the free will of man, choice, resisting tyranny and captivity, bondage and slavery.

*Bondage is anti-freedom - it's a state of servitude, captivity or subjugation which can be physical, spiritual or moral in nature. It signifies a condition where individuals or groups lack freedom and are under the control or influence of another power. We can see that in nations and in culture, and also in ourself spiritually and emotionally. The enemy is such an opportunist that when he gets an opportunity - when we give just a little bit of ground - he takes up the ground that we gave.*

Galatians 5:1 NIV84 - Freedom in Christ

*"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."*

He was talking about this group of Judaizers. The Judaizers were people who had become Christians, but they were hanging on to their past belief system in Judaism. They were Jewish and they gave their heart to Jesus, but yet they were still hanging on to the old Covenant - the Jewish law. They didn't let go. So they're new in Christ - they're *free* in Christ - but they're still hanging on to the Jewish law - a list of 613 do's and don'ts. So instead of walking in freedom and teaching others to be free, these people who were bound up, projected the same demands on others that they put on themselves. They expected other people to live up to their standard.

But when we become free, we're "free indeed." and we're no longer subject to the law. There's now a *liberty* that happens. There's a freedom that happens. There's *joy* that comes - there's a skip in our step. The interesting thing about that is we become more *in line* than we ever were, but now we're doing it out of gratitude, love, appreciation, value, and a heart to please our Father. When a Christian falls back in love with Jesus and says, "*I just want to please Him,*" we don't have to talk about holiness. We don't have to preach or teach holiness because when we love him, we will walk holy.

It'll be as normal as breathing. It won't be work. It won't be us gritting our teeth and trying not to mess up. It'll be us walking in such a level of freedom and grace and life that other people want. They will say, "*I want what he has and I'll take two - whatever it is.*" Why? Because there's freedom. And when you're free, you can live up in a down world. When you're free, when the whole world is losing its mind and every "*Chicken Little*" is running around, the sky is falling and you're like, "*So what? God is good all the time, and all the time God's good.*" Why? Because I'm *free indeed*. That freedom gives us such an edge on the world.

We can see the attitude of worldliness that constantly blames other people for our current condition. "*It's their fault and they should have done this, and the world did this, and culture did this, and media did this.*" But why don't we take responsibility say, "*You know what, God, I can't do it on my own. I need Your help. Will You help me? Will You save me? I give You my life because I've made a huge mess of it.*"

Does that mean everything goes great when you're a Christian? *No. Persecution's real. Things get hard. The enemy resists everything we do. But when we know that we're free, we can smile in the face of opposition and resistance. We can smile in the face of persecution. We can laugh at the enemy because we know his endgame. When the devil comes at us, we can say, "Hey, look, it's fine. I know where you're going. I know your endgame, but guess what? I know mine, too. Because it's win-win. You take me out of this world, I'm in the presence of God. that's a win. You leave me in this world, I get to win more people to Jesus. I get to make more disciples. I get to do more of his will. I get to advance the kingdom."* It's a win, guys. It is a win-win proposition. Whether we live or whether we die, we win.

2 Corinthians 3:17 NIV84

*"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."*

We're being transformed with ever-increasing glory. That means it never stops, but we never actually *arrive*. We're always on the journey and we get to keep growing and growing. And when we grow *together*, something amazing happens. We start to look like the Bride of Christ. Why? Because God is there, and the people are unveiled and our faces are reflecting his glory. Something is different. There *should* be something about Bridge people that's different from the world that we're surrounded with - being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory which comes from the Lord who generates it all. Our responsibility is to take off our mask ...and let him shine.

## Prayer

*Father, in the name of Jesus, we want to submit everything to You, and we say, Yes, Jesus.*

*Yes, Lord. And now, what's the question? What would You have us do? As we go out of this place today, we want to engage culture with courage, with Christ, and with grace. We want to let mercy lead, but we also want to be very bold and unashamed of who we are. Thank You for our gathering here today. In Jesus' name. Amen*