

Introduction – locating cultural renewal

[S] [Slides 2-6] – brief history of renewal

[S] RENEWAL

- **spiritual** – discipleship, evangelism
- **social** – care for the poor, justice
- **cultural** – arts, business, government, education, third sector

[S] Renewal = ordering chaos for human flourishing.

What is culture?

[S] Jon Tyson

"Culture is the beliefs, behaviours, values, language, intellectual achievement, artistic expression and the entire way of life of a particular group of people or a society as a whole".

[S] Andy Crouch

"Culture happens through systems but it is for and by people"

[S] Gabe Lyons – 7 channels of cultural influence that shape and form a culture:

- media
- arts and entertainment
- business
- education
- government
- social sector
- church

Theology of cultural renewal

Central to understanding why cultural renewal matters is **theology**.
Essentially three things we need to see from the Scriptures.

[1]

Humans are culture-making creatures... it's what we do... what we were in part created to do.

We are divine image bearers.

[S] **Genesis 1:26-28**

²⁶ Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

*²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

We have been given dominion as image bearers – male and female – to **rule**.

God had a purpose in creating us His image = culture making.

"Cultural mandate" = to work with God to fill the earth with His culture.
Add order and unleash abundance. Sustain beauty and create utility.

[S] **Andy Crouch**

"Culture making is creating and cultivating things both useful and beautiful"

[S] **Tim Keller**

"It is rearranging the raw material of God's creation in such a way that it helps the world in general, and people in particular, thrive and flourish".

[2]

God's good creation is ravaged by sin and death, curse, Satan.

=> world is broken – e.g. refugees, plastic

But in Jesus God declares it's still good, or in case of humans still very good.

[S] **Ben & Hannah Dunnett**

"A world of fabulous design, yet scarred with misery and pain, but underneath this brokenness, our Maker's signature remains".

[S] **1 John 3:8**

"The reason the Son of God came was to destroy the works of the devil."

[S] **Abraham Kuyper**

"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, 'Mine!'"

[S] **"Christ & Culture" - Niebuhr**

1. Christ against culture
2. Christ of culture
3. Christ above culture
4. Christ and culture in paradox
5. Christ transforms culture

[S] We have a **"four part, not two-part"** gospel: *Creation – Fall – Redemption – Restoration.*

God is not only saving **people**... He's redeeming and reconciling all things.

[S] **Colossians 1:19-20**

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

[S] **Revelation 21:5**

He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'

[S] **KAINOS** – all things new (not all new things)

[S] **N.T. Wright**

"God's missionary purposes are cosmic in scope, concerned with the restoration of all things, the establishment of shalom, the renewal of creation and the coming of the Kingdom as well as the redemption of fallen humanity and the building of the Church."

Including **culture**.

[S] Tim Keller

"If...the story of salvation is creation, fall, redemption, restoration, then things look different...the purpose of redemption is not to escape the world but renew it...if we lose the emphasis on the corporate – on the kingdom – we lose the power of the gospel for cultural transformation".

New heaven and a new earth... *this world* **all new**.

[S] Paul Marshall

"This world is our home: we are made to live here. It has been devastated by sin, but God plans to put it right. Hence, we look forward with joy to newly restored bodies and to living in a newly restored heaven and earth. We can love this world because it is God's, and it will be healed, becoming at last what God intended from the beginning."

[3]

Mission = working for the spiritual and social *and* cultural renewal of the whole world.

"Joining God in the renewal of all things".

Practice of cultural renewal

Subversive engagement of our host culture (grace)

[S] Graham Cray

Involved distinctiveness *within* our host culture (holiness) &
Subversive engagement of our host culture (grace)

Three paradigm texts:

[S] Jeremiah 29:4-7

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.'

[S] Matthew 5:13-16

¹³ *'You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.*

¹⁴ *'You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

[S] Philippians 2:3-5, 12-16

³ *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:...*

...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

¹⁴ *Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life.*

[S] Show home.

[S] GERHARD LOHFINK

"It can only be that God begins in a small way, at one single place in the world. There must be a place, visible, tangible, where the salvation of the world can begin: that is, where the world becomes what it is supposed to be according to God's plan. Beginning at that place, the new thing can spread abroad, but not through persuasion, not through indoctrination, not through violence. Everyone must have the opportunity to come and see. All must have the chance to behold and test this new thing. Then, if they want to, they can allow themselves to be drawn into the history of salvation that God is creating. Only in that way can their freedom be preserved.

What drives them to the new thing cannot be force, not even moral pressure, but only the fascination of a world that is changed."

[S] MADELEINE L'ENGLE

"We draw people to Christ not by loudly discrediting what they believe, by telling them how wrong they are and how right we are, but by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it."

Participating in cultural renewal

[S] Discern vocation – THREE CALLINGS

We each have **three** callings – first two are *generic* and third is *specific* to us.

(i) [S] **Bear the image of God**

- add order and unleash abundance
- sustain beauty and utility
- shared calling with every other human
- don't over-spiritualise it – recognise and affirm it

(ii) [S] **Restore the image of God**

- image has been lost
- partly a failure on our part to be the *imago dei*
 - o treated world as a machine
 - o treated things are either symbolic or material but not both
- idolatry → injustice – social conditions that prevent human flourishing and lead to violation of the image
- we are image restoring people
- people of God are to be *over-represented* in two places:
 - o with the most vulnerable neglected
 - where the image is *most* lost and so creation is the most frustrated
 - o among the powerful (cf. Daniel, Nehemiah, Paul)
 - o in both of these we must confront idolatry and injustice to reshape systems in order to re-image people

[S] John Mark Comer

"We are all called to a dual vocation – to take the creation project forward (Gen 2) and to help humans come into relationship with the Creator (Matthew 28)"

(iii) [S] **Contingent calling**

- something that could be otherwise and depends on something else
- we all have multiple contingencies

key = making the most of these opportunities

[S] Discern strategy – THREE QUESTIONS

1. What should role of the arts/education/government/business be in culture from a Biblical perspective?
2. What's wrong with how arts/education/government/business is expressed or functions in our culture at the moment?
3. What would a redeemed Kingdom version of it look like and how can that be achieved?

[S] Develop a support network

- Friends
- Peers
- Mentors
- Networks
- Social media

EXTRA MATERIAL

[S] Albert Walters

"What was formed in creation has been deformed by sin and must be reformed in Christ".

[S] Goheen & Bartholomew

"We cannot grasp the meaning of the story of Jesus until we begin to see that it is in fact the climactic episode of the great story of the Bible... When his good creation was fouled by human rebellion, God immediately set out on a salvage mission. He had created it, and it thus belonged to him by right. Now he would redeem it... so that it might be restored to what he had always intended it to be... In God's purpose, at last the very heavens and earth themselves are to be renewed and restored. In Jesus Christ, that renewal and restoration is revealed in its final shape as the kingdom of God".

[S] John Frame

"Redemption should be interpreted as God's reparation of Adam's failure and fulfilment of his original creation mandate through the Second Adam, Jesus the Messiah. Whereas the first Adam betrayed his heavenly Father and fell into sin by snatching after divinity (Gen. 3:4-6), the Second Adam proved his perfect loyalty by assuming the posture of a servant and humbling himself even unto the death of the cross (Matt. 4:1-11; Phil. 2:5-11). And by his perfect life and spotless sacrifice Jesus became a vicarious atonement for sin and undid the evil that the first Adam initiated. Moreover, the Second Adam is currently fulfilling the original mandate God had given to humanity".

Trevin Wax

"Confessing with our mouths that "Jesus is Lord" does not affect only our church life and a few spiritual habits here and there. As Kingdom people, we must be actively spreading God's reign into every segment of society, influencing the world by bringing God's love and grace to all, whether it be through the arts, through business, through politics or through our vocations."