10. Culture and the Kingdom

Learning Objectives

- Introduce the idea of the “Kingdom of God” and why it is important.
- Understand that everyone can be a catalyst for change and a positive influence on culture.
- Discuss what culture is and how Christians can respond to it.
- Develop a plan for changing an element of culture they are in.

Welcome [5 mins]

Welcome the group to this session, recap the last session and review how the challenge went.

The challenge was to work through an area God had challenged you on using the Circle activity and to talk about a plan with your mentor.

🪃 **Bonus Game: [10 mins]**
Select a game that will best suit your group and setting. Consider games this week that fit with the theme of influencing others.

> ***Pray for the session***

Introduction [5 mins]

ASK - What comes to mind when you think of a missionary? Does anyone know of any missionaries?

Get feedback

Many of us might think of trekking through a jungle to reach a remote village with a box full of Bibles or working with children in a school in a third world country. Usually, we think of “missionaries” as those working overseas in a deprived country.

But!

What if every one of us in this room is a missionary? If you are a follower of Jesus and taking part in his mission to the world, then we believe you are a missionary.

Think back to the “Calling” session. In that session, we talked about how all Christians are *called* to two mains things; **Do you remember what they were?**

> 1. The Great Commandment – Loving God with all we have and are. (*Matthew 22:37-39)*
> AND
> 2. The Great Commission – To ***go*** *and make disciples of all nations….” (Matthew 28:19-20)*

We talked in the “Gospel” and “Sharing our Faith” sessions about how we obey the great commission when we share the Gospel but also when we use our unique gifts and passions to meet a need we see around us.

In this session, we're going to unpack that even more and explore how together we can become "PIONEERS of CHANGE" in our culture and our community.

Bible Focus [25 mins]

When he came to Earth, Jesus spent most of his time preaching about one thing.

ASK - Does anyone want to guess what that was?

= "The Kingdom of God" Or The Kingdom of heaven.

Jesus rarely mentioned "church," but he spent lots of time explaining that the Kingdom of God was coming, and had come, because he had arrived. Many of his parables gave pictures of what the Kingdom would be like.

Ask – What does the word "kingdom" make you think of?

Try and draw out the ideas that a Kingdom has a King or Queen who rules over a people and a place/country.

So, what is the "Kingdom of God"?

A Kingdom must have a King or Queen. The gospels (particularly Mark & Matthew) introduce Jesus as the King that the people of God have always been waiting for.

"The kingdom of God" has Jesus as its King.

📽️ **VIDEO – The Bible project "Gospel of the Kingdom" [**0:00 - 4:45]

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmFPS0f-kzs

The Bible says as followers of Jesus, we are citizens of His Kingdom.

📖 ***Colossians 1:13-14*** *says*
"For he has rescued us from the ***kingdom of darkness*** *and transferred us into the* ***Kingdom of his dear Son,*** *who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins."*

Jesus came to Earth on a mission. He came to announce, demonstrate and establish his Kingdom on Earth and to release it through his people. We join God's mission whenever we work to bring his Kingdom and grow his Kingdom.

That might seem like a huge thing to get our heads around, but it is simple. We're going to think now about how we can use our "influence" in our everyday lives for God's Kingdom.

INFLUENCE

In Small Groups:

What famous people can you think of who have a big influence on others, and how do they influence others?

Explain what a "Social Influencer" is and how people get paid to 'advertise' their products just by using them!

Bonus Video [3 minutes]
"If your Dad was a social influencer", Foil, Arms & Hog – [0:00-2:08]

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8Kzv19UfyU&

This video is just a bit of fun related to the idea of being a social influencer.

It is easy to see the impact celebrities, business leaders and politicians have on others and the world around us. In the church, we can sometimes think it is only the "leaders" and those who are on stage who are making a big difference.

Whilst, many of us might not call ourselves a "leader", each of us can recognise times when we have been an influence on someone else whether that is for good or for bad.

Ask – For example, who here has younger siblings? How many of you have ever persuaded their younger sibling to do something they shouldn't have?

We believe each one of you can be a ***Catalyst*** for change in your culture and your generation by using your ***influence*** for God's Kingdom. A Catalyst is something that brings change that wouldn't happen if the Catalyst wasn't present. A catalyst in chemistry makes some amazing chemical reactions happen.

For example; here's what happens in a Catalytic chemical reaction:

VIDEO – *One of the most viral videos of 2019 – "World Record Elephant Toothpaste Experiment"*

https://youtu.be/XXn4fP3CnJg?t=541 [9:00-10:20]

A Catalyst is "someone or something that causes a big change".

Jesus described the Kingdom of Heaven like this in **Matthew 13:33 "** *"The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough."*

In the same way that yeast can make the dough rise to ten times its height, or a catalyst can make a lot of elephant toothpaste(!), we are called to change the world around us.

In essence, using your influence and being a catalyst means;

> Impacting others… Changing culture… Making a difference…

CULTURE

As catalysts and influencers, we want to impact the culture around us.

This video will help us understand a little about what we mean by "culture".

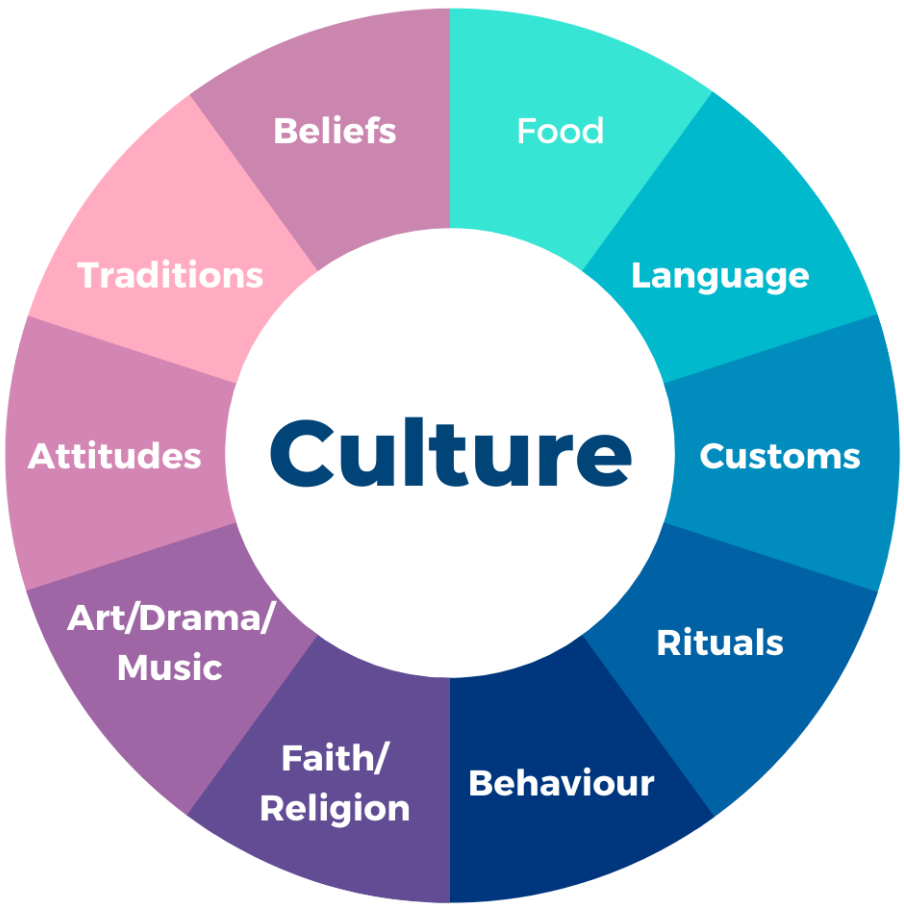
VIDEO - HSBC Eels Ad. [30 secs]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aQpHNOh_io

A culture is made up of how a group of people behave, talk and what they value (believe and show to be important). As this video showed, cultures can be very different!

A “culture” is whatever is “normal” or expected within a particular group and is made up of lots of different aspects.

Ask: How are cultures formed? Draw out such things as beliefs, attitudes, customs, fashion etc.

Show the “culture diagram” picture



As you can see, there are lots of different elements which make up a culture.

You find a unique “culture” in a friendship group, a church, a business, a school, a region (E.g. the South West), an industry (e.g. Sports of Fashion), a nation or a society (Western vs Eastern culture).

In our modern-day UK, we live in a culture that can have some very different values to our faith at times. For example, many people base their ethics (how they decide right/wrong) on what “feels” right or good to them: if it feels good, do it...? But this is contrary to the Bible, which gives us “absolutes” - i.e. there are some things that are always right or wrong, no matter how it feels.

As people of influence, we need to be aware of what culture says, and then respond to it well.

How to respond to culture:

There are three ways that Christians generally respond to aspects of culture: We can try to oppose it, agree with it or try to change it.

📌 **Bonus [5 minutes]**

Oppose

- There may be aspects of a culture which are clearly against what the Bible teaches. Christians can oppose these areas of culture and highlight how wrong they can be whilst trying to bring a solution.
- For example, where people are being mistreated or abused, such as slavery.

A group of Christians led efforts to make slavery illegal in Britain and America in the 19th Century. They were CATALYSTS; they changed culture.

Agree

- Some aspects of culture can be positive. Where Christians see aspects of culture which promote Biblical values of freedom, justice and peace, they should be championing and supporting those elements of culture.
- For example, the freedom and democracy we enjoy in the UK can be traced back to a Biblical worldview.

Change

- Some aspects of culture might not need to be opposed but might need to be changed.
- For example, our generation uses the internet a lot. The internet is not bad in of itself but can be used for negative purposes. As Christians, we can seek to transform an element of culture such as the internet or the media to help bring God's Kingdom on Earth.

📖 ***Read Romans 12:2***

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

We are told in the New Testament not to conform but be transformed.

Living in any culture is like sitting in a boat on a river; if we aren't intentional, we will simply get carried along by the current without realising. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to transform our minds so that we will see both the good and bad elements of culture and not simply fit in with the culture around us.

With this in mind; we recognise that as ***Influencers and Catalysts,*** we need to be evaluating the cultures we're in; not simply accepting or rejecting it. We need to be people who transform culture.

Testimony: [3 mins]

Have a leader share a time when they had to oppose or tried to change an element of culture. It can also be helpful for them to share an area where they changed their mind over whether they should be opposing, agreeing or changing.

Application: [20 mins]

We have seen how, as Christians, we are a part of God's Kingdom, and our mission is to extend His Kingdom on Earth. We do that by sharing the Gospel and by using our influence to change cultures around us.

We are now coming to the end of TAG Catalysts, and we really want to build on all that we have learnt to grow as people of influence who become Catalysts of change in our culture. So now, we're going to come up with a plan together for something we could actually put into practice to change the culture around us.

📌 **Activity: Transforming Culture**

Split the group up into small groups of 3 or 4 students & give each group some flipchart paper. If you have enough leaders, assign one to each group to help them work through the activity.

Take a few moments to explain the steps below. Then, go through the steps below using the area of "Social Media" as an example with the whole group.

Then get the young people into their small groups and ask each small group to think of their own area and follow the steps. Use one piece of flipchart paper per stage to write down or draw ideas.

1. Choose an area of culture & identify a problem

What is going on around you? You may wish to consider your school or college, social media, gaming culture, fashion, environment, clubs or sports.

The first step is to identify the problem.

- What is negative about this area?
- What "goes against" scripture?
- Why is it a problem and why do you want it to change?

Maybe it's an aspect of the culture in your school, or perhaps it is some form of injustice that breaks your heart.

- For example, you might see the amount of waste that comes from food packaging and feel like you need to do something about it.
- Maybe there is someone or a group of people specifically you know who get bullied, and you want to change that.

In this step, take some time to think about what the problem is.

2. Paint the ideal – What could it look like?

- Dream big!
- How would you like things to be?
- Ask God to reveal His vision.
- Describe what it would look like. What would you like to see?

For example, dreaming to be a zero plastic household, or you could dream that your school becomes a bullying free zone.

3. Make a plan

How can we transform it? – Think about what you can practically do to transform it.

- How are you going to get there?
- What steps do you need to take?
- What will you need?

- When will you do it?
- Who do you need to talk to?
- Who can do it with you?

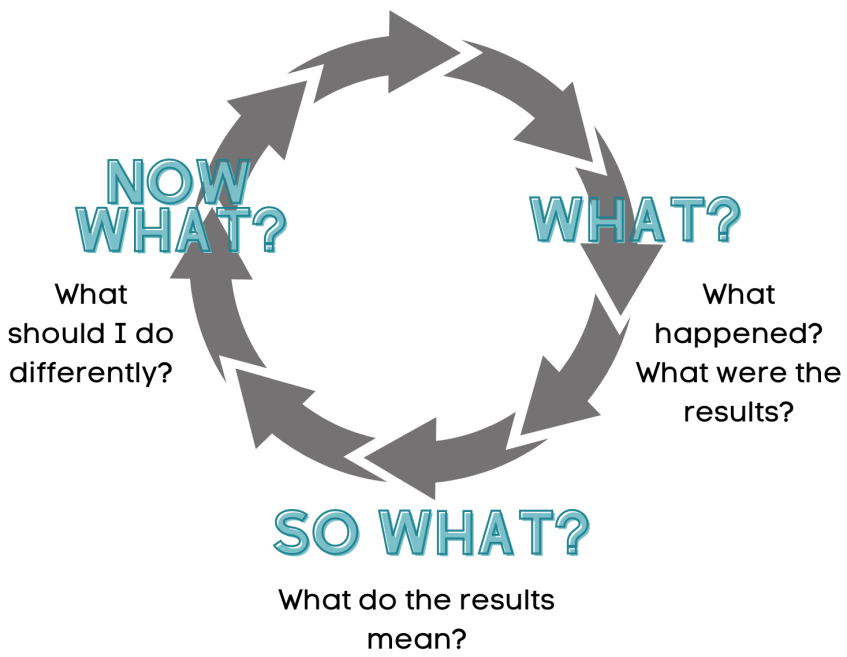
For example, to get to 0% plastic packaging we might need to change where we shop, we might need to get parents on board to make household changes such as buying plastic free toilet roll and using more reusable containers etcetera. We may also need to write or campaign to our local shop to reduce food packaging.

To see a reduction in bullying, as a starting point, you could choose to go and sit and eat lunch with someone every time you notice them eating alone at school, college or work. If you want to dream even bigger, you could come up with a campaign to take place at your school, encourage the creation of 'safe spaces' or invite in visiting speakers to lead assemblies.

4. Review

Make sure you plan in time to review how progress is going and learn from your successes and mistakes. How will you know if you've succeeded?

You might find it helpful to use the learning cycle (which is also on moodle) to help you reflect.



Bonus
Take extra time on this activity and give the participants plenty of time to develop a plan that could be put into action.
Make sure to get feedback from every group and help them work through how they could implement their plans in practice.

Get Feedback:
Depending on how much time you have left, get feedback from each group about what their plans were. If you are short on time, you could just focus on one plan as an example.

Please encourage the participants to put their plans into practice. The groups don't have to be exclusive, if one group came up with an idea that others are passionate about then encourage them to join in as well. You may decide to pick one area or plan and focus on putting that into action as a whole group.

You can share your ideas and what you manage to do on moodle. We would love to hear what you get up to so we can encourage other groups across the region.

Conclusion & Challenge [2 mins]

Today we've looked at one of Jesus' most discussed topic - the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom includes everyone and everywhere that Jesus is King. As Christians, each of us has a role to play in God's mission to see His Kingdom grow. We can do that through using our gifts and our influence to become Catalysts for change in our culture.

Challenge:

Your challenges for this final Catalysts session are; first, to look for little ways you can be a Catalyst for change in the coming week. Secondly, put your plan for change into action. You can do this on your own, as a small group or join with one of the other small groups to help implement theirs.

> ***Pray to end the session***

Thank you so much for using the Catalysts resource, we hope it has been a blessing to you and your group. Have a look on moodle for links and ideas of other resources that are great to follow on from Catalysts. Please get in touch if you want any other ideas of what to do next with your group now that Catlaysts is finished.

Make sure to look out for the next TAG conference where we have amazing live worship, practical training and gather young people from across the South West to hear from inspiring Christian leaders in every sphere of society.

Check out our other latest resources at Swym.org.uk/tag