



Week of April 29, 2019: Judges Series: The Power of Oppositional Culture

Discussion Questions Set #1

“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. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:13-16)

In my younger years, “culture” was always touted as a big, bad evil to be resisted or from which to flee. Rather than experiencing equipping to engage well in culture, I found myself warned to run away from culture, leaving me without strategies to engage the world around me. I ended with a garbage bin full of CD’s – even my U2 Joshua Tree album – and an empty influence in the world. In other words, I found myself as a profound loss as to what it meant to be salt and light in my world.

1. Have you experienced a tendency in Christian community to teach the avoidance of culture rather than teaching on how to effectively engage culture? In what has this resulted in your own life? What do you think might be the larger impact of such thinking?
2. Why do you think there is a tendency to forward avoidance of oppositional culture rather than proper engagement in culture within the church?
3. How can one be “the salt of the earth” or “the light of the world” if we refuse to engage the culture around us?
4. Do you ever experience tension between engaging the world and fleeing culture? Discuss.

Discussion Questions Set #2

“I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, and from the desert to the Euphrates River. I will give into your hands the people who live in the land, and you will drive them out before you. Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. Do not let them live in your land or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you.” (Exodus 23:32-33)

“Another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. They forsook the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them.” (Judges 2:10-12).

In sermon, we talked about four common gestures that we often take toward oppositional culture. We found that we can either condemn, critique, copy or consume culture. The difficulty for us comes when these gestures – to be used sparingly and strategically at times – become postures – regular ways of interacting in the world.

1. Of the four possible postures, which one do you feel might be your Achilles heel? Which way of engaging culture might you be most drawn towards?
2. Which of the four postures might be the Achilles heel of the church in 2019? How do you see this at work in the church?
3. The above verses present to us a warning and the effect of indiscriminate consumption of culture. In the span of one generation, the people of Israel went from a people proudly declaring “as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15) to a people who didn’t even know the Lord. How might we see a similar reality at work in our world? In what ways have you seen the church consume oppositional culture?



Discussion Questions Set #3

“Be fruitful and multiply.” (Genesis 1:28)

Through Israel “all peoples on earth will be blessed” (Genesis 12:3).

“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.” (Jeremiah 29:4-7)

Scripture encourages us to be creators and cultivators of Godly culture.

1. What do you think it means to a) create Godly culture and b) cultivate Godly culture? What might this look like practically at Hillside in 2019?
2. In response to the Israelites’ consumption of oppositional culture, God raised up judges to call Israel to engage in repentance, to pursue justice for Israel, and to stand as deliverers in times of cultural crisis. What might it look like for the people of Hillside to begin fulfilling the role of “judge” in our community?
3. Is our culture – the culture of the community of those calling Hillside home - a light to the greater culture around us? Are we like salt in the cultural soup around us? Do we stand out? Discuss.