

Sermon #25

What Culture Do I Choose?

God is love, for He always does what is good and right and true.
God's love is real love.

It is not temporary or based on feelings.

It is eternal and based on His unswerving commitment to
do you good, regardless of what you do towards Him.

God's love does not spoil; it does what is best.

God's love is amazing, beyond our conceptions.

His will is that we love others as He loves us,
but we cannot do this on our own.

We need His truth, guidance, strength, wisdom, power
and desire in order to love like He loves.

God is delighted to give these things to us for that purpose.

Just ask, receive and go forward in faith.

God's will for you is to love others as He loves you.

Whether you consider yourself to be a Baptist or a Buddhist,
Methodist or Mormon or Muslim, Jew or Jehovah's Witness,
Catholic or Church of God in Christ, Presbyterian or Pentecostal,
Unitarian, New Ager or atheist, His will for you is to love.

Knowing church doctrines and creeds do not make you a loving person.
Joining a church and going to church does not empower you to love.

Does your life testify faith in Christ and obedience to His teachings?
Or are you masquerading, playing a pious part in the play of religious
deception—giving lip service to Jesus for public display while
hiding your sins in the darkness of hypocrisy?

God's will is love.

Love is following Christ and obeying His teachings.

Are you growing in love each day?
Are you choosing to love each moment?

Culture

No human culture is based purely on love.

No human culture is perfect.

Not African culture, European culture, Asian culture,
Hispanic culture or native culture.

All cultures have some false ideas, harmful traditions
and unhealthy attitudes.

Whoever worships or puts faith in their culture
can never rise above the limitations of that culture
or truly unite with anyone of a different culture.

In contrast, God's culture is based on pure love.

His culture is perfect and His language is truth.

It is a culture that transcends and perfects all earthly cultures.

Better than Jewish; better than Gentile.

Better than African; better than Hispanic.

Better than European; better than Asian.

It is the only culture where people from different cultures can
come into unity.

People of every nation, tribe, language and cultural group are welcome
in the Heavenly Culture of God. The only requirement is that they
love God and one another in truth.

Jesus taught all about heavenly culture.

He called it the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God.

Jesus leads us to leave the confining ideas and errors of our human
culture and let Him replace them with God's ideas, love and truth.

He calls us to give up attachments to our culture
and to join His heavenly culture.

Let's contrast a few typical American cultural ideas
with Jesus' heavenly ideas:

{go over the handout}

“I, the Lord, AM your Father, Teacher and Guide.
I know what is good and right, what will bring life.
I give you the gift of life, and I show you how to live it and enjoy it.
Human cultures and ideas interfere with and disrupt the flow of my
goodness, so come out of your culture and be planted in Mine.
My culture is good. There is no evil in it.
It is the best there is, and it is far better than yours.
Do not take pride in your culture; trade it in for My culture like
you would trade in an old beat up car for a brand new one.
Mine is better, and it never wears out or rusts or gets wrecked.
My culture uplifts you; your culture demeans you.
My culture is heavenly and eternal; yours is earthly and temporary.
Seek the truth and live your life in Me: that is heaven.
I love you.
All that I have, I give to you;
yet I always have more to give.
You are made in My image and likeness.
I created you to love.
Only when you love can you fully enjoy the life I've given.
You must love by faith, for love often seems like a foolish choice.
My will for you is love, true love.
My love is true; receive it from Me and pass it on.
It takes strength and courage to love.
Love humbles the willing lover and humiliates the prideful.
But love is good and has great reward. Love.”

Notes:

What Culture Do You Choose?

American culture: Self	Heavenly culture: Love
<p>Go to church every week to show that you are a good Christian or Jew and a responsible citizen.</p>	<p>Devote a day each week to resting and communing with God. Do nothing burdensome or stressful on this day. Do good as God leads. Don't go to church unless it is restorative and leads you into deeper communion with God. Remember, the Sabbath was made for man's benefit.</p>
<p>Make your children go to Sunday School so they will be good and so that others will see you as good parents.</p>	<p>Listen to and learn from your children. Lead them to God by setting an example of love, goodness, kindness, respect and honesty. Let them choose or reject God for themselves.</p>
<p>Make as much money as possible and/or get the best job you can.</p>	<p>Work diligently as God leads and accept the pay He gives, depending on Him as your Provider.</p>
<p>Strive to be popular and rich in order to feel good about yourself.</p>	<p>Seek, practice and speak the truth in love and you will feel good about God and others. Save up spiritual treasures.</p>
<p>Take a stand either for or against abortion clinics and doctors: get involved in political activism!</p>	<p>Encourage and help pregnant women in distress. Urge them to seek God's will for themselves and to obey it, having faith in God's power to work through all for good.</p>
<p>Go to court and sue if you think you have been wronged.</p>	<p>Turn the other cheek; do good to those that hate you; receive God's provision and justice; put your trust in Him.</p>
<p>Keep your house immaculately clean and expensively furnished.</p>	<p>Keep an atmosphere of love, faith, goodness and truth in your house. Clean, organize and furnish it according to the needs of those who live there.</p>
<p>Make good grades in school.</p>	<p>Be a diligent, honest, respectful and appreciative student. Learn what is important and true. Develop skills that will benefit others and help you to take care of yourself.</p>

American culture: Self	Heavenly culture: Love
<p>Win at all costs.</p>	<p>Play the game diligently, fairly and honestly. Enjoy playing; rejoice with the winners and comfort the losers.</p>
<p>Listen to motivational speakers, commentators, role models and “experts” so you can get ahead in life.</p>	<p>Listen to the Spirit of Truth and read the teachings of Jesus. Put God’s truth and guidance into practice every day. Then you will have abundant, fulfilling life.</p>
<p>Build a bigger church, a newer church or add on to your church.</p>	<p>Build a greater faith in God by trusting and obeying Him, following where He leads.</p>
<p>Recruit more members to your church.</p>	<p>Encourage members to seek and follow Christ, even if it means that some will leave your church.</p>
<p>Strive to be better or achieve more than someone else.</p>	<p>Go forward in your journey of faith, seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Urge others to do the same.</p>
<p>Get elected. Get authority and power.</p>	<p>Be willing to serve wherever God leads and/or puts you; serve diligently, humbly and honestly.</p>
<p>Donate 10% to your church.</p>	<p>Gladly give of what you have as God leads, to whomever He shows you to give.</p>
<p>Do fund raising programs and activities to get more money.</p>	<p>Ask for what you need, receive what God gives, and use it wisely.</p>
<p>Get involved in social activism to change society and/or government.</p>	<p>Let God change YOU as you walk with Him, and let your life be a light and inspiration to others.</p>
<p>Get as much formal education as possible so you can make more money</p>	<p>Let the Spirit of God direct your education—what to learn, when and how—so you will be well-equipped for life.</p>
<p>Get stuff and things and possessions.</p>	<p>Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well--if you still want them.</p>