

Christian Action Ministry

Newsletter

Involving the Christian in Community Action

January—February, 2020★ Vol. 30, Number 01

Inside

Are you a Cultural Ambassador?

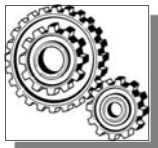
By
Lauston Stephens

Are You a Cultural Ambassador?

How culture affects societies and evangelizing.

Page 1-3

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please call (802) 655-0280, email, or contact our website (see back page).



In the Works

How does transgender activism effect us?

Are you interested in becoming involved? CAM is looking for interested and active people to act as liaisons to their church, helping to keep the Christian community informed. Contact CAM at 372-6442.

How many people who would be counted as a “culture warrior” can give a working definition of the word, “culture?” Surveys consistently rank Vermont as the least religious state in the nation. Even if every preacher in every pulpit preached what “culture warriors” think they *should* preach on certain subjects, they won’t win a culture war by playing power politics. The pews are empty; they don’t have the votes. That’s okay; God hasn’t called the Church to play power politics. We are called to be ambassadors (II Cor. 5:20). Though you may have ten thousand bible verses to bolster your

view on a subject, you might as well speak to your neighbor, friend, relative, or co-worker in a foreign language as to quote bible verses to them. It just won’t register. As a good ambassador, you will learn to speak their language. There is a need to look at cultural issues in cultural terms, not just simple political or religious terms. This applies to both our mission as salt and our mission as light (Matt. 5:13-14).

“There is no one righteous; no, not one. There is no one who understands. There is no one who seeks after God. They have all turned aside. They have together become unprofitable.

There is no one who does good, no, not so much as one. ... For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God”. (Romans 3:10-12, 23).

This must be clear; all cultures are sinful. They are created, expressed and changed by sinful people. They re-enforce the sinful inclinations of the human heart.

It may be easy to see the sinfulness of other cultures; our own, not so much. For example, you may think America is a Christian nation and China is not, so our culture is more biblical. Vermonters might be quick to cite human rights abuses of the Chinese government, but the government of a people is

"Give praise to the Lord, proclaim His name; make known among the nations what He has done, and proclaim that His name is exalted."

Isaiah 12:4, NIV

not the culture of the people. When my white-haired wife stepped onto a bus in China, one of the young people stood to give her a seat. When I got on, another stood. Being Western, I gave that seat to a woman with salt and pepper hair, perhaps European and ten years my junior. A third young person stood to give me his seat. Would that happen in Vermont? In this aspect, it appears the Chinese culture is more biblical than the Vermont culture. “You shall rise up before the gray head, and honor the face of an old man.” (Leviticus 19:32).

Most Christians are Gentile (from the nations). We may read Acts, chapter 15, and conclude, “Good, I don’t have to convert to Judaism in order to follow Messiah. I really like shrimp wrapped in bacon (or other unclean foods).” Here’s the part we may not like: note the phrase in verse 23, “Brothers who are of the Gentiles [nations].” The decision

made at that council basically declares that the congregation of Yeshua, Messiah, is to be multi-cultural! What? Yes, if everyone is to abide in their calling (I Cor. 7:20) then the Church should become the most culturally diverse and conversant part of a society. We represent the kingdom of God, which is “out of every nation and of all tribes, peoples, and languages.” (Rev. 7:9)

This has never been easy. See Gal. 2:11-14. There are many small villages tucked away in the valleys of Vermont. It has been possible to essentially hide in a local congregation where virtually everyone is of the same culture. For generations, Christians have been inclined to think that bridging culture gaps is an extra challenge that only missionaries must face. Only the missionary will be stretched and grown in godliness in this way. That was *never* God’s plan!

About our mission as light, this decade has seen the largest waves of human migration in recorded history and 90% of those who consider migrating want to come here. The mission fields are coming to us. If you travel abroad or have a real connection with missionaries, God has been using that to increase your cultural awareness. But the cultural competence of the local church must grow beyond the superficial things that attract tourists.

Remember, we need to be able to speak the language of neighbors, friends, relatives and co-workers. Cultural psychologists and anthropologists may identify various cultures as having predominantly an ethic of autonomy, an ethic of community or an ethic of divinity. The predominant sense of identity of people in those cultures are, respectively, as an individual, as part of a community, or in relationship to a deity or the spirit world. All are valid aspects of our identities.

Each individual is created as a social being, but various cultures assume and value one aspect of identity more than the other two.

Missionaries identify various cultures differently, according to the predominant moral emotion that motivates and restrains behavior. The two ways of classifying cultures correspond. What cultural psychologists may call an ethic of autonomy culture, missionaries may call a guilt culture, or guilt/innocence. What cultural psychologists may call an ethic of community culture, missionaries may call a shame culture, or shame/honor. What cultural psychologists may call an ethic of divinity culture, missionaries may call a fear culture, or fear/power. Establishing your own innocence, honor or power becomes the corresponding “works salvation.”

Genesis, Chapter 3, is our Rosetta stone, showing the connection between

"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 5:15–16, NIV

the missionary view and the psychological view. When Adam and Eve sin, the first moral emotion they experience is shame. There is a crisis in their identity as part of the community, though it be just the two of them at this point. When they sense the presence of God, they experience fear: there is a crisis in their relationship to the divine. When the very simple Edenic law is rehearsed, guilt is established and the crisis in their identities as individuals is revealed.

We are enculturated from the day we are born and take for granted what we have always known. We may not realize how important some things are to other people. In some shame/honor cultures, when someone brings shame or dishonor on their family or a larger group, they may commit suicide. In other shame/honor cultures, when someone is perceived to have brought shame on the family or larger group, there may be an “honor killing.” Because of these

things, most Western Christians will reject a shame/honor communal culture entirely as unbiblical and can only minister to people from those cultures by trying to convert them to our individualistic guilt/innocence culture. “So, your niece smiled at that stranger. That is not a sin. It’s no big deal. It is no reflection on your family.” We are not called to do that. Instead, we should recognize that the sinful part of communal cultures is the deadly responses to shame because they don’t know that the blood of Messiah was already shed to cover the shame and impute honor. In fact, biblical cultures appear to be more communal than individualistic cultures; we just don’t see it because we read the bible through our own cultural filter.

In a Western culture, prosecutors and courts have limited time and resources and may not have all the evidence they need. They resort to plea bargaining; at least they will attend to some

crimes. The Judge of all the earth has none of those limits. There will be no plea bargaining at the great white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-13). In this respect, our guilt/innocence individualistic culture is sinful; it misses the mark. The idea of a prosecutor plea bargaining with a criminal is shameful and not to be respected by people from other cultures.

Yes, America is the most individualistic culture on the planet; we are out of balance and this is a factor in many of our social ills. More on that later and our mission as salt. For now, just begin to focus on our mission as light. Read the commission Jesus gives in Matthew 10, “As you go, preach, saying, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons. . . . Into whatever city or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy; and stay there until you go on.” (Matthew 10:7-8, 11) All scripture quotes here are from the World

English Bible, but this passage can be paraphrased: “Give them Truth encounter; give them power encounter; give them community encounter.” Remember, Jesus sent out teams, communities. Another paraphrase: “Minister to their guilt, fear and shame; address their relationships with themselves, with God and with others.”

This is not multiple choice. Some congregations focus on being Bible churches, some focus on being charismatic power churches, some focus on being a community. The commission is comprehensive; minister to the whole person.

For further study, <http://honorshame.com/> provides a wealth of information and resources.

1 Demirdjian, Z. S. Andrew, and Zara Mokatsian. “Immigration Behavior: Toward a Social-Psychological Model for Research.” *Journal of Business & Educational Leadership*, vol. 4, no. 1, Fall 2013, pp. 22–33.

Lauston Stephens is a Board Member of the Christian Action Ministry and attends Roadside Chapel Assembly of God in Rutland, VT

Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Matthew 9:37–38, NIV

Return Service Requested

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BURLINGTON, VT
PERMIT NO.165



What can I do?



*Faith without
works is dead*
James 2:17

e-mail : camnetvt@gmail.com

www.christianactionministry.com

Happy New Year

As we begin our 30th year of the Christian Action Ministry Newsletter, we find new issues in the public sector that affect us as Christians. We will research issues like transgenderism and carbon taxes and their effect upon us and the churches we attend; the upcoming November elections, and other issues that are sure to come up.

The Christian Action Ministry is also actively working on an email distribution of our newsletter for those who wish to receive it in that manner with a small pilot test beginning with this issue to a selected group. Our email address had to be changed to camnetvt@gmail.com to allow this to happen. Our website remains the same.

We hope you have a safe and prosperous 2020 and that you move closer to God this year and his redeeming grace.

The **Christian Action Ministry Network, Inc.** is an educational nonprofit public charity supported entirely by volunteers and contributions from the public. Personal, church and business donations are encouraged and are tax-deductible under the IRS Code 501(C)3. The information provided herein does not necessarily reflect the views of any particular church or individual associated with the Christian Action Ministry Network.

✉ CAM Network, Inc.
PO Box 1067
Williston, VT 05495



(802) 598-3202
Call to confirm date
Next Meetings
January 16, 7:00 pm
Parkinson home
Hinesburg, Vt.
February 20 7:00 pm
Parkinson home
Hinesburg, Vt.

**Making A Difference
In Vermont!**