



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO CULTURE

by John Stonestreet & Brett Kunkle

Review by Tim Challies
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Christians have an interesting relationship with culture. *Culture* is a word we love to use, but one we rarely pause to define. We speak of culture's dangerous encroachment on the church, of our need to avoid it, engage it, or redeem it. But what is this culture thing anyway? It happens to be the subject of an excellent new book by John Stonestreet and Brett Kunkle. *A Practical Guide to Culture* is meant to help those who are helping the next generation navigate today's world, and it does its job well.

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“In its most basic sense, culture refers to what people do with the world: we build, we invent, we imagine, we create, we tear down, we replace, we compose, we design, we emphasize, we dismiss, we embellish, we engineer.” But culture goes deeper than that, and also speaks to our shared beliefs, our “conceptions of God, truth, morality, humanity, and history that shape how we live.” Culture is not people, but what people do. And, of course, culture is always changing because people are always changing.

To summarize,

“cultures consist of those products of human activity that have collectively taken on a life of their own. The worlds we create powerfully influence our lives by convincing us of what is normal. As we live in a culture, we become committed to its vision of life, unless we're intentional otherwise. In other words, we make our cultures, and then our cultures shape us.”

It shapes us primarily by what it considers normal and good and worthy of praise.

In every age, Christians have had to carefully navigate their culture, to ensure that they are taking their cues not from the world around them, but from the Bible. In every age, Christian parents have been responsible to help their children separate culture lies from biblical truth. This is as true

today as it has ever been. And that is exactly the purpose of this book. “We wrote this book for all who have a vested interest in their success like we do. The kids of today will build the culture of tomorrow. We’ve aimed this book at parents, grandparents, mentors, teachers, and pastors who have some little image bearers in their lives, as we have in ours, and who want to see them navigate this culture moment as champions for Christ.”

The authors approach the subject in four parts. In the first they introduce the notion of culture and tell why it matters which provides a kind of framework for the rest of the book. In the second they provide a read of the cultural waters, pointing to a number of prominent culture-shaping undercurrents we may take for granted: the Information Age, new notions of identity, technology’s role in allowing us to be alone together, and perpetual adolescence. The third part is the heart of the book, and here they discuss eight of the cultural waves pounding against the church today: pornography, the hookup culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, affluence and consumerism, addiction, entertainment, and racial tension. In every case they identify the cultural lies, compare those lies to biblical truth, offer practical counsel on taking action, and provide a vision for overcoming the challenges they present. The fourth part provides brief primers on worldview essentials, and especially those related to the centrality and trustworthiness of the Bible.

I am a father tasked with raising three children in this culture, and a pastor tasked with helping a whole church navigate a world that seems to be coming apart at the seams. I am convinced this book has better equipped me in my tasks. It has helped me better understand culture and it has helped me better understand *my* culture. It has shown me where culture is particularly pressing against the church and where I need to be especially careful to guard myself and equip the ones I love. I’m glad I read it and heartily commend it to you.

Review by Tim Challies: <https://www.challies.com/book-reviews/discerning-your-call-to-ministry>

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