

Sojourners and Exiles

Threats to North Collin, 2024

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

1 Peter 2:11

A person's culture and background have an immeasurable impact on their mindset, values, and habits.

This impact can be positive and/or negative with regard to their spiritual growth.

Romans 8:31-39 What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who can be against us?** He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 1:18-20 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. **So they are without excuse.**

**It's difficult for us, as Americans, to separate ourselves
from our culture as necessary in order
to cling to the culture of The Kingdom of God.**

1. It's difficult for anyone in any culture to be objective about themselves and their situation.
2. Many of the cultural ideals that we, as Americans, have traditionally celebrated are ideals that God also encourages in His Kingdom.
3. Many of the cultural ideals that we, as Americans, have traditionally celebrated that are NOT godly have been presented in such a way as to make them seem admirable and good.
4. For many decades, what we were doing as a nation worked really well.
5. We're surrounded by friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family members who profess Christ but don't actually cling to Him for guidance and wisdom.

It's difficult to be objective about ourselves. Sometimes, we need the help of a friend to gain insight.

Our background and culture significantly affect the way we respond to spiritual instruction.

We, as Americans, face unique cultural challenges when it comes to living for Christ and growing in the faith.

Some people have an easier time being introspective than others, but spiritual growth requires that we meditate and learn to think more deeply about spiritual things.

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Individualism: (1) A doctrine that **the interests of the individual are** or ought to be ethically **paramount**. (2) The conception that **all values, rights, and duties originate in individuals**. (3) A theory maintaining the political and economic independence of the individual and **stressing individual initiative, action, and interests**. (*Merriam-Webster*)

Individualism is the moral stance, political philosophy, ideology, and social outlook that **emphasizes the intrinsic worth of the individual**. Individualists promote realizing one's goals and desires, valuing independence and self-reliance, and advocating that the interests of the individual should gain **precedence over the state or a social group**, while opposing external interference upon one's own interests by society or institutions such as the government. (*Britannica*)

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Individualism: (1) A social or cultural tradition, ideology, or personal outlook that emphasizes the individual and their rights, independence, and relationships with other individuals. Compare collectivism. (2) In ethical and political theory, the view that individuals have intrinsic value. This implies that the unique values, desires, and perspectives of individuals should also be valued in their own right. Thus, individualism often manifests itself as an approach to life that emphasizes the essential right to be oneself and to seek fulfillment of one's own needs and desires. (*APA Dictionary of Psychology*)

Individualism is all about taking care of yourself; it is the belief and practice that every person is unique and self-reliant. A belief in individualism also implies that you believe that the government should bud out of your individual affairs. The counterpoints to individualism are socialism and communism (among others). Those who prefer individualism often site fear of governmental control over their life decisions as reason for that inclination. (*Vocabulary.com*)

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We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Declaration of Independence, 7/4/1776





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Romans 12:3-5 ³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members,^[e] and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24 ²³ "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. ²⁴ Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.

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1 Corinthians 12:12-27 ¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves^[d] or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts,^[e] yet one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

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Acts 2:42-47 ⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe^[d] came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 4:32-35 ³² Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. ³³ And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴ There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵ and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

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Philippians 2:1-11 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,^[a] ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,^[b] ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,^[c] being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

John 15:12-13 ¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

1 John 3:16 ¹⁶ By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

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What are the consequences?

**Focus on Selfishness/Self-Esteem, rather than Esteem for Others
and a Lack of Perspective**

Philippians 2:3 ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Luke 17:9-10 ⁹ Does he [*the Master*] thank the servant because he did what was commanded? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants;^[e] we have only done what was our duty.'

Jeremiah 10:23 I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.

Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

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What are the consequences?

Lack of Humility; Boastfulness

1 Peter 5:5 ⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

2 Corinthians 10:17-18 ¹⁷ "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." ¹⁸ For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

Isolation/Resistance to Asking For & Accepting Help from Others

Galatians 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Hebrews 10:24-25 ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Demanding Personal Rights Without Responsibility

Romans 14, etc...

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What are the consequences?

Injustice Prompts Violence, Rather Than Patience and Peacefulness

Matthew 5:9-11; 38-48 ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account... ³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' ³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic,^[a] let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. ⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers,^[b] what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

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What are the consequences?

Rebellious Attitudes Towards Authority Figures; Lack of Submission and Meekness

Romans 13:1-7 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ²Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

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What are the consequences?

Rebellious Attitudes Towards Authority Figures; Lack of Submission and Meekness

1 Peter 2:13-25 ¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution,^[a] whether it be to the emperor^[b] as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants^[c] of God. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. ¹⁸ Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. ¹⁹ For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹ For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

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What are the consequences?

Rebellious Attitudes Towards Authority Figures; Lack of Submission and Meekness

Hebrews 5:7-9 ⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus^[a] offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him...

Philippians 2:1-18

Romans 8:6-8 ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Ephesians 5:15-33

Colossians 3:12-25

1 Peter 3:1-6

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What are the consequences?

2 Timothy 3:1-5 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ²For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

Do we see many of these things in our society right now?

Do we ever see them in other churches?

Do we ever see them in ourselves?

Do we ever see them at North Collin?