

A TIME FOR CHANGE: CULTURE

CULTURE: THE BIGGEST CULPRIT

✳ *Instructor's notes: The trainees may take notes. Explain how culture impacts on people and affect their behaviour and way of thinking.*

The biggest hindrance to women is CULTURE.

Culture is a term used to describe the way most people think and live, within a given group, society or community. It is the ideas, traditions, customs, norms and art of the particular society.

Culture is a particular social environment created by human beings. This social environment is reflected in the lives of the people and includes religious beliefs, social norms, political factors and arts.

Two main components of culture are:

- Custom: A way of behaving or doing fixed by constant repetition – habit, mould, “a matter of course”. A traditional activity, something usually done at a particular time or in particular circumstances or manner by a person or people in a society. Usual.

E.g. It was her custom to sweep her compound at 6 o'clock every morning

- Tradition: An inherited, accepted or established way of thinking, feeling or doing. It is a custom or belief that has existed for a long time without changing.

E.g. It is their tradition to celebrate Christmas in the village every year.

THE SEVEN ELEMENTS OF CULTURE

✳ *Instructor's notes: Please take a minute to discuss these seven elements. The trainees may take notes*

There are seven "constant elements" present in every culture:

1. Language – a system of contact or code of understanding
2. Solutions to the very basic needs for survival – shelter, economics, and elementary technical skills.
3. Regulating and maintaining basic human unity and perpetuation of the species – *marriage and family*



4. Regulation of social relations – organization of clan, tribe, race, nation
5. Social rules – defining what is good or bad, right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable.
6. Artistic expressions of the individual and society – *what is beautiful, ugly, etc*
7. A concept of God or the supernatural – an experience of the "holy," of what is beyond everyday reality, through a form of religious beliefs.

Culture is, therefore, not necessarily a negative thing but when it confines or limits us, contrary to God's word, it becomes a stumbling block and hinders us.

POSITIVES OF CULTURE

Every culture is unique and should maintain its uniqueness. Some positive things about culture:

1. Culture gives a person a sense of identity and belonging
2. Culture ensures continuity and so is good for self-preservation
3. Culture sets and defines boundaries so we know what is acceptable or unacceptable, holy or profane.

NEGATIVES OF CULTURE

Hence culture must always be viewed from the perspective of God's word. Unfortunately, many aspects of culture, irrespective of background, glaringly contradict scripture.

1. Culture is manmade. Anything that originates outside of God is imperfect.

Biblical culture, however, is based on the infallible and perfect word of God

2. We become so well-adjusted to our culture that we fit into it without even thinking.

When we live and walk in God's word, we are transformed from the inside out.

3. Culture always drags us down to its level of immaturity.

The word of God brings the best out of us and develops well-formed maturity in us.

* *Instructor's notes: Discuss what is beautiful about your culture*



Crooked or Straight?

However, the best way to find out how straight or crooked a thing is, is to put it next to a straight line, in this case, the word of God.

- Is your culture in line with the word of God? Are our traditions and customs aligned with God's word?
- When our culture becomes aligned with the word of God, we would be liberated and released as women to develop our full potential and be used by God.

* Instructor's notes: Discuss this with trainees

Tradition Versus God's Word

Oftentimes, we end up taking our social traditions, for instance, and incorporating them within the traditions of the Church. This compromises and weakens the impact and effect of the word of God in our lives

Hebrews 4:12 NKJV

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

- Yet, Jesus said,

Matthew 15:3-6

3 Jesus replied, "And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? 4 For instance, God says, 'Honour your father and mother,' and 'Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death.' 5 But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, 'Sorry, I can't help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.' 6 In this way, you say they don't need to honour their parents. And so you cancel the word of God for the sake of your own tradition. Therefore, we make God's word ineffective in our lives when we stick to our traditions, customs and religious beliefs, rather than stand on the scriptures.

COMMON FACTORS

We have looked at 4 areas that hinder the Church generally and women specifically, individually or corporately. As Christians, the situation is dire because we face these problems both from the Church and society.

Prejudice, Religion, Denominationalism and Culture all have common factors that work against women.

1. They consist of rules, regulations, opinions and instructions that must be followed, stuck to and obeyed.



