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## CULTURE EATS STRATEGY FOR BREAKFAST

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Culture eats strategy for breakfast. This is a famous quote by a leadership guru by the name of Peter Drucker. What it means is that a business or organization can have a great vision, a great strategy but the culture of the organization is of far greater importance than anything else.

Every church has a culture— every workplace has a culture. Every family has a culture. We are not using the word culture in an ethnic sense. The culture is the feel of the place. It is the climate of the place. It is what you feel when you enter a place. In a healthy culture people love being there. It is attractive. People want to be around. You can't see culture. Invisible but it has huge impact. A culture is what the place feels like, how people behave, and how people treat each other.

We have talked about our 5 priorities on the wall here. But these are just words on the wall. They don't create culture. It is behaviour that determines culture, not belief. Most churches have very similar beliefs. But we know from experience that different churches feel very different

Whenever you study how to change a culture, they often start with leadership. But we all have a role in shaping the culture of a place. Workplace, family, church. Because it is the cumulative impact of everyone. 3 ways we can do this

# Call out unhealthy culture church, workplace If we don't then we are allowing that to continue. Leaders might have a key role in shaping culture but they are often allowed to continue bad behaviour by those whom they lead. Congregations can just go along with the culture of a place and not challenge it or call it out. So I am giving you permission to call out behaviour in the leadership here that is not healthy.

# Never underestimate your own influence. Often culture in an organization can be strongly influenced by a few key individuals, who might or might not carry a title. You might think I can't impact the culture of this church. Or my workplace. But just as one toxic person can permeate an organization so you can permeate goodness through what you say or do. James says this James 3:5-6 (The Message has a great translation.) Our words can profoundly impact for good or for bad. Jesus said You are the salt of the earth. A small amount of salt profoundly alters a meal.

# Reflect on how much the culture of the world is impacting us Paul says in Romans 12:2 Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world.... Let's draw some comparisons between the culture of the world today and Scripture.

**Conflict** We are increasingly living in a culture of conflict. And the way we deal with conflict is to talk to other people about it. Social media is causing us to lose the ability to talk face to face with people. Our emotional intelligence is actually decreasing despite our technology.

We talk about the other person but we never talk to the other person. We live in a society that loves to take offence. Kingdom culture is not devoid of conflict. We will always have conflict when we have people together. We all see things differently, have different world views and different vulnerabilities because of our brokenness.

**But kingdom culture puts a high priority on reconciliation and forgiveness.** Matthew 5:23-24 says If you are the offender, work to make it right He also said. If the other person is the offender, make it right. Matthew 18:15, Also. Luke 17:4, Matthew 6:15 There is a high culture of grace and forgiveness in the kingdom, not unresolved offence.

**Cancel culture** is where a person thought to have acted or spoken in an unacceptable manner is shunned or boycotted, often through the influence of social media. While there is a place for boycotts and social action, often it can be over the top and really a form of bullying. It happens in church circles as well. We write people off because they hold different views.

**Kingdom culture is one of acceptance and tolerance**  
Romans 14:1-13, NLT

**Complaint** We live in a culture of complaint. We love to complain: about the council, the government, the weather, about people that annoy us, the church, when you are held up, road cones. Half of social media is people complaining about something. The problems with complaint is that it is contagious and stops us from being grateful.

A culture of complaint in a church is lethal. It often sounds like. The church should do this or do that, meaning someone else, normally the paid staff should be doing this. It is not actually how church is intended to be, where each person uses their gift and plays their part. But we have professionalised church and pay people to provide the services that we feel we require.

**The bible instructs us to build a culture of thankfulness. Of gratefulness.** Colossians 3:15, Colossians 4:2, Philippians 2:14, James 5:9,

Take note this week as you talk, how much are your words one of complaint. Sometimes we don't even realize we are doing it. Take note of how many words are ones of thanks.

**Consumer** We live in an all encompassing consumer culture. A consumer culture is all about what is best for me. We are not worried about other people. But we expect it to suit us. We are given multiple options to choose from. We are bombarded with ads to upgrade things, despite the fact the old one works fine. Goods are made to only last a few years and then be chucked out. Things are made so you can't repair them. We are continually encouraged to upgrade. We are sold goods, not



on the basis of what they do, but on their status. We are encouraged to experience new things all the time. We fear missing out if we don't have the latest gadget. Our society is built around consumerism.

**The Bible says that the church should be built around a culture of others,** Phil 2:3-6, Gal 5:13, Matth 5:46 1 Cor 10:23-24

The culture of the kingdom is other centered. It doesn't focus on satisfying our own whims and pleasures. It is about looking at our fellow believers and about a hurting world around us. It is the opposite of consumer culture. And it is incredibly counter cultural. Why Jesus said. Following him involves taking up our cross. Really hard.

**Criticism.** We live in a culture that loves to criticize. Complaint is moaning about an issue. But criticism is personal. It is attacking a person's character or personality. Criticism leads to contempt. A culture of criticism destroys community and relationship. If the culture within a workplace is critical, then people are scared to take risks. And they are scared to admit they go thing wrong. A critical culture leads to people feeling they never measure up.

It is possible in a church to create a critical culture by using shame and guilt to try to motivate people. Pastors can do this from the pulpit very easily. And this generally is counter productive. It leads to legalism and condemnation.

In a critical culture we always assume the worst of people. Often we don't know what challenges a person is facing. We make a character assumption that they are lazy. People do not thrive in a critical culture.

**Kingdom culture is one of encouragement. It is believing the best in people.** 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11, Romans 14:19,

It is a culture that seeks to assume the best in people and seeks to build people up. It is one where the words spoken sow life and not death. The only reason I am preaching today is because other people have encouraged me and believed in me. Who are the young people in this church who you are encouraging? They need your encouragement. Who are the people around you who are struggling to keep going, to keep believing.? They don't need your criticism, they need you to listen and gently encourage. We all here today because some body encouraged us and believed in us.

I don't think we have a toxic culture at Central. But I also know that the longer we are in a place, the harder it is to see the culture. Rvery culture has it's blind spots that we just can't see. New people to a workplace or church tend to see the culture better than those who have been in it for years.

I do know that the culture of Central is far more important than any words up the front here about our mission and our priorities. Culture eats strategy for breakfast.

Here's the takeaway. We all play a role in the culture of any group we are part of. Any team, any small group, family

workplace. Smaller it is, the more influential you are. But regardless of the size or whether you carry a title or not, you can influence culture. Are you simply going along with the culture of the place, passively accepting that is the way it is in this workplace? That's just the way our family is? This church is just like that? Or are you willing to call out bad culture including here at church Giving permission because culture starts with leadership. Elders ministry leaders. Are you willing to play your part in creating a positive culture.

World's culture is of Cancelling, complaint, consumerism, criticism and conflict. Are you being sucked into that culture? Kingdom culture is on of acceptance and tolerance, thankfulness, other focused, encouraging and it is filled with grace and forgiveness.

What is the culture of your family. Of this church. Of your workplace? And what part are you playing in that culture.

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## REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

Use 3 words to describe the culture of your family of origin.

Share a group you have been part of that has had a great culture and one that was poor. (a team, group, church, workplace etc) What made each good or bad?

Discuss the idea that a congregation is complicit with the leadership in the culture of a church. Is this fair? How much do you think leadership influences the culture of a church?

What hinders you from calling out a bad culture when you see it?

How valid a description of today's culture do you think the five "Cs" in the sermon are? How much influence do they have on you?

Take the 5 kingdom cultures from the sermon and rank them from what is strongest to weakest at Central. Share with the group and come up with a cumulative total. (I would love to know the results 😊) How could we grow in whatever was the weakest?

Is there anything the leaders of Central could do to create a better culture?

Which of the 5 kingdom cultures do you personally need to work on? Brainstorm together on how you could grow in these.



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