



Pray for the Nation ~ INOI MO TE MOTU

Intercessors for New Zealand

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The LORD said, "If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and I will forgive their sin, and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

MAY 2019

As Jesus came near and saw the city of Jerusalem, He wept over it ... (Luke 19:41). Many of the people from the city of Samaria believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony ... (John 4:39). Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. The crowds with one accord listened eagerly to what Philip said, hearing and seeing the signs he did. So there was great joy in that city. (Acts 8:5-8).

City by City

A unique conference to celebrate unity, prayer and transformation in cities, towns and regions across Aotearoa, is to be held in **Wellington on 14 and 15 May**. Called '**Movement Day**', this conference is open to everyone – pastors, church leaders, leaders of Christian organisations, intercessors and all who have a desire to see God move throughout our land.

This is a time to:

- Inspire, challenge and catalyse the advancement of the Gospel.
- Be inspired by stories of what God is doing in cities and towns across our nation.
- Be challenged to seek unity in relationships with other city, business and civic leaders.
- Be resourced with fresh ideas for the advancement of the Gospel in your city or town.

A very good website to read some of the things God has been doing throughout our land is:

https://issuu.com/svartcom/docs/city_by_city_e_book_18_december_201

For further information on Movement Day and to register, see <https://www.citybycity.co.nz/> or <https://nzchristiannetwork.org.nz/events/movement-day-new-zealand/>

Please pray for the **Movement Day** conference and our country's future!

- Its organisers and the speakers, including the keynote speakers Seth Fawcett (Hope Centre, Lower Hutt) and Roger Sutton (Gather Global, UK).
- Pray for everyone who comes to the conference – for inspiration, encouragement and the call to be part of what God is doing.

In the Scriptures above, Jesus wept over a city; a woman shared her testimony with the people in her city; Philip preached in that same city and there was great joy in the city as people heard and saw what God was doing.

Praise God for what He has been doing in NZ over many years; what He is doing today; and also pray for the coming days.

LEGISLATION

The following are being discussed in Parliament and will probably be decided in the coming weeks. Both of them involve **life** – the life of the unborn and the life of people who wish to die.

- Regarding **Abortion**, it will be decided whether abortion should become a health issue rather than a legal matter. This would mean that Abortion is not controlled by law but regarded as a health issue.
- In the area of **Euthanasia**, the decision is whether or not people should be able to choose when they die. This is a complex issue and requires great wisdom.

Please pray about both of these matters. They both involve the possibility of ending life more readily – "liberalising" the availability of abortion, and the termination of life by euthanasia.

FOLLOW-UP FROM THE HOPE PROJECT

Around Easter time, over a million booklets have been distributed throughout New Zealand, to almost every home. Entitled "**HOPE for all**" – at peace together, they share the Gospel in the context of our nation's history. As well as the

booklets, there have also been a number of adverts on TV.

- Please pray that these booklets will be widely read, and that each booklet will be read by someone (or more than one person!)
- Pray that people will respond to the Gospel message, and seek after and find the Lord Jesus.
- There are a number of follow-up resources online, to help people who are interested, to follow up further the Gospel message and how to continue to grow in their Christian lives. Please pray that these resources will be widely used and will help people walk in God's ways.

For further information, please see:

www.HopeProject.co.nz

www.10DayChallenge.co.nz This is a simple introduction to the Christian faith – 10 short videos with reflective questions for those who are not yet Christians (and for those who are already Christians!)

ULTIMATELY ...

Ultimately, the only hope for our country – and indeed, for the world – is for people to come to salvation through Jesus Christ; come to know and have intimate relationship with the one true God the LORD (YHWH), and live the Christian life through the power of His Holy Spirit.

Some people say that all religions lead to God and it doesn't matter which god you worship – this is not true! To support their statement, they sometimes say that “all roads lead to Rome”. That proves that what they are saying is not true! Billions of people have travelled on millions of roads and the vast majority of people have never (and will never) get to Rome.

Jesus said, “I AM – the Way, the Truth and the Life. No-one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)

But would a loving God send people to hell? The reason we might go to hell is because we have rejected the only way of getting to Heaven – through Jesus Christ. He gave His life for every single person (John 3:16) but if we choose not to accept Him, how can we live with Him forever in Heaven? (Worth thinking about and acting on!)

Please pray about these matters, and for people you know who are not-yet Christians – followers (disciples) of the Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS *from page 4 of the Bible Study about Culture.*

1. How should Christians live, and interact with, a society which has very diverse religions, cultures and customs, some of which are not righteous?
2. What customs in secular society should Christians not adopt – and why?
3. What are some of our churches' cultures, and how do they differ from our country's cultures?
4. Because cultures may be very different, how do we work together so that everyone benefits from these differences? Can we achieve unity in all our diversity?
5. Who or what causes major changes to our society's culture? Who or what determines what is changed, and what they are changed to?
6. What aspects of *my* culture need to change, and what am I doing about it?
7. What else do the following Scriptures say about culture? Acts 17:26; Revelation 7:9-10; Galatians 3:28-29; Ephesians 3:14-15; Colossians 3:11.

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS *from page 4 of the Bible Study about Culture.*

- Pray that Christians will be given discernment to know what is good in a culture, and embrace that, and not participate in things which are displeasing to God.
- Pray that we will not be prejudice against people based on their race, age or customs, but will be loving and caring towards all people, without compromising Christian standards.
- Pray that we will discern what is not good in our own society, and turn from that. (We often don't see what is wrong in our own culture because we are so familiar with it!)
- Pray that practices which are evil and detrimental to our society, will lose their power and hold over the minds and hearts of our people.
- Pray that the Church will embrace people of other cultures, especially immigrants and refugees.
- Pray for unity and harmony in our country, and a strong move towards the Lord and His ways, and for the salvation of many more people in our country.
- Pray against all attempts at violence or terrorism. Pray for our Police, and all who work in our intelligence services, that all planned attempts to destroy and kill will be thwarted before they occur.



Pillars of Society

11. THE 11th PILLAR: CULTURE

Culture is a blend of customs in our society, or in our home, neighbourhood or even in our own personal lives. *It is the way we live.* Our **customs** are what people are **accustomed** to (or expect) because they are **customary**. How we usually **act** or **react** – our **actions** and usual ways of behaving – are how we **actually** live; not just what we *should* do, but what we *do* do!

Our “personal culture”

Our personal culture is shown by how we behave. It is a blend of our upbringing, social factors, people we interact with, spiritual beliefs, what we like and enjoy, and so on. Many of these may be affected by our age, gender or race; plus things that happen to us (life events and influences). We have little or no choice over these, but our personal choices will have a major influence on how we live. Our personal choices involve our philosophy of life, values, principles, actions and aspirations. When we become Christians (born again), our lives will change dramatically, especially if we have come from a non-Christian background. Some customs are bad or undesirable, some are neutral, others are good.

Society’s cultures

A racial group usually incorporates a fairly common culture, and different cultures normally have a fairly strong degree of unity within them but may have much less association with people of other cultures. In multicultural societies, people of many races and cultures live together and people will, to varying degrees, choose to practice a mixture of cultural features. The culture we belong to is based on who we are **and** our customs or habits. It involves the group or groups of people in society with whom we identify and associate.

Our culture reflects how our society behaves, and so culture is one of the major pillars of any society. In fact, all the other pillars are, at least to some extent, part of society’s culture. This includes religious cultures, and social, moral, political, family and other values.

Cultures may be based on self-sufficiency (independence) or community (social interdependence); strong or weak family ties; strong, weak or no spiritual beliefs; emphasis on “my rights” or “my responsibilities” to other people. The overall well-being of a community, city or nation depends on its culture – physically, materially, socially, morally and spiritually.

Christian culture in New Testament times

Customs involve both attitudes and actions towards: people of different ages, races and beliefs; towards orphans, widows and the fatherless; the poor, needy, sick, oppressed, hungry; and people needing other support and help. They involve morality, relationships, loyalty, respect, and so on. Religion, faith and beliefs (what we truly believe and practice) will also be part of our customs and habits. This is very practical – “Be *doers* of the Word, not just *hearers*.” (James 1:22)

In the early Church, what changed when the Church moved into different societies? Some people accepted Christ and His teachings, but some people strongly opposed His teachings and the Gospel as a whole. It divided people between “believers” and “unbelievers”. The concepts of being born again, and adopting a greatly different lifestyle, were radical!

Compare this with New Zealand’s cultures, and our churches’ cultures, today. What effects has multiculturalism had on Christians, and what effects have Christians had on our culture? What major things do Christians have to offer to our country’s culture? What are some of the potential strengths and weaknesses of a multicultural society?

While the word “culture” does not occur in the Bible, the words “custom” and “customary” occur about 17 times in the New Testament. The early Church, like us, also had to live in culturally diverse societies, and some of these were very opposed to Christianity. From the point of view of religions, there were Jewish people, Gentiles (any non-Jew), people with pagan beliefs, and with philosophies which might be quite godless, atheistic or agnostic. Often there was a clash of Greek, Roman, Jewish, Gentile and Christian cultures.

The Church believed in and followed the Lordship of Jesus Christ. But they lived in a land where Emperor worship and obedience to him was expected and often enforced. Hence Jesus was taken by His parents to Egypt because of Herod's decree, and even when they returned from Egypt, they went back to Nazareth rather than live in Jerusalem (Matthew 2:13-23).

The Bible says a lot about children, young people, parents and those who are older; about different races and their customs; about men and women; rich and poor; different social status and so on. **Acts 2** mentions different races and languages (v. 6-11); men and women; different ages and social status (v. 17-18). The outpouring of God's Spirit was for "everyone" who called on the name of the Lord (v.21) – Jews, Gentiles, Romans, pagans – anyone who chose to become a follower of Jesus.

In other parts of the New Testament we see some other ways in which the Church functioned. For example, looking after women and orphans, distributing to the needy, helping people in whose area there was famine, taking up a collection for the poor, praying for each other when they were in difficult times (e.g., in prison or being persecuted).

John 3:16 says that God loves the whole world so much that *whoever* comes to Him (for forgiveness, salvation and being born again by the Holy Spirit), will have eternal life. The Gospel is for *all* nations (Matthew 28:19). "Whoever wants to, let them come ..." (Revelation 22:17). Joshua said, "Choose today who you will serve ..." (Joshua 24:15).

Christian culture differs from other cultures by what Christians believe and practice. This may lead to some clashes with the culture of society around us. Christians may challenge or disagree or stand against what is wrong – what is untrue, immoral (in the broad sense of morality), harmful, displeasing to God, etc., and strongly support what is good and right and beneficial for society.

Some fundamentals of Christian culture

Love needs to undergird everything we do – including our habits and behaviour towards other people, no matter what their culture may be.

Some key Scriptures about Culture include **how Jesus related to people of different cultures and what Jesus said:**

- "I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed Me. I was naked and you gave Me clothing. I was sick and you took care of Me. I was in prison and you visited Me. ... Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are My family, you did it to Me." (Matthew 25:35-36, 40)
- "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength; and you shall love your neighbour as you love yourself." (Luke 10:27)
- "A new commandment I give to you, that you shall love one another as I have loved you." (John 13:34)
- "No one has greater love than this – than a person who lays down their life for their friends." (John 15:13)
- "Do to others what you would like them to do to you." (Luke 6:31)
- "Love your enemies; pray for those who persecute you; do good to those who hate you." (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27)
- "Who is greater, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? Isn't it the one who sits at the table? But I am among you as one who serves!" (Luke 22:24-27).
Jesus humbled Himself, came down from glory, served others and gave His life for us. What *incredible* love and humility!

"As far as possible, live in peace with all men" (Romans 12:18)

Produce the fruit of the Spirit, not the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-25)

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3)

Pray for, and obey, those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-4; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17)

The Christian culture should be gracious, kind, loving, generous, compassionate and forgiving. There are lot more characteristics of Christian culture, but you'll have to read the whole New Testament to find them all!

QUESTIONS & PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

about Culture are on page 2

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Weekly *Prayer Updates* can be found on our website: <https://pray-for-the-nation.org/prayer-updates.php>