

## **SALT AND LIGHT LIVING – Architects of Culture**

*Matthew 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

I happen to work in the construction industry and whether you are aware of it or not, you are all at the messy of that industry.

The construction industry shapes the landscape of cities, we enable people to cross rivers, if we can't go over something, we go through it.

Every project starts with an idea in someone's mind and in order to see their idea in reality, they go and look for an architect.

An architect is someone who puts together design concepts, ideas, colour themes. This person shapes our work spaces, our homes, our stadia etc.

Basically, architects influence our living spaces and sometimes even the way we feel when walk through certain structures.

Today I want to talk to you on the subject matter **SALT & LIGHT LIVING - Architects of culture** – this is such a relevant topic seeing that in the coming week on the 24<sup>th</sup> of Sep, the whole nation will be celebrating our diverse cultures. It was a day that was put together to remind us of our diversity.

- Culture consists of the values, beliefs and practices that people share in common and that can be used to define them as a collective.
- Simply put culture is the way things are done around here.
- By nature, culture is not static, especially in the context of cosmopolitan environments like ours – our communities have become melting pots of culture.
- Because of that, there is great contestation around who shapes the narrative around here. The media has played a major role in propagating certain cultures.
- In actual fact, whoever controls the media ends up controlling pop culture and the dominant culture of the day.
- I believe that one of the major aspects of being a Christian is that of being an architect of culture.
- Christians carry the culture that is needed in order for the world to remain functional – it called kingdom culture. **Remember the world is a fallen world and its inclination is to self-destroy.**
- In the absence of external intervention, the world will implode on itself.

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- Right from the onset, from one of His sermons – the sermon on the mount, Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that they are called to influence and disrupt the culture of the day. He did this by identifying them in the following way
  - Salt – preservative and disinfectant (Salt has been used as a preservative for ages, and works to preserve food in two ways: Salt dries food. Salt draws water out of food and dehydrates it. All living things require water and cannot grow in the absence of water, including the bacteria which can cause food poisoning), and flavor enhancer.
  - Light – represents everything that is good, guidance, reveals wickedness,
  - A city on a hill – authority, point of reference
- Jesus then said, don't hide behind doors but 16 *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*
- **The problem is that followers of Jesus are more comfortable with their natural culture than they are with their kingdom culture.**
- Jesus has strategically placed his people to bring Godly change to a nation by reaching its seven spheres, or mountains, of societal influence:
  1. Religion
  2. Family
  3. Education
  4. Government
  5. Media
  6. Arts & entertainment
  7. Business
- The fabric of a nation will slowly be depleted in the absence of disciples in these seven areas. Some of our problems in this nation is as a result of legislature that has been passed.
- Jesus came as an architect of culture and I want to take you through 6 aspects of culture that He wants you and I to be actively involved in shaping and influencing.

### **1. Maintain Relational wholeness in the middle of broken relationships**

*Matthew 5:21-24*

*"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' 22 'But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. 23 'Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 'leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

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- Whilst the murder that the law referred to was physical murder, Jesus introduced a deeper dimension of murder.
- We can murder each other emotionally – when we are outraged for no apparent reason, when we call people names out of anger, Jesus sees it as murder.
- There is unrighteous anger that is accompanied with rage. Raca expresses contempt for someone's mind (blockhead, dander head or stupid), getting involved in character assassination of someone.

*Galatians 6:10 Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.*

- In the eyes of Jesus, when we maintain healthy relationships, it is more valuable than the service we render to Him. In the eyes of God, Healthy relationships are more important than our service to Him!
- The Bible calls us to be at peace with everyone as long as it is within our power.

### **2. Maintain Sexual purity in a sexually charged culture**

*Matthew 5:27 - 30*

*"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 30 "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.*

- Back in the days, sexual sin involved the physical act – Jesus came on the scene and raised the bar and he said the moment you conceive it in your thoughts, you have already committed sexual sin.
- The world has no more standards around this – they talk about one night stands, after the act the people go their different ways.
- What should be expected in the house of God – what culture are we supposed to live by.
- Jesus is calling His church to be the light and salt in this regard. It is not easy but the world has no hope if the church cannot get this right.
- Jesus is not calling for self-mutilation but is calling for complete self-control over the members of our bodies.

*Job 31 1 "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman.*

- Job was saying he had made an agreement with his eyes not look at something by which his conscience may be defiled, or his God dishonoured
- This culture can only be broken by a believers who are fully devoted to Jesus, being helped by the Holy Spirit to honour Jesus with their bodies.

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## **3. Respect for the marriage institution**

*Matthew 5:31 - 32*

*"Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' 32*

*"But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.*

- There has never been a time like the time we are in now when the marriage institution is under severe attack.
- Back in the days, our parents would hold to each other for as long as it was feasible – but today, at a sign of a storm in a marriage, divorce papers are served without hesitation.
- Marriage ought to be honoured by all – by those who are married and by those who are not married  
*Hebrews 13:4 Marriage should be honored by all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.*
- To those of you who are married, don't easily throw in the towel – fight for your marriage, fight for your children, fight for your husband.
- It was never the initial idea of God for divorces to be the order of day. Jesus addressed this matter when he answered a pharisee – Mark 10:2-12.