



The Telos Collective

ANGLICANS AT THE INTERSECTION OF GOSPEL AND CULTURE

ENGAGING CULTURE Learning Community Curriculum

LEADER'S GUIDE

Based on the 2018 Intersection Conference, this 8-week curriculum will help you facilitate conversation groups in your local community.

PART 1: ABOUT THE ENGAGING CULTURE CURRICULUM

In May 2018, more than 100 missional leaders from 19 dioceses in the Anglican Church in North America gathered for the 2018 Intersection Conference—the Telos Collective’s second annual event. Led by Telos Collective Founder and Leader Bishop Todd Hunter, the conversation centered on Engaging Culture: An Interdisciplinary Conversation. Seven speakers explored key areas of cultural engagement (Bible, Theology, Justice, Arts, Multiculturalism, Worship, Witness) with a goal of reimagining how the Anglican Church in North America relates to culture.

The sessions from these world-class teachers are the foundation for this 8-week Learning Community Curriculum. Learning Community participants will watch each session or a clip from the session. Then, they will work through discussion questions designed to help them journey toward effectively engaging culture with the gospel. Participants can utilize the additional resources to take the conversation a step further, if desired. Finally, participants are encouraged to try the Weekly Practice and report on how it went at their next meeting.

For answers to more general questions, check out the [Learning Community Guide](#).

PART 2: HOW TO USE THE ENGAGING CULTURE CURRICULUM

Here are a few practical tips for using this curriculum.

- 1. Invite a group of 5-10 people to be part of a Learning Community.** In your first meeting, or by email, be sure to:
 - Define a Learning Community—a group that comes together to listen to one another and talk about engaging culture with the gospel.
 - Talk with participants about what they each hope to experience in this Learning Community.
 - Emphasize that the group is a confidential, safe place to share thoughts, ideas and fears about faith and the Church.
 - Solidify a place and time that works for everyone to meet over the next 8 weeks.
- 2. Meet with your Learning Community group each week for 8 weeks, consecutively if possible.** At each meeting, your group will:
 - Watch the assigned conference session, or a brief clip from the session if preferred.
 - Answer the discussion questions, or as many as time allows.
 - Take advantage of the additional resources, if desired. If it's an article, you may want to print and hand it out, or if it's books, distribute a reading list. You may want to choose one book to all read together.
 - Complete the weekly practice. Ask participants to come to the next meeting ready to report on how the practice went.
- 3. At the end of the 8 weeks, thank your participants and gather feedback about their experience, whether by email or sending them a brief online survey. As the leader, think about how you might share your Learning Community experience with the Telos Collective. We would love to hear and share it with others!**

You are welcome to continue to meet as a Learning Community beyond this curriculum. If you need ideas for where to go next, email Ryan (ryan@teloscollective.com).



WEEK 3: "PAST AND PRESENT PROPOSALS ON THE INTERSECTION OF CHURCH AND CULTURE"

BY DAVID FITCH

WATCH OR LISTEN TO THE SESSION: [BIT.LY/2JMQLTY](https://bit.ly/2JMQLTY)

SYNOPSIS: Everyone has a theology of church and culture. Two bad habits: 1. All culture is bad. 2. All culture is good. Neither option engages the culture. The question is: How shall we engage culture?

David Fitch believes American theologians Richard and H. Reinhold Niebuhr treat culture as one big lump that needs only a single strategy for engagement, and that we are all under the influence of Niebuhrian thought on culture. Christendom has long assumed that we're in charge and have power to influence. But the reality of post-Christendom in North America is that we've lost this power and influence. A Neo-Anabaptist critique, Fitch argues, might be helpful in this new space, centered around five points of divergence:

1. **Jesus:** Where Niebuhr saw Jesus as a principle to be applied, Fitch argues we need to see Jesus as a person, as the Lord whom we follow.
2. **Culture:** Where Niebuhr viewed the world as one monolithic culture—one that is Christian and has power—Fitch argues that we live in a world with many cultures, some that are in alignment with the reign of God and some that aren't. Our job is in the realm of discerning these cultures.
3. **Church:** Niebuhr argued that his principles focused on leaders of the church speaking to those outside of the church, hoping to influence them. But Fitch argues that the church needs to be the locus of an alternative "visible" culture and community that can witness to the larger world. The church has to be a way of life, visible to the world. We must first show how to be a different community, and then let God use it with the credibility that we gain in the world.
4. **Creation:** Where Niebuhr characterized God the Father and creation as the source of Christian ethics distinct from Jesus, Fitch argues that this distinguishes too much between God and Jesus, and we need to bring them together, allowing Jesus to help us understand the Father and creation more fully.
5. **Power:** Niebuhr considers Jesus' teaching as impractical regarding power, and that the withdrawal from power is unhelpful. But Fitch argues that a different power is needed, not through coercion, but through the Cross of Jesus. There are two kinds of power, the power of the world (the sword), and the power of the Spirit and presence. This changes the way we move into the world, making space for God to work as opposed to doing God's work for Him. And this changes everything.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. David Fitch warns against “applying” Jesus on our own terms, for our own ends. What do you think he means?
2. How have you seen the Church use power in ways that have been unhelpful to the aims of Jesus?
3. Now that our culture is officially post-Christian, how do we respond? Why does David Fitch say this is an opportunity?
4. When we disrupt the world and its patterns, people are going to be upset. Why? How can we handle the conflict and pushback?
5. If the church is actually a culture, an alternative community, is it a culture you’d choose to be part of? Why or why not?
6. What is a practical, visible way that we can witness to culture what it means to live under the Lordship of Christ, one that engages a posture of presence?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

An article that David Fitch referenced in his session:

[“Knitting While Detroit Burns?”: The Reformed “Both/And” versus the Anabaptist “First/Then”](#)

WEEKLY PRACTICE:

For one day, witness to the culture by intentionally sharing power with the powerless. This might look like going to those who don’t have power in your community, and doing the following:

- Listening instead of speaking
- Putting another person’s needs first
- In your encounters with people, asking instead of telling
- Helping a person develop and perform as highly as possible, without taking credit
- Considering what it looks like to be present to people, instead of giving them principles to live by