

## Sermon 5: Embracing a True Vision

In this fifth week, we begin focusing on the solution to this problem of cultural captivity. As believers, we must align our thoughts with God's eternal perspective not to the thinking of the world. We should recognize that we are involved in spiritual warfare. We must exercise discernment to avoid cultural captivity. We should be able to deal with testing, trials and temptations. God wants spiritual transformation in our lives.

### Fast Facts

Consider several statistical results reported in our book, *Cultural Captives*. These statistics represent the average result from three national surveys covering what emerging adult Americans believe about various behaviors.

- The percent of born-again, emerging adults with a biblical worldview, at least a minimal set of biblical practices, and biblically sound cultural beliefs (e.g beliefs regarding abortion, sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, science and faith, etc.) is less than 2%. Note this is less than 2% of born-again and does not even include the majority of young adults who are not born-again.
- Time after time, comparing results shows: the composite belief sets of Evangelical emerging adults are significantly different than those held by non-evangelicals but much closer to them than to any biblically defined standard. In other words, Evangelical emerging adults tend to have beliefs following closer to the beliefs of the population as a whole than to a set of beliefs consistent with New Testament teaching.



When we view the world from God's perspective under the leadership of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we can free ourselves from the deception of cultural captivity.



### Sermon Video:

None provided

## Suggested Sermon Ideas

### Embracing a True Vision

#### I. Spiritual Warfare

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

##### A. The three Ws

1. These are three components Paul mentions: walk, weapons, warfare.
2. Paul instructs us how to prepare for battle.

##### B. Walk with Christ

1. Arm yourself with the spiritual weapons.
2. Engage in spiritual warfare.
3. Need an eternal perspective.
4. We are to walk by flesh, but not war according to the flesh.
5. Failure to engage in warfare commonly begins here (wrong weapons or attitude).
6. We need a biblical worldview.

##### C. Weapons

1. Our weapons are not of the flesh, but of the spirit:
2. Gird with truth (Ephesians 6:14)
3. Shield of faith (Ephesians 6:16)
4. Helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:17)
5. Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17)

##### D. Warfare

1. We are to destroy something.
2. We are destroying strongholds or speculations raised up against God.
3. Word “speculations” refers to the mind.
4. Expose darkness to light.
5. Free cultural captives.

#### II. Cultural Captivity

##### A. The threat

1. Paul says in Colossian 2:8 we should “see to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception.”
2. Paul is saying that as believers we should take every thought captive otherwise we will be taken captive by the false ideas of the world.

#### B. The source

1. Our thoughts come from three sources: God, the Devil, and ourselves.
2. If we are thinking biblically, then our thoughts parallel God's thoughts.
3. Astronomer Johann Kepler said he was "thinking God's thoughts after Him."
4. However, the contrary is also true. If we are thinking like the world then our thoughts most likely parallel Satan's thoughts.
5. How do we recognize whether we are thinking God's thoughts or the Devil's thoughts?
6. One way is to compare your thoughts to the principles in God's Word.
7. When Paul wrote to the Philippians (4:8), he told them to let their minds "dwell on these things." What is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, good repute, excellence, worthy of praise.

#### C. Application

1. Paul calls for us to walk in this world but not be worldly.
2. He admonishes us to pull down the strongholds of Satan in this world.
3. He calls for us to take every thought captive so that we will not be taken captive by the false philosophies of the world.

### III. Testing, Trials, and Temptations

#### A. Life is a test

1. The Bible says quite a bit about testing.
2. Testing often comes in the form of trials and temptations.
3. In fact, these words (trials, testing, temptation, etc.) appear more than 200 times in the Bible.

#### B. Testing

1. James (1:2-4) explains that testing of our faith produces perseverance, which results in spiritual maturity in our walk with God.
2. James also says that testing is a blessing because when it is finished, we will have stood the test and will receive "the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."
3. Trials and testing come from God.
4. Paul explains that God works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called to be the children of God (Romans 8:28).
5. Testing in the Bible is often compared to the refining of precious metal.
6. In the Psalms, for example, our testing is likened to being refined like silver.
7. Peter says that the trials in our lives are similar to gold being refined in order to remove all of its impurities (1 Peter 1:7).

### C. Trials

1. Peter teaches that trials are a normal part of life: “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you” (1 Peter 4:12).
2. We should not see trials as strange or unusual. They are part of the Christian life.
3. Paul’s declaration to the church in Rome: “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”
4. This verse may be the most misused and misunderstood passage in the
5. First, Paul says “we know.” That means we can rest in the assurance that God is in control. We can trust in a sovereign God even if we don’t understand what He is doing in our lives or the world right now.
6. Second, Paul says that “God causes all things to work together.”
7. He is behind what is happening in the world, but He is not the cause of evil and suffering in the world.
8. God is using trials in our lives to achieve a greater purpose in our lives.
9. Third, Paul says that God is working them together “for good.”
10. That doesn’t mean that everything that is happening is good. Evil, pain, and suffering are in the world because of sin and the Fall.
11. God is using the actions and circumstances in the world for good in our lives.
12. Finally, Paul reminds us that this promise is for “those who are called according to His purpose.”
13. It is not a promise for all of humankind. It is a promise only for believers.
14. What is His purpose? Our purpose should be to become more like Christ.

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” 1 Corinthians 10:12-14

### D. Temptations

1. First, don’t think you cannot fall.
2. If you think you are immune to temptation, you are probably in dangerous territory. Many godly men and women have fallen into sin even when they thought they could not fall.
3. Second, temptations can overtake you.
4. A common misconception is that temptations in the world are neutral. We can take them or leave them.
5. This passage actually teaches that temptations can grab hold of you and pull you down.
6. Third, your temptations are not unique.
7. Paul says that these temptations are “common to man.” The temptations around you are common to others. You are not unique in feeling them.
8. Fourth, God is faithful.
9. Paul reminds us that God will not abandon you. He won’t let the temptations of

the world destroy you.

10. But we must also do our part in protecting ourselves from temptation.
11. Proverbs 4:23 tells us that we should guard our heart.
12. Fifth, God only permits what you can withstand.
13. Paul says that God “will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.”
14. It also implies that there are different levels of temptation for different people.
15. Sixth, God provides a way of escape.
16. This is another comforting principle to know that not only does temptation come with limits, but there is an escape hatch. Often the way out is to get out. Paul, for example, commands us to “flee idolatry” and to “flee immorality.”
17. Seventh, God will help you bear it.
18. Paul encourages us by reminding us that God will help us to endure it.
19. We can be successful in dealing with temptation if we trust in Him.

#### **IV. Spiritual Transformation**

##### **A. Introduction**

1. We need a spiritual transformation.
2. A false view of the world can destroy our witness and even guarantee that we will be captive to the world’s system.
3. The antidote is God’s Word, which is truth (Psalm 119).

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” 2 Timothy 3:16

##### **B. Transformation and the Bible**

1. First, make an appointment with God’s Word.
2. Set a consistent time to study the Bible.
3. This can be a time in which you read the Bible but also read a commentary or daily devotional that will give you a greater understanding of God’s Word.
4. Second, record what you learn.
5. Keep a journal to reflect on what God is teaching you through His Word.
6. You can also list prayers you are praying and answers to those prayers.
7. Keeping a record can be an encouragement in your spiritual growth.
8. Third, reflect on what God is teaching you through His Word.
9. “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.
10. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Joshua 1:8).
11. Fourth, keep God’s Word with you. Keep a copy of the Bible with you.
12. “It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law

and these statutes”(Deuteronomy 17:19).

13. Fifth, share God’s word with others.
14. Bring the Bible into your daily conversation with others.
15. You can do this as you meet with people, but you could also text a key scripture verse to someone.
16. Finally, apply God’s Word to your life.
17. The Bible teaches that: “The steps of a man are established by the Lord, And He delights in his way” (Psalm 37:23).

C. Become like Christ

1. God wants us to become like Christ (Romans 8:29).
2. Many Christians desire to become more Christ-like in their attitudes and behavior.
3. We have documented that most Christians fall short of becoming more like Christ.
4. We have been freed from sin.
5. We must consider ourselves “dead to sin” (Romans 6:11) and live a life of holiness (1 Peter 1:16)
6. Sin is no longer our master (Romans 6:1-14).
7. Paul says that we should “put on the new self, which in the likeness of
8. God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Ephesian 4:24).
9. In the preceding verses, he puts this process in perspective. We are not to be spiritual children but grow up.
10. We need to depend upon the Holy Spirit. We cannot do this on our own.
11. The Holy Spirit gives us power to change into the likeness of Christ.
12. Paul reminds us that “it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).