

# SESSION 5:

## MOULDING CULTURE

**'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.'** Romans 12:2

**Key Question:** How might I begin to influence the culture of my frontline in accordance with kingdom values?

**Aims:** To see the values that underpin the cultures of our frontlines; to see how we might affirm the good and think creatively about bringing positive change where needed.

**Core Text:** Matthew 5:13-16

**Materials:** Bibles, paper and pens

### Thinking Back (5 mins)

In the last session we looked at ministering grace and love.

How did you get on using your £3 to bless someone on your frontline this week?  
How did they react?

*N.B. Don't worry if you didn't manage to do this - there will be plenty more opportunities to bless people on your frontlines.*



## Pre-Film Discussion (10 mins)

Today, we're looking at moulding culture. This is about appreciating how we might contribute to cultural change on our frontlines, so that they become places where people better flourish. One definition of culture is 'the way we do things round here'.

Together, can you briefly think of a few things that are part of the culture of your own small group?

You might like to think about the different components of your gathering, such as the way you interact with one another, the food you eat, the way you speak, how you pray... Or you might find it helpful to ask yourself what an outsider would have to learn in order to do things as you are in the habit of doing.



## PLAY FILM to Pause Point (5 mins 30 secs)

### Pause Point for Personal Reflection (5 mins)

In a moment of quiet, think about the culture of your frontline. What are some of the positive and negative aspects of the way things are done there? Write down your thoughts as you will need to refer back to these later.



## RESUME FILM to end (4 mins)

### Questions to Discuss after the Film (10 mins)

- In the story of Elaine the headteacher, why do you think the original blame culture was bad for the staff? What about the children?
- What do you think were some of the Christian values that inspired Elaine to instigate the change that she did?
- Elaine first exemplified the change that she wanted to see and in doing so brought others along with her. Are there already things you try to do that go against the grain of a negative aspect of your frontline culture?



## Bible Reflection (10 mins)

# MATTHEW 5:13-16

This passage comes towards the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus sets out the way of life for his followers. The 'blessed' sayings which come before (in 5:3-12) are not presented as high ideals we have to live up to so much as a signal that a different set of values is now in play. Such values characterise those who belong to God's kingdom and inevitably impact the world in which God's people live. When it comes to being 'salt' and 'light', notice that Jesus says 'you are...'; not 'you should try really hard to be...' – a reminder that God sees us as those who really can 'mould culture' as we seek to live faithfully as disciples of Jesus.

- How might the images of 'salt' and 'light' help us think about what it means to influence our frontline culture?
- In 5:16, Jesus says, 'Let your light shine before others.' What could this look like for you, practically, on a daily basis?



## Exercise in Pairs (20 mins)

Come back to the things you wrote down about your frontline culture and then find a partner to talk through the following:

- Share with your partner a summary of what you wrote down.
- Is there one particular negative thing about the culture of your frontline that you would love to see change?
- Together look for a kingdom antidote (alternative) that might address the negative thing you identified. How might God use you here to start to bring about change?
- Together, thank God for the positive elements of your frontline culture. Pray for each other that God will give you the wisdom, faith and courage to start influencing the culture of your frontline for his glory.

## Praying Forwards (as a group) (10 mins)

Take a moment to reflect on this quote from Reinhold Niebuhr – then pray it aloud together.

**'God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.'**



### Takeaway Action

Ask a couple of people on your frontline what they think is good and not so good about the culture of your frontline – their responses might spur you to action and may even open up opportunities for a conversation about the Christian faith!

**PEOPLE FULFIL THEIR INDIVIDUAL AND  
COLLECTIVE DESTINY IN THE ARTS,  
MUSIC, LITERATURE, COMMERCE, LAW,  
AND SCHOLARSHIP THEY CULTIVATE, THE  
RELATIONSHIPS THEY BUILD, AND IN THE  
INSTITUTIONS THEY DEVELOP - FAMILY,  
CHURCHES, ASSOCIATIONS, AND COMMUNITIES  
THEY LIVE IN AND SUSTAIN - AS THEY REFLECT  
THE GOOD OF GOD AND HIS DESIGNS  
FOR FLOURISHING.**



Sociologist James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World*, 2010

