



# Gospel Renewal Lesson 12: Loving the City Part 6

## 2 Minutes of Silence

**Review the 4 models of cultural engagement Printed on the next page**

### **Watch Video: Know Your Season and Face the Center (15 minutes)**

Jot down a description from the video

Winter = \_\_\_\_\_

Spring = \_\_\_\_\_

Summer = \_\_\_\_\_

Fall = \_\_\_\_\_

Other Notes:

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Review the 4 seasons of culture. How does your model and your season affect how you evangelize non-Christians or serve the poor?

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Tim mentions Gifts as another factor in cultural engagement. What are your gifts? What are some of our church's gifts?

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Finally Tim mentions whether we are in the gathered church or the scattered church. What is the difference? What are ways the gathered church can engage culture? What are some ways the scattered Church can Engage?

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How do you see the conflict between models and seasons affecting politics in your country today? Does this give you any insight on how to engage in politics, as an individual or as a church?

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## **An Example of Cultural Engagement**

*A good case study of Christian cultural engagement and impact is the late William Stuntz, formerly professor of criminal law at Harvard Law School. Though he was an evangelical Christian and conservative Republican who was open about his faith and politics, when he died of cancer at the age of fifty-two, The New York Times paid him a remarkable tribute with a full op-ed piece on its editorial main page by Lincoln Caplan. It said that his scholarship in the area of criminal law was so strong that he had refuted the other thinkers and had a "profound" influence on the field. One of his accomplishments, according to the writer, was the incorporation of mercy to the marginalized without undermining rule of law. And yet the writer recognized that his arguments were not just skillful, but grounded in his Christian beliefs. While "literally defining the field," Caplan wrote, "he was living his faith." The piece also pointed to his inspiring example as he dealt courageously with cancer and faced his impending death with grace.*

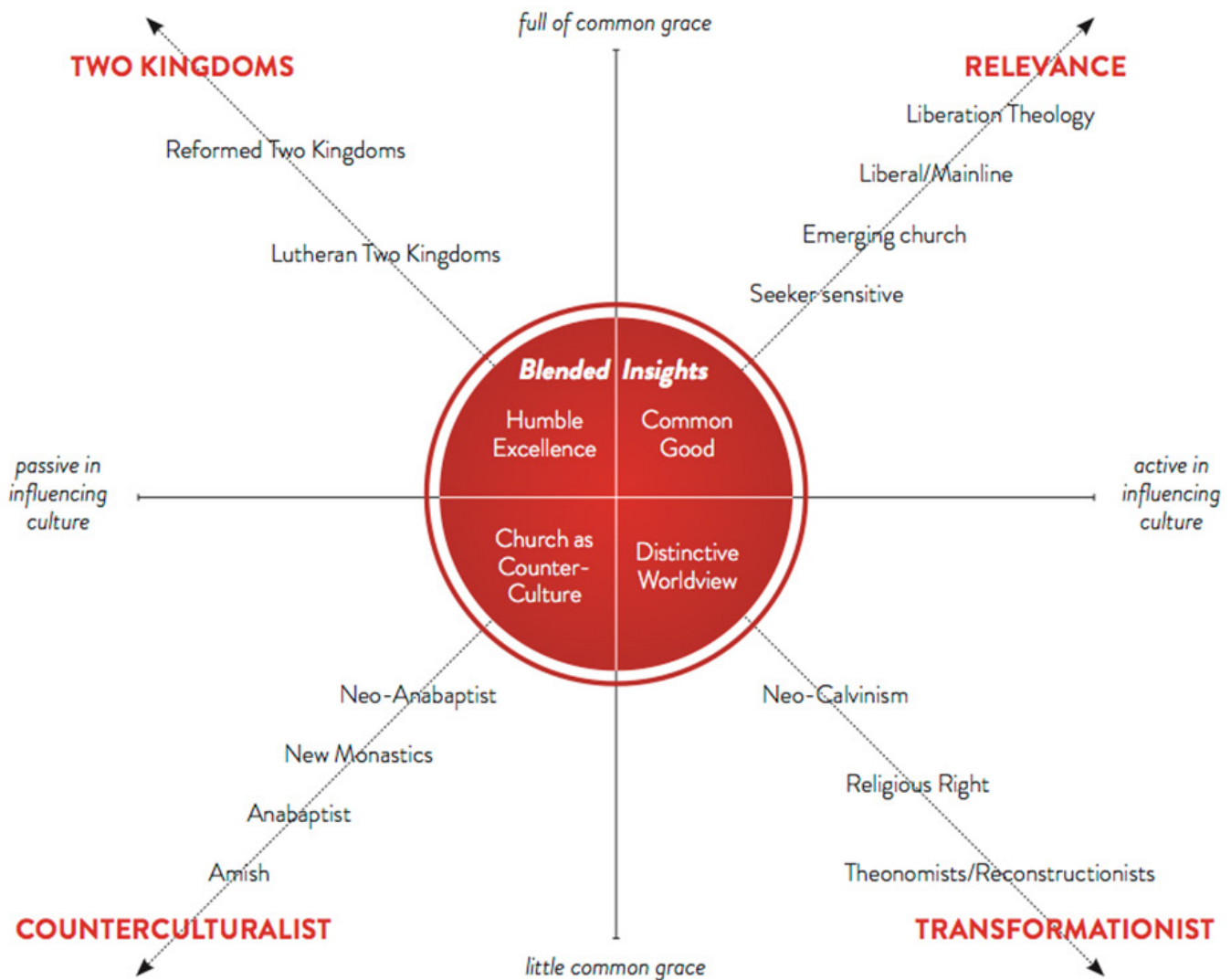
*Here we see a man who definitely engaged and influenced the culture, brought his faith and its distinctive worldview to bear on the field of law, did it with undeniable excellence, and showed compassion for the poor within his theories of justice. In spite of the fact that he worked in places that largely disdained the Christian faith, the combination of his clear commitment to the common good, the integration of his faith with his scholarship, and his undeniable skill and excellence combined to make a real difference.*

*Another important observation in the case of William Stuntz is that he did his work first at the University of Virginia and later at Harvard, two major institutions with a lot of "symbolic" or cultural capital (see sidebar on "Symbolic Capital" on Center Church p. 185).*

*Many Christians share with many Americans an anti-institutional bias, and therefore they grossly underestimate the power of institutions to shape culture. Hugh Heclo's little book *On Thinking Institutionally* can go a long way toward correcting this mistake. Here the Counterculturalist model serves us poorly, since it tends to see all worldly institutions as part of "empire" and no place for Christians to serve. However, in the case of William Stuntz, Christian excellence was available for all to see precisely because he functioned in one of the main public cultural institutions. All of the biblical warnings against pride, love of wealth, and hunger for power must be kept in mind, and not all cultural change automatically flows from elite circles at the very top (see James Hunter, *To Change the World* page 42-43). But Christians should still seek to be a faithful presence in the major cultural institutions.*

*Find an opportunity to challenge those in your midst to think about what they can do, not necessarily in the realm of politics, but in their day to day dealings with clients, and in their broader framework for the purpose of their work.*

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Excerpted from Center Church by Timothy Keller, p. 231 (Zondervan, 2012).



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Timothy Keller talked about how to "face the center" to gain balanced insights from other models. What's one concrete thing you could do to understand and apply the insights of one of the other models?

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In the last 12 weeks we have looked at two main questions:

1. What is the Gospel?
2. How do we communicate it to the world around us?

Reflecting on what we have learned, what are next steps we can take as a church to reach the world around us?

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**Pray**