

Welcome to the culture of Christ: an environment filled with rich appreciation for the ways of God!

The Christ Culture describes the ways of God experienced among us as a transforming presence. This book brings clarity to the most important concepts of Christianity and shines light on some of the most unappreciated aspects of our faith walk. It affirms God as our heavenly Father, who wants to dwell in our midst today, rather than as a someday Judge or eventual King.

1. The Way of Life Develops Us

Life is the journey God designed to birth and grow offspring into His image and likeness. How we view God and what we think about Him affects every area of our life. It is in the fellowship of God's presence that we get to know our heavenly Father and begin to understand His heart—His character, attitude, and personality. In the culture of Christ, we adapt to the ways of God and develop into reflections and resemblances of His heart.

Reflective questions for the first half: *What Is Life About?* and *Whose CAP Do We Wear?*

1. Why did God create the material realm?

2. In Genesis 1:26 God refers to Himself as “us” and “our.” Who does He speak of?

3. God declared His will for us in humanity's beginning. What is it?

4. What did Jesus identify as the primary message of Scripture?

5. What does the acrostic CAP stand for?

6. Consider how the following verses help us reflectively resemble our heavenly Father: Micah 6:8; Philippians 4:4-8; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; Matthew 7:12

1. The Way of Life Develops Us, cont.

Reflective questions for the second half: *Know His Ways* and *Life Develops*

7. What does Scripture mean when it speaks of the “ways of God”?

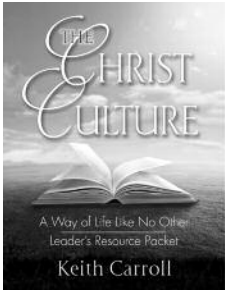
8. Why did Moses seek to know the ways of God?

9. Who can know, understand, and walk in the ways of God?

10. Compare our seeking miracles with seeking our heavenly Father’s fellowship.

11. Why is it important to view life as a developmental process?

12. Consider how we co-labor with God to develop His offspring (1 Corinthians 3:9).



2. The Way of Salvation Transforms Us

The choice our first parents made in the Garden to ignore God's guidance resulted in deadly effects. The ill effects complicate our ability to grow into the men and women we are created to be. Salvation is God's provision to free us from our deathly lifestyles and return us into the fellowship of His presence. In the culture of Christ we are increasingly transformed into maturing children who reflect and resemble our heavenly Father.

Reflective questions for the first half: *Saved From Separation and God Is Our Savior*

1. What perception brought humanity's separation from God? Who initiated it?

2. What are the similarities between the Prodigal Son & humanity's separation from God?

3. Consider how these verses speak to the issue of us accepting God's guiding presence: Eph. 5:14; Rom. 8:1-2; Luke 15:24, 32

4. Moses and Jesus were representative saviors. Who actually provides our salvation?

5. What does our heavenly Father "save" us from?

6. Consider how the salvation God provides is not reserved for someday or for the next life.

2. The Way of Salvation Transforms Us, cont.

Reflective questions for the second half: *Saving Transitions* and *Salvation Is A Process*

7. The Old Testament example of salvation illustrates 3 stages of salvation. What are they?

8. Focusing on the second stage, what do saving transitions do for us?

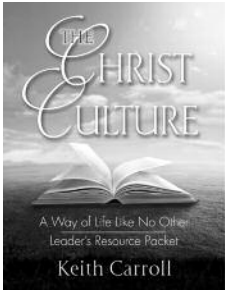
9. Which perceptions may be hindering our personal transition into maturity?

10. Why is it important to see salvation as a transforming process?

11. Consider what Scripture really means by “born again.”

12. Are these good phrases: “I’m saved,” “Are you saved?” “When were you saved?” Why not?

13. Consider how these insights help us to better know God and grow to reflect Him.



3. The Way of Forgiveness Restores Us

God is the embodiment of love. Love defines who He is and guides all His actions. Our heavenly Father's love for His offspring is so full that He forgives us without reserve. Forgiveness is His open invitation for us to repent and be restored into the fellowship of His presence. It is to the degree we accept God's forgiveness that we find release from our bondage to error and are able to partake of His guidance in the culture of Christ.

Reflective questions for the first half: *God Is Motivated* and *His Love Is Full*

1. What motivates God to forgive His offspring?

2. From God's perspective, when was/is our sin issue resolved?

3. What words does God use in Exodus 20:5 and 34:6, to describe His forgiving nature?

4. How does God's forgiveness compare to His lean toward justice?

5. How can God, who knows everything, forget our sin?

6. What did Isaiah and John identify as the primary reason God forgives?

7. What is the primary reason God sends judgment upon His offspring and children?

3. The Way of Forgiveness Restores Us, cont.

Reflective questions for the second half: *No Reserve Or Exceptions* and *Restored To Become*

8. What removed the Prodigal Son from his father?

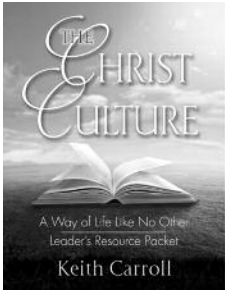
9. Was forgiveness in the father before he heard the son repent?

10. Does God's forgiving action require our repentance?

11. How does Scripture define death?

12. What expressions of God's love add defining depth to His forgiving nature?

13. How do these insights help us better know God and follow Him in the culture of Christ?



4. The Way of Repentance Releases Us

Separation from God's fellowship is what produces our deadly lifestyles. When we repent (accept responsibility for error and turn from it), God's forgiving grace and mercy comes to assist our desire to change behavior. Our lack of repentance keeps us from receiving the full benefits of His loving forgiveness. In the culture of Christ we learn to become people who are humble and quick to repent.

Reflective questions for the first half: *We Maintain Separation and Death Cycle Altered*

1. When Adam and Eve erred, how did they respond to the presence of God?

2. Read Psalms 7:12-16 and consider the five degrading conditions of a lack of repentance.

3. Wanting self-rule produced a separation that Scripture calls death. What needs restoring?

4. Why were Adam and Eve removed from the Garden of Eden?

5. What keeps us from seeing the face of God and partaking of the Tree of Life (Is. 59:2)?

6. Consider factors in Ezekiel 18:26-27, 30-32 that describe the activity called repentance.

7. What is the difference in asking for forgiveness and repenting?

4. The Way of Repentance Releases Us, cont.

Reflective questions for the second half: *Humble Action* and *Repentance and Health*

8. If God has already forgiven, why do we need to repent?

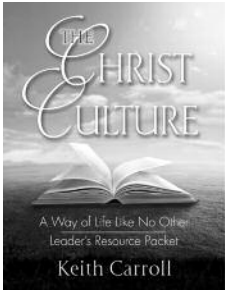
9. Why are we so hesitant to repent?

10. Read Acts 17:30; 26:20; 3:19-10 & discuss the “times” of ignorance and of refreshing.

11. Why is repenting so closely linked to the kingdom reign of God?

12. Does God want us to just repent or become humble people who are repentant?

13. How does our repentant attitude encourage right behavior in others?



5. The Way of Change Adjusts Us

God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. While He never changes, *we* must. History is the record of God making, molding, and refining us as maturing children. God not only creates and births us into existence, He wants to assist our development. Our growth process is easier when we embrace the changes He encourages. In the culture of Christ we become adjustable and learn to be better reflections and resemblances of God's heart.

Reflective questions for the first half: *Create and Make* and *Form and Mold*

1. Review chapters 1-4 and discuss how “process” is a core value in the culture of Christ.

In Ch. 1, we saw that life is the process God uses to birth His offspring into reality, to grow and develop us. In Ch. 2 we found salvation is the process God uses to transform us from mere offspring into developing children. In Ch. 3 we realized forgiveness is God's open invitation for us to enter His fellowship. In Ch. 4 our focus turns toward our response to God and how our repentant attitude and activity open to us the fuller benefits of God's forgiving love.

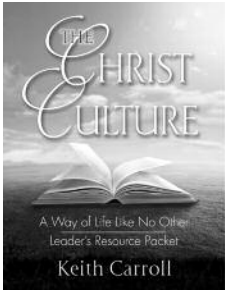
2. Describe the dual characteristic which Scripture speaks of as “the creative process.”

3. Consider the Genesis account of man's creation. Did it include a plan, a making and reforming?

4. Is anyone created, born, or reborn into maturity without a developmental process? Why?

5. What is the big difference in God's perspective of change and our perspective?

6. Growing and developing offspring are constantly changing. Who is our agent of change?



6. The Way of Balance Strengthens Us

A greater truth exists beyond the partial truth of separation. Balance speaks of a truth that dwells above and beyond division. As we embrace the One who dwells above our separations and receive His insights, we are strengthened and stabilized by eternal perspectives. The Prince of Peace reigns in lives that gravitate toward balance. In the culture of Christ, our perspective about life and one another becomes more balanced and godly.

Reflective questions for the first half: *A Godly Value* and *Guiding Presence*

1. When we view variables as a contrast, how do we tend to react or respond?

2. What are good ways to describe balance?

3. Compare the two perspectives: “contrast” and “complement.”

4. Consider why balance is different from compromise.

5. Separations can be of God & hurtful. Consider the difference between God’s influence & another.

6. Which perspective dominates our attitude and influences us more: contrast or complement?

7. What are some of the different life roles and seasons that can affect our balance?

6. The Way of Balance Strengthens Us, cont.

Reflective questions for the second half: *Flexible Adjustments* and *Peaceful Strength*

8. Can full truth reside in any issue or created thing? Can the full truth dwell in any of us?

9. Do weaker members of families have something of value to contribute?

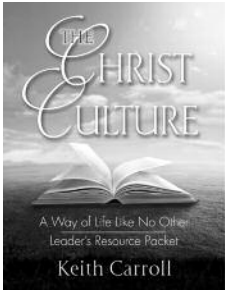
10. What does a complementary balance approach toward people and ideas produce in us?

11. How does a balance perspective make us stronger?

12. How do we discern what is or may be a balancing complement (people, idea, theology)?

13. Consider examples of how a balanced approach creates a greater life experience and how a divisive approach produces pain and suffering.

14. How do we become mature expressions of God? Discuss Eph. 5:1, 15-20; Col. 3:12-16



7. The Way of Interaction Matures Us

We are birthed to live and grow in families and communities. The quality of our interaction with God and with each other as family greatly affects the quality of our maturing development. The central theme and purpose of Scripture is achieved when we lovingly interact with God and with each other. In the culture of Christ, we develop the desire and skill to live out the greatest commandment: To fully love God and one another.

Reflective questions for the first half: *Relational Intent and With, Among, and In Midst*

1. The first “not good” in Scripture speaks of what relational condition (Genesis 2:18)?

2. Did the woman’s “helper” designation mean the man is not a helper as well?

3. What are some of the “Nod Effects” we experience when we reject God and His ways?

4. What did Jesus identify as the central theme of Scripture?

5. How did Jesus demonstrate interactive love for “one another”?

6. Consider the deterioration of interaction that came in our human beginnings.

7. The Way of Interaction Matures Us, cont.

Reflective questions for the second half: *Interactive Presence* and *Maturing Value*

7. When is our weakness considered to be strength?

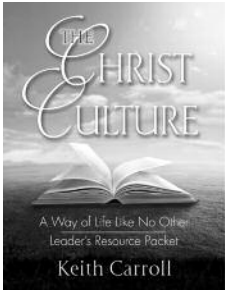
8. Does God see us as individuals or interactive participants?

9. Consider how interaction helps our maturing process?

10. Compare what life is like when we interact with God and when we exclude Him.

11. Consider how “serving God” compares with “interacting with God as a friend.”

12. Consider how these insights help us know God and hear Him speak in the culture of Christ.



8. The Way of Forgiving Commissions Us

God wants us to be people who forgive like God forgives, without reserve or condemnation. Our forgiving activity invites God's healing grace and mercy into our situation and circumstance. When we forgive offenders, we function as godly invitations to repent. In the culture of Christ we learn to forgive as a means of restoring right relationship with God and with one another. God gives each of us this ministry of reconciliation.

Reflective questions for the first half: *Maintenance Factor* and *How Do We Forgive?*

1. What are the two maintenance factors that are attached to God's restoring forgiveness?

2. Can we receive healing forgiveness and then lose it? How can this be?

3. What holds us captive when we do not forgive?

4. What if an offense was not intended, or our offender repents before God and we don't forgive?

5. Who benefited from Joseph's forgiving way of life?

6. Why should we forgive even when it is not requested?

8. The Way of Forgiving Commissions Us, cont.

Reflective questions for the second half: *Rise and Shine* and *Enabled Ministry*

7. How do we know we are forgiving as God forgives?

8. How do we appropriately respond to people in error?

9. Can we repent in the midst of conflict? What if we are not in the wrong?

10. Which view of God influences our view of Him most? Is He feared or respectfully trusted?

11. What about forgiving ourselves? Should we feel a need to forgive ourselves?

12. What does Scripture identify as our primary ministry to others?

13. Consider how these insights help you to better forgive others and draw people to Christ.

In Conclusion

Our heavenly Father loves every one of His human kids and desires to have personal fellowship with each of us. God wants to lead us through life's journey and teach us as a loving Father. He longs to reveal His heart and show us how to properly be His reflective resemblance (image and likeness) in each situation and circumstance we encounter.

Life is our process of development. Salvation transforms us as God's forgiveness restores us from condemnation and encourages our releasing repentance. This enables us to enter the processes of change, which allows us to find the strength in balance. Then we can partake of maturing interaction, in each of the situations and circumstances we encounter, as we inspire and influence others.

Participants in the culture of Christ partake of the fellowship of our heavenly Father and of one another. We learn to live by the ways of God. One way to articulate our primary purpose is:

“My purpose in life is to love God and learn to be an expression of His heart. I want to reflect as a mirror and resemble as a son, God's heart—His character, attitude, and personality (CAP) to everyone within my reach.”

We hope your study of *The Christ Culture* has moved you along life's journey toward maturity. But, don't stop here. Continue to learn and grow into better reflective resemblances of our heavenly Father. You will find the third book in this series, *The Fellowship of His Presence*, very helpful.