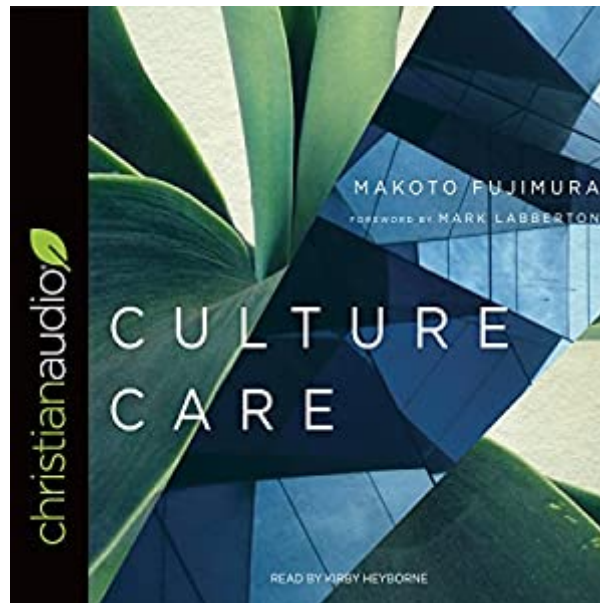




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Culture Care: Reconnecting With Beauty For Our Common Life



Synopsis

"Culture is not a territory to be won or lost but a resource we are called to steward with care. Culture is a garden to be cultivated." Many bemoan the decay of culture. But we all have a responsibility to care for culture, to nurture it in ways that help people thrive. In Culture Care artist Makoto Fujimura issues a call to cultural stewardship, in which we become generative and feed our culture's soul with beauty, creativity, and generosity. We serve others as cultural custodians of the future. This is a book for artists, but artists come in many forms. Anyone with a calling to create - from visual artists, musicians, writers, and actors to entrepreneurs, pastors, and business professionals - will resonate with its message. This book is for anyone with a desire or an artistic gift to reach across boundaries with understanding, reconciliation, and healing. It is a book for anyone with a passion for the arts, for supporters of the arts, and for "creative catalysts" who understand how much the culture we all share affects human thriving today and shapes the generations to come. Culture Care includes a study guide for individual reflection or group discussion.

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Customer Reviews

Love this book, very important contribution to Mako's ideas about cultural generativity and the arts!!!! A must read for anyone seeking to understand the seeds for hope in a diverse world and how the arts can infuse that with a fresh understanding of the importance of beauty.

Although Fujimura writes intellectually he still reaches your heart. This book is opening up how I

view my art as a purpose to the world. Thank you.

Excellent opportunity for interesting discussions. Definitely recommend.

Well written & challenging the current culture of the church appropriately.

Culture Care is a much-needed work for artists of all kinds to encourage, facilitate, and bring about a beautiful, healthy, and generative culture. Though artists in the typical sense of the word will find it especially insightful and motivating, Fujimura here expands the definition of an artist to the creativity found within us all as image bearers of our creator, thereby necessarily including businessmen, janitors, and all walks of life as equal participants in the cultivation of culture. Mako powerfully and explicitly states, "I am not a Christian artist. I am a Christian, yes, and an artist. I dare not treat the powerful presence of Christ in my life as an adjective" (65). We create because it's who we are, and we glorify God in all we do. In a commercially driven society that creates a "thing" and then the soon-to-follow "Christian" version of the "thing", we're all too sucked into marketing in a sacred vs. secular divide. A painting does not need to contain a cross to be "Christian," nor a song mention any part of the "gospel" to be called the same; in fact, we don't even need this adjectival language! If it glorifies God, it is beautiful and that for which we strive in caring of and for culture through creativity and artistic expression. When left in the hands of commercialization, art becomes something else, a mere commodity that is cheapened on so many levels. When "gifted" to the world for the sake of others "for the sake of glorifying God" then artists (of all kinds) will do more than fill an order, get a check to pay a bill, or simply please a customer: they rightfully care for their culture. Weaving scripture throughout the text, Mako does anything but ignore our rooting in Christ as the motivation for *Culture Care* (both as title and concept), but writes and argues in such a way that should be convincing and convicting for believers and nonbelievers alike in working toward better cultivation. Though nowhere stated as a goal and purpose of the work, I see many artists discovering a window into our creator, the author of their gifts and talents, through *Culture Care*. I highly recommend it for all formal artists, those desiring such, and those who simply want to better understand how they are or are not positively, creatively, and lastingly impacting their culture. Thanks for this one, Mako. It's pulling me back into my artistic roots, and with healthy motivation. Blessings to you and yours on the farm "keep digging and cultivating all types of soil."

Our first summer living on this country hill, the budget was tight and luxuries were few. I had planted a garden that seemed huge to me at the time, and a friend, intending to surprise me, weeded the entire plot as a generous gift from the heart. How could she have known that those random shoots between the green beans would have become marigolds or that the tomato plants had been interspersed with a potential forest of sunflowers? Reading *Culture Care* by Makoto Fujimura explained for me the long ago disappointment and the deep sense of loss that clouded my gratitude to that well-meaning friend: those flower seeds had been planted just for joy. To me, they had represented hope and beauty in a world that ran almost exclusively toward practicality. Our common lives become far too common when we fail to carve out a space for beauty. Makoto argues effectively that when we starve our souls in pursuit of our "living," we lose sight of our own nature as creative beings, made in the image of a Creator God who calls us to lives of fruitfulness and beauty. Working from insights gained in his calling as an artist, the author invites his readers into the generative life, which is "fruitful, original, new life, [and] . . . draws on creativity to bring into being something fresh and life giving." Throughout the book, he lays out numerous principles that define the generative approach to life on this planet: First, a genesis moment grabs the attention and renews a conviction, challenging us to make decisions in keeping with creativity and growth. Just as failure and disappointment entered the narrative arc of the biblical Genesis, it may also play a key role in our own personal genesis moments. Generosity is the fuel that drives generative thinking. A mindset of scarcity squelches creativity and leads to small, cramped living. The knowledge that all believers are stewards of culture leads us to create a welcoming climate for creativity and to care for the contributions of others so that future generations can thrive. Art is a gift "not a commodity. In his work with the International Arts Movement, Fujimura works to contribute to this type of reimagining, inviting others into the new paradigm that culture is "not a territory to win, but a garden to tend to, an ecosystem to steward." There is value to work that is done in secret for the pleasure and development of the artist "even if no one else ever sees or appreciates it. Artists fulfill the crucial role of "border-stalkers," living on the edges of various groups "sometimes in the space between "and carrying news back to the tribe. Like bees who pollinate far and wide, those who assume cultural leadership ensure flourishing. Christ, of course, was the ultimate Border-Stalker, creating in love, sidling up against all the borders with a light that would not be extinguished. When we narrow our categories (and our eyes) at artists who are Christian but who refuse to reduce Christ to a mere adjective, we diminish the mystery of Christ in our attempts to

keep the Spirit inside our boundaries and away from the margins where border-stalkers are most needed. As a mum who has spent that past decade or more schlepping children to piano lessons, play practices, and band rehearsals, I nearly stood on my chair as I read Makoto's thoughts on the deeply necessary role that art education plays in the development of people who are fully human. Dana Gioia has rightly said that we "do not provide arts education to create more artists, though that is a byproduct. The real purpose of arts education is to create complete human beings capable of leading successful and productive lives in a free society." We provide arts education so that we can have better teachers, doctors, engineers, mothers, and fathers. Arts are not a luxury but a path to educate the whole individual toward thriving. They are needed simply because a civilization cannot be a civilization without the arts.

Culture Care employs multiple metaphors to convey the connection between generative practice in everyday life and the enhancement and preservation of culture. Is a cultural greenhouse what we should strive for, or is that too sheltered? Would a garden concept with wise planning and limited scope be more likely to foster work that is both sustainable and generative? An estuary with its diverse and abundant ecosystems conjures images of some artists functioning as the oysters, rooted and filtering their surroundings, improving the environment for all; others are more like salmon, following a pattern of life-giving migration and, perhaps, leaving the estuary for good at some point. Makoto veers from principles to practicality by sharing his own story of inviting his supporters to invest in his career rather than merely purchasing his art. He does not use his considerable skills with a brush to paint an unrealistically positive view of the calling to serve one's gift, but, instead, introduces a gritty path to success that he calls "rehumanized capitalism."

In order to start a movement or survive as an artist, three types of capital are necessary:

- Creative capital "The artist with talent and skill"
- Social capital "An influencer such as a church leader or community organizer"
- Material capital "An individual with means or access to supportive business contacts"

Wouldn't it be lovely if, once again, the church could become an environment in which partnerships such as this could thrive? Tim Keller, former pastor from New York City, laments the tragedy that "the church is no longer where the masses come to know the Creator of beauty." If it is our desire to make caring for souls a way of life, Makoto Fujimura offers an outline for life-giving practices that will enable us to honor God and embody the gospel while, at the same time, cultivating the creativity that is at the heart of what it means to be fully human.

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