

## 1 **Our Secular Culture: The influence of culture on today's youth...**

### 2 **Introduction and Overview of Series**

- Passion: Sharing Good News of Jesus
- Commitment: Jesus is the Way, Truth, and Life...
- Dilemma: With a few exceptions, the church is struggling to connect, especially with "Z's"
- Setting: Post-Christian, Postmodern, Post-Truth...
- Challenges:
  - How do we navigate pluralistic culture?
  - How can we keep our families in the church?
  - How should we respond (as the body of Christ) to the new questions and ethical conundrums of our culture?
  - How do we bear faithful witness to Jesus Christ?

### 3 **Our Secular Culture**

- Summer research – Who are these people (students)?
- We can no longer assume our students know...
- What do we have to offer?
- Statistics are frightening...
  - Greatest growth in identifiable group – "Nones"
  - In particular, youth walking away...
  - Definitive research – not so much "I am spiritual, but not religious." It is now "I am not spiritual nor religious."

### 4 **An "Ahha" Moment in Cultural Research**

- Charles Taylor: *A Secular Age* (2007)
- Great influence on writers such as James K.A. Smith, Michael Gorman, Andrew Root, and Robert Bellah (*Habits of the Heart*)
- Taylor introduces idea of "Immanent Frame"
  - A closed world structure.
  - Language house, social imaginary
  - Everyone determines own "nova effect"
    - Authenticity
    - Expressive individualism
    - No ontological reality – negates transcendence – I make myself...

### 5 **Secular vs Spiritual?**

- Long argued against secular/sacred divide – but too general...
- Taylor argues there are 3 kinds of "secular"
- Secular 1: Sacred vs Secular Planes (Renaissance)
- Secular 2: Religious vs A-religious Spaces – the human will is now the driving power of reality
  - Still sacred realities – located almost completely in institutions made by human willing

(ideologies) [classic secular vs spiritual]

- Secular 3: Negation of Transcendence – divine action is not possible. Naturalism wins. Modern social imaginary precludes transcendence...

#### 6 **“What, then, must we do?”**

- The Human Experience:
  - Jane Elliot *Using Narrative in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*.
  - Two narratives in which we live:
    - 1<sup>st</sup> order – personal and unique
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> order – collective, attempting to provide meaning
    - We choose our 2<sup>nd</sup> order story based on what it offers.
    - Body metabolizes energy – we are economists of our energy – we give it to the narrative that offers the highest return.
    - The nova effect becomes toxic – we are whatever we want.
    - “And everyone did what was right in their own sight...”
  - The role of “Faith.”

#### 7 **Identifying “the Better Story.”**

- We are trying to bring our young people back to our Secular 2 institutions of faith (full-blown dualism).
- Not “authentic” – experiential element is lacking
- Next week we will unpack this more fully – “Living the ways of Jesus in a non-transcendent Immanent Frame.
- Our challenging task? Live out Romans 12:1-2.
- What story will allow you to develop into the best version of yourself?
- We cannot give what we do not have.

#### 8 **Review and Homework (really!?)**

- We are losing the cultural battle for the hearts of our youth...
- Fascinating studies speaking of the growing problem of depression and unhappiness.
- Today’s youth have more than any generation in history, yet are grading out as the most depressed and unhappy...
- Questions of identity and purpose are rampant and remain unanswered.
- Assignment: How important are the teachings of Jesus to you? How often do you meditate on and attempt to train into the life of Jesus. Keep a log on your time and expenditures

#### 9 **A Spiritual Cardiogram**

- Where do you spend your greatest emotional energies?
- What are you most concerned about – what do you worry about the most?
- On what do you spend your money and time? Where do you make financial sacrifices?
- Where does your mind go for “healing” or recreation? When your mind goes into default – where does it go?
- Are you spending any energies that allow for the transformation of your mind –

embracing the ways of Jesus?

- Love of enemies rather than their destruction
- Unconditional forgiveness instead of retaliation
- Readiness to suffer for the sake and well-being of others, peacemaking