

**Faith formation in a secular world:
Living the way of Jesus in a World of Complex Issues**

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

Brentwood Hills Church of Christ fall, 2018

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?

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.”**

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...**

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...

“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:**
 - **1st order – personal and unique**
 - **2nd order – collective, attempting to provide meaning**
 - **We choose our 2nd 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.”**

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.

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**

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**