

**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:**

- 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.”**

# 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**