

# Christ in Contemporary Culture:

## Session 1 - Understanding Syncretism - Outline

### I. Series Introduction

#### A. Introductory Thoughts

1. Statue of San Francisco (An example of animistic syncretism with Catholicism)

One hundred+ years ago a vendor traveled through a small Pima settlement in northeastern Sonora, Mexico. He carried with him a plaster image about 5' tall which he called San Francisco (Saint Francis). The Pima Indians of Maycoba purchased the 'saint' for a large sum and claim that he is the representative of Ichmaam, the sun god, also known as Jesus Christ. Since Ichmaam is far away in the sky, it is the 'saint' with whom they have to deal. San Francisco is believed to be alive, to see, hear and feel, to be watching over his people. When there is no rain to cause the crops to grow they call out to him. They 'show' him the dry fields and leave him out in the sun so that he will 'feel' the heat and send rain. October 4th is the date every year when San Francisco is honored as the town saint. People come from as far as California to be involved in the ceremony. How sad it is to see our friends bowing down before this image made of plaster, praying for protection, health and good fortune. They view him as greatly pleased by all the drunkenness that results during this fiesta in his honor.

**“Subtle compromise with culture affects the believers walk with God, his understanding of moral truth, his ability to be a light in the community, and his ability to carry out the great commission.”**

2. Challenges of Missions in Islamic, Buddhist, and Catholic countries
  - a. The above illustration demonstrates syncretism between Catholicism & animism. Other world religions beat Christianity to many remote peoples.
  - b. Poor understanding of culture on the part of those who took their religion to these groups allowed people to take what they wanted from the world religions and syncretize it with their animistic beliefs.
  - c. Outside of the major 13 Arab speaking countries of North Africa and Middle East, most Islam is folk Islam, especially in Central and South Africa.
  - d. Has this only happened with non-Christian world religions? Surveys taken among African Christian groups showed strong adherence to belief in spirits and witches and magic despite Christian teaching for many years.

### 3. Defining Syncretism

- a. The combination of different beliefs or practices by cultures when they interact with one another.
- b. Syncretism is the inter-working of two or more cultural perspectives into one system.

### B. Understand the importance of learning culture before teaching to avoid syncretism.

1. Ethnos360 teaches missionaries how to identify root beliefs of culture to avoid syncretizing Christian truth with unbiblical tribal culture. I avoided using the word non-biblical. Many non-biblical aspects of tribal culture, or of any culture, are not necessarily contradictory to truth yet it won't look like Western culture.
2. Early Western missionaries failed in many cultures to see this significant issue – seeking to change aspects of their culture to match ours, often making the issue a clash of external actions and missing internal issues needing change. (Example of marriages in red vs. white dresses in India.)
3. Because of the danger of syncretism with lying beliefs, Ethnos360 uses a Chronological approach to evangelism in all our works.
  - a. We begin with Creation – “In the beginning God” and take them to Calvary. (Newer models now teach from “eternity to eternity.”)
  - b. Most animists have little concept of God, let alone their fallen estate, and need for a Savior.
  - c. Focus is on basic truths of scripture: God – sovereign & creator, man – created in God's image, the fall – sin, death, and destruction entered the world, and redemption – Jesus is God's gift to man, the redeemer of our sin.
  - d. This form of evangelism met with good success in purely animistic tribal groups but has greater hurdles when approaching groups syncretized with another world religion on top of their animism.
  - e. Properly laying basics about God, man, sin, a fallen world, and why Jesus died, avoids major syncretism with animistic beliefs.
  - f. Great care must be shown to build a church on solid foundations of God, man, his fall, and redemption.

### C. Biblical Passage – 1 Cor. 9:19-23(NKJV)

<sup>19</sup>For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; <sup>20</sup>and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; <sup>21</sup>to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; <sup>22</sup>to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. <sup>23</sup>Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

1. We learn to become all things to all men to avoid offense in culture.
2. Understanding how culture strongly controls one's thinking is very important.
3. Learning how to accommodate one's lifestyle and communication to another's culture and thinking without compromising biblical values is a great challenge.

D. Personal Illustrations of unimportant cultural issues that help us relate to others:

1. In Holland, on our first trip abroad, we discovered Dutch people only eat open face bread, never sandwiches, and they only place one item on a piece of bread.
2. Foolishly swatting flies in a restaurant by clapping hands together is also the signal for the waiter to come to your table.
3. Asking for ice in a drink may get you an ice cream soda.

E. Understand destructive features of culture that are contrary to the truth.

1. Proverbs 14:12 & 16:25 both say, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."
2. Many groups killed one or both twins from false assumptions about spirits. I would have been killed at birth as a second born twin.
3. Evolutionary teaching caused widespread abuses in slavery and destructive behavior toward indigenous groups as well as being a root of Nazi extremism and American racism.
  - a. In NSW and Victoria between 1834 and 1859, horses and carbine rifles were used in at least 116 frontier massacres of Aboriginal people in mostly daytime attacks, with an average of 27 people killed in each attack.
  - b. From the late 1840s, massacres were carried out as daylight attacks by native police, sometimes in joint operations with settlers. They most often used double-barreled shotguns, rifles, and carbines.

## **II. With the above in mind, let's define modern American culture & why it is important.**

A. Grasp the subtlety of contemporary influences and thinking.

1. People, including Christians, adopt philosophies of culture readily without realizing why we do and think the way do.
  - a. Being raised in our culture, we often fail to discern truth from cultural norms.
  - b. As with animists, we embrace Christianity, but because we lack firm foundations in God and biblical revelation, concepts foreign to scripture blend into our lives unconsciously.
  - c. Non-biblical issues in culture do not affect us spiritually, but without knowing scripture,

how do you discern biblical from non-biblical?

- d. Decisions we make every day are guided by unbiblical philosophies.
  - e. This was true at the time of Paul, and it is true today – Col. 2:8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.
2. Because culture is subtle, we assume what we do or think is biblical, not realizing how contrary to a Biblical worldview it may be. Culture is powerful.
- a. This affects local and foreign evangelism as it perverts the message and messenger of truth unconsciously.
  - b. Subtle compromise with culture affects the believer's walk with God, his understanding of moral truth, ability to be a light in the community, and ability to carry out the great commission.
  - c. Two questions to probe:
    - i. To what extent are our lives patterned or influenced by vain pursuits of contemporary culture?
    - ii. How does this affect God's call on our lives and evangelism in this age?"
3. Here are some cautions as we continue through the material:
- a. Generalities are not true of all people.
  - b. People may have a few or many of these traits.
  - c. Though circumstances and situations are different in today's world, these things are propelled by the same flesh that governed lives from the time of Adam and Eve.

## This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# Session 2 – Defining Contemporary Western Culture & Its Absence of Truth - Outline

## I. Dealing with titles:

A. Contemporary education labels everything, including generations and time periods.

1. My wife was a builder (born in war years); I am a baby boomer (Post war baby).
2. Recent generations have been called gen x, y, etc.
3. Generalizations are helpful but they obscure uniqueness of individuals as well as overstate certain characteristics that are common to all fallen individuals.
4. What is more important is to see common threads that are possible influences in our lives. This short course aims to identify some in 6 concise lectures.
5. For clarity, here is a brief history from where contemporary society emerged.

**“All the teachings of man will never alter what God has set in place.”**

B. Contemporary thought calls modernism an ancestor of today's post-modernism.

1. Francis Schaeffer correctly called it simply a post-Christian era.
2. Philosophers & sociologists called this post-modern society.
3. This terminology is being replaced by other labels but some of this is relevant in understanding unbiblical thinking of the age and how it affects the Church.
4. Post-modernism, and its characteristics – defined later – came from a reaction to voids in modernism.
5. Defining modernism
  - a. Modernism was a result of exaggerated, unconfirmed speculations, including professional deceptions regarding evolution as fact rather than theory.
  - b. This encouraged widespread rejection of religion in educational circles.
  - c. Science was declared key to solve all problems of mankind.
    - i. Health triumphs of conquering polio and eradication of smallpox led the way in the medical world along with organ transplanting.
    - ii. Rapid rise of electronic appliances for the home was dramatic.
  - d. Religion was squeezed out of many, if not most, higher schools of learning, many originally founded as religious seminaries.

- e. This filtered into widespread governmental regulations and supreme court decisions banning prayer, teaching of creation, and rejection of the Ten Commandments in public institutions.
- f. Religion was publicly labeled as superstitious fables.
- g. Modernism still reigns in educational circles, but disillusionment set into life as a spiritual void reduced man to random accidental collections of matter.

## II. Development of Post-modernism (Much of what we see today in human thought)

### A. The void in hearts and fallenness of his nature remained unchanged.

1. Basic problems of man were not solved.
  - a. People still killed people. Hurt, divorce, abuse increased.
  - b. Mental issues and alcohol and drug dependency increased.
  - c. Hatred, war, & terrorism rose to a conscious level of everyday living.
2. Man cannot live in a spiritual vacuum.
  - a. He saw a need for that which was declared irrational (religion).
  - b. Because science rejected traditional religion, but had no answers, people turned to eastern religions, self-help gurus, mixing it with their daily lives in a religious hodgepodge of beliefs.
  - c. You can watch HGTV and listen to a lady expound on how you need to make corners of your room rounded to allow free flow of energy or see a rock display in a mall with attached spiritual implications to each kind of rock.
3. With absolute truth disallowed, confidence in any absolute became suspicious.
  - a. Truth becomes whatever someone thinks. My story is as good as your story.
  - b. History and empirical evidence opened to whatever I want to imagine it to have been [hence speculative books like DaVinci Code and its sequels].
  - c. Revisionist history allows us to see history in any light we choose. There is no historical framework from which to view life or examine truth.
  - d. We seek an historical Jesus ignoring writings of the contemporary witnesses to His life and character; we make Him to be who we want Him to be.
  - e. In a world where science, particularly evolution, declared life accidental and meaningless, we are free to create our meaning and purpose, no matter how foolish or ignorant or contradictory to God's written revelations.

### B. Descriptive generalizations of society today (Some to be examined in greater detail)

1. Man has found the modern-day fruit of the Garden, allowing me to become god.

- a. Two statements from the Garden of Eden exemplify today's temptation.
    - i. Satan's subtle challenge to Eve: "Has God said?"
      - a. There is no absolute truth.
      - b. With the one statement Eve entertained doubt to the sovereignty, goodness, truth, motive, and holiness of God.
    - i. Satan's blatant lie to Eve: "your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God." (Whatever you believe is true for you but not necessarily for me.)
  - b. Cultural shifts of the day further this thinking or are results of this thinking.
2. Additional struggles of modern culture include:
- a. No family structure – two gods seldom can co-exist under the same roof.
  - b. An amazing speed of life – no time is given to think about the meaning of life.
  - c. Globalization – continual exposure to differing cultures adds to the unwillingness to acknowledge absolute truth, resulting in pluralism.
  - d. Religious terrorism makes religious adherence look deadly and absurd.
  - e. Moral expectations are dismantled as one can't be certain of their sex.
  - f. Acceptance of the profane – belief in God is something to ridicule.
  - g. Immoral standards once universally acknowledged as wrong are displaced.
  - h. Acceptance of Eastern mysticism abounds with new-age influences.
  - i. Rejection of religious absolutism creates a distaste of Christianity with its exclusive claims.
3. Many different ways to look at the impact of current thinking exists.
- a. Though not inspired and with room for much correction, let's examine 10 common themes of society from a biblical viewpoint.
  - b. Ask the Spirit of God as we do this to help you see how it impacts your life.
  - c. We end this lecture with the first of the ten themes.

### **III. Contrasting Biblical Values with Contemporary Society**

#### **Relativism vs. Truth**

##### **A. Relativism**

- 1. Basic Concepts of Relativism
  - a. Pluralism, including atheism, is welcomed. Whatever you believe is fine.
  - b. It doesn't matter how contradictory people's stories are. Each becomes their own god in declaring what is true or false.
  - c. Superstition and science co-exist despite obvious contradictions.
  - d. Man rationalizes sinful behavior without fear of condemnation or rejection.
- 2. Underlying Spirit – Skepticism masked behind a virtue of tolerance.



- a. Any pronouncement of non-negotiable truth to which all men answer is anathema as there is no absolute truth.
- b. Underlying slogan – Who says?
- 3. Perceptions from relativism
  - a. Life – Life is what I decide it to be, from random accident to nirvana.
  - b. God – God is made in my image; I determine what God, if he exists, is like.
  - c. Scripture – I either dismiss it or interpret it my way.
- 4. Fleshly focus of relativism
  - a. Self-directed
  - b. I focus – I’m free to live life my way.
  - c. Concept of sin – what I determine to be wrong.
  - d. Others – You’re ok as long as you don’t mess with my turf.
  - e. Social media reveals an intolerant society of self-declared gods; being outside political correctness is not tolerated.

## B. Biblical Response to Relativism

- 1. Truth
  - a. “In the beginning God” – Genesis 1:1, Isaiah 40:12-18, Psalm 14:1 – “The fool has said in his heart there is no god.”
  - b. There are absolutes – “And God said.” Matt. 5:18 - (NKJV) For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.
  - c. Evolution is a hodgepodge of speculation and innuendo lacking undisputed evidence. Good creationist material abounds.
- 2. Human inadequacy
  - a. I’m fallen – I’m not OK – Gen. 3:1-6, Rom. 3:23, 19-20 - “All have sinned.”
  - b. We will be judged by how we respond to divine revelation - John. 3:16-18.
  - c. We must accept the love of God or be judged by His words – John 12:44-50.
  - d. No Savior exists outside Jesus Christ – Isaiah 43:11, 45:21. “I even I am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior.”
- 3. Teaching emphasis
  - a. Gracious absolutism – A standard of truth exists to which all men answer – Matt. 24:27, 30. John 17:17 – “Thy Word is truth.”
  - b. The truth is the truth because it is the truth; it can’t be changed – 2 Cor. 13:5.
  - c. Grace must be the foundation by which we approach others – 2 Tim. 2:24-26.

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# Session 3 – Entitlement, Independence, & Materialism

## I. Contrasting Biblical Values with Contemporary Society Entitlement vs. Service

### A. Entitlement

#### 1. Basic Concepts of Entitlement

- a. My rights are supreme and must be granted (even at the expense of others).
- b. Western society is an age of lawsuits, putting price tags on inconvenience. (Morgan & Morgan, Bogan Munns & Munns, Dan Newland.)
- c. Division and strife reign whenever I am denied my wants and demands.
- d. We punish the present generation for historical violations of rights.

**“What God becomes the center of focus, everything else falls into its proper place.”**

#### 2. Underlying Spirit of entitlement.

- a. Underlying slogan – “It’s my right”, or “have it your way.” (BK slogan)
- b. My right includes permission to be sinful, including lawless activity.
- c. “You owe me” is the philosophy; ignoring reconciliation and forgiveness.

#### 3. Perceptions from entitlement

- a. Life – Life is about me & my rights.
- b. God – God, if He exists, is about my benefit – prosperity gospel preachers.
- c. Scripture – If I think it is relevant, I interpret verses to support my thinking.

#### 4. Fleshly focus of entitlement

- a. Self-focused
- b. I focus – I’m the center of the universe.
- c. Concept of sin – It’s never my fault. Someone else is responsible even for my poor choices and bad behavior. No sense of accountability.
- d. Others – exist to meet my needs. You are meaningless if I have no use of you.
- e. Social media is about “selfies.” See how I am, what I do & what I think.

### B. Biblical Response to Entitlement

#### 1. Truth

- a. Life is about God. Isa. 43:21 – “This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise.”

- b. I live for His glory – 1 Cor. 6:19-20. “You were bought with a price. Therefore Glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God’s.”
  - c. “The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” – Rom. 6:23. – He gave up His life for our redemption.
- 2. Human inadequacy
  - a. “There is a way which seems right but the end is death” – Prov. 16:25.
  - b. The flesh is directed by unforgiveness and bitterness. – Heb. 12:15
  - c. In a fallen world we cope with pain and inconvenience daily. – Rom. 8:22.
- 3. Teaching emphasis
  - a. Servanthood – Mark 10:42-45 – Christ became a ransom for many.
  - b. Love and wash each other’s feet as He showed us – Eph. 5:2, John 13:13-17.
  - c. Learn to show forgiveness & grace – Eph. 4:31-32.
  - d. God teaches thankfulness and trust in His sovereignty even when hurting or abused by others – Ja. 1:2-4. I rest in inseparable love – Rom. 8:28, 35-39.

## **One Phrase Contrast: Thankfulness vs. Selfishness**

## **II. Contrasting Biblical Values with Contemporary Society Independence vs. Unity**

### **A. Independence**

- 1. Basic Concepts of Independence
  - a. Community is unimportant, man is an island unto himself.
  - b. Modern architecture removed front porches & erected high back fences.
  - c. Marital oneness and commitment are shunned for live-in relationships.
- 2. Underlying Spirit of independence
  - a. “Just do it” – (Nike slogan)
  - b. Independence is part of our heritage and highly magnified as a virtue.
  - c. Movies portray one man wrecking crews who go alone – (Die Hard Bruce Willis), (Rambo – Sylvester Stallone) (Super spy James Bond since 1963)
- 3. Perceptions from independence
  - a. Life – Is under my control.
  - b. God is not personal – a deistic approach to Christianity if I accept Him at all.
  - c. Scripture – No sense of personal need, instruction, or guidance for my life.
- 4. Fleshly focus of independence

- a. Self-reliant
- b. I focus – I can do it without help.
- c. Concept of sin – I’m free to do what I want, especially non-committal sex.
- d. Others – I don’t need you.
- e. Social media creates lonely people through unreal artificial relationships.

## B. Biblical Response to Independence

### 1. Truth

- a. Life is not under my control, I need God – John 14:6, Isa. 1:18, Rom. 1:21.
- b. God created man to develop relationships with others. “It is not good for man to live alone.” - Gen. 2:18, Eph. 2:19-22
- c. One body of Christ is designed to work in harmony together – 1 Cor. 12.
- d. Division and strife characterize the flesh and independence creates disunity & fractures the body – 1 Cor. 1:10-13, 3:1-3.

### 2. Human inadequacy

- a. Without me you can do nothing - John 15:5.
- b. Without Christ evil & lies destroy us – Rom. 1:22-32, 2 Thess. 2:10-11.
- c. Without the centrality of Christ, we judge, compare, and condemn one another – 2 Cor. 10:12.

### 3. Teaching emphasis

- a. God is personal; we need to walk with & abide in Christ. Ps. 63:1-3 – “Oh God, you are my God.” John 15:1-7. “I am the vine, you are the branches.”
- b. We need one another, recognizing our place in the body – 1 Cor. 12:14-21. We are to avoid prideful attitudes of superiority – “I don’t need you,” or inferiority, “I am nothing compared to others.”
- c. Walk in humility under the headship of Jesus Christ – Eph. 1:22-23, 2:10.
- d. We are desperate for the Word of God. Matt. 4:4. - “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”

## **One Phrase Contrast: Togetherness vs. Loneliness**

## **III. Contrasting Biblical Values with Contemporary Society Materialism vs. Contentment**

### A. Materialism

#### 1. Basic Concepts of Materialism

- a. Consumer advertising creates endless false promises and empty hopes of fulfillment through money, things, fame, or gambling.
- b. Materialistic desires produce discontentment bringing dissatisfaction w/ life.
- c. Wellbeing is determined by how I compare myself to others.
- d. Lifeless objects, unable to fulfill dreams, become sought after idols.

## 2. Underlying Spirit of Materialism

- a. Lust for things and status in life is love for a fallen world – 1 John 2:15-17.
- b. Commercial slogans teach, “Because You’re worth it.” (Loreal of Paris)
- c. Self-worth is determined by looks, achievements and possessions.
- d. External success & goods blind us to internal bankruptcy and emptiness.

## 3. Perceptions from Materialism

- a. Life is a game to see who has the most toys.
- b. God, if I believe in him, is a genie to do my bidding in fulfilling my wants.
- c. Scripture – Take what you want, leave what you don’t.

## 4. Fleshly focus of Materialism

- a. Self-centered
- b. I focus – I must have
- c. Concept of sin – external deeds I don’t approve with no concept of internal sins of the heart
- d. Others – You must worship me or work for my success, looks, fame, etc.
- e. Social media glorifies outward performance while ignoring inward vanity.

# B. Biblical Response to Materialism

## 1. Truth

- a. “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses.” – Luke 12:15.
- b. Matthew 10:39 (NKJV) - He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.
- c. God looks on the heart, not outer appearances – 1 Samuel 16:7.

## 2. Human inadequacy

- a. Wealth without divine wisdom creates wrong priorities – Luke 12:16-21.
- b. Selfishness & vanity are a way of life, destructive to the soul – Ps. 119:36-37.
- c. Without Christ we are lifeless – 1 John 5:12.
- d. Materialism is void of intrinsic value, blinding the soul – Rev. 3:15-17.

## 3. Teaching emphasis

- a. Life is Christ – John 10:10, 14:6, Col. 3:1-4.
- b. Godliness with contentment is great gain – 1 Tim. 6:6-10.
- c. Everything I need in life is found in Jesus Christ – Col. 2:9-10, 2 Pet. 1:3-4.
- d. God is able to make all things abound toward me – 2 Cor. 9:8, 11.
- e. Giving is greater than receiving – 2 Cor. 8 & 9

**One Phrase Contrast:**  
**Substance vs. vanity (holding a rock vs. grasping wind)**

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## Session 4 – Lust, Amusement, & Distrust - Notes

### I. Contrasting Biblical Values with Contemporary Society Lust vs. Love

#### A. Lust

##### 1. Basic Concepts of Sexual Lust

- a. I can have sex without commitment or responsibility w/anyone I choose.
- b. Sexual activity expresses free love (in extreme cases with animals).
- c. Any sexual encounter with a consenting adult is OK.
- d. Sexual taboos are old fashion in a sexually liberated world.

**“If I live with no structure, I have chaos. If I accept God’s order from the Word of God, I find order in everything.”**

##### 2. Underlying Spirit of Lust

- a. Sexual fantasy is OK. (With children is frowned on by most but not all)
- b. Nudity is art, not pornography (that is how Playboy became legalized).
- c. I am free to interpret my sexual orientation & sexual identity.

##### 3. Perceptions from Lust

- a. Life is sexual freedom.
- b. God doesn’t judge sexual sins.
- c. Scripture is old fashion and shouldn’t place restrictions on modern society.

##### 4. Fleshly focus of Lust

- a. I am sexually enlightened to be or do what I want.
- b. Self-defined (vs. being God and nature defined)
- c. You must allow me to fulfill my sexual fantasies.

#### B. Biblical Response to Lust

##### 1. Truth

- a. “...male and female He created them” - Gen. 1:26-27.
- b. In the beginning God determined men and women who leave home and cling to another become one flesh in a new identity – Gen. 2:24-25.
- c. Man is not to destroy what God has joined together – Matt. 19:3-6.
- d. Love is selfless giving within God’s pre-determined boundaries & according to His divine example – 1 Cor. 13:4-8a, 1 John 4:7-12, Matt. 5:28, 15:19.

## 2. Human inadequacy

- a. Sexual confusion reigns about sex, purpose, and limits – 1 Cor. 6:13-20.
- b. Sex, apart from genuine love, never fulfills – Prov. 5:1-23, 6:23-35, 7:1-27.
- c. Love of self never produces life worth living – Eph. 4:17-19.
- d. Sexual sin destroys relationships, ministries, & lives – 1 Sam. 11 & 12.
- e. Bombardment of fleshly images leads to date rape, aggravated assaults, marriage destruction, bondage to pornography, etc. – 1 Cor. 6:12, 10:23.

## 3. Teaching emphasis

- a. God's intent for sex is within boundaries of marriage, to be fully enjoyed and freely expressed – Song of Solomon, Heb. 13:4.
- b. Sex without love is empty, void of meaning, and relationless – 1 Cor. 3:1-3.
- c. God's truth is foundational for stability of families and nations – Deut. 6:6-9, Eph. 5:22-6:4. Israel's failures included adultery – Jer. 7:9, 13:27, 29:23.
- d. God illustrates intimate love by calling Israel His wife & the Church the bride.

# **One Phrase Contrast: Intimate vs. Shallow**

## **II. Contrasting Biblical Values with Contemporary Society Amusement vs. Accountability**

### A. Amusement

- 1. Basic Concepts of amusement (Pleasure is not wrong until it replaces reality.)
  - a. Live for the moment.
  - b. Dull the pain of living (entertainment, addictions, or tranquilizers).
  - c. Frenetic activity glosses over vain living.
  - d. Continual motion limits meditation on meaning or values in life.
- 2. Underlying Spirit of amusement
  - a. Life has too much pain and regret.
  - b. Living in fear of transparency or discovery.
  - c. Building walls to hide behind and an inability to get close to others.
- 3. Perceptions from amusement
  - a. Life is a fantasy.
  - b. God doesn't care about me. If He exists, He's aloof and impersonal.
  - c. Religion, including scripture, is not relevant to my life.
- 4. Fleshly focus of amusement

- a. Self-deceived – don't look at the real you or the real world.
- b. I focus – I hide who I am. I pretend to be who I'm not.
- c. Concept of sin – sin is hidden and denied, living with addictions.
- d. Others – I can't trust you with the real me.
- e. Social media – Sounds and voices cover my emptiness, fears, & shame.

## B. Biblical Response to amusement

### 1. Truth

- a. Life is found in Jesus Christ – John 10:10, Col. 3:1-4.
- b. The Good Shepherd leads me to green pastures and still waters – Ps. 23.
- c. God is personal and loves me unconditionally and sacrificially – John 3:16.
- d. God knows everything about me; I don't need to hide who I am – Ps. 139:1-6.

### 2. Human inadequacy

- a. All have shame (sin) and come short of the glory of God – Rom. 3:23, 6:23.
- b. Human wisdom cannot know God, but God seeks us – 1 Cor. 1:18-21, 2:14.
- c. Human behavior leads to envy, strife, and division – 1 Cor. 3:3.
- d. Apart from God, we are deceived sons of disobedience – Eph. 2:1-3.

### 3. Teaching emphasis

- a. We are without hope in the world apart from Christ – Eph. 2:12.
- b. Seek the Lord as He desires to walk with you – Phil. 3:7-10, Psalm 63:1-8.
- c. God is personal & by grace, I am free to be transparent about failures and faults, finding His sufficiency in all things – 1 John 1:9, Isa. 55:6-9, 2 Cor. 9:8.
- d. True pleasure and riches are found in the person & will of God – Ps. 16:11.
- e. Whatever we do, we are to do it to the glory of God – 1 Cor. 10:31, Col. 3:23.
- f. We do not need to run and hide from the one who loved us through Calvary, who knows everything about us – Ps. 139:1-6, 13-17.

## **One Phrase Contrast: Genuine vs. Pretentious**

## **III. Contrasting Biblical Values with Contemporary Society**

### **Distrust vs. Respect for Authority**

#### A. Distrust of Authority

##### 1. Basic Concepts of distrust

- a. Neither God nor His Word have authority over man.

- b. All God ordained authority is suspect - parental, marital, or governmental.
- c. Each individual considers himself a supreme authority to be listened to.
- d. Anarchy is the ultimate result. Everyone does what is right in his own eyes.

## 2. Underlying Spirit of distrust

- a. Cynicism reigns toward any control over my life. This blindly opens a door for the more dominant to create dictatorial powers over others.
- b. Egalitarianism reigns in marriage.
- c. Anarchy & rebellion are acceptable as long as it is against what I'm against.
- d. Rejection of divine authority exalts sexual freedom and live-in relationships.

## 3. Perceptions from distrust.

- a. Life is meaningless, random, and belongs to the strong.
- b. God is dead or can't be trusted with my life, or is the cause of evil.
- c. Scripture is too authoritarian and dismissed as having no influence over life.

## 4. Fleshly focus of distrust

- a. Self-ruled
- b. I focus – I am my own authority.
- c. Concept of sin – only what I determine to be wrong.
- d. Others – You have no authority over my life.
- e. Social media – lies, discord, or whatever necessary to get my way.

## B. Biblical Response to distrust

### 1. Truth

- a. God & His Word is truth – Ex. 34:6, Dt. 32:4, John 14:6, Ps. 33:4.
- b. God's Word is final – Psalm 119:160, John 17:17, Luke 21:33.
- c. Truth sets us free – John 8:32.
- d. God ordained authority creates order from disorder – Psalm 19:1, Rom. 8:28.

### 2. Human inadequacy

- a. O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps – Jer. 10:23.
- b. Man's ways lead to destructive behavior – Rom. 1:21-32.
- c. Man's heart apart from God is rebellious – Eph. 2:1-3, Rom. 3:10-18.
- e. Refusing God's authority destroys order, especially the home – 2 Sam. 11-12.

### 3. Teaching emphasis

- a. Trust the Sovereignty of God – Isa. 41:4, 10, 42:8-10, 43:6, 8, 44:24; 45:7-9, 18; Dan. 4:34-36, Rom. 4:17-21, 11:33-36, Rom. 13:1, Rev. 19:11-16.

- b. Love our enemies – Matt. 5:44, Rom. 12:9, 14, 17, 20-21, Matt. 10:16.
- c. Respect life as God-given – Gen. 1:26-27, Rom. 12:8, Heb. 12:14.
- d. Honor God given authority – 1 Pet. 2:13-17 (husbands, elders, parents).

**One Phrase Contrast:**  
**Order vs. Chaos**

[illegible]

# Session 5 – Insecurity, Worship of Creation & Frenzy - Outline

## I. Contrasting Biblical Values with Contemporary Society Insecurity vs. Peace

### A. Insecurity

1. Basic Concepts of fear & insecurity
  - a. Uncertainty & distress – tossed about by winds of change
  - b. Live with a daily “what if” syndrome, including imaginative scenarios
  - c. Emphasis on empty promises - insurance, wealth, health, or government.
  - d. Walking by sight, unwilling to rest in God given promises
2. Underlying Spirit of insecurity
  - a. Hopelessness and despair
  - b. Seeking security in human solutions of education, science, government, employment, medicine (excessive use of tranquilizers), or lotteries.
  - c. Torment and lack of peace, often leading to addictive behavior to fill the void
3. Perceptions from insecurity
  - a. Life is fearful and uncertain.
  - b. God is not trustworthy or can't meet my needs.
  - c. Scripture is not for real life problems
4. Fleshly focus of insecurity
  - a. Self-anxious
  - b. I focus – I must be secure (Insure it)
  - c. Concept of sin – overt actions depriving me of security - political ideologies, thieves – cyber or physical, sexual predators, profiteers, etc.
  - d. Others – You must make me safe or I fear you oppose my happiness.
  - e. Social media – manipulates fear and uncertainty for personal gain.

### B. Biblical Response to fear & insecurity

1. Truth
  - a. Perfect love casts out all fear – 1 John 4:18, Rom. 8:35-39.
  - b. Jesus promises peace the world can't give – John 14:27, 16:33, Phil. 4:6-7.
  - c. Understanding who God is brings courage and confidence – Ps. 27:1.
2. Human inadequacy
  - a. Wicked always are looking over their shoulders – Pr. 28:1.

- b. A fallen world offers no solace for people – Ecclesiastes – “all is vanity.”
- c. One cannot run from his inability to control his destiny – John 3:16-18.
- 3. Teaching emphasis
  - a. This world is fallen, not our home – Phil. 3:20-21.
  - b. Peace begins with God through Christ. Rom. 5:1 - “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
  - c. God is our place of refuge & rest – Ps. 23:1-6, 1 Peter 5:7, Heb. 3 & 4.
  - d. The sovereignty of God brings meaning to all circumstances – Rom. 8:28.
  - e. “For we walk by faith, not by sight” – 2 Cor. 5:7.

## **One Phrase Contrast: Assurance vs. Doubt**

## **II. Clash of Biblical Values w/ Modern Culture**

### **Worshipping Creation vs. worshipping the Creator**

A. Worshipping Creation (Starts with the worship of man and runs as deep as seeing the earth as a goddess – “Gaia” or mother earth.

1. Basic Concepts of worshipping Creation
  - a. Creation is all we have, and nature is to be preserved at all costs.
  - b. Emphasis includes everything organic – foods, health remedies, etc.
  - c. New age teachings are accepted along with astrology and worship of rocks.
  - d. Animal rights are highlighted while murder of human babies is ignored.
2. Underlying Spirit of worshipping creation
  - a. Save the planet. Earth Day is universally taught.
  - b. Man and manufacturing are enemies of nature, especially use of fossil fuels.
  - c. Radical organizations militantly fight to protect the planet or animal rights.
3. Perceptions from worshipping creation
  - a. An obsession with saving the environment and preventing climate change.
  - b. God is nature, to be protected at all costs, necessitating harmful taboos similar to ancient animistic and Hindu teachings.
  - c. Scripture is ignored in favor of evolutionary theory; nature is god.
4. Fleshly focus of worshipping creation
  - a. Self-preservation – save the planet or I become extinct.
  - b. I focus – I’m part of the cosmic whole which is god (Star Wars).



- c. Concept of sin – anything destructive to the environment
- d. Others – you join my crusade or you are the enemy.
- e. Social media promotes politically correct environmental issues.

## B. Biblical Response to worship of Creation

### 1. Truth

- a. God alone is to be worshipped – Psalm 19:1-4, Isa. 42:8, 43:7, 48:11.
- b. Creation points us to God. From there, decisions and care are built on solid foundations of truth – Rom. 1:19-20, Psalm 8:1-4, Rev. 1:8, Prov. 1:7, 9:10.
- c. Caring for the environment is a God-given responsibility, to be done with thanksgiving for what God gave man – Gen. 2:7, 15, Rom. 1:21-23.
- d. Nothing reverses the curse of the fall until the Lord's return – Gen. 3:17-19, Ps. 102:25-26, Romans 8:20-22, Rev. 19:1-20:1.

### 2. Human inadequacy

- a. Man cannot find life through worship of nature or idols of man – Job 33:4 (Elihu), Jer. 2:11-13.
- b. Fools reject God (Ps. 53:1, Job 40:2) and are enslaved to idols – Jer. 10:1-16.
- c. Unserved men put hope in wrong places – Jer. 2:27-28, 2 Chron. 16:7-9.

### 3. Teaching emphasis

- a. Worship God, the creator by seeing His handiwork in creation – Gen. 1:31.
- b. Creation is a gift of God for which we praise and thank Him – Ps. 148:1-14.
- c. Understanding creation teaches us the magnitude of God's sovereignty over affairs of men – Gen. 17:1, Job. 38-41 (70 questions), Isa. 46:2, Col. 1:15-18.

## **One Phrase Contrast Life-giving God vs. Lifeless idols**

## **III. Clash of Biblical Values w/Modern Culture Frenzy vs. Stability**

### A. Frenzy

#### 1. Basic Concepts of Frenzy

- a. The hurry-up generation – instant gratification & infatuation with speed
- b. Searching for the newest rage or challenge
- c. Impatience, unwilling to take time to hear what others are saying.
- d. Everything must be new, rejection of older techniques and concepts

#### 2. Underlying Spirit of Frenzy

- a. Bigger, better, faster, louder
- b. Easily distracted, an inability to meditate and think through decisions
- c. Fearful of being alone, yet are lonely
- d. Inability to stay at a job, build a family, or make deep & lasting friendships

### 3. Perceptions from Frenzy

- a. Life is a thrill ride
- b. God is in experience
- c. No time for Scripture meditation & application

### 4. Fleshly focus of Frenzy

- a. Self-fulfilled
- b. I focus – I need the latest, fastest, best, etc.
- c. Concept of sin – only what annoys me or hinders me
- d. Others – I must be better than you, or I don't have time for you.
- e. Social media – possesses my waking moments, controls thinking and desires

## B. Biblical Response to Frenzy

### 1. Truth

- a. God looks on the heart of man, not outward appearances – 1 Sam. 16:7.
- b. Internal issues are more important to God than outward achievements – Deut. 10:12, Ecc. 7:8, Micah 6:8. "We walk by faith not by sight" – 2 Cor. 5:7.
- c. We are called to fellowship with the Son – 1 Cor. 1:9.
- d. Come to Jesus – Matt. 11:28-30, Luke 12:31-34, Ps. 34:1-4, 8-11.
- e. "Grow in grace & knowledge of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ." – 2 Pet. 3:18.

### 2. Human inadequacy

- a. The heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked – Jer. 17:9.
- b. It is not in the heart of man to direct his own steps – Jer. 10:23-24.
- c. Natural man is blind to his outcome – Prov. 1:7, 16:25, 1 Cor. 1:18-20, 2:14.

### 3. Teaching emphasis

- a. Learn to be still and wait on the Lord – Ps. 37:7, 46:10, Prov. 3:4-6.
- b. Learn to be patient with all men – 1 Thess. 5:14, 2 Tim. 2:24.
- c. Don't be conformed to this world – Rom. 12:1-2, 1 John 2:15-17.
- d. Patience is a virtue – James 1:2-4, 5:7-11, 2 Cor. 6:4.
- e. Growth and maturity take time – Lk. 8:15, Rom. 15:4, Heb. 6:12.
- f. 2 Cor. 3:18 – "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the

Spirit of the Lord.”

## **One Phrase Contrast: Meaningful vs. Valueless**

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## Session 6 – A Final Challenge - Outline

### I. Conclusions:

A. Neither the Church, nor missionary endeavor, can succeed in this environment apart from the work of the Holy Spirit transforming us into the image of Christ.

1. The truth of Christ, the life He offers, and the commitment necessary to fulfill His purposes, are lost in the shuffle of contemporary expediency.
2. If in truth, controlled by flesh, we live and act as the unbelieving world, how can we attract unbelievers to Christ and the message of the cross?

**“We will not impact this world without God and His truth being a part of our lives.”**

B. If you believe you are unaffected by society and its underlying currents, answer a few simple questions honestly:

1. How important is the Word of God to you?
  - a. To what extent are you a student of this book? If you make no effort to study the Word of God, absolutes of God are not important to you.
  - b. After speaking on the importance of God’s Word in a church in Moscow, MI, one man told me he never opened a bible outside Sunday services in 20+ years Church attendance. Many Christians feel taking time to study God’s word a waste of time - 2 Tim. 2:15, Matt. 4:4.
  - c. Perhaps your life is more subject to whims of culture than being rooted in the solid rock of God and His revelation of truth.
2. How willing are you to serve needs of others, physically, spiritually, or materially? - Mark 10:45
  - a. To what extent do you think about, pray about, or give toward the communication of Christ to a lost world?
  - b. To what extent do you seek opportunities to make a difference in others?
  - c. If your answer borders on little to none, perhaps your life is wrapped up in your rights, rather than the need of others - 2 Cor. 5:14.
3. How involved are you in the body of Christ, the Church?
  - a. Do you spend time with others, hold yourself accountable before others, work in fellowship with others? Do you sense need for the body of Christ?
  - b. How often do you pray? Prayerlessness is independence from God. Though we talk about needing God, we don’t call out to Him – Heb. 11:6.

- c. Perhaps, you are more independent and individualistic than you realize. After all, Independence is a glorified virtue of our nation - 1 Cor. 12:13.
- 4. What do you live for or consider success? 1 Cor. 1:26-29, 31
  - a. Is your life always wanting more than what you have? Do you have to have a bigger house, newer car, bigger or newer electronics?
  - b. Do you gage status in life on how you compare to what others have? Is peace of mind determined by size of bank accounts or insurance policies?
  - c. How willingly do you give generously to others from what you have?
  - d. Perhaps you are more driven by materialism than you realize.
- 5. How do you react to displays of flesh on newsstands or sexual encounters in movies and books? Are you OK with live in, no commitment relationships?
  - a. Do you look for gratification in movies or pornographic websites?
  - b. Are you OK with the freedom to determine sexual preferences?
  - c. Perhaps the lust of the flesh and daily bombardment of sex in media affects your desires more than we acknowledge? Eph. 5:3-5
- 6. How do you spend your time?
  - a. Are you consumed with the American mindset - I must be entertained? Do you, like many, just live for the weekend?
  - b. Is life about getting away and indulging in non-stop entertainment, whether TV, books, movies, or computer games?
  - c. How much time do you spend in quiet meditation of God and His Word?
  - d. Perhaps you are more caught up in amusement and entertainment than you realize? 1 John 2:15-17
- 7. How do you speak about others, especially those in authority over you?
  - a. When you speak, does bitterness control your tongue, attitudes, or actions toward others you disagree with or have been hurt by?
  - b. Do you disrespect others whom God allowed to be over you in authority?
  - c. Do you find yourself more concerned about your freedom than the lostness of those you despise?
  - d. Perhaps the world has more hold on you than the love of God and trust in His sovereign authority.
- 8. How confidently do you live in the grace and love of God?
  - a. Are you overwhelmed with "what ifs" and fears of what might happen?
  - b. When struggling with difficulties do you remind yourself that nothing can separate you from the love of God and he can work all things for good?
  - c. Perhaps your trust is more in yourself and things of this world then they are in the Lord who loves you, who offers peace the world cannot give.

9. Do you recognize God as the creator of the world?

- a. Do you find yourself more concerned with health cures, saving the planet, and going natural than surrendering yourself to the will of God?
- b. Do you view the universe as something that just happened or as the hand of the omnipotent creator, designed and created by Him alone?
- c. Perhaps you are more influenced by worship of the earth and man's evolutionary theories than you think?

10. Do you make time to meditate on God and His Word, or do you need to be distracted to avoid facing life's realities?

- a. Are you enamored by the latest things, but ignore ancient truths of God?
- b. Are you always looking for instant gratification or do you find yourself patiently waiting on God's work in maturing your spiritual growth?
- c. How do you summarize your relationship with God? Is He a religious concept or someone with whom you walk, talk, and share your heart?
- d. Perhaps you are more caught in frenzy of this world than you realize.

C. The Church must be alert to cultural irrelevancy before reaching out to the community around it and world about it.

- 1. Needs and opportunities to make a difference abound but we will not impact this world apart from God & His truth being central to our lives.
- 2. Man, since his fall in the Garden is about being self-directed, self-focused, self-reliant, self-centered, self-defined, self-deceived, self-ruled, self-anxious, self-preserved, & self-fulfilled.
- 3. As believers we are to be God directed, God focused, God reliant, God centered, God defined, God revealed, God ruled, God confident, God protected, & God fulfilled!

D. How does a Church correct its vision? - By getting back to the basics.

- 1. God is – (Exodus 3:14) - The most important thing about me is my concept of God. I must know Him for Who He is as my creator to whom I give account.
- 2. God spoke – (Matt 4:4) – Foundational truth comes from God's revelation. Man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. His Word must be our foundation for daily living.
- 3. Adam sinned – (Rom. 5:12) – I am fallen, in need of His redemption. Sin has broken this world. My hope cannot be in a fallen world. I must see my need of a Savior who alone will free me from the penalty of & bondage to sin.
- 4. Jesus Died for my sin – (1 Peter 2:24, Acts 4:12,) – No other name exists by which we can be saved. Preaching Jesus, His death, burial, & resurrection is the central aspect of ministry. By faith alone in Jesus Christ we are saved. No works, tears, efforts, church attendance will save me. We must humble ourselves before the finished work of Christ who

paid the debt for my sin.

5. My life belongs to Christ. My reasonable service is surrender to Him & His will. Yielded to Him, 6. His grace empowers and conforms me to His image. In Jesus alone I have everything I need for life and godliness. Christ came to bring life – John 10:10, Rom. 12:1-2, 1 Cor. 6:19-20. 2 Peter 1:3-4, Col. 2:9-10. God commanded – (Mark 16:15, Matt. 4:19) – The world needs Christ. He calls us to be about his business, not our business. God has a will and calling for every believer that involves loving the lost, along with their brothers and sisters in Christ. Overwhelming subtleties of contemporary culture distract us from the important things of impacting the world with truth.

E. Consider contrasts set before us. Which is more descriptive of your life?

1. Ambiguity, selfishness, loneliness, vanity, shallow relations, pretentious living, chaos, doubt, lifeless idols, and valueless living OR
2. Certainty, thankfulness, togetherness, substance, intimacy, genuineness, order, assurance, a life-giving God, and meaningful living. This life is ours as we walk with Jesus Christ day by day.

F. Joe Stowell said in His book, *Following Christ*: p. 13 – “Yet, in a strange, twisted sort of way, many of us live out our faith in Christ as though He exists to follow us. We come to believe that Christ exists to satisfy our demands. Distorted perceptions of Christianity pose the power of faith and prayer as instruments designed to get Christ to serve our impulses for peace and prosperity. This disguised form of self-serving religion sets Christ up as just one more commodity in life that will enhance and empower our dreams and destinations.”

G. Despite shortcomings, failures, and entanglements with modern culture, the blessing of God’s grace is that He is loving and patient. Spiritual maturity is not instantaneous, but through God’s loving hand over our lifetime. Grace is the ultimate foundation for our lives and this verse should be central to our daily walk. “2 Peter 3:18 (NKJV) “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”



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