

Week 2: A Post-Christian Society

- Our non-Christian society's values and needs
- How have things changed in the past 50 years?

Scenes from a Changing Society

Our beliefs as a society have changed, because our society's underpinnings have changed from a belief in an outside moral authority (the Law, the Pope, the Bible) to a belief that there may be no objective source of morality.

General Changes in Morality

		True	False
1	I would cheat to get a job after college	90%	
2	Gambling is morally acceptable	61%	
3	Living in a sexual relationship outside of marriage is okay	60%	
4	Having to abort your child before birth is okay	45%	
5	Getting drunk is okay	35%	
6	Homosexual relationships are okay	30%	
7	Using drugs is okay	17%	

(www.barna.org, 2003 survey) (1st question, reported 1/1/05 in CT)

Changing Meanings leads to Meaninglessness

Audio clip from “Wait-Wait Don’t Tell Me” – “Pimpfants”

When a word doesn’t mean what it used to mean, then nothing means anything.

Lewis Carroll, “Alice in Wonderland”: 'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean -- neither more nor less.' 'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.' 'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master -- that's all.'

Shame Ain’t What It Used To Be

Lawlessness in France: “[I saw] three youths...attempting quite openly to break into a parking meter with large screwdrivers to steal the coins. It was four o’clock in the afternoon; the sidewalks were crowded, and the nearby cafes were full. The youths behaved as if they were pursuing a normal and legitimate activity, with nothing to fear. Eventually two women in their sixties told them to stop. The youths...turned murderously angry, insulted the women, and brandished their screwdrivers...A man of about seventy then told them to stop. They berated him still more threateningly, one of them holding a screwdriver as if to stab him in the stomach. I moved forward to help the man, but the youths, still shouting abuse and genuinely outraged at being interrupted in the pursuit of their livelihood, decided to run off....Several things struck me about the incident: the youth’s sense of invulnerability in broad daylight; the indifference to their behavior of large numbers of people who would never dream of behaving in the same way; that only the elderly tried to do anything about the situation...Could it be that only they had a view of right and wrong clear enough to intervene?...” (Dalrymple, p.297)

Misplaced and Forgotten Loyalties

“The post-1941 era in American History marked a new peak in institutional loyalty. Patriotism was one expression of this. Loyalty to one’s labor union or alma mater or to one’s employer or one’s religious heritage or to one’s lodge or service club or to the local public school or to a particular brand name were the other expressions of institutional loyalty.” (Lyle Schaller)

Enron: used a system of meritocracy where every period one out of every five was promoted, and one out of every five was let go. Rather than inspiring and motivating, it created a cut-throat, “everyone for himself environment.”

House: “I’m your colleague, not your friend.”

Prevalence of Cheating

- Cheating in sports: Barry Bonds
- The IRS loses hundreds of *billions* of dollars every year to tax fraud
- More than 90% of college students said they would cheat to get ahead
- Our own former DP, former LLL leader, bought a fake Ph.D from Ireland
- The current LHM speaker used an honorary “Dr.” title given from a Methodist church
- The “5-Steps to Spiritual Success” plays into this attitude

The reason? The gap between have-not and have is now so large that the temptation to cheat has grown exponentially. The difference in salary between someone who has a “regular” college degree and a “Harvard” degree can be in the *millions* of dollars.

The Generation Gap

The generations are often defined using the following terms (show of hands for each):

- Mosaics - those born between 1984 and 2002
- Buster - those born between 1965 and 1983
- Boomer - those born between 1946 and 1964
- Builders - those born between 1927 and 1945
- Senior - those born in 1926 and earlier

They’re Non-Judgmental – The Only Truth is Their Truth

“When young people want to praise themselves, they describe themselves as ‘non-judgmental.’ For them, the highest form of morality is amorality. There has been an unholy alliance between those...who believe that man is endowed with rights but no duties, and [those] who believe that consumer choice is the answer to all social questions. Thus people have a right to bring forth children any way they like, and the children...have the right not to be deprived of anything, at least anything material. How men and women associate and have children is merely a matter of consumer choice, of no more moral consequence than the choice between dark and milk chocolate.” (Dalrymple, p.15)

They are Media-Saturated, Visual Culture

“Most of the babies born in the 1950s and later have been reared in a culture in which the projected visual images on motion picture, television and computer screens are watched more hours per day than are the words printed in black ink on white paper... Those babies born after 1950, and especially those born after 1965, have been reared in a culture in which messages come wrapped in entertainment.”

- What has modern advertising done to our expectations?
- What have Sesame Street, Elmo, etc. done to education?
- Do we change the way we teach or allow our children to go uneducated?
- ILLUS: The Daily Show as a source of news

Geography is No Obstacle

“The younger ones have been reared in an environment in which the reliable, privately-owned motor vehicle, cheap gasoline (!), the interstate highway system, low-priced consumer air travel, the Internet, and the cell phone have reduced the influence of geographical distance... Today the word “walk” is used more frequently to describe how a baseball batter reaches first base than how a parishioner travels to church.”

- How many of you had family in other states growing up?
- How many now have children or grandchildren in other states?

Self-Descriptions

Are searching for meaning in their lives (2001 survey)

Builders and Seniors	32%
Boomers	32%
Busters	44%
Mosaics	32%

Are “too busy” (2001 survey)

Seniors	27%
Builders	32%
Boomers	49%
Busters	53%

Are struggling with their finances (2001 survey)

Seniors	20%
Builders	23%
Boomers	32%
Busters	38%

Consider themselves “stressed out” (2001 survey)

Seniors	22%
Builders	27%
Boomers	32%
Busters	41%

Technology

Americans who own:

VCR player:	93% of adults in 2000
DVD player:	56% of adults in 2003 (18% in 2000)
Laptop computer:	23% in 2003
PDA:	14% in 2003
Digital camera:	36% in 2003
Computer:	62% in 2005
Internet access:	59% in 2003 (50% in 2000)
Satellite Dish:	28% in 2003 (29% of Christians)
Cable:	73% in 2000 (71% of Christians)

Conclusion

The situation in the world has changed. The change can be seen across generations; it can only be seen in our region as the “vanguard” of the change. We are faced with two responses:

- 1) Encourage the government to crack down on lawlessness
 - There is nothing we can really do
 - It’s the youth’s fault – they have the option to change
 - Get the police to do their job
 - RESULT: Improved earthly society

- 2) Find new ways to proclaim the Gospel to this generation, in this area
 - Demonstrate that increased stress and problems are a symptom
 - The spiritual solution is a right relationship with the God who died for them
 - Change the church to meet a changing world
 - RESULT: citizens for our Father’s heavenly kingdom