

Being Salt & Light

Week 2 - The World Around Us (4/20)

We live in an interesting world. Many of us began life in a country that reflected a foundation of Christian ideas, morals and principles. But the world around us has been changing at an amazing pace and the ideas that form the foundations of our culture are no longer Christian ideas. Christian principles have been replaced by humanist ideas. In some ways our world is beginning to look more like the world of the New Testament: pagan, immoral, and multi-spiritual. Understanding our culture allows us to be more effective at communicating the message.

Some Facts about faith in the US (2007, source Barna research)

- ❖ **56% Attended a conventional church in past month**
- ❖ **33% Have not attended a religious gathering in past 6 months (73 million adults)**
- ❖ **23% Did not attend a faith gathering in past year**
 - More stressed out, less concerned with moral condition of nation, don't believe they are making a positive difference in the world, less optimistic about future, less likely to believe the Bible is totally accurate in its principles, believe Satan and Holy Spirit are symbolic figures, believe Jesus Christ sinned while on earth, believe holy literature of major faiths all teach the same principles using different stories.
- ❖ **60% consider themselves Christian, 62% pray, 19% read Bible weekly**
- ❖ **15% Have never attended a church at any time in their life**
- ❖ **Only 35% of Christians believe that God expects people to become holy**

Modern vs. Post Modern Views

	Modern	Post-Modern
Authority Figures	Distant, Big Boss, Powerful	Close, Safe Relationship
Influencers	Shame, Guilt, Fear	Opportunity, Journey, Hope
Worldview	Linear, Formulated, Logic	Narrative, Experience
Driving Force	Success, Money	Purpose, Mission
Approach to Bible	Cognitive, external "I examine the Scriptures"	Internal, Sensual "The Scriptures examine me"
Will Fight For	Institutions, Religious affiliation	People who care, friendships
Social view	Individual	Group, All voices Intolerant of intolerance Hyper Individualism
Core Questions	"Is it true" or "Is it logical"	"Does it work"
Spiritual	Embraces truth, understanding, and logic	Embraces mystery and spirit
Value in People	Consistency, Silent Suffering	Variety, "Real" & Honest
Truth	Singular existence (universal) Determined by logic, debate, reason	Many "truths" each with value (relativism) Determined by experience
Religion Religious writings	Center of moral structures, History	Peripheral, Ancient Myth superseded by education, technology, humanism

Rapidly Changing Attitudes about Christianity

- 1997 - vast majority of Non-Christians had a favorable view of Christianity
- 2007 – only 16% (ages 16-29) have a “good impression” of Christianity
- Young Non-Christians & Young Christians both believe that Christianity no longer looks like Jesus

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❖ Top 4 (-/+) perceptions of age 16-29 Non-Christians about Christianity

• (-) Christianity is judgmental	• (+) teaches same ideas as other religions
• (-) Hypocritical	• (+) has good values and principles
• (-) Old-fashioned	• (+) friendly
• (-) Too involved in politics	• (+) a faith they respect

❖ Generational Shifts

Self Identify	Born < 1957	Born '57-'65	Born '66-'90	Born '79-'91
Christian	77%	73%	63%	60%
No Faith	23%	27%	37%	40%

Shrewd about method, innocent with doctrine?

It's one thing to recognize some characteristics about the world around us and it is another thing to consider our response to that situation. Consider the following questions about our response to the cultural assessment.

Getting Past the Negatives

The most significant barriers to relationships with unchurched people is their perceptions that Christians are judgmental, old fashioned and hypocritical.

❖ **1 Pet 2:12** – “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

❖ **1 Cor 2:1-5** – “When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.”

❖ **Matt 7:4** – “How can you say to your brother, ‘let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”

❖ **Luke 7:44-47** – “Therefore, I tell you, her sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.”

➔ **Hate the sin, love the sinner**

Keep it R.E.A.L

❖ **Emphasize Relationship, not process**

God's message is about a relationship that God desires with each of us, his own creation. He has been pursuing us for a long time and has done everything to level the path for that relationship to form.

❖ **Emphasize Experiences with God, not truth**

When I live my life by faith and trust God I have the most amazing experiences. I find that problems are solved, peace prevails, doors open, and doors close.

❖ **Emphasize personal Assurances, not evidences**

I cannot prove the existence of God by science, logic, or history. But I can tell you how sure I am about the kind of God I follow because when I trust him, things happen inside me.

❖ **Emphasize Living meaningful Life of Love, not organizations**

My life has a purpose that is far more significant than any career I could imagine or any organization could offer. I am constantly challenged to grow in love and how wonderful to know that He loves me even in my struggle to love others.