

Understanding the Spiritual Climate of Today's Youth Culture

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INTRODUCTION: What is the value of *understanding the times* in which we live? Why should we know the culture into which we are to speak the Gospel? Understanding the times is necessary if we are to make wise decisions (1 Chron 12:32)? Like a school of ravenous piranhas, there cultural issues poised to prey upon our youth. In my talk today I will endeavor to name and describe briefly as many of those 'piranhas' as possible.

If we are going to teach the rising generation how to think like Christians; we will have to show them why, and how they must reject the false dichotomies which saturate our culture (divisions between head and heart; belief and practice; idea and consequence). One of my ambitious goals in equipping Christian teachers and parents is to explain why a fragmented worldview can lead to a fragmented life—and to offer hope in Christ as the great “Unifier” of our biblical worldview.

When we think about our culture; there could hardly be a more accurate assessment of our country today than the description found at the end of the book of Judges God's Word says in Judges 21:25, “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

Because our young people are for the most part unprepared; they are becoming the casualties of our culture. Most are unprepared for culture's onslaught against biblical Christianity. Nominally 'Christian' students never trained in biblical worldview who attend secular universities are at greatest risk. If we do not train our young people in Christian worldview; then we are guilty of sending our kids off like lambs into a pack of wolves.

College students who leave the faith are, for the most part, those who were never taught a unified worldview which has Genesis and biblical creation as its foundation. High school students who are never taught what is at stake if the foundations of Scripture are destroyed are astonishingly vulnerable to erroneous worldviews.¹ Our Christian students are waiting to be formed into 'worldview changers'—into maturing saints able to resist the tide of our culture's lies.

The advantages in training our young people in Christian worldview are immense.

Worldview may be defined as: *A set of beliefs through which we view the world and our place in it, and our calling and future in it.*² Biblical worldview is the very foundation of ethics, life decisions, values, and behavior. Training in worldview enables Christians not only to stand firm in the face of our culture's non-biblical ideas; but also to tear down the atheistic absolutes of false worldviews; and to powerfully share the Gospel in a secularized society.

I. Cultural factors that shape today's philosophic climate

A. The loss of biblical cosmology

By cultural factors, I mean common beliefs which have left our young people with a hopelessly fragmented worldview. Our youth have grown up in a society that has lost its grasp of biblical cosmology. (Cosmology is that branch of philosophy which deals with the origin and structure of the universe.) Cosmology deals with the question of God's relation to the universe and man's place in the creation. At the heart of biblical cosmology is the Creator-creature distinction and the creation of male and female as the image of God.

Central to biblical cosmology is that God is Creator and 'Definer' of what He has made. As Creator He gives designations, definitions, categories and relations of what He has made.³ God's

defining role over His creation has established the creation structures of male and female and marriage and family. These creation structures are foundational—they are at the core of your being. Without biblical cosmology; morality appears to be imposed arbitrarily by religious conservatives (as opposed to morality being the very creation structures and ‘fabric and furniture’ of the universe). God’s moral creation structures (heterosexual marriage, the nuclear family, etc.) are just as real as physical structures such as the solar system or a mountain range.

Biblical cosmology is the foundation of the gospel—for the gospel ONLY makes sense in a world in which our omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God is Creator, Owner, Upholder, Lawmaker, Ruler, Redeemer, and Judge.

ANTITHESIS: Contrary to the prevailing belief in a purposeless creation; God has authoritatively set forth His ‘blueprint’ for His creation found in His Word. God’s relation to what He has made is our fixed point of reference which provides our understanding of the nature of reality (see Ps 96). Only by what God has said in His infallible Word do we know what is true, real, right and wrong.⁴ Scripture defines freedom as living according to God’s divine blueprint for us. Christ said that freedom from sin’s rule can only come by knowing and doing the truth (Jn 8:31-32). Secularism defines freedom as the rejection of God’s blueprint in favor of the media’s conception of the world.⁵

B. The pervasive **influence** of Darwinian Theory

Darwinian Theory has had a central role in removing biblical cosmology from the American mind. The average Christian high school student assumes that there is more evidence for evolution than creation. Young people brought up on evolutionary theory in the classroom have been taught that death, disease, pain, and suffering have always been part of life (as if the only way God can make creatures is by death, deformity and suffering—by millions of years of natural selection—*non-random death*). This has a ‘killing’ effect on cosmology; for it sends the message that the only way God could make things was by the cruel forces of billions of years of evolution.

Harvard Anthropologist Irven De Vore captures the same thought, “I personally cannot discern a shred of evidence for a benign cosmic presence . . . I see indifference and capriciousness. What kind of god would work with a 99.9 percent extinction rate?” De Vore’s point is hard to miss—what kind of character would a god possess if he created such a scenario? “How could a God of love allow such horrible processes as disease, death, and suffering for millions of years?”⁶

Ken Ham notes that the ‘god’ who uses death and suffering as part of the creation process is a cruel god and not the God of Scripture. Scripture makes it clear that death is not part of the creative process; death is the penalty for sin (1 Cor 15:26). Darwinian educators who ‘normalize’ death go to great lengths to make their point—i.e. in the *Tomato patch* story a teacher dying of cancer ordered her cremated ashes to be plowed into her tomato garden and then the tomatoes fed to her former students. She said they would be “taking a bite of her.” In the *write your own epitaph* story, a grammar school teacher wishing to normalize death had her students design their own gravestones.

What is the hope of overcoming death if death has always existed? God did not make a world of billions of years of pain, death, suffering, and disease. All these came about because of man’s sin.⁷ We stress that the curse was a judicial act of God (Gen 3:14-19). The answer is a return to the authority of God’s word—especially as it unfolds cosmology.

C. The **rending apart** of fact from value

The loss of biblical cosmology has produced an immense gash in our thinking; a tearing apart of creation and redemption. Remember, cosmology is God’s relationship to the creation. He is Creator; Upholder, Owner, Definer. The secular academy and pop culture have been systematically teaching our young people that scientific facts are totally objective and moral values are totally

subjective. That message can rip a kid apart ethically when they accept the lie that morality is based on choice and not upon the unchanging character of God. The secularist claims to explain everything in terms of natural laws instead of by means of the Creator. The result been *a pervasive splitting* which separates creation from redemption. This two-level view of truth has imbued students with the notion that religious views are private and have nothing to do with the real world.

Having dispensed with the wonder of divine creation as the revelation of God (and thus having removed His rule and reign over creation), reality is nothing more than what you choose to make it—in essence an extension of the self. The sovereign self, with its autonomously shaped identity, may use the world as its ‘raw material’ to construct the self. We must know how these philosophies are affecting our students’ worldview. Once the universe is viewed as merely a select mass of raw material with all phenomena reducible to material properties and natural laws and processes, then the very ground of prime reality is no longer Almighty God. In this view the cosmos becomes purposeless and is severed from redemption in the minds of most people. Religious truth claims are regarded as personal, private, subjective ideas existing in the heads of people.

When one allows the Bible to describe salvation and science to comprehensively describe the creation; it produces a tear, or rend, in our thinking. As a case in point, “believing students on university campuses are able offer Jesus as ‘friend’ but have no clue how to proclaim Him as Lord of the cosmos.”⁸ This prevalent split view of reality welcomes Jesus as ‘helper’ but cannot conceive of Him, or proclaim Him, as majestic Lord of the universe. This is the dilemma our Christian students face today on the secular university campus. The loss of biblical cosmology forces them to live with an immense ‘disconnect’ between faith and life. Pop culture drives this disconnect.

*ANTITHESIS: The fact/value split is fueled by scientism’s folly and pride. (Scientism is the belief that everything in our experience, including religion and ethics, has a reliable scientific explanation). This has become a worldview. The empiricists would like us to believe that they possess perfect knowledge. How powerfully the Word of God refutes this exercise in absurdity. For truth is not a sterile lab fact under a microscope, truth is an absolute Person. Jesus is the truth. His authority stands behind all truth. The doctrine of the incarnation of Logos destroys all dualisms. This has the power to blast us out of privatized religion. The incarnation of the God-man does not permit us to partition off reality into a spiritual and a non-spiritual sphere. All reality flows from one point of integration—the Son of God.*⁹

D. The acceptance of postmodernism

Postmodernism has moved our thinking to the place where truth is no longer objective and universal. Truth no longer transcends race, culture, and language. Postmodernism pushed truth off of the table and made everything into a perspective. Nothing is bigger than the individual. Divine transcendence has been eroded away.¹⁰ D. A. Carson comments about postmodernism, “Truth is no longer foundational and axiomatic. The postmodern meaning of things is supplied by the mind, not by the data which is sensed.”¹¹

In postmodernism there is no universal omniscient divine mind who supplies the ultimate criteria for truth. In PM there is no ultimate “Knower” who is the absolute reference point for reality (this is the loss of an absolutely authoritative vantage point of God’s view of the world). Instead the acquisition of truth is severely limited by finite autonomous man—so much so that objective truth is not attainable. But this position of PM is more than a bare philosophical view; it is also an ethic. PM says that epistemological certainty is not desirable or attainable. It is not attainable because *there is no sure place to stand* (no omniscient mind to test things). To claim epistemological certainty is to be arrogant, bigoted, and out of date. Students feel more humble ‘not knowing’.

Certainty is not desirable because totalizing statements impose a kind of total structure and worldview which is manipulative and controlling. Thus, due to the human condition, it is far better

(PM ethically) to speak of truth as a correlative ('truths' from different perspectives—i.e. *from a certain time in history; from a particular stance; from one's upbringing; from one's religious perspective; from a group of feminists; etc.*).¹²

Postmodern popular culture has been relentlessly eroding away every transcendent reference point. In so doing postmodernism leaves nothing but the self as the only reliable, trustworthy center (everything else is pushed through the grid of self). This is the existential situation our young people find themselves in. They have been systematically taught by popular culture to be skeptically of absolute truth claims. Our kids have been the subjects of marketing since they were potty trained. As a consequence, they carry a palpable skepticism with them. Postmodernism helps 'seal the deal' that there is no truth outside of self.

The secular/sacred dichotomy tends to restrict Christianity to the realm of 'religious ideas' (and not total truth about reality)—this creates double minds and fragmented lives.¹³ A pastor friend shared the following account. "It took two weeks of counseling before one young man was able to see that porn is not a 'compartment' in human experience; but a worldview hostile to the knowledge of God. Among today's postmoderns, a huge disconnect exists between their ethical life and their professed belief—truth and everyday life are commonly torn apart."¹⁴

ANTITHESIS: There is no split between creation and redemption in the Scriptures. Scripture affirms that truth and life are forever joined in the Person of Christ. We need to thunder again from our lecterns that Christ unifies all reality because He structures and upholds all reality. He is the Great Insider who entered human history as one of us; yet without sin. Christ is Lord of the cosmos; goal of all reality; consummation of all history; and some day, restorer of a sinless reality.

Postmodernism has overlooked the one grand infallible meta-narrative that explains life and meaning—the one totalizing worldview that is able to solve Enlightenment dualism—namely God's plan of the ages in Christ.¹⁵ Only when we understand the Father's plan to restore us to the image of God in Christ, and only when we grasp Christ's preeminence and the Father's determination to give Him first place in everything will we find the cure for our fragmented lives.

E. The **entrance** of diversity's Trojan horse

Our kids are being conditioned to see everything through the lens of cultural diversity.

Cultural relativism's assumptions include the following: one cannot transcend his own cultural situation. Thus, one cannot find an objective vantage point from which to make objective judgments. And, because of one's limited cultural perspective, any judgment offered would be conditioned by Western civilization. There is no perspective which transcends culture; no one is in possession of absolute truth. To assert that one possesses the truth is to be a dangerous fundamentalist. All cultures ought to be affirmed. (Your own religion is a matter of geographical coincidence.)

Diversity appears benign because it states that every culture deserves equal respect and sanctity. But it operates on the assumptions of relativism—that an individual's beliefs and practices should be understood in terms of his culture. Thus it operates on the assumption that there is no superior answer or absolute truth and morality that applies to all people in all places at all times—therefore all judgments are made from the perspective of one's own culture. Christian kids are being told that their biblical ideas amount to nothing more than their own cultural situation. This 'boxes in' Christianity since according to diversity, all judgments are relative to one's culture, those who make them are regarded as 'absolutists,' 'closed-minded' and guilty of discrimination.

What the rising generation tends to miss is that diversity issues its mandates from the worldview of relativism. That's what is hidden within the Trojan horse of diversity. The push for diversity conceals a siege taking place against the normalcy of heterosexual monogamous marriage.

Diversity is a covert weapon in the culture war which is being used to ‘liberate’ the world from the boundary of heterosexual relations. This amounts to a radical deconstruction of the family.

What is concealed behind the agenda of diversity is a worldview that is seeking to dignify homosexual relations (as if homosexuality is not a behavior; but instead deserves the status of a community). This lets ethics come from ‘culture’ and not from God. Our young people have become unwitting participants in a spiritual war that is seeking to normalize homosexuality. The proponents of same-sex marriage would like nothing more than to recruit our children to be defenders of the homosexual lifestyle—all in the name of diversity and fairness.

For the most part what is still concealed in the ‘Trojan horse’ is that diversity’s agenda is not so much a cultural change as a spiritual change! What is perceived in our society as a culture war is actually a spiritual war. Diversity conceals a totalizing worldview which is being raised up against the knowledge of God. This spiritual shift in the West is no longer a peripheral novelty—it is morphing into a planetary worldview that will not permit Christianity to oppose its views on marriage and sexuality. Cultural relativism is relentless in its assaults upon a traditional understanding of morality, marriage and family. Only the biblical worldview stands in its way. Homosexuality can’t be normalized UNTIL there is a religious explanation of reality that opposes biblical view.

ANTITHESIS: What the rising generation tends not to see is that at the heart of the debate are two opposing conceptions of the world—two ideologies locked in combat (one constrained, and one unconstrained—by ‘constrained’ is meant God’s blueprint and wise and good boundaries). God’s design of heterosexual marriage is the fundamental building block of a civilization’s order and wellbeing. God’s plan for human relationships is based upon His design for the body—a design which is founded upon gender distinctions. Our young people today are being taught the opposite—a worldview which promotes the acceptability of homosexuality. We much train our young people in the worldview of the Bible. Our young people are being told to stop allowing their religious ideology ‘get in the way’ of cooperation and dialog. They have popular culture’s message coming at them from all quarters—a message which urges them to allow society to dictate ethics and not God.

We need to equip them so that they may answer their detractors by saying, “May I tell my story? Christianity has a different way of conceiving of things. Rather than all things existing in one circle, Christianity poses asserts that there are two circles—God is distinct from His creatures and His creation. Everything God has made is dependent upon God; therefore the creation is not divine. Jesus, as Lord of the cosmos, is the Lord who saves you and He also is the Lord who made you. Therefore, since He owns us and upholds us, He has the right to tell us how to live and what to believe about reality. Christ’s relation to the creation and His infallible plan for His creatures constitute reality.” *Now let’s examine some of the personal factors which affect our youth.*

II. Factors that have shaped today’s spiritual climate

A. A deluded spirituality

The gods of popular culture are fighting a ceaseless battle against the transcendence of God. Like termites in soft wood; postmodernism eats away every transcendent reference point—SELF becomes the only ‘reliable’ or trustworthy reference point remaining. In essence, self becomes the ‘default’ god when the God of Scripture is marginalized.

No wonder our young people are confused—they have been systematically taught that there is no longer any absolute meaning outside of self. Religion becomes completely based upon self—it’s the disordered self in need of order (the therapy view of religion). The boundary between God and self becomes fuzzy. The Creator-creature distinction (so foundational to theism) becomes obscured. An encounter with God no longer depends upon God’s revealed truth, the Bible, but upon an inward experience. Self-sufficiency in the realm of the spiritual is celebrated.

It is in this religious/philosophic climate that faith is dislocated from its object (God's self-revelation in Christ in the Holy Scriptures). The word "Jesus" is being torn from the infallible Word of God and being redefined as a religious buzz word to describe one's spiritual journey. In the new spirituality, self becomes the main form of reality; spirituality is based upon inward knowledge; not outward belief. The new spirituality endorses *reinventing* and *remaking* the self.¹⁶

The Christian faith is about listening to the Word of God—in utter dependence upon God's revelation. By contrast, the new spirituality tries to reach up in self-sufficiency. When the Word is faithfully proclaimed; it overturns our natural instincts about self and God. Herein is the radical antipathy between the new spirituality and true Christianity; it is the difference between *listen to self*; and *listen to God's Word*. It is self versus divine revelation. (EX. While sharing the gospel with my new age neighbor, I asked him what he does when the god within disagrees with the God of Scripture. He answered, "I trust the god within every time.") Biblical faith is about agape love—God reaching down to disclose Himself to those who would not otherwise be restored to Him. The cross of Christ killed all private worldviews.

ANTITHESIS: How opposite is God's way of saving from the new spirituality—in Christ the Father redeems and seeks that which was lost. Christ dies for the helpless. God cannot be manipulated by the human spirit nor accessed by methods. Grace alone from outside the sinner can save. Human questing and seeking for its own sake is still unbelief. The locus (or center point) of true faith is what God has spoken (Bible doctrine), and how God has decisively acted in Christ (redemptive history).

B. A domesticated Jesus

In the absence of theology and divine transcendence, today's domesticated Jesus of progressive Christianity is not preeminent, but helpful. He is not cosmic Lord, but inspirational friend. He is not majestic Lord, but mascot. He is not the authoritative source of all knowledge and certainty. Thus, He is not a source of reverence, awe and authority. Dear people we know from Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians that Satan is more than happy to accommodate those who want a Jesus in their own image (11:4). There is a 'different' Jesus, and a different gospel. Those who climb the mountain of the new spirituality will find Lucifer at the summit instead of Christ (2 Cor 11:4, 14).

This different Jesus is a divided Christ whose offices are separated (He is Priest but not King; Protector but not authoritative Prophet—the result is a divided Christ and a divided reality. Only when Christ is exalted in His preeminence; cosmic Lordship; majesty; and supremacy will we recover biblical spirituality. True spirituality does not come from within man (esoteric). Biblical spirituality has but one source—a sovereign act of God Almighty which unites the helpless sinner to Christ.

ANTITHESIS: We must understand how Christ, in His own Person, refutes pantheistic spirituality. As we proclaim the vastness of His Person and the complete sufficiency of His work, all pseudo spiritualities are exposed as enemies and as impostors which advocate the esoteric, but have only self, the earth and demons as gods. (Salvation involved confessing "Jesus as Lord," see Rom 10:9-10.) You can't understand the cross until you know the One who died upon it. He who is transcendent to creation condescended to become one of us—the Great Insider—to live vicariously the life of a creature in order to bring us to God.

III. Lifestyle symptoms of today's spiritual climate

A. A dysfunctional discernment

We live in a media-saturated age in which pop culture floods our senses. The constant drone of secular culture's deceptive message has been 'mainlined' into our youth like heroin into the bloodstream. The consequences have been deadly—discernment has suffered incalculably. The

majority of our kids tend to believe what they hear in the media. When polled recently, 66% of high school boys believed that cohabitation is the best preparation for marriage.

Moral relativism has become the very air they breathe. This is the pervasive mindset of their classmates—and it comprises much of the content of their entertainment. We have left our kids to tread water in a swamp of moral relativism where the notion of absolute right and wrong is treated like a layover from the age of prejudice. We have reached a point in culture in which the ideas accepted by our young people about reality are created more by pop culture than by Christian truth.¹⁷

The electronic media is intent upon tearing apart Christian worldview. The homosexual agenda is embedded in pop culture. As evidence for lack of discernment, consider that nearly 70% of young people in USA thirty years old and younger now believe that it is discriminatory to refer to homosexuality as immoral or wrong (that is a sentiment born of media-driven pop culture).

1.) “We can create our own reality.”

Regarding today’s popular culture, modern individualism encourages each person to define their own social reality apart from considerations about how the creation is ordered. Thus there is a huge dysfunction between reality in the created order and popular culture.¹⁸ So much of popular culture operates on the false assumption that we create our own reality (and we do so to the degree that we insist upon our preferences. Years of marketing have imbued this lie). God proclaims that there is one reality ordered by one God. We are answerable to Him for our conduct within that reality. Reality and its center is Jesus Christ (not self).

2.) “We may ‘construct’ the self and establish our own identity and meaning.”

The world’s philosophies (which make up so much of pop culture) have reduced religion to a private preference. Salvation has been divorced from the purpose of the cosmos. This modern divide has shoved the majesty of God in His creation to the periphery. It has torn God’s created order from our consciousness. With the image of God lost; reality is nothing more than what you choose to make it—an extension of the self. The sovereign self with its autonomously shaped identity now uses the world as ‘raw material’ to construct the self.

3.) “We view the electronic media of mass culture not primarily as rebellion; but as an art form that provides lifestyle options.”

The electronic media is a modern art that shapes a young person’s perception of the world. Pop culture often has a low view of reason; instead it is characterized by clichés, political correctness, and sensuality—rather than by propositional truth. There is an accompanying unwillingness to think upon divine transcendence (the only true source of coherence and consolation).¹⁹

4.) “We accept the notion that it is possible to be spiritual apart from the Bible.”

It is assumed that non-theistic, or non-biblical spirituality, offers legitimate spiritual option. Currently the Western world is awash in spiritualities—all of which are from below. More and more Americans are looking for spiritual power within rather than to the God of religion. Each year the sentiment grows that ‘the god of the sacred within’ removes the need for church.²⁰

The world is increasingly hostile to any exclusive truth claims—that only in Christ do we find reconciliation to the Father. But the Gospel of John is so clear. Forty two times the theme is repeated: Christ was sent into the world from above. Jesus is the “Great Insider” sent into our human experience to be bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He learned obedience through the things which He suffered (Heb 5:8)—perfectly equipping Him to be our merciful and faithful High Priest.²¹

5.) “We view sexual relations as existing to meet the need of human love, response, and connection.”

Sexuality is not fundamentally covenantal, sacred and spiritual. There has been a spate of Hollywood movies made about unwanted pregnancies. “Juno,” “Knocked up,” “Waitress,” and “Bella” to name a few. The box office hit “Juno” sends the message that, “[T]eenage girls can withstand the shock of pregnancy to attain blissfully happy endings.”²² The incredible crisis of an unwed teen mother is reduced to a “blip” on the radar of one’s life. Some have lauded the pregnancy movies as an example of being willing to bear the child instead of choosing abortion. But, is it really

that simple? Hollywood evades reality by oversimplifying: “I got pregnant, I guess I can have the baby too.” 750,000 teenage girls in America will become pregnant this year outside of marriage.

6.) “We regard a person’s attitude toward his or her gender as a matter of personal right. Attitude toward one’s gender is considered a choice that belongs to the person. Popular culture has jumped on this bandwagon in a host of ways. World Wrestling Federation calls young males to be barbarians. Girls are indoctrinated by the media to see themselves as “blow up” dolls. Marketers press this script relentless in the interest of profits. A number of female pop icons have admitted that they have to play the role of loose woman because the culture demands it.²³

How tragic that in the pursuit of the dollar, companies have shamelessly offered an identity to our youth of barbarian or harlot. Males are taught that masculinity and crudeness belong together. And females are schooled in sex and sensuality. These false ideas pumped out by the media about gender are also complicated by the notion that gender rebellion is freedom and sex is love. Finding oneself has now become finding new ways to rebel against true manhood and womanhood.²⁴

Darwinism has blunted God’s truth so effectively in the minds of our youth that men and women are regarded as separate coincidences of nature. We cannot find purpose and fulfillment in our relationships if turn our backs on God’s order. It is time we tell the truth to our young people. God’s plan is for our blessedness and fulfillment. Gender neutrality and sexual experimentation are a form of anarchy against God.

God’s plan for gender and sexuality is not something the church has imposed on culture. God’s plan is His sovereign act in creating us male and female. It is time we ‘anoint’ and bless masculinity and femininity. Our true manhood or womanhood is a gift of God. There is power, purpose and joy in realizing God’s plan for gender and sexuality. And there is destruction when it is rejected. ***How does a young believer ‘swim upstream’ to escape mass culture when he or she is embedded in it as a consequence of living in techno society?*** How may they resist the current so as to swim upstream against the tide?

ANTITHESIS: The answer is to be utterly deliberate about developing the discernment principle. First of all limit the band width of intake from the pop culture highway (music, TV, movies, web, magazines, cell phone, etc.). Take an honest look at how much of mass culture’s message you are absorbing passively by your exposure to these sources. Take a break from the perceived need of electronic background noise to accompany everything you do. If you listen to music, make a conscious shift toward worship and classical instead of passively going along with pop culture.²⁵

Deepen your grasp of worldview. Set aside time to discuss worldview until you can watch a movie or television program and immediately discern the worldview coming through in the plot, behavior or language. Scripture commands discernment for the child of God. The true believer operates by means of a renewed mind by which he may discern all things (1 Cor 2:15-16). Expect to be misunderstood by those who do not manifest Christian discernment (Jn 15:18-25).

B. A disconnected way of living

What is the collective effect of the above influences on the spirituality of our youth? They live with a huge ‘disconnect’ between their thoughts and reality (they live with an intrusive dualism). This does not create a new viable way of existence—departures from God’s view of reality produce real pain in the lives of young people. Living with the divide inherent in postmodernism means that the majority of our young people don’t see God for who He is and don’t see man for who he is (or man’s place in the universe). Christ is seen as the lord of the Christian church but not the lord of the cosmos. Creation is severed from redemption. This severing manifests itself in a form of a ‘disconnect’ placing redemption outside of the objective reality of everyday life.

Christianity is viewed as a heart preference absolutely divorced from the purpose of the cosmos. The sovereign rule of the Creator, the consummation of human history in Christ, the coming Kingdom of God, and the ultimate restoration of the cosmos are all out of view. The lordship of Christ is seen as existing over things that belong in the Christian religion—His lordship is not seen as His absolute rule and authority over all reality. In this dualistic view of spirituality is segmented off from the rest of life so that the truth of God is detached from the everyday decisions of life.

Christian students are commonly at a loss to understand the connection between their Bible study and the discernment of culture. A fellow professor from The Master's College noted, "The screen has become the students' world. An understanding of the relationship between soul and body is absent. Young people seem surprised when the truth about the human body being 'for the Lord' is explained to them. So serious is the disconnect, that the whole concept of being 'a vessel fit for the Master's use' is a novel idea to them."²⁶

ANTITHESIS: We must show our young people that God's truth is active in the true believer. It not only transforms and renews; it keeps the believer from being conformed to culture (Rom 12:1, 2). Faith and life must be joined. Belief and practice must operate together. Anything less is hypocrisy and presumption. In the true believer, God's truth is operating in the affections. In the person living a disconnected life, biblical truths are held intellectually; but not in the affections. The genuine believer is always repenting. He is continually seeing to have his life match the truth. He loves the truth.

C. A **destructive** source of identity and significance

Your identity is what you look to—to define you. You need an identity for the purpose of ultimate meaning, significance, fulfillment, love, purpose, and belonging. It also functions like a score card to see how you are doing. *What is the source of your identity* is the big question we all face: *What is it that defines my life?* Your identity is like your worldview—it shapes all your choices. That means you will live out your identity (whether you intend to or not). That's why a Christian's identity in Christ is so important: it tells him who he is; who he used to be; what his purpose is in life; what he is becoming, what his true treasure is; what His Lord requires of him; and where he is going.

As Christians, we are locked in combat in a culture war that has radically different ideas about what will give a person his or her identity. We live in an identity hungry culture (EX. Miami Ink and endless reality TV shows). Your identity is a battle ground; even your choice of friends (according to 2 Cor 6:14-7:1) has a profound impact on your choice of identities. And you know why—when friends and acquaintances get together socially; they reinforce the identity source of their friends—whether it is the gospel; fashion; music; sports; academics; whatever. The wrong friends will (guaranteed) pressure you directly or indirectly to get on board with their counterfeit source of identity.

Now, either one's identity is from the world, or it is from the gospel. You can't get your identity from both—any more than you can serve two masters (James 4:4; Lu 11:23). The gospel is a whole different way of seeing. It radically transforms your relationships because it defines and identifies who God is; who you are; who others are; and what this life actually is. Pop culture is dead set on having you forget your identity in Christ—mass culture wants to steal your identity and give you a soul-destroying identity in its place.

ANTITHESIS: Our identity in Christ is continually realized only as we keep preaching the Gospel to self. We must keep our identity in Christ in view. We should always be matching His all-sufficient Savior-hood with our sinner-ship—always dwelling upon how His redeeming work is a perfect fit for our ruin (Heb 7:25-27). Reckoning who we are in Christ means that our identity in Him will exert a greater sway upon our choices. Thus to identify ourselves as Christ does (a sheep, a freeman, a son, a beholder, an heir, and an overcomer, etc.) means that we are becoming what we really are. To have received God's free gift of redemption is also to be owned by the Lord as His possession (1 Cor 6:19-20). It is to be Christ's 'slave' who is ruled by His Word. What follows the

rest of our lives (in time and eternity) is sonship—giving our selves back to God in overflowing gratitude, obedience and praise (Rom 6:12-23).

CONCLUSION: Training in biblical worldview has never been more important and strategic. Today's young people are under enormous pressure to move in the direction of moral ambiguity—all in the name of unity. The drumbeat of the 'new tolerance' has students stranded between two mutually exclusive worldviews (the biblical worldview and the humanistic worldview).

As a case in point, recently a Christian high school principal confided in me commenting, "I fear we are seeing a whole new generation of 'practical agnostics' who are incredibly vulnerable to cultural compromise because they do not have a unified Christian worldview or a unified Christian experience." In other words, their 'life view' is not consistently anchored in God's transforming truth, therefore their Christian experience often manifests a radical disconnect from Scripture.

The principal's words hit home. We must be utterly deliberate about equipping the rising generation of believers in biblical worldview. We have failed to 'keep up' with the monumental task of training in biblical worldview, and it is showing up in our kids. In terms of engaging the culture for Christ, young believers are in 'retreat mode' on a grand scale.

Biblical worldview is a 'big picture' tool which has the potential to shape the entire Christian education, ministry, and spiritual life experience of the Christian young person. This is a gift to students who have grown up in a relativistic world of 'blur' in which a mixture of ideas from world religions have resulted in the compromise of truth. Realistically, we are engaging in false hope if we subscribe to the *osmosis theory of transformation* (that our young people will be fortified against culture's assaults by two hours of sermons a week). What is needed is radical intentionality that lets us speak into their lives with soul care and systematic instruction.

Only by a firm grasp of the unifying power of Christian worldview will our young people be able to resist the false promises of popular culture. Our God-given yearnings for meaning, purpose, dignity, significance, connectedness, and love will either be taken to Christ or to the world. Christ alone can satisfy these deep yearnings. He alone can unify our view of life. He alone through His Word is able to properly inform our everyday life decisions. Without Christ, our young people will not adequately understand the unbreakable connection between ideas and consequences. Christ alone as the Word of truth can provide the definitive reasons to repent of reckless living. Young people without a biblical worldview have little reason to stop reckless living (whether that recklessness is in the form of substance abuse; hyper body-piercing; destructive entertainment and music; etc.). Our goal is to shape the students' mindset in terms of biblical faith for all Christian living.

As Lord of creation and Lord of redemption (holding both together) Christ *repairs* a divided view of reality; for He is upholder of all reality. He *rejects* every private sacred space; for He only occupies those sacred spaces He sovereignly creates and fills by regeneration. He *renounces* the 'different Jesus' of the new spirituality (who is not lord of all; but made in our own image). **Christ is Lord of the Cosmos. When we consider the 'vastness' of His Person we come face to face with the fact that He is the reference point for all reality:**

Endnotes:

¹ Fallwell & Ham, *If the Foundations be Destroyed*

² Norman Klassen, Jens Zimmerman, *The Passionate Intellect*, p.17

³ Dave Doveton, "Paganism in the Church" (Escondido, CA: Christian Witness to a Pagan Planet, think-tank, 2007).

⁴ Jay Wegter, "Worldview."

⁵ Richard Weaver, *Ideas have Consequences*, p. 45, 94

⁶ Ken Ham, "The god of an old earth," *Creation Magazine* (21:4, September-November, 1999) p. 42.

⁷ Ibid. p. 23.

⁸ Peter Jones, "Framing the Issues; Finding our Voices" (Escondido, CA: Christian Witness to a Pagan Planet, think-tank, 2007).

⁹ Klassen, Zimmerman, *The Passionate Intellect*, pp. 21, 30, 73, 87, 101, 148-150, 169, 187.

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- ¹⁰ Dominic Smart, *Postmodernism and Discipleship*, www.sermonaudio.com.
- ¹¹ D. A. Carson, *Postmodernism*.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid, p. 25.
- ¹⁴ Jim Newheiser, Pastor, Grace Bible Church, Escondido, CA.
- ¹⁵ Klassen, Zimmerman, *The Passionate Intellect*, p. 159
- ¹⁶ David Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers: Christ in a Postmodern Culture*, pp. 148-155.
- ¹⁷ Al Mohler, *Raising Teens in a Media Culture*.
- ¹⁸ Ken Myers, *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes*, p. 85.
- ¹⁹ Ravi Zacharias, *Mind Games in a World of Images*.
- ²⁰ David Wells.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Gary Direnfield, "Teen Pregnancy: It's not like the Movies" (*The Hamilton Spectator*, Jan 14, 2008).
- ²³ Bob Just, *Killer Culture*, p. 7.
- ²⁴ Ibid, p. 8.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Grant Horner, The Master's College, Newhall, CA.