

TELLING A BETTER STORY: Proclaiming the gospel in a culture of SOGI, Snapchat, and Sunday Soccer

ANiC Synod Workshop – Rev. Jeremy Graham

November 6, 2019

## **INTRODUCTION**

Workshop Aim: We are going to explore together the impact of rapid changes in Canadian culture on the ways we seek to do evangelism and discipleship for children, youth and families.

### **PART 1: Understanding our Cultural Moment**

#### **1. What is Culture?**

*“A Culture is a way of life for a group of people--the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next.”*

#### **2. Are we living in Jerusalem or Babylon?**

Here’s a quote from David Kinnaman in his new book *Faith For Exiles*:

*“ We Believe many parents, educators, pastors and other leaders are trying to prepare young Christians for Jerusalem, to keep them safe and well-protected for a world they no longer live in... we propose that the goal of discipleship today is to develop Jesus followers who are resiliently faithful in the face of cultural coercion and who live a vibrant life in the spirit”*  
(page 28).

#### **3. What is Post-Modern and Post-Christian Culture?**

- The Western and western-influenced world no longer shares many basic cultural assumptions with Christians
- Western culture still owes its foundation, strength and remaining moral fibre to Christian influence, but has forgotten where these visions of justice, human rights, tolerance, etc. came from

The Story of Post-Modernity in 3 A’s

**AUTHENTICITY** – I must be true to myself above all else in order to find fulfillment and discover the good life. Feelings of tension and strain, especially between my body and my mind are signals that I am not being authentic to myself.

**AUTONOMY** – It literally means “self-law. “No person or institution has the right to tell me what to do as long as my decisions aren’t hurting anyone else. I am the master of my own fate.

John Stuart Mill

Philosopher of modern Western liberalism and social theory

*“over himself over his own body and mind the individual is sovereign”*

**AFFIRMATION** – Speaking out against someone else’s authenticity or autonomy is hateful and hurtful. My role in society is to affirm others for their choices as I seek the same affirmation for myself

#### **4. What are the Challenges of this Cultural Moment?**

Listen to how pastor and author Mark Sayers summarizes the challenges:

*“A growing sense of worry haunts the western church. The rise of a post-Christian society, alongside declining numbers of those who practice biblical faith, combined with a corresponding weakening of Christian influence, has created an anxious mood. This mood can range from a sense of defeat to a feeling of deep vulnerability to a desire to retreat into a religious Refuge... Our fears are usually connected to the boogeyman we call secularism.” (Disappearing Church, page 19).*

#### **5. What are the Opportunities of this Cultural Moment?**

Remember that every human being is longing for ‘the Good Life’

Every person longs to know and be known. To love and be loved.

The failure of secularism to deliver on its promises is leaving a gaping hole in our society...a cultural vacuum.

And the gospel of Jesus Christ offers a compelling and beautiful response to our longing for happiness and “the good life.”

### **PART 2: Telling a Better Story**

#### **1. SOGI – Sex, Gender and Identity**

SOGI stands for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. I’m using it to represent our cultural attitudes towards SEX, which really are just an application of how we understand human identity.

SOGI is an acronym used across North America now to align our education curriculum with the ideology of LGBTQ+ lobby groups.

Here’s a quote that encapsulates our cultural moment:

Lily-Rose Depp (Johnny Depp’s daughter)

*“You don’t have to label your sexuality; so many kids these days are not labeling their sexuality and I think that’s so cool...if you like something one day, then you do, and if you like something else the other day, it’s whatever. You don’t have to label yourself because it’s not set in stone. It’s so fluid.”*

#### **2. Snapchat – Technology**

Snapchat is a social media tool that allows users to share short pictures and videos that disappear shortly after they’re sent.

203 million daily active users now...7 million more each day

A similar app called Tik Tok has over 500 million users, but it doesn’t start with the letter S...

78% of American internet users between the ages of 18 and 24 used Snapchat in 2018.

I’m using Snapchat to represent our cultural attitudes towards media, technology and relationships.

### **3. Sunday Soccer – Family Life/Priorities**

What is the most widely played recreational sport in Canada? Not hockey. It's soccer.

Close to a million youth play soccer annually in Canada.

Over 4 million youth in America – second only to baseball

On the Westcoast, boys teams play on Saturdays and girls clubs play on Sunday.

This means that St. John's families with daughters regularly miss church, or bounce around from service to service during the long soccer season.

I'm using Sunday Soccer to represent our cultural attitude towards commitment, community, leisure, and family priorities in 2019.

#### **Table Group Discussion Questions**

1. What human longing for "the good life" is your cultural issue seeking to fulfill?
2. How does your cultural issue express the 3 A's of post-modernity: Autonomy, Affirmation and Authenticity?
3. What are the particular challenges that your cultural issue poses for those seeking to follow Jesus?
4. Why and How is the gospel "good news" in response to this cultural issue?

What facets or angles of the "gospel diamond" would you want to shine on this cultural issue as you proclaim the good news?

5. What scriptures would you suggest in applying the gospel to this cultural issue? Provide one sentence to summarize how it applies.

## **FURTHER RESOURCES**

### **Sexuality and Identity**

- Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?*, 2013.  
Vaughan Roberts, *Transgender: Talking Points*, 2016.  
Wesley Hill, *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian*, 2015.  
Andrew T. Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*, 2017.  
Jonathan Grant, *Divine Sex: A Compelling Vision for Christian Relationships in a Hyper-sexualized Age*, 2015.  
Mark A. Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, 2015.  
Jay Stringer, *Unwanted: How Sexual Brokenness Reveals our Way to Healing*, 2018.

### **Technology**

- Craig M. Gay, *Modern Technology and the Human Future*, 2018.  
Andy Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family*, 2017.  
Tony Reinke, *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*, 2017.  
Daniel Strange, *Plugged In: Connecting Your Faith with what you watch, read, and play*, 2019.  
Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, 1993.

### **Family and Community Life**

- Russell Moore, *The Storm-Tossed Family*, 2018.  
Mary Eberstadt, *How the West Really Lost God*, 2014.  
Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as Christian Tradition*, 1999.  
Rosaria Butterfield, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in our Post-Christian World*, 2018.  
A.J. Swoboda, *Subversive Sabbath: The Surprising Power of Rest in a non-stop world*, 2018.

### **Faith and Culture**

- Mark Sayers, *Disappearing Church*, 2016.  
Mark Sayers, *Reappearing Church*, 2019.  
David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock, *Faith For Exile*, 2019.  
James K.A. Smith, *On the Road with St. Augustine*, 2019.  
Jeff Greenman, *The Pedagogy of Praise*, 2016.

### **Audio**

- This Cultural Moment* podcast  
Any Sarah Williams lectures from *Regent College Audio*