

Seculosity: Session One

Intro + Chapter One: The Seculosity of Busyness

Pages xi–16

Are We Less Religious Today...Or More?

- There is a universal human longing to belong, to be loved, and to have a purpose. This sense is conveyed in Scripture with the word *righteousness*.
- “The great Reformer Martin Luther once said, ‘Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your god.’ We become what we worship because what we worship is what we love...it’s not a question of *whether* you worship but *what* you worship.”
- James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love*.
- Key idea of *Seculosity* (found on pp. xix–xx): “the needs addressed by Religion—for hope, purpose, connection, justification, enoughness—haven’t diminished as churches have become taprooms and theaters...it seems that the further we retreat from a shared Religion, the more contenders emerge to harness our floundering religiosity... These new religions go by different names but function more or less the same, maintaining all the demand (and much of the ritual!) but none of the mercy of the capital-R variety.”
 - G.K. Chesterton: “When people stop believing in God, they don’t believe in nothing, they believe in *everything*.”
- The Biblical word for the concept of religions is *idolatry*.
 - “Called to responsibility and authority within and over the creation, humans have turned their vocation upside down, giving worship and allegiance to forces and powers within creation itself...The result is slavery and finally death.”
- N.T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began*.

Key Definitions of the Book

- **religion** (pp. xiii–xiv) - “the lens through which you sort the data of your days, rank your priorities, and focus your desires...religion is what we rely on not just for meaning or hope but *enoughness*.”
- **Righteousness** (pp. xiv–xv): “The benchmark in our minds where value, vindication, and love would be ours...the feeling of being enough.”
- **Self-justification** (pp. xv–xvi): “The energy we expend for the sake of feeling [like we’re enough]... [Self-justification is] the drive to validate your existence—to assert your lovability—via adherence to some standard of enoughness, be it behavioral or conceptual, given or invented.”
- **Seculosity** (p. xxi): “Religiosity that’s directed horizontally rather than vertically, at earthly rather than heavenly objects.”

Case Study #1: The Seculosity of Busyness

- Busyness is the sign in our culture that we have value. The more we’re doing, then the more important we are in the eyes of those around us.
- Busyness is also our preferred anesthesia to the deeper problems, emotions, and anxieties we are desperate to avoid.
- Busyness often becomes about *performancism*.
 - Performancism means that “there is no distinction between what we *do* and who we *are*...What makes you loveable, indeed what makes your life worth living, is your performance at X, Y, or Z....**if you are not doing enough, or doing enough well, you are not enough**” (6).
 - Performancism generally leads to exhaustion, anxiety, and isolation. It does not deliver on what it promises (8–10).

Sabbath as the Treatment to our Addiction to Busyness

- God offers us restfulness, whereas Pharaoh only offers us restless anxiety - Walter Brueggemann.
- Sabbath must begin with a confession of our frailty and mortality. It demands “a willingness to acknowledge the limits of our humanness and take steps to live more graciously within the order of things” - Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*.

- Embrace of Sabbath can truly begin when it derives from a place of love rather than a sense of obligation.
- How to begin embracing the Sabbath in your own life:
 - **Pick:** Look at your (or your family's) calendar: what is one day you might set aside for Sabbath? Block it off.
 - **Prepare:** Get ready ahead of time to clear any potential obstacles, distractions, or excuses that would pull you away from that day of rest.
 - **Pray:** confess that you are human and you need rest, and ask that God would assist you to keep this day holy and life-restoring.

Further Reflection and Learning

- Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, Chapter 8: "Sabbath: Establishing Rhythms of Work and Rest."
- Rabbi Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath*.
- Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*.
- Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, *Covenant & Conversation*, "Renewable Energy," https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/beshalach/renewable-energy/#_ftn1

For Next Class (March 23):

- **No class on March 16** - No Wednesday night dinner or programming that week due to Spring Break
- For our next class on March 23:
 - Read Chapters 2 & 3 - The Seculosity of Romance & The Seculosity of Parenting.
 - Listen to:
 - "Love the One You're With" - (The Aretha Franklin Live at the Fillmore West version because Aretha)
 - "Escape (The Piña Colada Song)" - Rupert Holmes
 - "Love without End, Amen" - George Strait