

GOD

**POP
CULTURE**

**WHAT THE STORIES WE TELL AND THE
PRODUCTS WE SELL SAY ABOUT GOD AND US**

Pastor Chris Tenny

THE GOALS

*What is this picture?
What does it symbolize?
What does it create?*

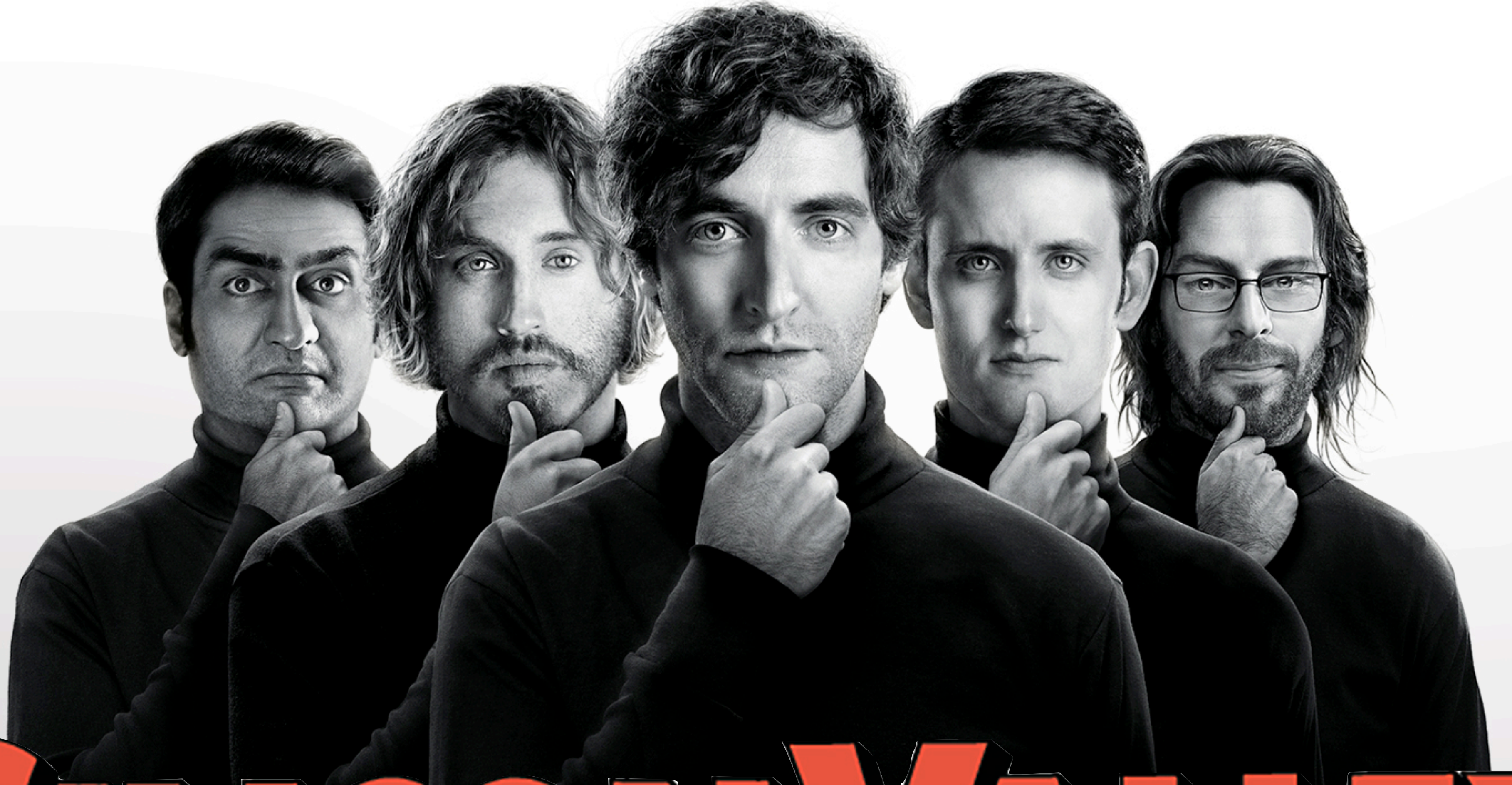


THE GOALS

- Give a basic framework for interpreting “cultural texts” through the lens of the Gospel (Matt. 16:3; Rom. 12:1).
- This is ultimately about formation in Christ and mission to our neighbor: holiness and mission go together (Jn. 17:13-19)
- Holiness - To create awareness to what culture is and how culture shapes us, this is not just about “them” or your kids... its also about you.
- Mission - To equip us as local missionaries to more thoughtfully embody the Christian life and disclose the “secrets of the heart” of people in our community (1 Cor. 9:19-23; 14:25).

CULTURE IN THE BIBLE

- Genesis 1:28; 2:15 - human beings are creators and cultivators of culture
 - Its how we reflect the Creator - *Imago Dei*, Gen. 1:27
- Gen. 3; 11 - The tragedy is we “image” what we worship
 - Idolatry and injustice are connected esp. in the prophets.
 - False worship creates injustice, injustice has a false notion of god enabling it.
- **The Incarnation of Christ is a crucial resource, “The word became flesh and moved into the neighborhood.” John 1:14, *The Message***
- Acts 2; Eph. 2:11-22 - the undoing of Babel occurs in the church through Christ and the Spirit
- Revelation 21:1-8 - the story ends in new heavenly *city*
- **CREATION - FALL - REDEMPTION** as a basic framework



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- How is it like Jerusalem?
- How is it like Babylon?
- “This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”” (Jeremiah 29:4–7, NIV)
- This is the context of the beloved Jer. 29:11, its not about your plans but his kingdom plans.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

- “Culture is that complex whole which include knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” - Edward Tylor in 1871
- Culture gives us a “lens through which a vision of life and social order is expressed, experienced, and explored; it is a lived worldview.” - Vanhoozer, *Everyday Theology*
- “Culture is what we make of the world... We *make sense* of the world by *making something* of the world... We don't make culture. We make omelets.” - Andy Crouch, *Culture Making*

WHAT IS POP CULTURE?

- Traditionally, scholars spoke of “high” and “folk” culture
 - Symphony and Opera vs. Folk music and campfire stories
 - Pop culture is mass produced, accessible, simplified, and designed to appeal to the most people
- American culture is pop culture. We invented it.
 - Ben Franklin to immigrating europeans - what you will find is “a general happy mediocrity prevails.”
- People are learning their theology not in nature, scripture, or the church but in our media saturated culture and our cultural products.
 - “You are what you love.” - James K.A. Smith
 - “Culture eats theology for breakfast.” *unknown*
 - We don’t engage culture, we engage people.

THE CHURCH AND CULTURE

*What is this?
What does it make
possible?*



THE CHURCH AND CULTURE

- Christian Identity and our dual citizenship, 1 Pet. 1:1; Col. 1:1
 - We are “in Christ” and “in San Jose.”
 - Dual citizenship born of the world and then born of the Spirit
 - But Christ has invaded our lives and this creates a distance between who we were and who we will be (1 Pet. 1:18).
- Christians live in between the **now and not yet**
 - Rom. 12:2 - do not conform but be transformed
 - Matt. 16:3 - interpret the “signs of the times”
 - Rev. 7:9 - people from every tribe, nation, and tongue will be in heaven

“ Notice the significance of the new birth for Christian social identity. Christians do not come into their social world from outside seeking either to accommodate to their new home (like second generation immigrants would), shape it in the image of the one they have left behind (like colonizers would), or establish a little haven in the strange new world reminiscent of the old (as resident aliens would). They are not outsiders who either seek to become insiders or maintain strenuously the status of outsiders. Christians are the insiders who have diverted from their culture by being born again. They are by definition those who are not what they used to be, those who do not live like they used to live. Christian difference is therefore not an insertion of something new into the old from outside, but a bursting out of the new precisely within the proper space of the old.

-Miroslav Volf

IMPLICATIONS OF VOLF'S "SOFT DIFFERENCE"

- How is our church a little haven of insulated Christians from “the culture”?
- How is our church accommodating to the culture uncritically?
- How is our church seeking to shape the culture into our image?

We do not ask, “What beliefs and practices of this culture should we accept or reject?” We ask, “Which beliefs and practices of the culture that is ours must we reject now that our self and been reconstituted by new birth?

Which can we retain? What must we reshape to reflect better the values of God’s new creation?” - Volf

- What should we **accept, reject, or redeem** of *our* culture?

HOLINESS AND MISSION BELONG TOGETHER

- Two equal and opposite dangers
 - avoiding culture self-righteously for the sake of holiness
 - accommodating to it for the sake of the mission
- Christ and the Spirit make us holy
 - not avoidance of cultural texts
 - “What comes out of a person is what defiles them.” (Mark 7:20, NIV)
 - Remember Jesus’ holiness was contagious
- Identify your own idols then testify to how Christ delivered you

NEXT WEEK – INTERPRETING CULTURAL TEXTS

- How do we use the framework of CREATION, FALL, REDEMPTION?
- How do we interpret them on their own terms
 - What is it?
 - How is doing it?
 - What does it create?
- One last thing...
 - Walter Bruegemann's theses...
 - We all have a script that we are following... but do we know what it is and where we are in it?