WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT IT?

We all see it. It's in the decline of religious affiliation or people no longer joining fraternal organizations. It's in the rise of self-help regimens and the 21st century mantra, "you do you." It's the deluge of selfies and people who make a living as Instagram influencers. "Me" is have a huge moment. Granted, the first use of the phrase "me generation" was coined for the Baby Boomers in the 70's. But today, "me" has been given new tools like portable cameras with unlimited storage, the ability to share our lives with the world in an instant, and tools to look up (or make up) any tidbit of fact or information we like.

iNDiViDUALiSM

Me, Myself, & I Alone

a Brewed Theology conversation stater*

At the same time, we are living in a moment in our country that is "just so divided right now" (source: everyone).

We are seeing a spike in rates of narcissism, suicidal ideation, and low levels of self-esteem. And we are experiencing what some researchers are calling a loneliness epidemic.

Jesus presented a philosophy that at its core pushed people to think beyond "me." In fact Jesus' two main commandments were: love God and love neighbor (Matt 23:37-39). Paul, too, believed that a life in Christ meant that there is no longer "me" who lives but Christ who lives in me (Gal 2:20). So, let *us* talk about it.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Where do you see "me" culture in your world? Is our inward focus a recent phenomenon? How would you address the rampant division and loneliness facing this country? Is the act of joining a social group or organization a thing of the past or can you imagine people coming back to traditional churches and community organizations? How should Christianity meet this "me" moment? Should the Church cater to people's inward focus by offering compelling personal experiences? Or should the Church push for human connection in community?

BIBLE BASICS

The Bible's words are often directed at a *group* of people rather than directly to individuals. Many of the "you"s that you read in the Bible are actually plural "y'all"s (…or "ye" if you prefer). Read the following popular Bible verses, but change every "you" to "y'all." Does it change the way you hear these words?

- **Matthew 6:33** – Seek the kingdom of God, ya'll.
- **Matthew 11:28-29** – Jesus inviting (me? us?) to rest.
- **Ephesians 2:8** – Who is saved by grace? Me? Or We?
- **Jeremiah 29:11** – God has some plans. For whom?
- **1 Corinthians 6:19** – The Holy Spirit's dwelling place(s).

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ESSENTIAL READINGS & WATCHINGS (click headings for knowledge)

RISE OF THE "ME" CULTURE (~2 min)
Read this brief introduction to how the "me" days of the Baby Boomers have given rise to the rampant individualistic culture of today.

TAKE A TEST: THE NARCICISSM PERSONALITY INVENTORY (~10 min)
Everyone's a little narcissistic but very few people have narcissistic personality disorder. This inventory will help you explore the areas of your life that tend toward narcissism (if you answer truthfully). This is not a definitive tool of your narcissistic tendencies, but it will give you something to think about!

ME! ME! ARE WE LIVING THROUGH A NARCICISSM EPIDEMIC? (~7 min)
What is this current culture of narcissism doing to our sense of worth?

WATCH: CAN A DIVIDED AMERICA HEAL? (20:18)
Psychologist Jonathan Haidt explores the reasons why we feel so divided today and what we can do about it.

BELONGING OR NOT: MY LIFE AS A NONJOINER (~10 min)
Amy Frykhom shares the story of her journey away from and eventually back to church community.

BONUS READINGS

THE TEXAS BIBLE (a browser plugin): FIXING THE SECOND PERSON PLURAL PROBLEM ONE WEBSITE AT A TIME (~6 min)
John Dyer has set out to fix a problem! According to him, there are 4,720 verses in the Bible where "you" should actually be "y'all." The Bible often addresses human beings as a group and we miss that without a plural version of you. Don't worry though, y'all can choose "ye" or "you lot" if y'all don't prefer the southern drawl :)

RELIGION'S RELATIONSHIP TO HAPPINESS, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, AND HEALTH AROUND THE WORLD (~8 min)
Religious people tend to be happier, more engaged in their communities, and a little bit healthier.

HOW AMERICANS SPEND THEIR DAYS (~3 min)
Hold on a sec! *Before* you click this article, what do you think are the three things Americans spend the majority of their time doing on a given day?

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