

## Study Questions for “Going to Get Wonder-fully Messed Up: Core Values in a Post-Christian World”

By Jim Zerfing

1. Jim Zerfing says, “I found myself being called to reject many things within our institutional church and in expressions of civil religion founded on Christianity across the developed world.” Do you agree with Zerfing? In what ways would you say your congregation practices civil religion, that is, in what ways does the church exist to support government or society in general, and in what ways does it exist purely to serve God?

2. When the church became an institution in the fourth century and began to have state-sanctioned organization, a clear set of beliefs, property and buildings, how did the church change from its origins in the first century? In your opinion, should we try to get back to the style of the first century church?

In what ways was Jesus counter-cultural? Should the church be counter-cultural today? In what ways?

3. Zerfing thinks we live in a post-modern world. In his book *Christian Theology*, theologian Alister McGrath defines postmodernism as “A cultural development, starting in the late twentieth century, which resulted from the general collapse in confidence of the universal rational principles of the Enlightenment. It is characterized by a rejection of absolutes and of objective and rational attempts to define reality.” Do you think the loss of confidence in rational principles is a good thing or a bad thing? What will it mean for the church? In the modern period, faith became associated with certainty based on reason. If moderns give up on reason, on what will our faith be based?

4. “People across the developed world are part of a growing conversation about a ‘missional,’ ‘relational,’ and ‘incarnational’ Christianity centered on the Jesus who sends us.” How do these ideas about the church differ from Brethren traditions of our recent past? In what ways have the Brethren already been missional, relational, and incarnational? Have we become mission-minded and gone to where people need us, or have we lost some of that character?

5. To what extent is your congregation “pastor centered”? That is, to what extent does the success of the congregation depend on the strength of the pastor? Or, to what extent is the church missional and dependent on the strength of your mission work? What are the advantages of both? What are the disadvantages?