

I. Introduction: Why do you need to know about postmodernism? Acts 17 II Co. 10:4-5

- A. It is important to understand the worldview of those whom we are seeking to reach. Acts 17 Paul at Athens.
- B. *What is post-modernism? A general and wide-ranging term which is applied to literature, art, philosophy, architecture, fiction, and cultural and literary criticism, among others. Postmodernism is largely a reaction to the assumed certainty of scientific, or objective, efforts to explain reality. In essence, it stems from a recognition that reality is not simply mirrored in human understanding of it, but rather, is constructed as the mind tries to understand its own particular and personal reality. For this reason, postmodernism is highly skeptical of explanations which claim to be valid for all groups, cultures, traditions, or races, and instead focuses on the relative truths of each person. In the postmodern understanding, interpretation is everything; reality only comes into being through our interpretations of what the world means to us individually. Postmodernism relies on concrete experience over abstract principles, knowing always that the outcome of one's own experience will necessarily be fallible and relative, rather than certain and universal. Postmodernism is "post" because it denies the existence of any ultimate principles, and it lacks the optimism of there being a scientific, philosophical, or religious truth which will explain everything for everybody - a characteristic of the so-called "modern" mind. The paradox of the postmodern position is that, in placing all principles under the scrutiny of its skepticism, it must realize that even its own principles are not beyond questioning. As the philosopher Richard Tarnas states, postmodernism "cannot on its own principles ultimately justify itself any more than can the various [metaphysical](#) overviews against which the postmodern mind has defined itself." (From the PBS website)*

II. Understand the times in which we live: Truth Decay. I Chron. 12:32 Rom. 13:11

- A. Pre-modernity. (Up to the 17th century).
1. Pre-modern thought presupposed a God-centered view of reality (but not necessarily Christian).
 2. Divine revelation is the final arbiter of truth and gives reality and meaning to all things.
 3. Mankind is dependent on God Who makes and organizes history.
 4. Religion gives society uniformity.
 5. How would this worldview affect counseling?
- B. Modernism (Beginning in the 17th Century: the Enlightenment)
1. Modernism is a man-centered view of reality, which looks to man to understand the world and solve his problems through intellectual and scientific endeavors.
 2. Reason replaces revelation as the final arbiter of truth, thereby liberating humanity from religious *mythology*.
 3. Modernism is optimistic about human potential and progress.
 4. Modernism assumes a unified view of truth and reality, which mankind can discover through reason and science: laws of nature.
 5. Man can express ultimate realities using language.
 6. Modernism stresses individualism and autonomy.
 7. Mankind makes his own history.
 8. How would modernism affect one's view of counseling?
 9. Christian apologists have worked for the past 200 years to answer modernism.

- C. Postmodernism (Beginning in the mid-20th century).
1. Postmodernism critiques modernity's claim that mankind can gain objective knowledge through rationalism and empiricism.
 2. Postmodernism denies the existence of fixed absolute universal and objective truth. There is no *meta-narrative* (the big story which explains everything).
 3. Truth is a construct and is relative. *Truth is made rather than found.*
 4. Language cannot render truths about the world in an objective way: word games.
 - a. There is no truth to which language corresponds.
 - b. All meaning is socially constructed.
 - c. Written texts do not have a single knowable meaning or truth value.
 - d. The meaning of words and texts is determined by the reader, not the author.
 5. Truth claims have been used as instruments of oppression and power.
 6. Postmodernism exalts the community.
 7. Postmodernism is pluralistic. Truth has been replaced with truthS.
 8. Postmodernism is revolutionary: Modern society with its rationalism and unitary view of truth needs to be replaced by a new world order.
 9. The arguments Christian apologists make against modernism don't work against post-modernism.

III. The influence of postmodernism.

- A. Postmodernism affects our culture in many ways.
1. Postmodernism and the arts.
 2. Postmodernism and history.
 3. Postmodernism and the natural sciences.
 4. Postmodernism and education.
 5. Postmodernism and politics (including the judiciary).
 6. Postmodernism and the media.
 7. A battle is raging in our universities between modernism and postmodernism.
- B. Postmodernism and religion.
1. Religion has been used as a means of power and control.
 2. Religion often fails to respect the perspectives of other communities.
 3. Religious texts must be deconstructed.
 4. Religious pluralism. The heretic is the one who dares to believe he has the truth.
- C. Postmodernism and morality.
1. There is no absolute right and wrong for all people.
 2. Tolerance is the cardinal virtue.
 3. Collective guilt minimizes personal responsibility.
 4. Redefining family and gender roles.
 5. Sexual morality. Isa. 5:20
- D. The professing church has been influenced by postmodernism.
1. Deconstructing the Bible.
 2. Pluralism and doubt in the pulpits.
 3. Some churches cater to the postmodern generation.
- E. The impact of postmodernism on counseling.
1. Pluralism: Psychology is moving from modernism to postmodernism.
 2. Irrationalism.
 3. Relativism.
 4. Pessimism and Nihilism.

IV. How can a Christian answer postmodernism? II Co. 10:5

- A. There are some useful aspects to postmodernism's critique on modernity.**
1. Mankind cannot autonomously arrive at ultimate truth or create utopia. Gen. 11
 2. Postmodernists have exposed the modernist myth of objectivity.
- B. Postmodernism is internally inconsistent: It collapses upon itself.** *Postmodernism is self referentially incoherent. That is to say, if it is true, then it is false.... If postmodern claims are objectively true, then those claims are themselves the mere products of social forces and so are not objectively true... If postmodernist claims are not true then they are just the arbitrary opinions of people we are free to ignore (Craig).*
1. Postmodernism itself is a meta-narrative which tries to explain reality.
 2. Postmodernists are intolerant of those who question their meta-narrative by believing in some other absolute truth. Isa. 5:20
 3. Postmodernists cannot consistently apply their system in the real world.
 4. Most people intuitively believe they have individual identities, live in an objective world, and truth is not merely a social construction.
 5. Postmodernism is unable to meet the deepest human needs.
- C. Postmodern thought is not really new. Genesis 3 Isa. 5:20 Ecc. 1:9-10**
1. Satan deconstructed God's Word. Genesis 3:1,4-5
 2. Eve chose to remake herself and to establish her own truth/reality. Genesis 3:6
 3. The heart of sin is seeking autonomy from God.
- D. How can you persuade postmodern people to seek the God of the Bible?**
1. Deep down everyone knows God exists and that they are accountable to Him. Romans 1:19-20,32 2:14-15 Acts 17:24-31
 2. False thought, including both modernism and postmodernism is an attempt to suppress the knowledge of God. Rom. 1:18b,21,25
- E. Unashamedly present a Biblical view of truth: There is a personal God Who has created all things and has revealed Himself to us. Genesis 1:1f**
1. He has created us in His Image for His own glory. Gen. 1:27 I Co. 8:6
 2. God speaks with clarity and authority. II Ti. 3:16-17 Isa. 40:8 Ps. 119:142
 - a. Language is not a human construction.
 - b. God's language existed before human beings. John 1:1 Gen. 1:1f
 - c. God gave the gift of language to men. Gen. 2:19-20
 - d. God's Word redeems. Ro. 10:17
 3. The Bible reveals objective truth that is knowable to humans in spite of our limitations as finite and fallible human beings.
 - a. We need the Holy Spirit to understand. I Co. 2:9-16
 - b. Meaning is not subjective. II Pe. 1:20
 - c. We are right to be wary of how mankind uses language. Rom. 1:28f
 - d. We are dependent upon God's Words. Mt. 7:24,26
 4. Truth is God's truth, revealed in Christ. John 14:6 1:14,17 Acts 4:12 I Co. 15:1f
 5. Mankind seeks autonomy from God. Rom. 1:18f
 6. God's truth (alone) will set you free. John 8:32
 7. The gospel unites people of all cultures into one community. Eph. 2:11f
Rom. 7:9-10 5:9

V. Concluding applications: What is truth? John 20:28