

Postmodernism and the Sovereignty of the Individual

Modernism, Postmodernism, and Truth

Lesson 1

Introduction: There is a book in my library titled *Seven Men Who Rule the World from the Grave* by Dave Breese (who died in 2002). The book is about seven men who, though dead, have had a profound impact upon the world. In the book, the seven men mentioned are...

- 1) Charles Darwin who impacted science through his ideas about evolution.
- 2) Karl Marx who has impacted governments and nations through communism.
- 3) John Dewey who has impacted our public educational system by instituting government-funded public education.
- 4) Sigmund Freud who has impacted modern psychology with his ideas on sexuality's impact upon the psyche.
- 5) John Maynard Keynes who has impacted the economy and financial systems through his ideas on macroeconomics.
- 6) Soren Kierkegaard who has impacted philosophy through his ideas on existentialism.
- 7) Julius Wellhausen, a liberal theologian, who impacted textual criticism and is a leading voice of modernism.

These are all sound choices for a book of this scope. Yet, the author, Breese, died in 2002 two years before another major voice, Jacques Derrida, passed away in 2004. If the book could be revised to add an eighth person, I believe a strong case could be made for this Algerian-born French philosopher. Some people have never heard of Derrida, but his ideas, along with a host of other postmodern influencers, have heavily impacted the Western world and how it thinks today. Though Derrida did not use the term "postmodern" in his work, he is known as one of the leading voices of the postmodern framework. Derrida "was an atheist regarding the existence of God and agnostic concerning the possibility of knowing absolute truth" (Geisler, Norman. *The Big Book of Christian Apologetics*, p. 121). Thus, immediately his influence should be of concern.

Yet, whether you have heard of Derrida or not it is vital to wrap our minds around the general tenor of this movement. If we do not understand postmodernism and its roots and fruits we will have a harder time understanding our gospel audience. Frankly, if you do not have a general idea of the postmodern worldview then you will fail to understand the cultural waters and societal air in which this world is swimming and breathing. Furthermore, if our audience has embraced postmodernism it will make it more difficult to win them to the gospel. Even further, if the church is influenced into thinking it must embrace a postmodern approach to a postmodern culture this may very well have disastrous consequences upon future generations. So, what exactly is postmodernism? What are some of its key ideas? How has/will it impact the world and the church

today? How should Christians be on guard for it and respond to it? We'll try to answer all of these in these lessons.

I. A Brief History of the “Modern” Era

A. The “Modern Era” is known by two key philosophical views—rationalism and empiricism—which tended towards devaluing belief in God.

1. “when we come into the Age of the Enlightenment, or the “modern” era (roughly 1550 to perhaps 1945), there were two key breaks that took place. First, **rationalism emphasized the adequacy of human reason to know objective, rational truths...**” (Smith, R. Scott. *Truth and the New Kind of Christian*, p. 26-27).
2. “A second major break from the past that took place in the modern period was **the rise of empiricism**. This is the view that we can know only what we can touch, taste, smell, see, or hear. Of course we all recognize the value of empirical knowledge, which simply is knowledge we have by using our senses. Empiricism, however, **limits all knowledge to that which comes by way of the five senses...** Since the empiricists insist that all knowledge comes by way of the five senses, God, for them, is not the kind of thing about which we can have rational beliefs. Moral and religious truths, such as virtuous character qualities, or our souls...also were seen as no longer things we could know to be true, because they too were not the kinds of things we could see, touch, and so forth” (Smith, R. Scott. *Truth and the New Kind of Christian*, p. 26-27).

B. Two of the key Enlightenment thinkers were David Hume and Immanuel Kant...

1. “David Hume developed empiricist thought...Hume developed his skeptical **arguments against God’s existence**, such as his famous argument against miracles” (ibid, p. 28).
2. “Immanuel Kant attempted to answer Hume’s empiricism in order to defend rationalism, including the objective character of ethics...Kant’s views helped to develop another key idea that is very influential today: science gives us knowledge and facts, but other disciplines, such as religion, can only give us values, or personal opinions and tastes...under Kant’s view, science took off, getting the philosophical prestige that it still enjoys today. However, according to Kant’s view, we cannot sense God with the five senses, so **God cannot be known to exist**. The same goes for having free wills, as well as souls” (ibid, p. 29).

II. The “Post” in “Postmodernism”

A. The “postmodern” era follows the “modern” era and there are some key distinctions between these two belief systems.

1. . “Simply put, they regard it [postmodernism] as rejecting most of the fundamental intellectual pillars of the modern Western civilization...At a minimum, postmodernism regards certain important principles, methods, or ideas characteristic of **modern Western culture as obsolete or illegitimate**” (Cahoone, Lawrence. *From Modernism to*

Postmodernism: An Anthology, p. 2). So, philosophers have moved on from the reason and rationality of the Enlightenment era to a new era and worldview.

2. “Modernists view the world, including humans, as one gigantic machine, placing their faith in rationality (the ability of humans to understand their world), empiricism (the belief that knowledge can only be gained through our senses), and in the application of rationality and empiricism through science and technology...academicians, the thought-shapers who teach in our colleges and universities—whose opinions sooner or later influence the rest of society—are clearly **discarding modernism and embracing postmodernism** in growing numbers” (McCallum, Dennis. *The Death of Truth*, p. 13).

3. “Postmodernism means **after-modernism**, in the sense that its beyond modernism. Postmodernists believe they have seen through modernism...Postmodernists believe that things like reason, rationality, and confidence in science are cultural biases. They contend that those who trust reason, like science, Western education, and governmental structures—unknowingly act out their European cultural conditioning. This conditioning seeks to keep power in the hands of the social elite” (McCallum, Dennis. *The Death of Truth*, p. 20).

4. “Academic postmoderns are highly suspicious of human reason’s abilities. In fact, while many “modernists” (a term relating to the modern era, or the Enlightenment, roughly 1550-1945) thought that we could know universal, objective truths by our reason, **postmodernists have given up on knowing such truths**” (Smith, R. Scott. *Truth and the New Kind of Christian*, p. 18).

B. Clearly, one key difference between modernism and postmodernism is how postmodernists view truth. Rationality, reason, and logic are old school ideas!

1. We may better grasp the contrast between classical, modern, and postmodern thinking just by looking at the change through art, architecture, design, and music.

2. Francis Schaeffer brings out these contrasts, especially between classical and modernist artforms, in his book *The God Who Is There*.

“As in philosophy so in art there is a doorway into the line, and this is provided by the Impressionists. When they began they did not see themselves as rebelling against classic concepts...But later their work, especially the work of Monet, changed and expressed the new mentality” (p. 30).

3. Whether art imitates life, or life imitates art, is an age-old debate. One thing is certain...theological views of truth have been impacted just as we see in art.

III. Postmodernism and Its New View on “Truth”

A. Postmodernism Seeks to Eliminate the Concept of Objective Truth and “Metanarratives”

1. "...an (anti-)philosophical view flowing from a **'suspension' of the notion of truth**" (Tomlinson, Hugh. "After Truth: Postmodernism and The Rhetoric of Science," in *Philosophy: A Text with Readings*, p. 501-502).
2. "...postmodernism stresses the fallibility of human reason, as well as its biases and how it all too often is used to oppress people...in the modern view of the world, we could find objective, universal truths that applied to all people...Now, however, in a postmodern era, that idea would seem **"quaint" at best and oppressive and imperialistic at worst**" (Smith, R. Scott. *Truth and the New Kind of Christian*, p. 32).
3. "...postmodernism isn't a distinct set of doctrines or truth claims. It's a *mood*—a view of the world characterized by a **distinct distrust of reason, not to mention a disdain for the knowledge Christians believe the Bible provides**. It's a *methodology*—a completely new way of analyzing ideas...postmodernism is also a *movement*—a fresh onslaught on truth that brings a more or less cohesive approach to literature, history, politics, education, law, sociology, linguistics, and virtually every other discipline, including science. And it is ushering in a cultural *metamorphosis*—transforming every area of everyday life as it spreads through education, movies, television, and other media" (McCallum, Dennis. *The Death of Truth*, p. 12).
4. "Postmodernism questions many of the concepts that define modernity...it's **deeply skeptical of objective truth and suspicious of the power dynamics of those who claim to know it**...according to postmodernism, if objective truth exists, no one can claim to know it absolutely. If they say they do, it's most likely a power grab. I think it's fair to sum up postmodern thought with the slogan, "What's true for you is true for you, but what's true for me is true for me" (Childers, Alisa. *Live Your Truth and Other Lies*, p. 23).
5. "Postmodernism involves ideas from a variety of different thinkers, and so it is difficult to capture it in a way that is fair to its diversity. Nevertheless, philosopher J.P. Moreland provides a helpful summary of postmodern thought:

"As a philosophical ideology, postmodernism is primarily a reinterpretation of what knowledge is and what counts as knowledge, though postmodernists don't like to talk in this way. More broadly, it represents a form of **cultural relativism about such things as reality, truth, reason, value, linguistic meaning, the self and other notions**. On a postmodern view, there is not such thing as objective reality, truth, value, reason, and so forth. All these are social constructions, creations of linguistic practices, and as such are relative not to individuals, but to social groups that share a narrative"

PREMODERNISM	MODERNISM	POSTMODERNISM
Objective Ultimate Truth	Objective Ultimate Truth	Objective Ultimate Truth is Unknowable
Supernatural	Anti-Supernatural	Mystical
Authority from God (or gods)	Authority from Science & Human Reason	No Ultimate Authority

(quoted in McDowell, Josh and Sean. *The Beauty of Intolerance*, p. 62-63).

6. “Instead of knowing the world as it really is, **academic postmoderns claim that we cannot know any such thing**. We are left with having to “make,” or shape, our own worlds ourselves, **including religious and ethical “truths”** (Smith, R. Scott. *Truth and the New Kind of Christian*, p. 19).

7. “Modernism is often pictured as pursuing truth, absolutism, linear thinking, rationalism, certainty, the cerebral as opposed to the effective — which in turn breeds arrogance, and inflexibility, the lust to be right, the desire to control. Postmodernism, by contrast, recognizes how much of **what we ‘know’ is shaped by the culture in which we live**, is controlled by emotions and aesthetics and heritage, and in fact can only be intelligently held as part of a common tradition, without overbearing claims to be true or right” (Carson, D. A., *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005, p. 27).

8. “Post-modernism challenges global, all-encompassing world views, be they political, religious, or social. It reduces Marxism, Christianity, Fascism, Stalinism, capitalism, liberal democracy, secular humanism, feminism, Islam, and modern science, to the same order and dismisses them all as logocentric (Derrida’s term that is an adjective used to describe systems of thought that claim legitimacy by reference to external, universally truthful propositions), totalizing metanarratives that anticipate all questions and provide predetermined answers. All such systems of thought rest on assumptions no more or no less certain than those of witchcraft, astrology, or primitive cults. The postmodern goal is not to formulate an alternative set of assumptions but **to register the impossibility of establishing any such underpinning for knowledge**” (Rosenau, Pauline Marie. *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads, Intrusions*, 1992).

9. “Modernity, in simple terms, was characterized by the belief that truth exists and that the scientific method is the only reliable way to determine that truth...**Postmodernism suggests that if objective truth exists, it cannot be known objectively or with any degree of certainty**. That is because (according to postmodernists), the subjectivity of the human mind makes knowledge of objective truth impossible” (McArthur, John. *The Truth War*, p. 10-11).

B. Since truth is not objective, then the postmodernist relativizes all truth claims and, thus, relativizes morality placing it in the realm of personal opinions, tastes, or feelings.

1. “**Truth, declares a growing collective consciousness, is relative**: what is true, right, or beautiful for one person isn’t necessarily true, right, or beautiful for another. Relativism says that truth isn’t fixed by outside reality, but is decided by a group or individual for themselves. Truth isn’t discovered, but manufactured. Truth is ever-changing not only in insignificant matters of taste or fashion, but in crucial matters of spirituality, morality, and reality itself. This is the postmodern consensus—**that truth is a slippery thing**” (McCallum, Dennis. *The Death of Truth*, p. 31).

2. “The postmodern worldview operates with a community-based understanding of truth. It affirms that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth are dependent on the community in which we participate. Further, and far more radically, the postmodern worldview affirms that this relatively extends beyond our perceptions of truth to its essence: there is no absolute truth; **truth is relative to the community in which we participate**” (Grenz, Stanley J. *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 1996). So, there is Islamic truth, Buddhist truth, Christian truth, feminist truth, Afrocentric truth, etc. Truth is just a cultural construct...not a reality.

3. Jacques Derrida is viewed as “the father of a movement known as ‘deconstructionism.’...A deconstructionist reads and rereads a text, looking for new, deeper, forgotten meanings...in deconstructionism...**all meaning is relative to a culture and situation.** There is no meaning prior to language...**all truth is conditioned to one’s perspective**...there is no perfect reference or one-to-one correspondence between words and the meaning they confer. Meaning, therefore, is ultimately untransferable between writer and reader” (Geisler, Norman L. “Jacques Derrida,” *The Big Book of Christian Apologetics*, p. 121).

4. “...you have here **the erosion of all moral categories**...in all the writers of the New Spirituality, ultimately the erosion of moral absolutes. This is a deadly game at work. Morality, time, essence, absolutes—all are gone by the wayside in the name of spirituality. What is left but to deny anyone who still holds to those distinctions” (Zacharias, Ravi. *Why Jesus?* P. 202).

5. “I believe that one of the prime reasons this generation is setting new records for dishonesty, disrespect, sexual promiscuity, violence, suicide and other pathologies, is because they have lost their moral underpinnings; their foundational belief in morality and truth has been eroded...At one time, our society, by and large, explained the universe, humanity, and the purpose of life from the Judeo-Christian tradition; a belief that truth existed, and everyone could know and understand it...That has changed drastically, however. Our children are being raised in a society that has largely **rejected the notions of truth and morality**, a society that has somewhere lost the ability to decide what is true and what is right. **Truth has become a matter of taste; morality has been replaced by individual preference**” (McDowell, Josh. *Right From Wrong: What You Need to Know to Help Youth Make Right Choices*, p. 12-13).

6. We hear this postmodern view of truth expressed in this way...

- i. “Truth is whatever you believe”
- ii. “There is no absolute truth. That’s just your opinion.”
- iii. “If there were absolute truth, how could we know what it is?”
- iv. “What’s true for you is true for you, what’s true for me is true for me.”
- v. “You do you and I’ll do me.”

vi. “People who believe in absolute truth are dangerous.”

7. Isaiah 5:20-21 describes it and renounces it in this way: “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!”

8. Judges 21:25 says, “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”—this philosophy is not new!

9. Francis Schaeffer wrote, “...this change in the concept of the way we come to knowledge and truth is **the most crucial problem**, as I understand it, **facing Christianity today**” (*The God Who is There*, p. 13).

IV. Practical Problems With Postmodern Philosophy

A. The postmodernists who teach relative truth believe it is an absolute claim. This falsifies the relativist’s position!

1. “Most relativists believe that relativism is absolutely true and that everyone should be a relativist. Therein lies **the self-destructive nature of relativism**. The relativist stands on the pinnacle of an absolute truth and wants to relativize everything else” (Geisler, Norman. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, p. 745).

2. “If postmodernism can be shown to be true, a worldview with objective merit, then postmodernism’s main thesis (rejection of objective truth) is wrong. It ends up teaching that there is at least some objective truth—namely, that postmodernism is right!...It either denies the plausibility of its own position, or it presumes the reliability of reason and the objectivity of truth” (McCallum, Dennis. *The Death of Truth*, p. 53).

3. “To assert that ‘the truth is that there is no truth’ is both **self-refuting and arbitrary**. For if this statement is true, it is not true, since there is no truth. So-called deconstructionism thus cannot be halted from deconstructing itself” (Craig, William Lane. “Politically Incorrect Salvation,” *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World*, 1995).

3. This is not a new argument, really. Just a reconstructed old argument. Consider this ancient conversation between Socrates and Protagoras from 400 B.C.

Protagoras: Truth is relative. It is only a matter of opinion.

Socrates: You mean that truth is mere subjective opinion.

Protagoras: Exactly. What is true for you is true for you, and what is true for me is true for me. Truth is subjective.

Socrates: Do you really mean that? That my opinion is true by virtue of it being my opinion.

Protagoras: Indeed I do.

Socrates: My opinion is: truth is absolute, not opinion, and that you are absolutely in error. Since this is my opinion, you must grant it is true according to your philosophy.

Protagoras: You are quite right, Socrates.

4. “A self-defeating statement is one that fails to meet its own standard...”**there is no truth” claims to be true and thus defeats itself...**Self-defeating statements are made routinely in our postmodern culture, and once you sharpen your ability to detect them, you’ll become an absolutely fearless defender of truth” (Geisler, Norman L. and Turek, Frank. *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be An Atheist*, p. 39).

5. Consider a few self-defeating truth cliches and how to respond to them with questions to help expose their erroneous nature.

i. “All truth is relative” (Is that a relative truth?)

ii. “There are no absolutes” (Are you absolutely sure?)

iii. “It’s true for you but not for me!” (Is that statement true just for you, or is it true for everyone?)

iv. “True for you but not for me” may be the mantra of our day, but it’s not how the world really works. Try saying that to your bank teller, the police, or the IRS and see how far you get!” (ibid, p. 40).

B. The concept of relative truth violates the Law of Noncontradiction as it creates a world full of contradictions.

1. **“If relativism were true, then the world would be full of contradictory conditions.**

For if something is true for me but false for you, then opposite conditions exist. For if I say, “there is milk in the refrigerator,” and you say, “there is not any milk in the refrigerator,” and we both are right, then there must both be and not be milk in the refrigerator at the same time and in the same sense...”

2. “In the religious realm, it would mean that Billy Graham is telling the truth when he says, ‘God exists,’ and Richard Dawkins is also right when he claims, ‘God does not exist.’ But these two statements cannot both be true. If one is true, then the other is false. And since they exhaust the only possibilities, one of them must be true” (Geisler, Norman L. *The Big Book of Christian Apologetics*, p. 564).

3. “The Law of Noncontradiction is a self-evident first principle of thought that says contradictory claims cannot both be true at the same time in the same sense. In short, it says that **the opposite of true is false. We all know this law intuitively...**Suppose you ask a married couple on the street one day—friends of

yours—and you ask the wife if it's true that she's expecting a baby. If she says "yes" and her husband says "no," you don't say, "Thanks a lot, that really helps me!" You think, "Maybe she hasn't told him, or maybe they misunderstood the question (or maybe something worse!)." There's one thing you know for sure: they can't both be right! The Law of Noncontradiction makes that self-evident to you. When investigating any question of fact, including the question of God, the same Law of Noncontradiction applies" (Geisler, Norman L. and Turek, Frank. *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be An Atheist*, p. 55-56).

4. "A person could not function or live very long if he consistently acted as though truth were perspectival rather than objective. He would bounce checks because his account has money "to him," drink poison which "to him" is lemonade, fall through the thin ice that is thick "to him," or get hit by a bus that is not moving "to him." To a person who wants to function effectively and live in the world, Truth's objective correspondence to reality must matter in some sense. Even more dangerous to humanity are those who live by a perspectival view of truth only concerning their moral activities" (McDowell, Josh. *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, p. 625).

5. Destroy the principle of noncontradiction and you have destroyed truth. There is no true or false, no right or wrong, no meaning whatsoever. This is why many have labeled postmodernism as the "death of truth."

6. In the Scriptures, Luke mentions a short quip about "*Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons...*" (Luke 8:2, NKJV).

i. Imagine how difficult it must have been to have the power and voices of "*seven demons*" pulling you in various directions.

ii. We mustn't minimize or equate demon-possession to a mental health issue as some scholars have in their efforts.

iii. However, as a similarity, imagine how difficult it must be to live in today's world truly believing all moral views are equally viable—to be pulled in seven different directions!

iv. It is no surprise we have the mental health and anxiety problems we have today in this culture of moral confusion and contradiction!

v. Through the teaching of truth, we need to free people who are pulled in so many directions whose "*minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*" who are believing "*a different spirit*" and "*a different gospel*" (2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

vi. "*God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints*" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

V. What Is the Truth About Truth?

A. Theologically speaking, “truth is the self-expression of God” (McArthur, John. *The Truth War*, p. 2).

1. The Triune God is described as “truth.”

i. Deut 32:4, “*He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, **A God of truth** and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.*”

John 1:17, “...*but grace and **truth came through Jesus Christ***”

Hebrews 1:2-3, “...*His Son...being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person...*”

1 John 5:6, “...*the **Spirit is truth.***”

2. Because the word came from God, it is also described as “the truth.”

i. John 16:13, “*when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will **guide you into all truth...***”

ii. John 17:17, “*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your **word is truth***” (Psalm 19:7-9).

iii. This word of God “*lives and abides forever*” (1 Peter 1:23).

B. Ontologically speaking, our God-created world reveals basic truth and truth is what matches the facts (correspondent view or objective truth)

1. “Truth is that which corresponds to its referent (that to which it refers). Metaphysical truth is that which **corresponds with reality or reflects reality**—what really is. By “correspondence” we mean agreement with something—in this case, a thought or statement about reality agrees with reality” (McDowell, Josh. *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, p. 585-586).

2. “Correspondence describes a situation where there is a fact and there is a belief about that fact. Correspondence means that the belief is true when it **accurately reflects the fact**. Subjectivism, on the other hand, is where truth or reality is determined internally by the subject or person” (ibid. p. 586).

3. Aristotle said, “To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true; so that he who says of anything that is, or that is not, will say either what is true or what is false; but neither what is nor what is not is said to be or not to be” (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. 4.7. 1011b25-30).

4. Thomas Aquinas: “truth is defined by **the conformity of intellect and thing**; and hence to know this conformity is to know truth” (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1.16.2).

5. "Truth is what corresponds to its referent [the idea to which a word refers]. Truth about reality is what corresponds to **the way things really are**. Truth is "telling it like it is." This correspondence applies to abstract realities as well as actual ones. There are mathematical truths. There are also truths about ideas. In each case there is a reality, and truth accurately expresses it. Falsehood, then, is what does not correspond. It tells it like it is not, misrepresenting the way things are. The intent behind the statement is irrelevant. If it lacks proper correspondence, it is false" (Geisler, Norman. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, p. 743).

i. "The pulpit is made of wood" is factually correct if indeed the pulpit is made of wood. It corresponds to reality.

ii. "The bathroom is to my left" is factually correct if indeed the bathroom is to my left. It corresponds to reality.

iii. " $2+2=4$ " is factually correct. It corresponds to mathematical reality.

iv. Indianapolis is the state capital of Indiana.

v. A square has four equal sides. A circle is round.

vi. Biological females have two X chromosomes. Males have 1 X and 1 Y chromosome.

vii. Jesus was born of a virgin, died on a cross, was buried, then rose again (see John 5:31-36; 1 Corinthians 15:1-20).

B. Objective truth does not change based on whether or not I believe/feel it to be right or wrong (Jeremiah 10:23).

1. It does not matter if I believe the pulpit is made of plastic. If it is made of wood and I say it is made of plastic, I'm wrong.

2. It does not matter if I am sincere in believing the bathroom is to my right. If it is to my left, I am wrong.

3. It does not matter if I am bad at math and think $2+2=5$ or any other number. IF it's not 4, I'm wrong.

4. It does not matter if I believe a biological male is a female, if the anatomy is male and I call it a female then I am wrong.

5. It does not matter if I disbelieve in the moon landing, if the evidence is presented man walked on the moon then I am wrong.

6. It does not matter if I believe Jesus Christ's resurrection was a hoax, if the eyewitness testimony confirms His resurrection then I am wrong to reject it.

7. There are some ideas I may sincerely believe, but if they do not correspond to reality. I'm wrong.

C. Truth is true for all people, in all places, at all times (cp. 1 Peter 1:23).

1. Some postmodern “Emerging church” leaders have adopted the pluralistic idea that Christians get saved by God in one way, Muslims in another, Buddhists in another, and on goes the list. This makes truth *regional and divided*.
2. The world is also teaching truth is *situational*. It is dependent on culture and circumstances. It’s okay to steal if it’s a poor mom who just got laid off and is trying to provide for her kids. It’s okay to revolt against police officers if you’ve got a good enough reason. It’s okay to murder the unborn in the right circumstances.
3. But, with God’s Word, the standards are the same for “*all men everywhere*.” God’s will for man does not change based on culture. That would be a God of confusion. Truth is like parallel lines. It does not cross. It does not contradict. It is consistent in all places, at all times (see 2 Timothy 2:3-4).
 - i. The wood pulpit is wood for everyone, everywhere, at every time.
 - ii. “ $2+2=4$ ” is true for everyone, everywhere, at every time.
 - iii. “Indianapolis is the capital of Indiana in 2023” is a true statement for everyone, everywhere, at every time.
 - iv. “Jesus rose from the dead three days after His death on a cross” is true for everyone, everywhere, at every time.

D. Truth does not cease to be truth because of the attitude of the one professing it.

1. You may think I am being arrogant when I say the pulpit is made of wood, but that does not make it any less true.
2. You may call me dogmatic when I say $2+2=4$ but that does not make the truth claim untrue.
3. You may admire the humility of someone who argues “Indianapolis is NOT the capital of Indiana” but they are still in error despite their humble attitude.
4. You may admire the authenticity of one who disbelieves in the resurrection of Jesus but their believe is authentically false.
5. A biologically male may sincerely believe they can identify as a female, but they are anatomically incorrect.
6. An anorexic, underweight girl may sincerely believe she is overweight, but she needs to be brought to a better informed realization.
7. A boy might genuinely identify as an octopus, this does not mean we will go throw him in the ocean!

E. Truth is Exclusive. Ex. What do we say to our kids when we want “the truth?” By our words, we suggest truth is narrow. We want “the truth” singular, and do not want to hear “a lie” plural! That very question suggests that truth is narrow and exclusive.

1. Nobody tells the scale it is being “exclusive” when it gives us a specific weight.
2. Nobody blames gravity for being “narrow and exclusive” when they jump off a building and go splat on the ground.
3. Nobody gets mad at the historian for saying the U.S. declared its independence on July 4, 1776!
4. Nobody gets mad at Middle C on a piano because it sounds out the same standard frequency.
5. Those are facts. They correspond to reality. They are also exclusive. They rule out other options.
6. In the same way, certain spiritual truths are exclusive too. Jesus was raised from the dead and is, therefore, “*the Way, the Truth and the Life*” (John 14:6).

E. Truth is Knowable—the spiritualist movement and mystical elements of religion have turned truth into something flimsy, abstract and unknowable. Jesus says you can “*know the truth*” (John 8:31-32). We can comprehend it. For that reason, we are expected to “*rightly divide the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15). Because truth is possible, the reality of being led into error is also possible.

1. You can know math facts, historical facts, and scientific facts.
2. Just like you can know spiritual facts about God, Jesus, His Church and His will! We can ascertain it. True discipleship takes the effort to learn and know the truth.
3. “...not to pursue truth would be absurd, since it is the only thing that ties meaning to all our endeavors. It would be equally absurd to suppose that truth is something forever to be pursued but never to be attained” (McInery, D.Q. *Being Logical: A Guide to Good Thinking*, p. 19).

Conclusion: God wants us to be people who seek “the truth.” Jeremiah 5:1, “*Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; See now and know; And seek in her open places if you can find a man, if there is anyone who executes judgment, **who seeks the truth**, and I will pardon her*” (NKJV). Our failure to believe “the truth” has disastrous results. 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12, “*And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not **believe the truth** but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*”

Dangers of Postmodernism

Part 2

Introduction: Why should we be concerned with postmodernism and its tenets? How has and will this impact Christians and the church? We look at the negative impacts in this lesson...

I. Postmodern Philosophy Has Led to the “Rise of the Nones”

A. If one “truth” is no better than another then why claim to be part of any? If there is no ascertainable meaning, then all religions can be boiled down to the same thing! The data from polls indicate the culture has caught onto this idea and are identifying as “none.”

1. The reason, in recent polls, we have seen a sharp increase in people not affiliating with any religious group is because postmodern thinking causes us to believe no religious group is any “truer” than another. So, just check “none.”
2. “For young people to drop out of church life is now normal.” (Barna Group (2014). *Churchless*. Ventura, CA: The Barna Group).
3. “...one-third of adults under 30, the highest percentage ever, are religiously unaffiliated” (Joel Stein, “The New Greatest Generation” *Time* (Vol. 181, No. 19): 2013 May 20, p. 28).
4. “Twenty years ago 18 percent of skeptics were under thirty. Today that proportion has nearly doubled to 34 percent” (Barna Group (2014). *Churchless*. Ventura, CA: The Barna Group).
5. “...about three-in-ten (29%) say they are not affiliated with any religion....” (Pew Research Center (2014), *Millennials in Adulthood*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, p. 4).

B. If we ultimately do not think any one truth claim is better than another, then it completely kills all motivation to be part of any group staking any truth claim!

II. It Undermines the Clarity, Authority, and All-Sufficiency of Scripture

A. Relativistic thinking dilutes the Scriptures into just one of many valuable sacred texts from one of many religious traditions.

1. “So what is really at stake are the very same truths the serpent sought to subvert when he asked Eve, “Has God indeed said...? (Genesis 3:1). They are the same truths that have always been at the heart of the Truth War—the inspiration, authority, inerrancy, sufficiency, and perspicuity (clarity) of Scripture... **Take away the ground of truth, and all you have is fluctuating religious sentiment**” (McArthur, John. *The Truth War*, p. 38-39).

2. “Jesus, and how his crucifixion delivered us from sin, and how his resurrection assures us of eternal life. I believe these are unquestionable absolutes for all Christians—and perhaps **the only absolutes**” (McLaren, Brian D. and Campolo, Tony. *Adventures in Missing the Point*, 2003, p. 33).
3. “Drop any affair you may have with certainty, proof, argument—and **replace it** with dialogue, conversation, intrigue, and search” (McLaren, Brian D. and Campolo, Tony. *Adventures in Missing the Point*, 2003, p. 78).
4. “In the recent past we generally began our apologetic by arguing for the Bible’s authority, then used the Bible to prove our other points. **In the future we’ll present the Bible less like evidence** in a court case and more like works of art in an art gallery. The Bible will become valuable not for what it proves, but for what it reveals” (McLaren, Brian D. and Campolo, Tony. *Adventures in Missing the Point*, 2003, p. 101).
5. “Is it possible that the absolute truth they defend is not in the end worth being for? Or at least not worth nearly as much as our own biblical story?...What if our love affair with the idea of absolute or objective truth reflects not a presumed biblical orthodoxy as much as it does our modern Western mindset?...And more: we Christians can acknowledge that our subjectivity in approaching the Bible is in fact not a bad thing, it does not compromise our spirituality or our understanding of the Bible or our orthodoxy. Such subjectivity is actually necessary—it is a reality that even the Bible itself assumes, for it is a premodern text...Any attempts of ours to read the Bible objectively are actually modern invasions into our reading” (McLaren, Brian D. and Campolo, Tony. *Adventures in Missing the Point*, 2003, p. 243-244).
6. “The way of seeing and reading the Bible that I describe in the rest of this book leads to a way of being Christian that has little to do with believing. Instead, what will emerge is **a relational and sacramental understanding of the Christian life**” (Borg, Marcus J. *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time*, p. 18).
7. “As we enter the twenty-first century, we need **a new set of lenses through which to read the Bible**. The older set, ground and polished by modernity, no longer works for millions of people. These lenses need to be replaced. The older way of seeing and reading the Bible, which I will soon describe, has made the Bible incredible and irrelevant for vast numbers of people” (Borg, Marcus J. *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time*, p. 3).
8. R. Scott Smith paraphrases McLaren saying, “...that our beliefs are justified by their being supported by indubitable, certain, “bombproof” beliefs in the “foundations,” is wrong. By trying to build our faith on a bedrock of absolutely certain beliefs (**even from Scripture**), we face great problems...” (*The Death of Truth*, p. 61).
9. “Postmodernism...**is anti-foundational**. It seeks to destroy all such objective foundations and to replace them with nothing” (Veith, Gene Edward. *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, 1994).

10. McArthur notes, “The belief that no one can really know anything for certain is emerging as virtually the one dogma postmodernists will tolerate. **Uncertainty is the new truth.** Doubt and skepticism have been canonized as a form of humility...A relentless tone of postmodern angst about too much certainty pervades that whole movement. No wonder: the Emerging Church began as a self-conscious effort to make Christianity more suitable to a postmodern culture” (*The Truth War*, p. 16-17).

B. Though relativists may use words to try and undermine the authority, clarity, and value of Scripture this is not what the inspired texts claim for themselves!

1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 speaks of the inspiration, purpose, and all-sufficiency of Scripture.

2. Inspired authors speak of the clarity of truth and its connection to the text (John 8:31-32, 44-45; 16:12-15; 1 John 2:4; 2 Timothy 3:14-17).

3. Though postmodern authors mock the “bedrock of truth” Jesus uses this very illustration to describe His teachings’ ability to weather storms in Matthew 7:24-27!

III. Postmodernism values *eisegesis* over *exegesis* in our Biblical study.

A. Our approach to a text’s interpretation is vital as we enter into Bible study.

1. A common term we hear often in postmodern writings, beginning with philosophers such as Jacques Derrida is “deconstruction.”

i. “Deconstructionism is a form of hermeneutics, of interpreting a text. As such, it can be distinguished from other interpretive approaches. Yet Derrida was not interested in destroying meaning but in **reconstructing it...It stands against fixed rules of analysis.** A deconstructionist reads and rereads a text, looking for new, deeper, forgotten meanings” (Geisler, Norman L. *The Big Book of Christian Apologetics*, p. 121).

ii. “For Derrida...he was skeptical that absolute truth could be found through language and thought that words could not be narrowed down to singular and definite meanings...James Lindsay noted that in Derrida’s view, “the **speaker’s meaning has no more authority than the hearer’s interpretation** and thus **intention cannot outweigh impact**...much of the deconstruction we see in the context of faith happens on the level of language. Words are redefined, and precious core doctrines of the Christian faith are explained away” (Childers, Alisa. *Live Your Truth and Other Lies*, p. 24).

ii. “One implication of academic postmodernism is that if we cannot know reality...then we cannot know what an author...really meant. Thus, in many Bible studies, a frequently asked question is, ‘What does the passage mean *to you?*’ as though we cannot know what Paul, Luke, or Peter meant when they wrote a book...the implication seems to be that the meaning of the

passage is up to us, **a meaning that we must make up for ourselves**" (Smith, R. Scott. *Truth and the New Kind of Christian*, p. 19).

iii. "...another key aspect to understanding the postmodern ethos is deconstructionism...the heart of deconstructionism is the idea that you cannot get at and know the intention of an author when he or she wrote a text, and there is no fixed meaning in any text...meanings, like anything else, always change, and are subject to what **each reader brings to the text**. Deconstructionism causes people to question everything..." (Smith, R. Scott. *Truth and the New Kind of Christian*, p. 70).

iv. This approach is implicit, such as with McLaren's advice here: "...we typically use the Bible, especially in conservative settings...as a legal constitution...Like lawyers, we look for precedents in past cases of interpretation, sometimes favoring older interpretations as precedents, sometimes asserting newer ones have rendered the older ones obsolete...whatever the Bible is, it simply is not a constitution. I would like to propose that it is...the library of a culture and community...**whose approach best resonates** with...a community gathering in which people listen **to the Bible being read, then respond and interact** with it and with one another..." (McLaren, Brian D. *A New Kind of Christianity*, p. 78, 81, 84).

v. "...imagine you're looking at an Impressionist painting...It's not just what's on the canvas that counts, you see: **there's more going on in the eyes of beholders than we often realize**, not to mention in the minds and eyes of painters..." (McLaren, Brian D. *A New Kind of Christianity*, p. 84-85).

vi. "The philosophically pluralistic theories hold that objective truth is inaccessible and that **meaning resides not in external reality of texts but in the interpreter**" (Henry, Carl F.H., "Postmodernism: The New Spectre?" *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 1995).

B. Should the interpreter's ideas be more important than the author's intent?

1. McArthur responds to this method saying, "Truth is never determined by looking at God's Word and asking, "What does this mean to me?" Whenever I hear someone talk like that, I'm inclined to ask, "What did the Bible mean before you existed? What does God mean by what He says?" Those are the proper questions to be asking. **Truth and meaning are not determined by our intuition, experience, or desire**" (McArthur, John. *The Truth War*, p. xx-xxi).

2. Sproul would also rebuke the postmodern method saying, "We do not have any right to look at a Biblical text from the perspective of the twenty-first century and change its meaning. If the perspective of the twenty-first century doesn't fit with the Bible, **it is the perspective that it is wrong, not the Bible**" (R.C. Sproul, *Truths We Confess: A Systematic Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith*).

3. Clearly, the postmodern vantage point makes the one reading a text of equal or greater value than the one writing the text!

4. The framework of our philosophy must never override the truth of the text of Scripture. Text should trump our preconceived framework!

5. Yet, the postmodern disciple is encouraged to just insert himself into any text and make the text mean whatever he wants it to mean in “his story” or “his/her journey” regardless of the author’s intent.

6. In other words, instead of encouraging “exegesis” in Bible study (reading out of the text what the author meant to convey) postmodern Bible students are using an “eisegesis” approach to Bible study (reading INTO the text what the hearer/interpreter wishes to find or feels he finds there). Instead of asking, “what did Isaiah intend to mean when he wrote this text within this specific context?” we are asking, “What do I (the reader) think this text means to me regardless of the author’s intent?”

7. This makes the reader the sovereign determiner of “his truth” rather than allowing God to speak “the truth” as stated in His Word!

i. Jesus believed we could “know” truth and that was connected in the text to His “word” (John 8:31-32).

ii. Paul thought we could understand His writings (Ephesians 3:3,5; 5:17).

a. “...by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ...)” (Ephesians 3:3-4, NKJV).

b. “Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17, NKJV).

C. Ironically, most deconstructionists write books intending to be understood: “I have never read a deconstructionist who would be pleased if a reviewer misinterpreted his or her work: thus in practice deconstructionists implicitly link their own texts with their own intentions...My point, then, is that in the real world, for all the difficulties that there are in communication from person to person and from culture to culture, we still expect people to say more or less what they mean (and if they don’t, we chide them for it), and **we expect mature people to understand what others say, and represent it fairly**...That is the way things are in the real world—and that in turn suggests that any theory that flies in the face of these realities needs to be examined again” (Carson, D.A. *The Gaggling of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*, 1996).

D. This approach to a text does not only impact the text of the Bible, but any text in a postmodern world.

1. Business: “If postmodernism takes a firm hold in business and law, then contracts could become unenforceable, except by a raw imposition of judicial

power. People could say they agree and thus sign a contract, but later decide to break it. How would the dispute be resolved, if the meaning of the signers of the contract were not something others could know? After all, according to postmodern thought, we cannot know the authors' intent, so **the meaning of a document is "up to us"** (Smith, R. Scott. *Truth and the New Kind of Christian*, p. 82).

2. Law/Constitution: "...Many judges not adjudicate not on the basis of natural law theory (universal, objective rights) but on the basis of mere personal opinion...In our postmodern times, law schools tend to teach that, since we cannot know the meaning of the framers of the Constitution (or of any other law), or that such intent is basically irrelevant, **we must interpret the Constitution and find out what it means to us now**" (ibid, p. 83).

3. Religious Studies: "In secular universities, there is an emphasis on studying religion from a variety of perspectives...**no one has the corner on the religious market**...no one has knowledge of objective truth. Instead, there are just many truths, and thus we all should be tolerant of each other. Furthermore, postmodernism makes us mindful of marginalized, "oppressed voices," and so religion scholars may give extra credence to so-called "secret Gospels," even though they were not recognized as authoritative by the early church..." (ibid, p. 84).

4. History: "...according to the postmodern view, there is **no such thing as history as such; there are only histories**. Why? Because we simply cannot know the objective facts that took place. As many cultures, communities, or people groups as exist in relation to some event (or set of events), there will be (in principle, at least) that many histories...it is very helpful to gain others' perspectives on events and issues. But that does not mean that there isn't objective truth there to be found and told in history books" (ibid, p. 87-88). Perhaps this is why we have...Black History Month (African-American history), Pride Month (LGBTQ history), Native American History, etc.

IV. Postmodernism Appeals to Our Selfish Desires for Self-Sovereignty (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

A. If man can make Scripture mean what he wants, then he can find a way to justify selfishly doing as he wants without submission to God!

1. "We are constantly bombarded in our culture by **appeals to our native narcissism**. The religious version of this message—purveyed for some time by liberals and many evangelicals today—**makes God a means to an end** rather than the end for whom we exist" (Horton, Michael. *Christless Christianity*, p. 91).

2. "...we as Christians have been deeply affected by the surrounding American culture, which has bought the belief that the goal of life is to indulge our desires. This belief stems straight from the attractiveness of sin, and believers are not immune to that allure. **Relativism (and/or postmodernism) lets us think we can be in**

charge...Relativism also puts us in the idolatrous position of *being God* by deciding what is morally right or wrong” (Smith, R. Scott, *Truth and the New Kind of Christian*, p. 168).

3. “...the bestselling books, podcasts, and blogs by those who have left historic Christianity behind preach a **“gospel” of self**...To be authentic I must belong to myself. To be happy I must put myself first. To be fulfilled I must be enough for myself. To be successful I must control my own destiny. All these ideas build upon the starting point of self. But...the self is a faulty foundation...it’s so vital for Christians to ensure that our foundation is Christ, not ourselves...It’s easy to point people to themselves. There will always be a market for that. We love it!...But we were not created to worship ourselves. We were created with a different purpose...to glorify God” (Childers, Alisa, *Live Your Truth And Other Lies*, p. 16-17).

4. “The goal of human philosophy used to be truth without God. Today’s philosophies are open to the notion of God without truth—or to be more accurate, **personal “spirituality” in which everyone is free to create his or her own god**. Personal gods pose no threat to sinful self-will, because they suit each sinner’s personal preferences anyway, and they make no demands on anyone else. That fact underscores the true reason for every denial of truth: “Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19)” (McArthur, John. *The Truth War*, p. 8).

5. Postmodern philosophy has spawned into some of the New Age thinking which focuses on “the best version of yourself” and “the inner self” and more “self-consciousness” with best-selling authors like Deepak Chopra, Eckhart Tolle, Richard Rohr, Edgar Cayce, Mona Lisa Schulz, and more...

B. The Scriptures repeatedly warn, both by example and in precept, of the danger of seeking out teachers who will tell us what we want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

1. Ahab gathered for himself prophets to tell him what he wanted to hear and saw Elijah as a *“troubler in Israel”* (1 Kings 18:17-20).

2. The *“king of Israel”* hated Micaiah because *“he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil”* (1 Kings 22:5-8, 13).

3. Jesus warned, *“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets”* (Luke 6:26).

4. Paul forewarned Timothy, *“the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables”* (2 Timothy 4:3-4, NKJV).

5. When materialistic men realize the market is more profitable to tell people what they want to hear then, of course, they will accommodate for their own selfish sake!

C. In Scripture, the pursuit of self and the denial of truth often go hand-in-hand and we must be vigilant of such. God is sovereign. Man is subject.

1. Psalm 2 warns of the danger of “casting off” the cords of God as if God’s will and decree can be altered or changed. God laughs!

2. Psalm 12:3-4, “*May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, those who say, ‘With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?’*”

3. Romans 2:6, 8, “*He will render to each one according to his works...for those who are **self-seeking and do not obey the truth**, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.*”

V. Postmodernism Has Resulted In A Complete Redefinition of Key Bible Terms and Mission

A. When truth gets redefined it results in a false version of truth—another gospel. Alisa Childers writes, “Words like love, hate, bigot, male, female, oppression, justice, and truth...are all being constantly refashioned...Hillary Morgan Ferrer refers to this phenomenon as “**linguistic theft**,” which she defines as “**purposefully hijacking words**, changing their definitions, and then using those same words as tools of propaganda” (Childers, Alisa. *Live Your Truth and Other Lies*, p. 12).

B. Note a few ways “Emerging Church” and leaders in progressive Christianity are notably and heretically redefining Biblical terminology.

1. Salvation: “Salvation is not a matter of divine rescue from the judgment that is coming on the world but rather a matter of self-improvement in order to have your best life now” (Horton, Michael. *Christless Christianity*, p. 74).

i. “Osteen seems to think that God’s judgment of our heart (like his record-keeping) is good news, Scripture treats it as the worst possible report since...Jeremiah 17:9...Matthew 15:19...” (ibid, p. 75).

ii. “...it is a dangerous thing to think that our trial before God’s all-knowing justice can somehow turn in our favor by examination of our heart or the record of our life” (ibid, p. 75).

iii. “Jesus knew why he came. It was not to help people find a little more happiness and success in life. In fact, his life was filled with suffering, under the long shadow of Calvary. “For this purpose I have come,” he said, referring to the cross (John 12:27). “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10 NKJV).” (ibid. p. 95).

iv. Salvation according to McLaren and Campolo: “Perhaps it is time for all Christians to overcome their fears of being Christian environmentalists and save the earth without worshipping it. Now is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation—not only for our spiritual salvation, but also for the

physical salvation of all that is in God's world" (McLaren, Brian D. and Campolo, Tony. *Adventures in Missing the Point*, p. 173).

2. Sin: "...It is not obvious that sin, in Osteen's view, is an offense against God. That's why he does not speak of sins but of mistakes or failures to be all we can be...sinful actions lose their moral context. Instead, they become translated into the therapeutic language of dysfunction—unhealthy behaviors...sins becomes offenses I commit against myself that keep me from realizing my own expectations. It is therapeutic narcissism: I have failed to live up to my potential, to secure God's best for my life..." (Horton, Michael. *Christless Christianity*, p. 77).

i. "No longer "falling short of the glory of God" (see Rom. 3:23), sin is falling short of my best life now" (ibid, p. 78).

ii. "Even when the concepts of sin and redemption are employed, they are redefined. Sin is not a condition of rebellion...it is diseases, poverty, and bad attitudes that we inherit from our family line..." (ibid. p. 85).

3. Redemption: "Osteen redefines redemption as freedom from pain, illness, and poverty as well as the bad attitudes and negative habits that our parents or grandparents passed on to us" (Horton, Michael. *Christless Christianity*, p. 86).

4. Good News: "Osteen can say, "The world does not need to hear another sermon nearly as much as it needs to see one." Now we are the Good News" (Horton, Michael. *Christless Christianity*, p. 90).

i. "The bad news is far worse than that we are not experiencing health, wealth, and happiness now. It is that we are actually dying and nothing can reverse this fact...At the same time, the Good News is far greater than finding a way to mask our symptoms..."but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:23)...But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:56-57)...The victory promised here is far greater than relief from stress, sadness, loneliness, disappointment, and even illness leading to death. It is the victory over everlasting death through the resurrection on the last day, as we share in Christ's victory over the grave..." (ibid, p. 92-93).

ii. "Far greater than living longer and enjoying ourselves and our circumstances is the unfathomable richness of our life together with God" (p. 93).

iii. "You do not need Christ for the things that Osteen and many other preachers today promise" (ibid, p. 94).

iv. "Joel Osteen's message is representative of a much broader phenomenon of assimilating the gospel to culture" (p. 94).

v. "Because he does not face the bad news, Osteen does not really have any good news...The best news that Osteen has for us in these books is

that by following these seven steps he has been given good parking spaces, the best seat in a restaurant, and an unexpected upgrade to first class on the plane. But the gospel tells us that God has taken all of the steps down to us, saving us not from discomfort or the ills that are common to humanity in this present age but from the penalty of sin and death...what could be better news than this?" (ibid, p. 99).

5. Heaven: "...for Jesus, heaven wasn't some far-off place that was only relevant when you die; he saw the life of heaven as a kind of life we can enter into now. It's as if he kept saying, 'The party's already started! You don't have to wait'" (Bell, Rob. *Love Wins For Teens*, p. 34).

i. "In the Bible, when they talked about where we would all be someday, they talked about this world being fixed and healed and transformed into the place God had intended for it to be all along. Not somewhere else, here...So when Jesus was talking about that great day in the future when God would heal the world, he was talking about the day when heaven and earth would be the same place" (Bell, Rob. *Love Wins For Teens*, p. 39-40).—Bell would make a good hyper-preterist.

ii. "Jesus calls disciples in order to teach us how to be and what to be—his intention is for us to grow in generosity and forgiveness and honesty and courage and truth telling and responsibility, so that as these take over our lives, we are taking part more and more and more in the life of heaven, now" (Bell, Rob. *Love Wins For Teens*, p. 48-49).

iii. "Heaven isn't about escaping this world, it's about saying yes to Jesus' invitation to work for a better world" (Bell, Rob. *Love Wins For Teens*, p. 61).

iv. Yet, the Scriptures would speak of heaven being a real place separate from this earth (Matthew 6:10, 19-20; 23:9; John 14:1-3; Colossians 1:20; 2 Peter 3:10).

6. Hell: "...hell is what happens when we reject God's invitation to be a part of God's new world. We're free to make choices, to live how we want, to treat others, ourselves, and the earth however we'd like. And when we reject God's way, we don't bring heaven to earth, we bring hell to earth...And yes, there's a literal hell. We see it every day—every tear shed over a divorce, every bomb dropped on an innocent family, every kid who's gotten sucked into doing or dealing drugs...we see literal hells every day" (Bell, Rob. *Love Wins For Teens*, p. 67-68).

i. "It's not an image of separation, but one of integration—the two realities of heaven and hell are right there in each other's presence. In this story, heaven and hell are within each other, intertwined, interwoven, bumping up against one another" (Bell, Rob. *Love Wins For Teens*, p. 108-109).

ii. "Everybody is already at the party. Heaven and hell, here, now, around us, upon us, within us" (Bell, Rob. *Love Wins For Teens*, p. 129).

iii. Yet, the Scriptures teach a contrast between our temporal earth and the eternal hell (cp. 2 Peter 3:10; Matthew 25:46).

B. Consider the Reconstructed Emerging Church Mission:

1. Social Justice/World Peace: “The way I heard the prophets the second time (after deconstructing, JRW) captivated me. I was struck by their passion for social justice, their **anti-establishment** message, and their warnings of the consequences facing a society that did not take peace and justice seriously” (Borg, Marcus J. *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time*, p. 123).

2. Distribution of Wealth/Equality: “Thus the prophets are not saying that all or most Israelites were equally guilty of **social injustice**, as if the victims of the system were as responsible as the perpetrators. Rather, they indict the elites of power and **wealth at the top of the system** on behalf of the victims in the name of God” (Borg, Marcus J. *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time*, p. 128).

3. Save the Earth:

i. “The idea of **taking care of the earth** is ‘at the very heart of the Christian faith’” (Bell, Rob. *Love Wins for Teens*, p. 39-40).

ii. “Christians have let New Agers hijack the environmentalist movement and make it their own domain. **Environmentalism should be a Christian concern**. All creation is waiting for the sons and daughters of God to rescue it from the painful suffering it has had to endure at the hands of those who have been neglectful and destructive, wrote the apostle Paul in Romans 8. And being filled with the Holy Spirit, he wrote in that same chapter of the Bible, involves joining with God in rescuing nature from an exploitative urban industrial society” (McLaren, Brian D. and Campolo, Tony. *Adventures in Missing the Point*, p. 167).

iii. “...my primary obligation as an evangelist is to tell other people about what Jesus has done for them—and I am also obligated to do what Jesus said: save the whales” (ibid, p. 171).

iv. Cp. Mark 16:15-16; 2 Peter 3:18; Genesis 8:22

4. “Kingdom” Initiatives:

i. “People will have **decent housing** that they can call their own...Everyone will have a job that pays to each a **fair wage**...The **ecological balance** of Eden will be restored, and environmental destruction will come to an end” (McLaren, Brian D. and Campolo, Tony. *Adventures in Missing the Point*, p. 44).

ii. “We may not be able to create the kingdom of God in its fullness prior to his return, yet we are nonetheless called by God to work toward that end” (ibid, p. 48).

iii. “The kingdom of God is at hand, or, in the words of my friend Rod Washington, **God’s new benevolent society** is already among us...the

kingdom-oriented term “Christ” means “liberating king,” the one who will free God’s people from oppression, confront and humble their oppressors, and then lead both into a better day...This good news...was about God’s faithful solidarity with all humanity in our suffering, oppression, and evil” (McLaren, Brian D. *A New Kind of Christianity*, p. 138-139).

iv. Just as many in Jesus’ day misunderstood the nature and purpose of the kingdom, so do these writers (see Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14; Colossians 1:13).

5. Embrace the LBGTQ Movement:

i. Tony Jones: “I now believe that **LBGTQ can live lives in accord with biblical Christianity** (at least as much as any of us can!), and that their monogamy can and should be sanctioned and blessed by church and state” (Drew Zahn, Emergent Church Leader Says ‘Gay’ Can Be Biblical Lifestyle, wnd.com, 2008).

ii. “Frankly, many of us don’t know what we should think about homosexuality” (McLaren, Brian D., *Finding a Pastoral Response*, Christianitytoday.com, January, 2006).

iii. Rob Bell: “**Churches that don’t embrace same-sex marriage will become increasingly irrelevant**...I think culture is already there and the church will continue to be even more irrelevant when it quotes letters from 2000 years ago as their best defense, when you have in front of you flesh-and-blood people who are your brothers and sisters, and aunts and uncles, and co-workers and neighbors, and they love each other and just want to go through life” (Carol Kuruvilla, Former MegaChurch Pastor Rob Bell: A Church that Doesn’t Support Gay Marriage is “Irrelevant,” huffingtonpost.com, February, 2015).

iv. “Homosexuals do not choose their sexual orientation any more than heterosexuals do...humanizing benefits of a genuine love relationship that has given them mutual blessings, but that did not violate biblical admonitions against homosexual intercourse” (McLaren, Brian D. and Campolo, Tony. *Adventures in Missing the Point*, p. 181, 187).

v. “I don’t want to be closed-minded or judgmental, but in good conscience I simply can’t approve of the lifestyle...**The lifestyle I’m speaking of is fundasexuality (not, as you may have assumed, homosexuality)**, a neologism that describes a reactive, combative brand of religious fundamentalism that preoccupies itself with sexuality...that declares war on those who differ. Fundasexuality is rooted not in faith, but in an orientation of fear...It is a kind of heterophobia: the fear of people who are different...it seeks a minority group on which to project its anxieties and anger. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people are an ideal choice for this kind of fundasexualist scapegoating” (McLaren, Brian D. *A New Kind of Christianity*, p. 173-175).

vi. When one is allowed to read into a text whatever they want then the Biblical text is a free-for-all despite Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

6. Liberate Women's Roles in Churches:

i. "...how could he [Paul] have written something **so unrealistic**, so apparently misinformed, and even mistaken?...The upshot is that women in the early church were apparently abusing their newfound Christian freedom" (McLaren, Brian D. and Campolo, Tony. *Adventures in Missing the Point*, p. 131).

ii. "The subservience of women created by the sin of the first couple (Genesis 3:16) was abolished at the crucifixion" (ibid, p. 134).

iii. Then, why are these post-crucifixion passages written by the inspired authors on this topic (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:8-15)?

C. The result of redefining words: "**Reduce Christianity to good advice** and it blends in perfectly with the culture of life coaching. It might seem relevant, but it is actually lost in the marketplace of moralistic therapies" (Horton, Michael. *Christless Christianity*, p. 102). This is not progression, but regression (see Jeremiah 7:24).

VI. Postmodernism Leads to A New Brand of Tolerance (2 John 9-11)

A. Because a "post-truth" world cannot define words or determine morality then it results in a new type of "tolerance" and "political correctness"...in fact, the one intolerable act is to not be "accepting" and "tolerable" of others. Thus, evangelism becomes judgmentalism and is intolerable. For some non-confrontational people this viewpoint has great appeal.

1. Allan Bloom, previously a professor at the University of Chicago before his death in 1992, wrote, "The danger they have been taught to fear from absolutism is not error but intolerance. **Relativism is necessary to openness**; and this is the virtue, the only virtue, which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to inculcating" (Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind*. P. 25-26).

2. "Political correctness generally refers to the idea that **we should go out of our way not to offend** certain groups. Our society has created a hyper-sensitive atmosphere in which we have to change the way we say everything so as not to offend anyone" (Moyer, Doy. *Mind Your Faith*, p. 137).

3. "...most Christians nowadays simply don't care about the prevalence of false doctrine, nor do they take seriously their duty to fight against apostasy. Instead, they want a friendly atmosphere of **open acceptance for everyone**, tolerance of opposing ideas, and charitable dialogue with the apostates...Meanwhile, much of the evangelical movement has been acting for a long time as if our main duty is just to keep in step with the fads of worldly culture in order to gain the approval of each

succeeding generation...the church is not supposed to ape the world's fads or court the world's favor anyway" (McArthur, John. *The Truth War*, p. 46-48).

4. "When individuals think of themselves as their own source for creating truth, it's only natural for them to feel **no one has the right to judge whatever they choose to believe or do**. Acceptance of them includes acceptance of their moral truth. After all, if each person is a valid, independent source of applied truth, then there can be no basis for external disapproval. There is no overarching standard by which to apply judgment. That means tolerance as the culture defines it is the only appropriate response to each individual's moral choices. That kind of tolerance—what we will call cultural tolerance—propagates the notion that all moral truth is equal" (McDowell, Josh and Sean. *The Beauty of Intolerance*, p. 22).

5. This best-selling New Age author writes, "Beyond the realm of simple and verifiable facts, the certainty that **"I am right and you are wrong" is a dangerous thing** in personal relationships as well as in interactions between nations, tribes, religions, and so on" (Tolle, Eckhart. *A New Earth*, p. 69).

B. Some are tired and afraid of conflict and contention. This call for totalitarian tolerance is appealing but it is not the rallying cry of Scripture for weary soldiers in the Lord's army.

1. Paul rallies tired Ephesus in Ephesians 6:10, 12, 14, "*Finally, **be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might...For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places...Stand therefore, having fastened on **the belt of truth**...***"

2. Jude urged Christians to "**contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ**" (Jude 3-4).

3. John's Apocalypse is a battle scene of Jesus and His church fighting against Satan and his forces. The ultimate message: "Jesus wins!" The purpose of the book is to remind Christians to keep fighting for Jesus and truth!

4. There are many today, like post-Joshua Israel, who have "*not known any of the wars in Canaan*" and have forgotten the need to battle (Judges 3:1-2)!

C. Some fear being outcasts in their culture and society so they follow any trendy breezes that blow to fit in with the crowd.

1. "Perhaps the primary origin of subjectivism today, at least in America, **is the desire to be accepted**, to be 'with it,' fashionable, avant garde, 'in the know,' rather than 'square,' 'hokey' or 'out of it.' We all learned this as children—to be embarrassed is the absolutely primary fear of a teenager—but we put more sophisticated, scholarly disguises on it when we become adults" (Kreeft, Peter and Tacelli, Ronald K. *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, 1994).

2. “Evangelicals today...are tempted to jettison or at least to minimize the importance of propositional truth...In a day when propositional, objective truth is considered “fundamentalist,” “intolerant,” and “exclusive,” Christians are enticed to view it as a nuisance, **especially if they crave popularity** from the rest of our culture” (McCallum, Dennis. *The Death of Truth*, p. 237-238).

D. Yet, the Scriptures call us to discern between truth and error, good and evil. We cannot extend the “*right hand of fellowship*” to those out of fellowship with God (Matthew 7:15-23; Romans 16:17-18; 2 John 9-11).

Word	Biblical Understanding	Contemporary Cultural Understanding
<i>Tolerance</i>	Recognize and respect others when you don't share their values, beliefs, and practices.	Recognize and respect that every individual's values, truth claims, beliefs, and practices are equally valid.
<i>Respect</i>	Give due consideration to others as valuable human beings, without necessarily endorsing their beliefs and lifestyle choices.	Wholeheartedly approve of others' beliefs or lifestyle choices as equally valid.
<i>Dignity</i>	Created in the image of God, humans have an inherent and inalienable worth of infinite value.	Humans have an inherent worth shaped and realized by personal choice and standards created by the individual.
<i>Acceptance</i>	Embrace people regardless of their beliefs and lifestyle choices.	Not only endorse, but actually praise others for their beliefs and lifestyle choices.
<i>Moral Judgments</i>	Certain things are morally right and wrong, as determined by God's Word.	No one has the right to judge another person's moral truth or behavior.
<i>Personal Preference</i>	Individual preferences of art, food, clothing style, hobbies, etc., are personally determined.	Individual preferences of sexual behaviors, value systems, and beliefs are personally determined.

VII. Postmodernism Makes “Winning” Others Pointless

A. If we live in a post-truth world, then those with a post-truth philosophy will feel as though there is no need to hear and respond to the gospel.

1. McLaren argues we should not use logic or arguments in a way to “win” others to Christ in a post-modern culture. In fact, “winning” someone implies there is something to “lose.” (Smith, R. Scott. *Truth and the New Kind of Christian*, p. 66).

2. “There are implications of Jones’s view for apologetics. **No longer do we need to “prove”** (i.e., using human reason, and with certainty) the truth of the faith” (ibid, p. 75).

B. Despite the fact even some “Emerging Church” leaders feel the need to speak disparagingly about soul-winners and reject the “propositional” and rational nature of truth the Scriptures themselves speak of its importance!

1. The Scriptures value logic and reason (Isaiah 1:18; Acts 17:2-3).

2. Peter uses inductive reasoning to prove the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:17-32).

ii. He makes a deduction based on his reasoning (Acts 2:36).

ii. His Spirit-inspired line of reasoning is an example of the law of rationality.

a. He drew the only conclusion warranted by the evidence.

b. He presented evidence that proved his conclusion.

3. Paul was clearly trying to “win” King Agrippa when his reply was, “*You almost persuade me to be a Christian*” (Acts 26:28, NKJV).

4. The very purpose of the revealed Scriptures is to “**Convince [reprove]**, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears **away from the truth**, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 4:2-4, NKJV).

VIII. It Opens the Door to a New Spirituality (Mysticism) or to a Pseudo-Work of the Holy Spirit

A. Because we are asked to cast away our rational minds in studying God’s will there is a greater emphasis upon experiences and feelings among postmodernists.

1. “Grenz and Franke argue that the **Spirit of God speaks through Scripture, tradition, and culture**, and theologians must seek to hear the voice of the Spirit in each one. Moreover, since culture is constantly in flux, they say, it is right and fitting for Christian theology to be in a perpetual state of transition and ferment too. No issue should ever be regarded as finally settled...they are convinced that every desire to gain a fixed and positive knowledge of any truth actually belongs to the collapsing categories of enlightenment rationalism” (McArthur, John. *The Truth War*, p. 19).

2. “What specific cultural traits must youth ministers take into account? One is **the rise of mysticism and spirituality**. As Jones puts it, “propositional truth is out and mysticism is in...**worship needs to engage all the senses**, in our architecture and lighting, in word, in music, in posture (e.g., kneeling), and even in smell (e.g., incense). Why does this matter? Jones explains that the **Roman Catholic Church**, as well as high Episcopalian and **Eastern Orthodox churches**, are attractive to younger generations because “they **offer transcendence in worship**” (Smith, R. Scott, *Truth and the New Kind of Christian*, p. 69, 71).

3. “These days, churches increasingly cater to Christians who hate Christianity but still want to be “spiritual.” These people **desire the feeling of fulfillment and purpose found in devout religious practice without any of the actual practice**, nor for that matter the doctrines, teachings, constraints, discipline, obedience, observance, challenges, commandments, suffering, or sacrifice. They want the appearance of the dish but none of the ingredients whatsoever. What they end up with, then, is a meal similar to the kind my 2-year-old daughter serves after she’s “made dinner” in her Fisher-Price kitchenette: a colorful plate filled with plastic fruit and imagination” (Matt Walsh, source unknown).

4. When people want to “experience” Christianity in a certain way there will be churches to offer it...but, when the feelings of “experience” wane the commitment will die—easy come, easy go!

B. There is clearly an emphasis upon “experiencing God” in the modern church, but this approach has been tried and fails for multiple reasons.

1. Feelings can be *deceitful* (Proverbs 14:13; Jeremiah 10:23; Acts 23:1)—I wonder how Jesus “felt” on the cross or how Stephen “felt” as he was stoned!
2. Feelings must sometimes be *denied* (Matthew 26:39; Luke 9:23).
3. Feelings lead to *departures* (cp. John 6:14, 60, 66, 68)—these disciples just “weren’t feeling it” when Jesus taught some “hard sayings” and walked away!
4. Feelings are out of God’s *design* for producing faith (1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 2:1-5; Romans 10:17; 2 Corinthians 5:7).
5. Paul did not use philosophical “wisdom” or *experience-driven* “signs” to convict people to Christ. Christ IS “*the power of God and the wisdom of God*” (1 Cor 1:24).
6. “Postmodernism does not get to tell us what to say or how to relate to the culture. God gets to tell us what to say and how to win the culture to Him. Our marching orders come from Him. Christianity has not grown and does not truly grow under the blessing of God by accommodating itself to every objection, but by being faithful to the word of God and prepared to answer every objection and pretension of wisdom placed before it and to respond to it with the wisdom of God. We don’t get our marching orders from the culture” (Duncan, Logan. “Should the Church Embrace Postmodernism?” Audio sermon via youtube.com).

IX. Postmodernism Will Lead to a Blurring of Boundaries among Christians and Churches

- A. If our young people are hearing Biblical teaching once a week while hearing from the culture seven days a week “what’s true for you is true for you, and what’s true for me is true for me” then how will they begin to treat denominational and doctrinal differences?
- B. The ecumenical movement, the community church movement, and Interfaith movements, as well as progressions among churches are the results of an increasingly postmodern mindset and thinking.
- C. We must be reminded...
1. there is such a thing as “sound words” and “sound doctrine” (1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 1:13).
 2. there is such a thing as “sound churches” (Revelation 2-3).
 3. there is a call for Christians to discern between them (Hebrews 5:12-14; 1 John 4:1-6).

Conclusion: Two verses as we consider the dangers of anti-Christian thinking:

- 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 says, “*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, **casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...***” The Christian’s task is to blow holes in the enemy’s fortress so the heart can be exposed to the light of truth.
- Colossians 2:8, “*See to it that no one takes you **captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.***”

We are warned we can become captives “*through philosophy (PHILOSOPHIA) and empty deceit.*” Satan can make us part of his “spoils” of war through these means.

In the first century, this may have had reference to *Gnosticism* and *Judaism* which paled in comparison to the philosophy of Christ. Yet, today, this warning about philosophy needs to be taken seriously with regard to any philosophy which aims to compete with and supplant faith in Christ (i.e., atheism, humanism, evolutionism, progressivism, pluralism, Calvinism, etc). Postmodernism will take us captive because it suggests the Scriptures cannot be understood and relativizes and equalizes all the teachings of Scripture.

No philosophy will be as powerful as that of Jesus Christ! We need to be extremely cautious no human being becomes more supreme than Jesus! So, this is a warning to all: If what’s being said doesn’t match up with Christ then it needs tossed from our minds and combatted. He must be “*in all things preeminent*” (Colossians 1:18).

Critiquing the Cliches and Catchphrases of Post-Modern Thinking

Lesson 3

Introduction: Most of America will not know what post-modernism is from its philosophers or by its philosophical definitions in academia. Instead, we must become more aware of its existence through the use of its contemporary catchphrases in our culture and even within progressive Christianity today.

A.W. Tozer once said, “Too much of contemporary Christianity is borrowed from the philosophies of the world and even other religions—phrases and mottos that on the surface look great but are not rooted in Scripture or that mostly bolster one’s self-image” (Tozer, A.W., *The Crucified Life: How to Live Out A Deeper Christian Experience*, p. 15).

Alisa Childers, building off of Tozer says, “These happy little lies are pithy assertions that sound good, safe, optimistic, and constructive. They look great stitched on a pillow, digitized into a meme, or turned into a slogan. They are usually stated in positive form, like “Believe in yourself” and “you are perfect just as you are.” You see, the best lies are the ones that sound the most beautiful...They sound nice and carry an illusion of truth...The problem? They are lies” (Childers, Alisa. *Live Your Truth and Other Lies*, p. 2-3).

Childers goes on to say, “I think that ditching the jargon and clinging to the timeless truths of the Bible is the most freeing and stabilizing thing we can do. It will ease anxiety, quell depression, and calm a restless heart...Scripture has stood the test of thousands of years...and given countless believers a solid foundation for knowing God and living out their faith” (ibid, p. 6).

Consider some of those catchphrases and how to respond to them.

I. “Live Your Truth”

A. This phrase suggests truth is variable, relative, and personal. It makes truth about us.

B. But, Jesus is “*the way, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6). Following Jesus is not following “your truth” but “the truth!”

1. Truth is of such high importance we are called to pursue “*the truth*” even if it contradicts what we want or desire to be true ourselves.

2. John 8:31-32, “*If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (cp. John 17:17).

3. Illustration: Can you imagine telling a child who does not want to go to the dentist to get a cavity filled, “just live your truth and don’t worry about it then.” No, the truth is, the child has a cavity, needs to get it fixed, even if he doesn’t like it or want to do it. He must face this reality.

II. “Be Authentic” or “Be Your True Self.”

A. Because “truth” is claimed as personal, subjective, and fluid then being “authentic” is supremely important to those in a post-truth world. Since truth does not matter, “you do you” is considered the best rule for our lives.

B. To the Christian, being “authentic” in following Jesus should be important too, as opposed to being a hypocrite (cp. Matthew 23; Luke 12:1). Authenticity matters.

1. Yet, before we can “be authentic” we are called to “be holy” which starts with the death of ourselves (1 Peter 1:13-15; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

2. “‘You be you’ is Satan’s counterfeit to God’s, ‘Be holy as I am holy.’ I don’t want to be me. God had to save me from me! I stand with the Apostle Paul who said, ‘I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.’” --Dale Partridge

III. “You Are Enough”

A. If we embodied truth and goodness, then perhaps this would be a fair statement of encouragement.

B. Yet, “the truth” is we are not enough...Jesus came to save us from ourselves and our warped hearts (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 5:8).

C. The Scriptures declare we are not “enough” but Jesus is enough to change our life’s direction and destiny (Ephesians 2:1-4; John 15:5; Romans 3:23; 5:8; 6:23).

IV. “Put Yourself First”

A. One of the favorite encouragements of the “you do you” crowd is “put yourself first.” The collective voice of the world favors the self-indulgence of any and all pleasures.

1. The “you do you” mantra despises Biblical truth and Biblical morality. It celebrates egotistical “PRIDE” and mocks the humility of serving a Supreme and Sovereign God.

2. Its main argument is the same argument Satan used in the garden. “God’s keeping you from a really good tree, you should try it” (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:5).

3. “Pride” led to destruction in the Garden. It still does today if we do not “deny ourselves” and live in the same “spirit of Christ” as the last Adam!

B. Yet, the voice of Jesus says in Luke 9:23, “*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself...*”—the idea here is, simply, to say yes to God, and no to yourself. It is a dethroning of self and an enthronement of God.

1. When Jesus was on the verge of death, said “*Not My Will, but Yours be done*” (Luke 22:42), but the world says, “Not the Father’s will, but yours be done!”
2. The follower of Christ will “*deny himself*” anything that does not comply with God’s will and live a life of self-denial (1 Peter 4:1-3).
3. Christ-like love lays down its life for others putting itself last (John 15:13; Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3; Galatians 2:20).

V. “You Only Live Once” (YOLO)

A. Another catchphrase of the postmodern movement is “You only live once.” Again, the idea is to indulge yourself. Don’t wait. It’s too late when you die.

B. The danger of this thinking is it assumes this life is as good as it gets. It’s rich fool thinking—“relax, eat, drink, be merry, for tomorrow we die” (Luke 12:19; 1 Corinthians 15:32-33).

C. Yet, Jesus says we “are not of this world” and we are made for a much higher purpose than living for just this life (John 17:14; Matthew 6:19-21; John 18:36; 1 Peter 2:9-12).

D. Furthermore, in addition to YOLO we should consider YODO and YOJO (Hebrews 9:26-27; Matthew 16:26-27; Philippians 3:12-21).

VI. “God Just Wants You To Be Happy”

A. We should be careful as we attempt to speak for God. But, many will say of God’s desire for man: “God just wants you to be happy.”

B. This is a partial truth. Yet, there is a sense in which God wants us to find our joy in Him.

C. Yet, there’s the rub...how many people are truly resigned enough to God’s will to find joy...

1. in persecution (Acts 5:41).
2. in death (Philippians 2:17-18)
3. in sufferings (Romans 8:38-39)
4. in refused prayer requests (2 Corinthians 12:7-8)
5. in trials (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-3)
6. in tribulation (John 16:33)

D. Only a person who fully trusts in God's purpose, prerogatives, and plan for their lives can find joy in these types of things. Most people in this world who see us endure these things respond like Job's wife, "Just Curse God and Die." But, like Job, we need to trust in God's goodness and ability to see the greater picture.

VII. "You Shouldn't Judge"

A. The postmodern movement equalizes all belief systems and, therefore, sees no need to "judge" another person's belief system as superior or inferior.

1. Our world sees this as the "loving" and "respectful" thing to do.

2. Often, a typical postmodern's favorite Bible verse is Matthew 7:1.

3. One popular postmodern evangelical put it this way, "Just because you believe it doesn't mean it's true for everyone. In so many instances judgment comes from a place of feeling as though you've somehow got it all figured out when they do not. Judging each other actually makes us feel safer in our own choices. Faith is one of the most abused instances of this. We decide that our religion is right; therefore, every other religion must be wrong. Within the same religion, or heck, even within the same church, people judge each other for not being the right kind of Christian, Catholic, Mormon, or Jedi" (Hollis, Rachel. *Girl, Wash Your Face*).

4. Perhaps we need reminded...our faith is not in an author just because they are "best-selling" or "popular" or claim to be a Christian.

B. What is wrong with this line of thought?

1. First of all, there is such a thing as objective truth.

2. Therefore, there is such a thing as a right and wrong.

3. Therefore, there is a responsibility to hold one another accountable when a truth line has been crossed.

4. Matthew 7's context does not forbid all judgment...the context forbids hypocritical and hypercritical judgment.

5. In fact, the context in Matthew and other Scripture demands judgment in some cases (see Matthew 7:5, 6, 15-16; 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:12-13; Jude 20-21).

C. Discernment helps us learn when the Bible calls for and condemns judgment and how it is to be communicated (cp. James 4:11-12).

VIII. "All You Need Is Love"

A. The Beatles made this line famous but it is connected to the idea that all beliefs are equal, therefore, true "love" never rejects any belief or practice.

1. We hear this in other ways “love is love” or “love makes a family.”
 2. The idea is that we are encouraged to tolerate, accept, and embrace all lifestyles and relationship or we are not “loving.”
 3. If we try to convince someone otherwise or try to change their convictions or lifestyle then we are labeled as “unloving.” (by the way, isn’t the person who is trying to change our minds about changing other people’s minds still trying to change us and, therefore, doing the very thing they disdain?)
- B. Jesus, the very embodiment of love, teaches us otherwise.
1. He loved the rich young ruler but still told him he needed to change (Matthew 19:16-22; cp. Mark 10:21).
 2. He loved the seven churches but still called upon multiple churches to repent (Revelation 2:1-3:22).
 3. Paul wrote of love it “*does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth*” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Conclusion: Despite the false, hollow, and downright erroneous nature of many of these quotes, we still find them showing up in Christian writings, on Christian graphic designs, and used by Christians as if they are “gospel.” We need to recognize them for what they are: “another gospel,” a false gospel of postmodern culture, not of Christ.

Let’s have the courage to gently change the wording of some of these statements when they are made by well-meaning, but erroneous Christians.

It’s not “live your truth” but “live the truth.”

It’s not “be your true self” but “deny yourself and be like Jesus.”

It’s not “you are enough” but “Jesus is enough to save you from you.”

It’s not “put yourself first” but “put the Lord of all first.”

It’s not “you only live once” so do as you please, but “you only live once, so please God.”

It’s not “God just wants you to be happy” but “God just wants you to trust Him in all circumstances.”

It’s not “don’t judge” but “judge righteous judgment.”

It’s not “love is all you need” but “the love of God is man’s supreme need.”

Let’s make sure our faith is in the wisdom of God, not man as we are careful to “speak as the oracles of God” as we communicate the message of God to a lost world (1 Peter 4:11).