

**FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH**

# Clarifying My Worldview

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A Bible Elective Series

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Why Christians need to be clear about what they believe, and why they believe as they do. A brief overview of the history of the world's philosophy - the Pre-Modern era, Modern era and Post-Modern era. The world's thinking is then contrasted with the Christian worldview, based on the truths of God's Word.

# Clarifying My Worldview

## Lesson 1 An Introduction to the Series

### 1. What do I mean by the title “Clarifying my Worldview”?

**Clarifying** To clarify means to make clear, to achieve clarity. Imagine a glass of muddy water, which is then passed through a filter. The filter removes the mud, and we are left with clear water. The muddy water has been clarified. Similarly, our beliefs or values or worldviews can be polluted, and then need to be clarified.

**My Worldview** My worldview is basically how I interpret the world in which I live. It is my system of values; my philosophy of life; what I believe. My worldview comprises the beliefs that shape my thinking and my actions.

### 2. Why is it necessary to Clarify my Worldview?

There are surely many reasons why we need to be clear about our beliefs and values. Let’s examine five such reasons.

#### 2.1 **We need to know *what* we believe, and *why* we believe it**

Firstly, 1 Pet 3:15 tells us that we should “*always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you*”. The imperative phrasing of “*always be ready*” doesn’t leave us with many options. To be “ready to give a defense”, we need to know *what* we believe, and *why* we believe it.

#### 2.2 **There is a vast difference between man’s wisdom and God’s wisdom**

Numerous passages in the Bible illustrate the vast difference between the vain philosophies of man and the wisdom of God.

**1 Cor 1:18-25** *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.” Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach*

*Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

**Isa 44:24,25**

*Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb: I am the Lord, who makes all things, who stretches out the heavens all alone, who spreads abroad the earth by Myself; who frustrates the signs of the babblers, and drives diviners mad; who turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolishness;*

**Jas 3:13-18**

*Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

So it is clear that there is a sharp dichotomy between the kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God; between man's thinking and God's thinking; between man's wisdom and God's wisdom.

### **2.3 Christians need to be on their guard against being influenced by the world**

The following verses stress the danger of being influenced by the world:

**Rom 12:2**

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

**Eph 4:14**

*... we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ ...*

**1 Jn 2:15**

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him*

**Col 2:8**            *Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ*

As Christians, we need to make sure our worldview is solidly based on Biblical truth, and that our thinking and decision-making are not tainted by the world's wisdom, which the Bible describes as "earthly, sensual and demonic". We need to know what the Bible has to say regarding the critical issues of life, so that our worldviews are based on God's wisdom, not the thinking of the world. But to be on our guards against being influenced by the "philosophy of this world", we also need to be aware of worldly thinking regarding these issues.

The instruction of Rom 12:2 is clear – "do not be conformed to this world". So we need to be able to recognize the philosophy and thinking of the world in order to ensure that we do not conform to it. "Know your enemy" is a well-known military strategy for defeating the enemy. This post-modern world is saturated with ungodly thinking, and unless the Christian is on guard against such views, there is a real danger of being influenced or infiltrated by them. Hence we will spend some time on identifying *how* the world thinks, and *why* it does so.

#### **2.4 Clarifying my worldview will enhance my ability to win my worldly neighbours to Christ.**

The Great Commission makes it clear that evangelism is a top priority of the church:

**Mk 16:15**        *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."*

**Acts 1:8**        *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

If we are to win our worldly neighbours to Christ, a good strategy is to first show them the futility of the direction they are heading in, and to then to contrast this with the riches of Christianity. Again, this requires some knowledge of the "philosophy of this world".

#### **2.5 The dawn of the post-modern era**

In philosophical terms, the "modern" era lasted for two hundred years, and ended in the late 1900's (perhaps 1989?). We are now at the dawn of the "post-modern" era. There is much confusion in thinking in this post-modern world, and some of this has spilt over into the church. So this is a particularly important time for Christians to clarify their worldviews,

because the church is the custodian of the truth, and great care must be taken to preserve the truth.

**1 Tim 3:15** ... *I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

### **3. The Design of this Course**

In compiling this course, I basically had three options:-

- a. Focus on the Christian worldview, and not even mention the thinking of this world;
- b. Describe the Christian worldview, and then contrast it with the thinking of this world;
- c. Describe the philosophy of this world, and then, with each of the key aspects of this philosophy, contrast it with Biblical truth and the Christian worldview.

Since “knowing your enemy” is a fundamental strategy of this course, I have decided to follow the third option. So for the next three weeks we will take a brief look at the philosophy of the world, and how it arrived at the post-modern worldview. Thereafter, the bulk of the course will concentrate on contrasting this post-modern worldview with what the Bible has to say on many of its key aspects.

### **4. Homework**

- 4.1 Study Rom 1:18-23. In what ways does this passage support the reasons given for clarifying our worldviews?
- 4.2 Study Jas 4:4. In what ways does this verse reinforce the need to clarify our worldviews?
- 4.3 Study Col 3:2. In what ways will clarifying our worldviews assist us to comply with the instructions of this verse?
- 4.4 Can you think of any other reasons for clarifying our worldviews?

## Lesson 2 The Philosophy of the World – Part I

### 1. What is Philosophy?

The word *philosophy* basically means “love of wisdom”. The Oxford dictionary defines **philosophy** as the use of reason and argument in seeking truth and knowledge of reality

The goal or aspiration of a classical philosophical system is to construct a unified field of knowledge. Classical philosophers hoped to find complete answers to all the **fundamental questions of life**, answers which would encompass all of thought and all of life. They aspired to find these answers by starting from certain **presuppositions**, and by using the **methodology** of **rationalism** and **rationality**.

(In any specialised field of study, specialised terminology is needed. These special words are precisely defined, and one needs to know the meaning of the words before one can hope to understand what the experts in that field are talking about. This is particularly true in the field of philosophy, so we will try to explain the meaning of these special terms as we encounter them.)

So what are the **fundamental questions of life**? There are many, and different cultures may have different questions. But we can start with, “What is real?” “What is true?” “What is good?” “What is right?”

What are **presuppositions**? They are the starting points from which a philosophy is developed – things taken to be real and true without prior proof; things we accept as real and true “by faith”.

What is meant by **methodology**? Basically, it is the approach or method one uses to arrive at truth and knowledge.

What is **rationalism**? It is a system of thought that **begins with man alone**, in order to try to find a unified meaning to life.

What is **rationality**? This word has **no** relationship to the word *rationalism*. Rather, it means that which is rational; logical and reasonable; that which is based upon man’s power to reason consistently; that which is arrived at by the use of **logic** and **antithesis**.

**Logic** is the science of correct reasoning, but what is **antithesis**? This is the thought-process which determines that if a certain thing is true, the opposite is not true; if a certain thing is right, the opposite is not right. By antithesis, we can say that *A* is not *non-A*.

## 2. A brief history of the world's philosophy leading up to the post-modern era.

The worldview of post-modern society differs from that of any preceding society. How did this new way of thinking, the adoption of new values, and the rejection of traditional values, come about?

There is a developmental thread running through the history of the world's philosophies which resulted in the chaotic thought processes of post-modern man. For the sake of simplicity, we'll view this history as comprising three eras – the Pre-Modern era, the Modern era and the Post-Modern era.

### 3. The Pre-Modern Era

This era extended from medieval times until the French Revolution of 1789. During this era the Western world believed in the supernatural. No-one doubted the existence of God (or gods). Animism, mythology, Greek philosophy and Christianity all held firmly to a belief in some form of a supernatural spirit-world.

For over 1000 years after the formation of the Christian church, there was consensus that God had created man, that man had fallen, and so had no autonomy. The supernatural world was regarded as all-important and very holy. There was little philosophical interest in nature.

#### 3.1 The Renaissance

The question of autonomy began to change with **Thomas Aquinas** (1225-1274). In Aquinas's view, the will of man was fallen, but the intellect was not. So according to Aquinas, in one realm man was independent, or had **autonomy**. (Autonomy is personal freedom; acting independently or having the freedom to do so. The significance of autonomy is that God is excluded.) So the concept developed that Man's intellect was autonomous. Thus with Aquinas we have the real birth of the humanistic Renaissance. As the Renaissance progressed, more importance was given to nature and the universe.

#### 3.2 The Reformation

The writings of **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) and **Calvin** (his *Institutes* were written in 1536) gave rise to the Reformation. While the Reformation was a change in religious thinking, and not a new philosophy, it nevertheless presented an entirely opposite answer from that of the Renaissance and had a marked impact on society. It said that the root of the trouble sprang from the old and growing Humanism in the Roman Catholic Church, and the incomplete fall in Aquinas's theology. The Reformation accepted the biblical picture of a total Fall. The

whole man had been made by God, but the whole man had fallen, including his intellect and his will. In contrast to Aquinas, the Reformation thinkers regarded only God as autonomous.

For the Reformation, final and sufficient knowledge rested in the Bible – *Scripture Alone*, in contrast to Scripture plus anything else. The Reformation theologians said that there is nothing man can do to merit salvation – no autonomous or humanistic, religious or moral effort of man can help. One is saved only on the basis of the finished work of Christ as He died on the cross in space and time in history. Sinful, fallen, and spiritually bankrupt man must raise empty hands of faith, and by God’s grace, accept God’s free gift. So it was Scripture Alone and Faith Alone.

The Reformation teaches that, while we do not have exhaustive truth, we have from the Bible truth about God, truth about man, and something truly about nature – we have true and unified knowledge.

As the Renaissance continued, the Reformation influenced the thinking of society, so that in Western Europe up to about two hundred years ago, the values of society were based on Biblical values. While many were not Christians, there was a prevailing Christian ethos.

#### 4. **Homework**

- 4.1 Do some research on the Reformation. What were the issues within the Roman Catholic Church that resulted in Luther posting his disputation, called his *Ninety-five Theses*, at the University of Wittenberg on 31 October 1517?
- 4.2 Martin Luther was excommunicated in January 1521. In April of that year he was called to answer for his beliefs before Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms. Luther stated, “*Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience.*” Does this statement complement the description of the Reformation given in this lesson?

#### 5. **Recommended Further Reading**

Francis A Schaeffer- *Escape from Reason* (1968) (Revised 2006)

(Much of this lesson is based on this great book, with many passages quoted directly.)

## **Lesson 3 The Philosophy of the World – Part II**

### **1. The Modern Era                      The Enlightenment**

#### **1.1 Old beliefs were Questioned**

The end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century saw the undoing of pre-modern thought. Influential philosophers such as **Immanuel Kant** (1724-1804) began questioning not only the dogmas of the past but also all sources of authority. Up to this time the Western world's primary sources of authority were the church (Roman Catholicism), the Scriptures (Protestantism) or the Koran (Islam). In the period known as the Enlightenment, these authorities were challenged by humanistic philosophical thinking, which offered instead human reasoning. To quote Douglas Groothuis, "The goal of the 'Enlightenment project' ... was to free humanity from superstition and found a philosophy and civilization on rational inquiry, empirical evidence and scientific discovery. The term 'modernism' is often identified with this overall project. The modernist vision presupposed the power of rationality to discover truth."

The fall of the Bastille in France in 1789 during the French Revolution is usually regarded as the birth of modernism. Gene Edward Veith reasons, "The French Revolution exemplifies the triumph of the Enlightenment. With the destruction of the Bastille, the prison in which the monarchy jailed its political prisoners, the pre-modern world with its feudal loyalties and spiritual hierarchies was guillotined. The revolutionaries exalted the Rights of Man. They dismissed Christianity as a relic of the past. During the course of the revolution, they installed the Goddess of Reason in Notre Dame Cathedral."

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the sense of the autonomous was fully developed, and rationalism was entrenched in philosophical thought.

#### **1.2 The Growth of Scientific Discovery**

The growth of scientific discovery played a vital role in the Enlightenment. The genius of Isaac Newton (1642-1727) had brought about new understanding in the areas of mathematics, astronomy, optics, universal gravitation and the laws of motion. John Dalton (1766-1844) had formulated the concept that matter was made up of atoms. J J Thomson (1856-1940) developed insight into the structure of the atom, and is credited with the discovery of the electron. Rutherford (1871-1937) developed man's understanding of nuclear physics. Lord Kelvin did great work in the field of thermodynamics. Mendeleev (1834-1907) developed the Periodic Table of the elements. And Charles Darwin (1809-1882) developed the theory of evolution.

Knowledge of natural science was growing from strength to strength, but scientists were becoming increasingly rooted in **naturalistic** philosophy. (**Naturalism** is the theory of the world that excludes the supernatural or spiritual.) Scientists had always believed in the *uniformity of natural causes* as they gathered data on the particulars and sought to discover the universals. They believed that there were laws governing nature, and sought to discover them. Most of the great scientists had been devote Christians who believed in a Law-Giver who created the universe, but stood outside His creation. However, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, scientists increasingly believed in the uniformity of natural causes *in a closed system*. God is excluded. And all of nature gets sucked into the “machine”, including man.

### 1.3 Determinism

Nature was now viewed as being so totally autonomous that **determinism** began to emerge. **Determinism** is the doctrine that human action is not free but results from such actions as psychological and chemical makeup, which renders free will an illusion. Previously determinism had been limited to the area of physics (i.e., to the laws of nature), or what is regarded as the “machine” part of nature. But now man was being sucked into the “machine”. The concepts of freedom, love, good and evil, moral codes, religions and God were increasingly viewed as figments of the imagination.

### 1.4 Synthesis and Relativism

Up to the time of **Hegel** (1770-1831), philosophic humanistic thought had hung on to rationalism, rationality and a unified field, but the possibilities had been exhausted. Hegel argued that for thousands of years attempts had been made to find an answer on the basis of antithesis, but had failed. So he proposed a new methodology; instead of antithesis, he said we should think rather in terms of thesis-antithesis, with the answer always being **synthesis**. (**Synthesis** is the combination of the partial truths of a thesis and its antithesis into a higher stage of truth.) Thus rationality was sacrificed in favour of rationalism, and in the process Hegel changed not only the methodology but the world. Truth as truth is gone, and synthesis (the *both-and*), with its **relativism**, reigns. (**Relativism** is the doctrine that knowledge is relative, not absolute.)

The basic position of man in rebellion against God is that man views himself as autonomous. He hangs onto his rationalism and his rebellion, his insistence on totally autonomous or partially autonomous areas, even if it means he must give up his rationality.

### 1.5 Kierkegaard - The Line of Despair, and the Leap

**Kierkegaard** (1813-1853) abandoned the hope of a unified field of knowledge – the hope of a unified answer for knowledge and for life. The result was that modern man had given up his hope of unity and lived in despair – the despair of thinking that what had always been the

aspiration of men was in fact not possible. On the basis of all reason, man as man is dead, having no meaning, no purpose, no significance. The only way to find fulfilment is by a “leap”. Aldous Huxley advocated the use of drugs to make the “leap” and attain a “first-order experience”. Other philosophers have suggested the arts, pornography, suicide, mysticism and even madness, as ways of making the “leap”. Man is forced to the despair of a “leap” because he cannot live merely as a machine.

## **1.6 Existentialism**

**Jean-Paul Sartre** was a leading proponent of the philosophical system known as **existentialism**, which was a reaction to the materialistic optimism of modernity with its infinite faith in reason and science. The existentialist measured life by other criteria and decided that it really was meaningless and absurd. Truth and purpose could not be found in science or reason; for that matter, it could not be found in revelation. Truth, if truth exists at all, could only be found within the individual. Truth, then, is a personal matter. It is not something one searches for and finds; it is something one creates for himself. Your truth may not be truth for me and I may therefore reject it, for truth is not universal, it is individualistic. But this fact does not negate that truth for you. You can embrace your truth and I can embrace mine, but we dare not attempt to impose our truth on anyone else. To claim to have found truth is a deceitful tool by which we attempt to manipulate and control one another. It is a power play, pure and simple.

## **1.7 Philosophical thinking percolates down to the common man**

Does this weird philosophical thinking influence the general population? Unfortunately, its essence does percolate down, first via the arts, music and literature, then via the media (particularly TV and movies), to change the way the man in the street thinks. Eventually it even corrupts theology. Does the common man know why he thinks the way he does? Probably not. He has probably never heard of Hegel, Kierkegaard, Sartre and the other philosophers. His thinking has nevertheless been indoctrinated by their thinking.

## **1.8 The “Death” of the Modern Era**

As with all worldviews, except the biblical one, modernity would ultimately disappoint. People became disenchanted with reason and science, as neither was able to deliver on their promises to solve all human problems and reshape society into utopia. So disappointed did the Western world become with modernism that it finally breathed its last and has been pronounced dead. The date of its “death” could be taken as 1989 (exactly 200 years after its birth) with the fall of the Berlin Wall, since, of all social experiments, Marxism most fully attempted to implement the concepts of the Enlightenment. When Communism crumbled, so did the last vestiges of the optimism in human ability that for so long propelled modernity.

This, then, is the background to the emergence of post-modern man.

### **3. Homework**

- 3.1 America's Declaration of Independence, adopted in 1776, states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident." How does this statement conform to the thinking of the Enlightenment, or Modern Era?
- 3.2 Why do so many intellectuals find the theory of evolution so appealing? How does it support the presuppositions of modernism?
- 3.3 Could Adolf Hitler's thinking be regarded as a natural outcome of modernism?

### **4. Recommended Further Reading**

Francis A Schaeffer- *Escape from Reason* (1968) (Revised 2006)

(Much of this lesson is based on this great book, with many passages quoted directly.)

Francis A Schaeffer – *The God Who Is There* (1968) (Revised 1998)

## **Lesson 4 The Philosophy of the World – Part III.**

### **1. Post-Modernism**

#### **1.1 The Reaction of the Disillusioned**

Post-modernism was born out of the ashes of the failure of modernity. It is the reaction of the disillusioned. If the optimistic projections of the last two hundred years of the best efforts of reason, science and technology have failed; and if the tenets of pre-modernism with its foundation of revelatory truth are preposterous, then all that is left is the pessimism of nothingness, emptiness, meaninglessness and uncertainty. (How relevant is the book of Ecclesiastes!) We will return to the issue of the meaning of life in a later lesson.

Post-modernism has its roots in various philosophies, such as naturalism, humanism, materialism, and particularly existentialism. In essence, these philosophies state that only the physical, material universe is real, and that there is no supernatural or spiritual reality. So there is no God. These philosophies are thus atheistic. They have their roots in Darwinism and the theory of evolution, and view humans as arising from a random, mindless, purposeless, evolutionary process of nature. In this godless, naturalistic world, there is no such thing as absolute right and wrong, or good and bad; there are only values formulated by societies. There is no such thing as life after death. I live; I die; that is the end of it. My life has no ultimate purpose or meaning, and this life is all there is. We will take a closer look at the issue of atheism vs God in the next lesson, and that of life after death in a later lesson.

#### **1.2 The Rejection of Absolute Truth and Universal Truth**

At the hub of post-modernism, and indeed all philosophies, is the issue of truth. To the pre-modernist, truth is found in revelation. To the modernist, truth is found in reason and science. To the post-modernist, truth is not found (indeed is not capable of being found), it is created. Absolute truth is a fable. It is possible for me to create my own truth, and for cultures and subcultures to create their truth, but it is not possible to find universal truth that is applicable to all people. Such truth does not exist and should not be sought. Those who claim to possess absolute truth only do so in order to assert power over others.

Kruger states that “Postmodernity, in contrast to modernity, rejects any notion of objective truth and insists that the only absolute in the universe is that there are no absolutes.

Tolerance is the supreme virtue and exclusivity the supreme vice. Truth is not grounded in reality or in any sort of authoritative ‘text’, but is simply constructed by the mind of the individual (or socially constructed).”

Groothuis elaborates, “For these postmodernist thinkers, the very idea of truth has decayed and disintegrated. It is no longer something knowable... At the end of the day, truth is simply what we, as individuals and as communities, make it to be – and nothing more.” We will examine this question of truth in Lesson 6.

How widespread is this type of thinking? At the end of 2001, the Barna Research Group found that only 22% of Americans believed in the existence of absolute truth. A BBC survey in 2004 found that only 31% of Britons believed that their God was the only true God.

### **1.3 Pragmatism – What Works for Me is Good for Me**

The post-modern view of truth leads to pragmatism. To quote Kruger, “What are the post-modernists’ criteria for ‘truth’? Simply what works. The post-modernist is not concerned about absolute truth like the modernist; he defines his ‘truth’ by more pragmatic concerns: What makes me feel good? What resolves my problems? What is attractive to me?” What works for me? In the naturalistic or materialistic world, I am free to believe whatever I like. What works for me is good for me. (**Pragmatism** – A system of thought which makes the practical consequences of a belief the sole test of truth.) I should not question another’s beliefs, and should respect his values and beliefs. My main concerns are my security, my comfort and my entertainment. No one religion is true to the exclusion of all others, and I am free to take beliefs from many religions, if that makes me feel better about myself or more secure. In any case, religion is the “opiate of the masses” and has no ultimate value.

What about the issues of sin, ethics and moral values? Again, if there is no such thing as absolute truth, I am free to construct my own values. So we are back to the pragmatic approach of “what works for me is good for me”. We will examine the question of pragmatism and of sin and moral values in later lessons. If there is time, we will also examine what my main concerns should be.

### **1.4 Relativism – Treating Everyone’s Truth as Equal**

Since there is no absolute truth anyway, your view is as good as mine. We should all live and let live, and by no means ever impose our understanding of right, wrongs, morals, and ethics on those of another philosophic community. This is the ultimate sin, perhaps the only sin, in a post-modern world.

### **1.5 Deconstructionism – Robbing Language of any real Meaning**

Post-modernism has a convoluted, incredible view of language. It assumes that language cannot render truths about the world in any objective way. Since language is a cultural creation, the meaning of language is nothing more than a social construction. The reader’s

own experience and perspective so condition interpretations that there can be no one “right” interpretation.

## **1.6 Tolerance**

The democratic idea of tolerance was that, even if you reject the ideas of another, you still have tolerance for that person. A new understanding of tolerance is in vogue amongst post-modernists. Tolerance now means that we must accept everyone’s ideas as equally valid. To be critical of anyone’s ideas is a sign of intolerance – which cannot be tolerated (note the irony!)

## **1.7 Contradictory Thinking**

The ability to believe contradictory things simultaneously is a hallmark of post-modern thinking. For example, about 70% of all Americans believe that the Bible is the written Word of God, and is totally accurate in all it teaches. Yet practically the same percentage believe that there are no absolutes.

## **1.8 Power Plays**

Post-modernists say that it is absolutely true that there is no absolute truth (note the irony!) So they view anyone who claims to possess some form of absolute truth as attempting to manipulate others. In other words, truth claims are nothing more than cover-ups for power plays.

## **2. Homework**

**2.1** It is vogue for post-modern “Christians” to seek to improve their spiritual experience by adding some Eastern mysticism or meditation or yoga to their “Christianity”. Do you know anyone who does this? How does this reflect the influence of post-modern thinking?

**2.2** In many home Bible study groups, when a passage of Scripture is read, people want to tell the group “what the passage means to me”. How does this reflect the influence of post-modern thinking within the church?

## **3. Recommended Further Reading**

Gary E Gilley            *This Little Church Stayed Home* (2006)

(Much of this lesson is based on this great book, with many passages quoted directly.)

## Lesson 5 God or Atheism

### 1. The Philosophy of the World - Atheism

The Enlightenment philosophers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century made science and reason their gods, and viewed religion as archaic superstition. Michael Kruger writes, “With the rise of the Enlightenment there came a new guardian of truth to replace the church: science. No longer would human beings stand for the irrational musings and archaic dogmatism of religion – science (with reason as the foundation) was the new god, and all intellectual theories had to bow and pay homage in order to be seriously considered. Science viewed Christians as being naively committed to ancient myths, unable to see past their bias and to take an objective and neutral look at the world. So modernity proffered the idea that mankind armed with rationalism and science, was able to access absolute truth and make unlimited progress toward a better life for itself. Therefore, at its core, modernity was a celebration of human autonomy.”

The net result of centuries of humanism, rationalism, naturalism, relativism, existentialism, nihilism and all sorts of other –isms is that post-modern man is left without God, without religion, without hope, without purpose, without meaning and without absolute truth. He is simply another part of the “machine”.

### 2. The Christian Worldview – “The God who is There”

Either we must accept the absurd state of affairs of post-modern man, or go back and look for another alternative. In retrospect, the problem started with man seeking autonomy, and “starting with man alone”. We need another starting point, or presupposition. And as a starting point, one cannot improve on **Genesis 1**.

For the Christian, the choice of presupposition is simple: “*In the beginning GOD ...*” (Gen1:1). So God exists, has always existed, and is eternal, or infinite. He is the “God who is there”. He is real, and He is infinite.

**Ps 90:1,2**     *Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,  
Or ever You had formed the earth and the world,  
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.*

“*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” So the mystery of how the universe came about is removed. God created the universe. As Creator, He is separate from His creation (just as the creator of a car or a building is not part of the car or building). God created space and time, and is not bound by space and time, but stands outside space and |

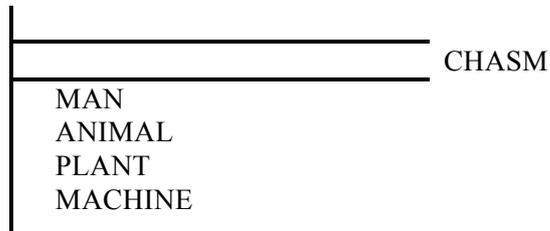
time. But, just as the creator of a car or building can sit in the car or enter the building, so God can enter space and time if He wishes. There is no mystery about the countless aspects of the universe which show evidence of design – God the Designer planned it all. There is no mystery about the fact that the physical universe is subject to the laws of physics – it was created by the Law-Giver.

“*Then God said ...*” (Gen 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26,29) God is not an impersonal force. He has personality; He speaks!

To quote Francis Schaeffer: “The Bible says God is a living God and it tells us much about Him, but, most significantly perhaps, for twentieth-century man, it speaks of Him as both a personal God and an infinite God. This is the kind of God who is “there”, who exists. Furthermore, this is the only system, the only religion that has this kind of God. The gods of the East are infinite by definition, in the sense that they encompass all – the evil as well as the good – but they are not personal. The gods of the West were personal, but they were very limited. The Teutonic, the Roman and the Greek gods were all the same – personal but not infinite. The Christian God, the God of the Bible, is personal--infinite.

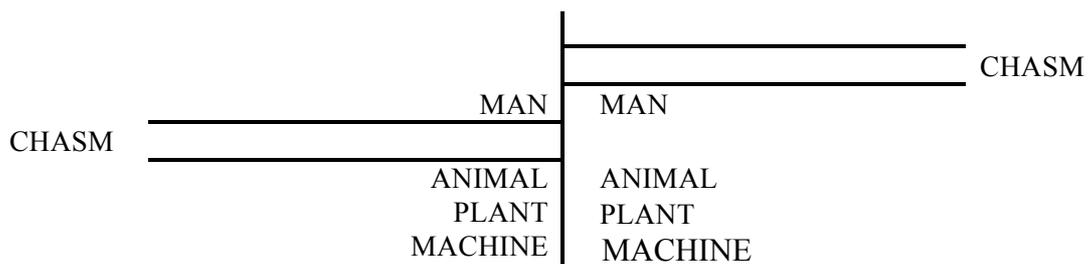
“This personal--infinite God of the Bible is the Creator of all else. God created all things, and He created them out of nothing. Therefore everything else is finite, everything else is the creature. He alone is the infinite Creator. This can be set out as follows:

**THE PERSONAL -- INFINITE GOD**



He created man, the animals, the flowers and the machine. On the side of his infinity, man is separated from God as is the machine. But, says the Bible, when you come on to the side of man’s personality, you have something quite different. The chasm is at a different point:

**THE PERSONAL --- INFINITE GOD**



*So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Gen 1:27).* The fact that man is created in the image of God sets man apart from all the rest of creation.

To return to Francis Schaeffer's narrative: "So man, being made in the image of God, was made to have a personal relationship with Him. Man's relationship is upward and not merely downward. If you are dealing with twentieth-century people, this becomes a very crucial difference. Modern man sees his relationship downward to the animal and to the machine. On the side of personality you are related to God. You are not infinite but finite; nevertheless, you are truly personal; you are created in the image of the personal God who exists." (*Escape from Reason*, pp 34-36.)

One should note that no one has ever thought of a way of deriving personality from impersonal sources, yet post-modern man must somehow either believe that personality came from the impersonal, plus time, plus chance; or accept the alternative that man is dead because personality is a mirage. The Bible has a wonderful answer to this quandary; man has personality because the personal-infinite God created man in His own image!

### **3. Witnessing to an Atheist**

Get the atheist to come to terms with the consequences of his beliefs – if there is no God, and mankind is simply a product of an evolutionary process (a mindless, haphazard, purposeless process), then our lives must be without purpose and totally meaningless. There is no supernatural world, man has no soul, so there can be no life after death. Since personality cannot arise from the impersonal (the evolutionary process), man's personality is just an illusion, and we are nothing more than a cog in the machine.

Then contrast this with the biblical view. God created the universe from nothing, and made man in His own image. Through Jesus Christ, He has made it possible for us to spend eternity with Him in heaven. Here on earth, we can enjoy abundant, meaningful, purposeful lives and we strive to glorify God.

### **4. Homework**

- 4.1 With a Christian friend, do a role-play. Take turns in being the "atheist", and have the other one practise witnessing to the "atheist".
- 4.2 God is the Designer of the physical universe, so there must be plenty of evidence of design. Investigate examples of evidence of design.

## Lesson 6            Truth

### **1.    The Philosophy of the World – Absolute truth does not exist**

As we have previously described, the post-modern view of truth is that truth is simply what we, as individuals and as communities, make it to be – and nothing more. Absolute truth and universal truth do not exist and should not be sought.

The post-modern view of truth is corrupt and condemned by Scripture.

**Jn 8:44-47**    *“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because **I tell the truth**, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if **I tell the truth**, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.”*

**2 Thess 2:9ff** *The coming of the lawless one is according to the work of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive **the love of the truth**, that they might be saved ... that they all may be condemned who did not believe **the truth** but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

**1 Tim 6:3-5** *If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and **destitute of the truth**, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.*

(See also **2 Tim 2:24ff**, **2 Tim 3:8**, **2 Tim 4:3,4** and **Rom 1:18-25**)

### **2.    The Christian Worldview – God speaks Absolute Truth**

#### **2.1    The Bible is God’s Communication with Man**

There is a wonderful consistency in the Christian worldview. God created man in His own image, and He created him to be a verbalizing, communicating being. So God must be a

communicating God, and it is perfectly logical that He should communicate with man. He has done so by providing us with the Bible – the Word of God.

**2 Tim 3:16** *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ...*

**2 Pet 1:19-21** *And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that **no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.***

## 2.2 God is Truth, and His Words are Truth

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that God is truth, that His words are truth, and that He cannot lie. And God's truth is absolute, eternal truth!

**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.*

**2 Sam 7:28** *And now, O Lord God, You are God, and **Your words are true** ...*

**Ps 33:4** *For **the word of the Lord is right**, And **all His work is done in truth.***

**Ps 100:5** *For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And **His truth** endures to all generations.*

**Ps 146:6** *(God) **Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; Who keeps truth forever,***

**Tit 1:1,2** *Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgement of **the truth** which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which **God, who cannot lie**, promised before time began.*

**Heb 6:17,18** *Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which **it is impossible for God to lie**, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*

(See also **Ex 34:6**; **Ps 57:3b,10**; **Ps 86:11**; **Ps 108:4**; and **Ps 138:2**)

### 2.3 God's Word / the Bible / the Scriptures – are the truth.

**Ps 119:160** *The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgements endures forever.*

**Dan 10:21a** *But I will tell you what is noted in **the Scripture of Truth**.*

**Jn 17:17** *“Sanctify them by Your truth. **Your word is truth.**”*

(See also **Ps 19:7-11**)

### 2.4 Jesus is the Truth, and speaks the Truth

Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, shares the Father's attributes. So Jesus is the truth, and speaks the truth.

**Jn 1:14,17** *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and **truth**. (17) For the law was given through Moses, but grace and **truth** came through Jesus Christ.*

**Jn 14:6** *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, **the truth**, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*

(See also **Jn 18:37**)

### 2.5 The Holy Spirit is the Truth, and speaks the Truth

Likewise, the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Triune Godhead, is the truth and speaks the truth.

**Jn 15:26,27** *“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, **the Spirit of truth** who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”*

**Jn 16:13** *“However, when He, **the Spirit of truth**, has come, He will guide you **into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”*

(See also **Jn 14:16,17,26**)

## 2.6 Christians and the Truth – seek, know and apply the truth

**Jn 4:24**      *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and **truth**.”*

**Eph 5:9**      *(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness and **truth**)*

**Eph 6:14**      *Stand therefore, having girded your waist with **truth** ...*

**2 Tim 2:15**    *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth**.*

**Jn 8:31,32**    *Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know **the truth**, and **the truth shall make you free**.”*

**1 Pet 1:22**    *Since you have purified your souls in **obeying the truth** through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.*

(See also **Prov 3:3; Prov 23:23; Phil 4:8**)

## 2.7 The Church and the Truth

The Church is to be the custodian of God’s absolute truth.

**1 Tim 3:15**    *... **the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth**.*

As Gary Gilley says, “The Christian community has something to offer that no one else has: **the truth as found in Jesus Christ and the Scriptures**. Rather than running about trying to keep up with the world, we need to return to the one thing the world cannot give.”

## 3. Homework

**3.1**      Look up the additional verses listed in this lesson.

**3.2**      Is FBC doing a good job of being a custodian of God’s truth? In what way? How could it be an even better “pillar and ground of the truth”?

## **Lesson 7      What is Real?**

### **1.      Summary**

We have been contrasting the Christian worldview with the philosophies of this world. If we were to treat Christianity as a philosophy (which, of course, it certainly isn't!), we would say that our presuppositions are that God – the personal-infinite God – has always existed; He created the universe (outside of Himself), and created man in His own image; He has communicated with man through the Scriptures, and the truths of His Word are absolute, eternal and universal truths.

### **2.      The Teachings of the Bible are True and Real**

The Christian worldview is that the Bible, the written Word of God, is accurate in all that it teaches. In a sense, this belief is a step of faith (or a presupposition!). On the other hand, there is plenty of evidence that biblical theology has been consistently developed over thousands of years. There is also plenty of archaeological evidence supporting the Bible. The way the Bible has been preserved through the ages is nothing short of miraculous. There exist today approximately 5000 ancient manuscripts of a part or the whole of the Greek New Testament, as well as about 8000 ancient manuscripts of translations, mainly Latin. The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947, are a collection of more than 500 manuscripts dating from about 100 B.C., found in a number of caves in the barren foothills of the Judean Wilderness west of the Dead Sea. The scroll of Isaiah is the oldest known complete Hebrew manuscript of any Biblical book, and it agrees in almost every respect with the much more recent manuscripts used in the translation of the King James Bible.

It is not universally accepted that the Bible is accurate in all that it teaches. Over the past two hundred years, many have been critical regarding the accuracy of the Bible. For example, the old liberal theologians in Germany began by accepting the presupposition of the uniformity of natural causes *in a closed system*. Thus they rejected everything miraculous and supernatural. [Read up on the theology of Karl Barth, and the higher (negative) critical theories.] Try taking the miraculous and supernatural out of the Bible, and what is left? Nothing that makes sense! Similarly, some theologians say that the Bible is accurate on theological or spiritual matters, but not necessarily on historical, geographical or scientific matters. The moment one believes that *any* part of the Bible is not true, it creates doubt on all the rest of the Bible.

### **3.      The Physical Universe is Real**

God created the physical universe *ex nihilo* and outside of Himself. The physical universe is thus real, but finite (i.e., not infinite – it has a beginning and an end). Just as a beautiful

building tells us something of the architect, so the physical universe tells us something of God.

**Ps 19:1**      *The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament shows His handiwork.*

**Rom 1:20**     *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen,  
being understood by the things that are made ...*

What should the Christian's view be regarding science and scientific discovery? Since science tells us more about the physical universe, it tells more about God and His design. The Christian should thus have a positive regard for true science. One can say that there are two "books" that tell us about God; one is the Bible, and the other is His created physical universe. While science may take some wrong turns, ultimately it will clearly point towards the Creator.

While the post-modern worldview regards the physical universe as real, it rejects the supernatural, heaven, the existence of the human spirit or soul, life after death, and any concept of eternal life and bodily resurrection. The Bible makes it clear that all of these are absolutely real.

#### **4.     The Supernatural World is Real**

The Bible makes it clear that, in addition to the physical world, there is a supernatural or spiritual world that is just as real as the physical universe.

**Ps 91:11**      *For He shall give His angels charge over you,  
To keep you in all your ways.*

**Heb 1:14**      (Regarding the angels:) *Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to  
minister for those who will inherit salvation?*

**Eph 6:11-12** *Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the  
wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against  
principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age,  
against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

**1 Jn 3:8**      *He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For  
this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works  
of the devil.*

## 5. Heaven is Real

**Matt 5:3**      *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

**Jn 3:3**         *Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

**Jn 14:2**       *In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

**2 Cor 5:1**     *For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

**Rev 4:1,2**     *After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.” Immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.*

## 6. Man has a Spirit or Soul that transcends the death of the body

**Ecc1 12:7**     (Upon one’s death)    *Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it.*

**Matt 10:28**    *“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

**Rev 20:4b**     *Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Jesus for a thousand years.*

## 7. Eternal Life is Real for Christians

**Jn 3:16**        *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

**Jn 11:25f**     *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”*

**Gal 6:8**      *For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*

**2 Tim 1:10**    *... our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*

## **8.    Resurrection is Real**

**Jn 6:40**      *“And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

**Acts 24:15**    *“I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.”*

**Jn 5:28f**      *“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”*

## **9.    Homework**

**9.1**    When Pontius Pilate’s interrogated Jesus, the answers Jesus gave are particularly pertinent to this series. Read Jn 18:33-38, and identify these pertinent points.

**9.2**    The Scripture passages listed in this lesson are just a selection from a much wider range of pertinent passages. Look up the following verses, and decide where each could best be placed in the lesson outline:

Ps 19:1    Dan 12:2    Matt 25:46    Lk 20:34-36    Jn 3:14,15    Jn 3:36    Jn 4:14  
Jn 6:27    Jn 6:47-50    Jn 10:28    Jn 12:25    Rom 6:22    1 Cor 15:50-54  
1 Thess 4:16    2 Thess 1:5    1 Tim 6:18,19    Titus 1:1,2    Heb 11:9-11  
Jude 20,21    1 Jn 2:25.

## **Lesson 8      An Assortment of Issues**

### **1.    The Influence of Post-Modernism on the Church**

#### **1.1    The Market- Driven Church**

The end of the twentieth century saw the emergence of the mega churches, usually called the new- paradigm churches, or market-driven churches, or seeker-sensitive churches. Leading examples are the Saddleback Community Church in California, pastored by Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose-Driven Church*, and the Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois, led by Bill Hybels. Much has been written about these churches, so we won't examine them in any detail. Gary Gilley's *This Little Church Went to Market* is a recommended book on these new-paradigm churches.

Marketing, as practised by the new-paradigm churches, focuses on what the consumer ("unchurched Harry") wants and thinks he needs. These churches then design their ministry to meet these felt needs, and they do so with spectacular success, if the number of worshipers is used as a measure of success. Almost all of the biggest and fastest growing churches around the world make use of market-driven methodology.

In order to market a church to the unsaved consumer, he must be given what he wants. Since unsaved consumers do not desire God, they have to be enticed by something else. Thus the temptation arises for a church to change, or at least hide, who they are so that they appeal to unchurched Harry. Additionally, the church is tempted to alter its message to correspond with what Harry wants to hear and thinks he needs. The end result is a felt-needs gospel that appeals to Harry's fallen nature in an effort to entice him to come to Christ, the ultimate felt-needs supplier, so that he is fulfilled and feels better about himself.

However, the gospel is not about helping Harry to feel better about himself and his circumstances. It is about his rebelliousness against a holy God who will ultimately condemn him to hell if he does not repent and trust in Christ for the forgiveness of his sins. It's not about what Harry wants and thinks he needs, but about what God wants and what He says Harry needs. Thus the new-paradigm churches are built upon the foundation of polls, surveys and the latest techniques, instead of upon the Word of God. As Gary Gilley asks. "Is the modern church reaching out or selling out?"

#### **1.2    The Emergent Church – An Example of Post-modern Thinking**

The emergent church is a new development which started in the late 1990's. For our purposes, it is of interest because its adherents see it as a post-modern church for a post-modern culture. They believe that the modern church cannot connect with the post-modern

mind. Dan Kimball, author of *The Emerging Church*, says that “the basis of learning has shifted from logic and rational, systematic thought to the realm of experience. People increasingly long for the mystical and the spiritual rather than the evidential and facts-based faith of the modern soil.” So the emergent church combines the singing of hymns, display of the cross and reading of Scripture (all excellent things) with questionable practices such as medieval ritual, prayer stations, labyrinths, candles, incense, icons, stained glass, contemplative prayer, mantras, Benedictine chants and darkness. The goal of all this is “spiritual experience”, and the embracing of mystery.

The emergent church avoids denominational ties, so you won't find a First Baptist Emergent Church; popular emergent church names are Solomon's Porch, House of Mercy, The Rock, Jacob's Ladder, Circle of Hope, Ikon, Vintage Faith, New Beginnings, Sanctuary, Sanctus and Mosaic.

Brian McLaren is regarded as the spokesperson of the emergent church, so we will quote from him. On the question of truth, McLaren says, “Ask me if Christianity (my version of it, yours, the Pope's, whoever's) is orthodox, meaning true, and here's my honest answer: a little, but not yet. Assuming by Christianity you mean the Christian understanding of the world and God, Christian opinions on soul, text, and culture ... I'd have to say that we probably have a couple of things right, but a lot of things wrong, and even more spreads before us unseen and unimagined. But at least our eyes are open! To be a Christian in a generously orthodox way is not to claim to have the truth captured, stuffed, and mounted on the wall.”

By rejecting the concept of absolute truth, the emergent thinkers must dispose of dogmatic truth claims (i.e., doctrines). They must purge the church of an exclusive gospel, an authoritative Bible and irritating doctrines such as hell. On the question of the doctrine of original sin, Brian McLaren writes, “The church latched on to that old doctrine of original sin like a dog to a stick, and before you knew it, the whole gospel got twisted around it. Instead of being God's big message of saving love for the whole world, the gospel became a little bit of secret information on how to solve the pesky legal problem of original sin.”

Guided by post-modern thought processes, the emergent church leaders are asking their followers to embrace a faith without truth, a Bible which has value due to its mystery, and a reality that is individual, subjective and changeable.

## **2. The Role of Psychology**

Robert Schuller, who claims to be the founder of the church growth movement, decided that mankind's most fundamental need was self-esteem (a “need” nowhere mentioned, alluded to

or even hinted at in the Bible), and built his theology and church growth strategy around this “need”. Later, Bill Hybels, pastor of the Willow Creek Community Church, viewed personal fulfilment (or the pursuit of happiness) as the most important need that drives mankind, encompassing all other needs. While the theology of these men may be non-biblical, there is no doubt that the pursuits of self-esteem and personal fulfilment are prime driving forces in the lives of post-modern mankind. And the number of psychologists and psychotherapists has mushroomed to help people in these pursuits.

Modern secular psychology teaches that the reason people “misbehave” is because of outside forces (such as society or parents) that harm them. These forces must be understood, dealt with or eliminated in order that the struggling individual may find relief. Psychology teaches that a great number of our emotional and mental problems are really illnesses that have come upon an individual, just as the ‘flu might, and are therefore not the individual’s fault. Since the person cannot help himself, he need take no responsibility for his actions, and can look for someone or something else to blame. For example, a man with a bad temper may blame his anger on his abusive father. Rooted deep in his subconscious, he has been told, is a resentment and bitterness towards his father (which he may not even recognize) that is now being ‘acted out’ in his own temper tantrums. Unfortunately, the man does not know this, so what he needs is a psychological expert to uncover the root forces behind his behaviour. When he discovers that he is an angry man because of his father, he can blame his problems on dad and feel better about himself. Once all this happens (which could take years), he will begin behaving better, or so the theory goes.

The teachings of psychology are widely accepted in post-modern thinking, and are having a profound influence in the new-paradigm churches. As Christians, we need always to test any teaching against the truths of the Bible. We find that there are fundamental differences between the teachings of psychology and the Word of God.

- a. Regarding **personal responsibility for our actions**, the view of psychology is that people “misbehave” because of outside forces. It is not their fault. The Biblical truth is that man is personally responsible for his own actions. (Job 19:4; Jer 31:30; Ezek 18:20)
- b. Regarding **the nature of man**, the view of psychology is that human nature is basically good, or is at least neutral. The Biblical truth is that people are sinners with a flawed and depraved nature (Rom 3:23; 1 Jn 1:8). Change is effected through repentance of sin (Lk 13:2,3; 1 Jn 1:9), acceptance of Christ as Saviour (Jn 3:16, 36), the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; Rom 8:14), and the understanding of the Word of God (Ps 119:105; Acts 17:11; Rom 15:4).
- c. Psychology is **man-centred**. The highest goal is the happiness of the individual. Happiness cannot be obtained if one is lonely, lacking in self-esteem, unfulfilled, etc.

The Bible is **God-centred**. Our purpose in life is to glorify God in all we do. (1 Cor 10:31) We should not be self-centred, but must “love our neighbours as ourselves” (Lk 10:23-37; Matt 5:43-48; Rom 13:8-10; Phil 2:1-4)

- d. Psychology teaches that we each live out our own **personalized set of values**. We must never condemn the values of others. (Relativism) The Bible teaches **absolutes**. God defines truth, and whatever does not meet God’s criteria for truth is false (cf Lesson 6).

### **3. The Results of a Clarified, Christian Worldview?**

We conclude this series by quoting from Josh McDowell’s book, *The Last Christian Generation*. He paints a glowing picture of effective Christians: “Imagine them being deeply devoted to Christ and passionately loving God with all their heart, mind, and strength. They know who they are as individuals, they know their strengths and weaknesses, and they are capitalizing on their strengths and compensating for their weaknesses. Consequently, they are highly valued and productive people.

“Additionally, they have a great sense of purpose and direction in life: they know why they are here. Their life’s goal is to honour and glorify their God by being devoted husbands or wives, loving fathers or mothers, faithful members of a local church and compassionate citizens of the world. They don’t just talk about how culture needs to change; they are active participants in that change. Their neighbours are attracted to them because they demonstrate such a caring and compassionate heart by bringing healing to the hurting, comfort to the broken hearted, and help for those in need.

“(They) have a perspective on life and death that doesn’t put a high premium on making lots of money or establishing a life of leisure and pleasure for themselves and their families. They sacrifice financially and give of themselves freely. Their eyes are not on this earthly kingdom but rather on a heavenly kingdom. Subsequently, they see themselves as pilgrims on a journey to a place not of this world, and they are intent on taking as many with them as they can.”

## Glossary of Terms

<b>Antithesis</b>	The thought-process of basic logic which asserts that <i>A</i> is not <i>non-A</i> . If a certain thing is true, the opposite is not true. If a certain thing is right, the opposite is wrong. By antithesis, <i>joy</i> is not <i>sorrow</i> .
<b>Autonomy</b>	Personal freedom; acting independently or having the freedom to do so.
<b>Determinism</b>	The doctrine that human action is not free but results from such causes as psychological and chemical make-up, which render free will an illusion.
<b>Dichotomy</b>	Division into two totally separated parts.
<b>Existentialism</b>	A modern theory of man that holds that human experience is not describable in scientific or rational terms. It stresses the need to make vital choices by using man's freedom in a random and apparently purposeless world.
<b>Humanism</b>	Any philosophy or system of thought that begins with man alone, in order to try to find a unified meaning to life. (There is no divine or supernatural element.)
<b>Logic</b>	The science of correct reasoning. The predictable and inevitable consequence of rational analysis. In classical logic it could be asserted that <i>A</i> is <i>A</i> , and that <i>A</i> cannot equal <i>non-A</i> .
<b>Methodology</b>	Study of the procedures and principles whereby the question of truth and knowledge is approached. The method by which we approach the question of truth and knowing.
<b>Mysticism</b>	(1) A tendency to seek direct communion with ultimate reality of "the divine" by immediate intuition, insight or illumination; (2) a vague speculation without foundation.
<b>Naturalism</b>	A theory of the world that excludes the supernatural or spiritual. In other words, it is an atheistic view.

<b>Nihilism</b>	A denial of all objective grounds for truth. A belief that existence is basically senseless and useless, leading often to destructive tendencies in society or in the individual. (The Latin word <i>nihil</i> means <i>nothing</i> .)
<b>Pragmatism</b>	A system of thought which makes the practical consequences of a belief the sole test of truth.
<b>Presupposition</b>	A belief or theory which is <b>accepted</b> before the next step in logic is developed. A starting point which is accepted in faith, or without proof. Such a prior postulate often consciously or unconsciously affects the way a person subsequently reasons.
<b>Rationalism</b> (Rationalistic)	Beginning absolutely and totally from oneself, one gathers the particulars and formulates the universals.
<b>Rationality</b> (Rational)	Whatever is related to or based upon man's power to reason consistently. The validity of reason based on antithesis.
<b>Relativism</b>	The doctrine that knowledge is relative, not absolute.
<b>Synthesis</b>	The combination of the partial truths of a thesis and its antithesis into a higher stage of truth.

### **Recommended Books**

The following books have been used and extensively quoted in the compilation of this series:-

<b>Francis A. Schaeffer</b>	<i>Escape from Reason</i> (1968) <i>The God Who Is There</i> (1998)
<b>Gary E. Gilley</b>	<i>This Little Church Went to Market</i> (2006) <i>This Little Church Stayed Home</i> (2006)
<b>D. A. Carson</b>	<i>The King James Version Debate</i> (1979)
<b>Carol and Roddy Smith</b>	<i>Christian History Guidebook</i> (2001)
<b>Josh McDowell</b>	<i>The Last Christian Generation</i> (2006)

All Scripture verses are from the **New King James Version**