



POSTMODERNISM IS A CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH AND TO OUR CULTURE

*"In those days there was no king in Israel;
everyone did what was right in his own eyes."
Judges 21:25*

Many of us that are enlisted in the culture wars find ourselves hitting the "glass ceiling" of postmodern thought when we articulate our reasonable responses to the ills of society. Postmodern thought is really not that new; it existed in the Garden of Eden and persisted throughout Israel's history. Even though Israel had the promises and the provision of God, they continued in rebellion against His tenets and boundaries. It is not much different today; however, modern man likes to camouflage his rebellion in lofty terminology like postmodernism.

A "not-so-new" philosophy emerges

The postmodern thought and the church's response to that "not so new" philosophy gives us a little insight as to why we do seem to be bouncing off the "glass ceiling" when we enunciate our views.

- Postmodern thinkers have a social construct of reality; in other words there is no absolute truth ... our experiences define reality. Our society determines what is right; some postmodern thinkers believe that our Constitution is a "living" document that must adjust to society's needs and beliefs.
- Truth is relative with society imposing its own meaning to reality, using personal subjective experiences as the baseline. This contrasts greatly with a Biblical worldview that sees truth through the lens of Biblical truth. The apostle Paul, for instance, saw things in a very "black and white way" while postmodern thinkers see truth as relative to one's own experiences.
- Postmodern thinkers seek to "de-construct" traditional moral views. A good example of this is Dr. Alfred Kinsey's research on human sexuality. He set out to prove that all sexual outlets are equal; that there is no right or wrong in human sexuality. He set up his research to "prove" that he was right and those who believed in Biblical morality were wrong. His "sexual revolution" has brought society a myriad of problems from escalating out-of-wedlock pregnancies and abortions to skyrocketing sexually-transmitted diseases, not to mention the emotional and physical pain to those who bought his lie.
- Postmodern thinkers believe we need to shed ourselves of the systems of right and wrong; that we should highlight people's culture and religion as equally valuable; not try to change them. They are often heard saying, "I am a very spiritual person," or "All cultures are equally right."
- Postmodern thinkers move away from rational thinking into mystical thinking and experiences such as contemplative prayer, walking labyrinths, praying with icons, yoga meditations, etc. What they "feel" is more important than what they "know." Many of these "experiences" that give them enlightenment stem from pagan practices that put them and the churches who embrace these things in jeopardy of being led astray by mystical experiences that may be coming from "the other side." If there is no basis in Scripture for doing these things; the Bible says to flee from it, to continue in what you

have learned and are convinced of, not always seeking higher revelation or intuition that comes from sources other than the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

- Another tenet of postmodern thinking is that uncritical "tolerance" is society's highest value; no one has the right to criticize another's beliefs, rights, or values, unless, of course, they are Biblical values. Their thinking is an oxymoron; they believe in tolerance, but are grossly intolerant of those who disagree with their idea of tolerance.
- They believe there is a universal duty to accept gender, race, sexual orientation, and religious expressions as equal. Failure to do so is intolerant. The idea of judging someone else based on their beliefs, religion, etc. is abhorrent to them.

Some churches deal with it

The so-called emergent church has tried to deal with this by saying they are not like other evangelicals; they say they are "relevant" to the post-modern world by accepting post-modern tenets and premises. Some of its leaders believe that the church should take a five-year moratorium on making pronouncements about homosexuality; they should dialogue with each other and the "experts" before they come to an official stance on this issue. In fact, one of its leaders, Brian D. McLaren, has written a book called *The Generous Orthodoxy* in which he proclaims that orthodoxy is "straight thinking" or "the right opinion." He seeks to transcend the difficulties of determining who is right and who is wrong and embraces relativism, picking and choosing what he believes to be truth in the midst of cultural chaos that will eventually lead to anarchy.

Ancient history gives us a clue

As we look at the post-modern thought and how it has pervasively infiltrated itself into the church and into our lives, we should be reminded of those who lived during the period of the judges in Israel. Spiritual apathy prevailed; the people had forgotten who they were and Whose they were. This led inevitably to apostasy; the people adopted the cultures around them and espoused an amalgam of ideas that merged into their relationship with a holy God. They no longer saw the boundaries that God had placed around them to protect them as good; they saw all gods and cultures as equal...if their crops failed, why not try Baal or Dagon? As they adopted more and more multi-culturalism, tolerance, and relativism, they eventually ended up in anarchy; every man did what was right in his own eyes and chaos resulted. That chaos had to be ended before society imploded, so a despot or tyrant came in to impose order, placing them in bondage until they cried out to God, and He sent another judge to deliver them.

We are no different

Our society, though modern and highly "evolved" is no different than the nation Israel; we will suffer the same consequences if we continue to tolerate anything and see everything as relative. We need to think about what sounds reasonable and reject it if it does not line up with God's word.