

# Christian Ambassador Training

## The Culture – Week 6

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<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:17-21** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

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[Prayer]

### *Intro/Welcome*

We continue our extended “knowledge” section of the course, turning our attention to those to whom we are called to serve as ambassadors.

### *Know the nature, language, and culture of those to whom you are a representative*

#### *The Nature -- Fallen humanity - Suppressors of the truth in unrighteousness/dead in sin*

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<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 1:18-20** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

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<sup>ESV</sup> **Ephesians 2:1-3** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience- <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

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It is difficult for us to get this concept into our heads, particularly for apologist types like me. People don't generally reject God for lack of evidence or information; they do so because they *suppress* the truth (an issue of the will and the domain of the Holy Spirit). We are called to proclaim the truth faithfully, and then stand in awe as God changes the heart. We'll look more at this later.

### *Postmodernism - The current version of worldliness*

**Bill Kynes video**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtGrf7I5SIQ>

Postmodernism is the dominant culture in which we live. It influences everything you watch, everything you read, it is the very air that you breathe today. As ambassadors for Christ, it is important that we understand the world we are called to reach. In the same way you wouldn't send a missionary to a foreign country without some knowledge of the language and culture, we need to know and understand the language and culture of where God has placed us.

Paul calls it in his second letter to Timothy

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<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Timothy 3:1-7** But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. 6 For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, 7 always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

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Paul called it in that each dominant culture in recent human history is seeking to learn in various ways with various assumptions, yet none are arriving at the knowledge of the truth.

In 2 Corinthians Paul describes the nature of our spiritual warfare:

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<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Corinthians 10:3-5** For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

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A word about Spiritual Warfare: Though our battle is usually not physical or meta-physical, it is very real. It is primarily fought in the domain of **ideas** of **truth**.

“Spiritual warfare is an ideological battle.” It’s not a mystical one, we don’t fight with swords and guns. We fight with the truth, the word of God... We have been in a war over truth, what is true and what is not since the serpent lied to Eve and she believed it. We see a glimpse of it when Satan tempts Jesus in the desert and uses the same tactic, twisting God’s words of truth to tell a lie. And like Jesus this requires that we refute false ideas with the truth of God’s word.

**Exercise/Discussion I – Who’s More Dangerous...**

- *The self professing satanic rock star who bites the heads off bats (or doves) or the high profile religious leader or preacher who mislead people?*

**Quick History of Worldly Thought\***

Pre-modern (~2500 yrs)	Modern (~250 yrs)	Postmodern (25 yrs?)
Objective, ultimate truth	Objective, ultimate truth	Objective, ultimate truth is unknowable
supernatural	non-supernatural	mystical

authority of God	authority from science and human reason	no ultimate authority--self only
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\*From Phil Johnson's Teaching: *You Can't Handle the Truth – Addressing the tolerance of postmodernism*

> > > Progressively more anti-Christian thinking > > >

**Postmodernism is a radical reaction to the failure of modernism.**

History of Worldly Philosophy and Thought: Notes for the table above:

- Pre-modern – foundations of human thought...
  - Objective, Ultimate Truth
    - Same standard of truth applied to everyone, everywhere, and governs the universe.
    - This Reality/Truth is knowable by mankind
  - Supernatural
    - The limits of reality are not defined by the physical world.
    - Almost universal belief in the supernatural realm
  - Authority from God (central auth grounded in supernatural)
    - The foundation for ultimate truth is supernatural.
    - All authority is derived from God or the gods...
    - Someone or something was the ultimate power in the universe in the supernatural realm.
- Modern Era – Era of REASON
  - Elevated science and human reason to the position of highest authority
  - Ushered in as an overt attack on Biblical Christianity
  - Objective, Ultimate truth
    - Whatever was really true, was true in an objective sense.
    - Truth is universal.
  - Anti-Supernatural (non-spiritual)
    - Skeptical
    - Ultimate truth/knowledge can only be gained by rational/scientific means.
    - Spirituality regarded as superstitious and out-dated
    - Deism- “Created the universe, and then left it be.”
  - Authority from science and human reason
    - Only science and reason can establish any authoritative truths
    - Failed as a worldview miserably
    - This era is essentially over in the academic and philosophical world.
    - Rejection of divine revelation completely
    - Main results of western Modern thought
      - Fascism
      - Socialism
      - Nazism
      - Darwinism
      - Liberal Theology
      - Godless Modernism led to tyrannical, oppressive, violent ideologies
- Postmodern

- Objective, ultimate truth is unknowable
- Mystical
  - Realativistic Supernatural
  - No authoritative revelation
  - Personal feelings dictate
  - Subjective personal experiences rule
  - God and truth can be whatever you perceive him/her or it to be
- No Ultimate Authority
  - No single, central authority supernatural or otherwise
  - Every man does what is right in his own eyes
  - Trying to create a God (spirituality) without authority
  - Pure love without authority
  - Radically at odds with Biblical, historic Christianity
  - Inside Evangelical Christianity, there are many who believe we must conform to this philosophical angle or we will lose postmoderns.
  - It is our duty to understand the spirit of the age we live and minister in.
  - There is a difference between understanding the spirit of the age (like we are doing now) and another thing entirely to adapt to it.
- What's next?
  - Don't know, but it we need to be careful not to put our hope in the next version of worldliness.
  - We should be wise enough to recognize opportunity.
  - "evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and y being deceived" 2 Tim 3:13
  - Is post-postmodernism right around the corner?

### ***Taylor Mali video***

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTSKU0FgZts>

- KEY Christianity does not fit into any of these models of philosophical thought
  - Stood against all the superstitions and human philosophies of premodern
  - Opposed rationalism and humanism of modern
  - Worldly philosophies are against Biblical Christianity (progressively increasingly)
    - We are called to stand against these human world views, using again, not swords, but THE SWORD OF TRUTH.

Four Essentials of the Christian Worldview that postmodernists cannot stomach:

- Objectivity --postmodernists believe ***all truth is subjective***, relative
  - Objective Truth – always true no matter who believes it (multiplication tables ...)
  - Subjective Truth – depends on the person (personal taste... etc.)
- Clarity -postmodernists believe meaning is determined by reader/hearer rather than author. It's completely self-absorbed, the author's intent is irrelevant. (*can you see danger here for a church influenced by this culture? – Ouiji Bible hermeneutics*)

- Authority –postmodernists insist there are no foundations for knowledge, all opinions are equally valid.
- Certainty –post modernists believe you can't know anything for sure and consider you arrogant if you claim to know anything for sure.

### *Culture--Affecting the Church*

With every incarnation of worldliness (culture evolves at varying rates, we eventually draw lines and make labels) religious folks will come along and try to rescue the church from “irrelevance.” The basic assumption here is that the culture determines relevance.

Modernism's challenge brought theological liberalism to the church. A great book responding to the effect of modernism on the church is “Christianity and Liberalism” by J. Gresham Machen. This small book is great and much of his work is also directly applicable to post modernism.

Postmodernism is also affecting the church. –“Emerging church movement” ran its course, but the attitudes and ideology live on. (basically the name fell out of favor)

- Rejection of the doctrine and theology for “story or narrative”
  - *While the Bible is more than an encyclopedia of truths, it is definitely **not** less*
  - *While we can't comprehend God exhaustively, we can know some things for certain... effectively turning doubt into a Christian virtue.*
- Ouija Hermeneutics → Biblical illiteracy
  - *People know only a few verses, and those out of context*
  - *Which is easier, looking for personal messages or diligent study?*
- Rejection of Biblical leadership/authority
  - *Biblical church discipline is almost non-existent.*
  - *Since Biblical meaning is my own interpretation, who needs teachers/mentors?*
- Rejection of Biblical model in \*decision making
  - *Turn to Christianized superstition looking for God's leading*
  - *Hint: Why would God include so much wisdom literature along with exhortations to pursue wisdom if all we were to do was look for signs and warm fuzzies?*

\*We have a 3 week seminar on this topic posted on [objectivegospel.org](http://objectivegospel.org) Training -> Decision Making

### *The Language Barrier*

- Truth – as we mentioned before, to the postmodernist, what is true for you is not necessarily true for them. All truth is relative. For you to say “unless you believe in Jesus Christ, you will go to hell” is taken to be the same as “unless you like my favorite flavor of ice cream, you are going to hell”
- Faith – *Believing something without regard for the facts, or in spite of the facts. Strong faith means believing what you believe may not be so, and the strongest faith is believing what you are pretty sure isn't so.*

The church shares a lot of the blame for this word losing its meaning. Now it is too easily paired with “leap of” and “blind.” Biblical faith is *to put ones trust in* something and is not irrational. You exercise faith in an airline when you actually get on the plane. Do you have good reason to believe that you will arrive safely? Did you believe it would get you there (rationally) before you got on?

- Humility– *Realizing that you don’t really know anything for sure*

This is actually arrogance in disguise. To claim that we cannot know what is clearly revealed by God is to make Him a liar. Real humility is to submit to the truth that we are sinners deserving of judgment and anything short of hell is by God’s grace; and that we are limited in our understanding of the truth. True humility remains teachable and hungry to learn.

- Argue[ment] and Debate – are both are seen now as inherently hostile rather than an honest contest of ideas. Why? Because every idea should be considered equally valid by everyone... and to insist you are right is to be intolerant.

Language of the faith--we cannot afford to assume people know what we mean and must carefully define our terms.

- Salvation – Being saved from the consequences of our rebellion, namely, God’s wrath. (Not a form of initiation into a club called Christianity)
- Wrath – God’s controlled, just, right judgment and punishment of evil rebellion.
- Justification – To be made right with God, cancellation of guilt. The slate is clean and we are at peace (rather than enmity) with God.
  - It’s as if God, the judge of all things, who is right, holy, and good, looks down upon me, a rebellious sinner and says “NOT GUILTY” and he slams the gavel in heaven! Then he looks to Jesus and declares him guilty on our behalf and Jesus takes on the punishment we deserved. That is what it means to be justified.
- Justice – We get what we deserve (God punishes us for our rebellion)
- Mercy – We don’t get what we deserve (criminal goes free)
- Grace – We actually get what we don’t deserve (the judge adopts the criminal) – unmerited favor
- Tolerance & Inclusiveness –*The chief virtues of postmodernism*

The post-modern world has completely redefined tolerance. In its real meaning “putting up with someone with whom you disagree, dislike, of differing views...” Postmoderns redefine

tolerance to disallow disagreement at all (or at least to express it – the only allowable expression of disagreement is to claim someone else is intolerant...).

Scripture on tolerance:

- Appropriate intolerance is praised:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Revelation 2:2** "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

- Inappropriate tolerance is rebuked (false teaching).

<sup>ESV</sup> **Revelation 2:20** But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Corinthians 11:4** For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

- Inappropriate tolerance is rebuked (immorality).

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 5:1** It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

### *Exercise/Discussion II – The Big Two... Tolerance and Inclusiveness*

*Where in Scripture can we find a description of virtuous tolerance?*

<sup>ESV</sup> **Galatians 5:22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

*Do the fruits of the Spirit adequately capture it?*

*Real tolerance is amply described in the fruits of the Spirit and exhortations to put other's interests ahead of our own. Thoughts?*

*The Gospel--Inclusive or Exclusive? (yes!)*

- The gospel is *inclusive* (all called to repent) and *exclusive* (Jesus is the only way). It is important to express that this is not *your* teaching, but Gods. You may not be able to convince the person that this is True, but you can certainly demonstrate that it is what Jesus and the apostles taught. Are the following Scriptures inclusive or exclusive in nature?

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 17:30** The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup> because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 14:6** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Timothy 2:5** For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 12:8** "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God,<sup>9</sup> but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 John 2:23** No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 John 5:11** And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.<sup>12</sup> Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 10:16** "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,<sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>11</sup> And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 4:11** This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.<sup>12</sup> And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."