

REBELLION OF THOUGHT



post-modernism,
the church and
the struggle for
authentic faith

Discussion Guide
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Table of Contents

3-9

Session 1

This thing called postmodernism

10-16

Session 2

Who am I? Why am I here?

17-24

Session 3

Our beliefs, our relationships, and an authentic life

25-31

Session 4

What about the god question?

32-37

Session 5

Being the church in a postmodern world

Reference Verses

Session one: ECCLESIASTES 7:23-24; PROVERBS 15:14; 26:12

Session two: JEREMIAH 29:11

Session three: GENESIS 3:1-6

Session four: PSALM 33:4-11

Session five: 2 TIMOTHY 2:23-26

Session 1

This Thing Called Postmodernism: Initiating conversations of understanding

What if the very way we think has changed?

It seems there is an ever-increasing gap between how people used to think about God, truth, church, religion, morality—and how people think today.

People used to think in terms of modernism, the worldview we associate with the rise of modern science. Modernists believe in progress, the role of human reason. They have confidence in the idea that reason will eventually be able to give us the answer to all ills.

“Truth claims are attempts to control other people.”

But that’s last century. In the 21st century, modernism and its trappings have become old-fashioned. The new worldview is postmodernism. Postmodernists have an attitude of incredulity toward meta narratives and are suspicious of all absolute truth claims. They believe in autonomy and claim an absolute, exclusive right to self-determination—to define one’s own truth and make one’s own moral choices.

If we understand the implications of postmodernism, they compel us to sit up and take notice. We can’t simply push them aside. We can’t forget them. They will continue to haunt us, perhaps even keep us awake at night.

Postmodernism affects our society in significant ways, but its impact is much more personal than that. Postmodernism has so permeated every aspect of life, that we’re often unaware

of its role. We may overlook its influence on how we define reality and understand ourselves. We often don't connect the dots and recognize how much postmodernism affects our moral decisions, fragments our efforts to build community, and makes it difficult for anyone to listen to the voice of God.

As we seek to understand the foundational perspectives of postmodernism and their impact on how we think, believe, and act, we gain insights into ourselves, our culture, and our faith.

Conversations about the phenomenon of postmodernism will stimulate questions:

What is truth?

Is there an absolute, transcendent truth that applies to all people everywhere?

How can we know what's right and wrong?

Do each of us have the right to determine our own values and beliefs, independently of others?

If we each choose what we want to believe, and our beliefs contradict what others believe, does it really matter?

Does any of it really matter?

ANCIENT PERSPECTIVES ON OUR PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

I am determined to be wise—but this was beyond me. Whatever wisdom may be, it is far off and most profound—who can discover it? The discerning heart seeks knowledge. Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Wisdom gleaned from the world's wisest king*

Show Group Viewing Segment 1:



Let's Start the Conversation

Professor Jim Spiegel offers one perspective on what postmodernism is. *"Whereas the modernist believes in absolute or universal truth and the sufficiency of reason to discover it for us the postmodernist believes that reason is insufficient and there is no absolute truth. Both the modernist and the postmodernist have it half right. The modernist is correct in believing there's absolute truth and incorrect in thinking that reason is sufficient to get us there. The postmodernist is correct in denying the sufficiency of reason but incorrect in drawing the conclusion that there is no absolute truth."*



How does this explanation add to your understanding of the assumptions of postmodernism?

Do you believe this explanation is accurate? Why or why not?

If this is indeed the case, how can modernists and postmodernists communicate with one another about the "stuff" of life?

In which ways do you see postmodern perspectives such as the rejection of absolute truth or one's right to make one's own rules, having an impact on life in your everyday world—in school, when trying to influence decisions of your local city council, in the workplace, at the customer service counter, etc.?

If all truth claims are suspect, and determining right and wrong is up to each individual or the majority consensus at a given time, what effect does this have on our view of morality and how we go about making moral choices?

In what ways do moral beliefs differ from ethics, personal preference or traditions?

To what extent might these differences be attributable to living out a postmodern perspective?

In which ways do you think postmodernism predisposes us to think in certain ways about: our identity, our view of self and our significance?

Our idea of community and our relationships with others?

God and our relationship with him?

To what extent is it important for us to engage with the ideas and implications of postmodernism—or should we simply file them away and continue doing things as we have always done them?

Personal Thoughts



Show Discussion Segment A:



Have you ever asked yourself, “*Why did that person do that?*” or “*How can a person think like that?*”

What do these questions reveal about how you think—about how your basis for interpreting reality or making decisions may differ from that of the other person?

- To what extent have modern or postmodern perspectives impacted your views about truth, life, and how you live (i.e. your compassion for the disenfranchised, your spiritual journey, your expectations for community, the things in life you pursue)?
- As you understand more about postmodern perspectives, what insights do you gain about how other people might be perceiving what you say and do?

- What are you really communicating, and to whom?
- Is it what you intend to project? If not, how do you want to change?

views to people who never enter your faith community so that they actually hear what you say?

As postmodernism collides with other worldviews, why do you think dialogue between Christians and postmodernists sometimes digress into “win-lose” debates?

What can be done to encourage discussion about truth issues in a manner that honors all participants, yet does not abandon a biblical perspective on truth?

What role might your faith community play in providing opportunities or forums in which people of various perspectives might explore other worldviews?

Show Discussion Segment B:

Conversations for the Faith Community



In what ways do the foundations of postmodernism challenge your spiritual foundations-and that of your faith community?

How will you respond?

What obstacles does the faith community face-individually as well as corporately-in communicating a Christian worldview based on divine authority to a postmodern world, and which aspects of postmodernism make it easier to share Christian worldview perspectives?

How good are you at listening to the views of people who never enter your faith community-and in fact, may distrust it?
How can you express your

People form their moral beliefs based on what they like or what gives them pleasure



Session 2 Who Am I? Why Am I Here?

Exploring Our Identity In A Postmodern World



and become more satisfying when we live at the center of a universe of our own making? Or do we still hope for a great epiphany?

In a postmodern world, no one has the right to impose their views on anyone else. Everyone has a seat at the table. Every point of view is equally legitimate. everybody has their say. no one is excluded.

Unless . . . someone has the audacity to say that someone else, or their point of view, is wrong.

Postmodernists resist being told what to do or how to do it, especially in such areas as spirituality and lifestyle. They want to run their own show—in their own way, according to their own standards. So the voices

of right and wrong are silenced in the name of new definitions of acceptance and tolerance. Each individual becomes an unfettered, independent arbiter of his or her universe, defining morality on the basis of personal conviction, self-expression, convenience, or self-gratification.

One would think such freedom and autonomy would lead to happiness, contentment, and good will. We can each stay in our own space and do our own thing. That would be cool. Yet, we still have conflict. We build fences. We fight wars. We divorce. We file lawsuits. We injure, rape, and kill. So while we are quite capable of asserting our position at the center of our own universe, it is another matter to live with the consequences.

Stay in your space. Do your own thing. That's what should be cool.

Perhaps the dominant perspective of postmodernism is the absolute validity of each person to stand alone in making sense of the world and in choosing to pursue whatever brings pleasure, satisfaction, and fulfillment. *"It's my right,"* proclaim postmodernists, *"to live according to my own choices. I determine what is true for me. I am free to express my individuality, and no one has a right to infringe on that."*

That having been said, what do we do next? Who are we? Why are we here? What has our proclamation of self-determination actually gained for us? Does life really change

Show Group Viewing Segment 2:

Let's Start the Conversation



In response to inquires about what he is really searching for, Arthur replies, *"Oh, I ain't searchin' for anything, I was just travelin' . . . Why does anybody do what they do? They're searching for an answer why they are here. None of us really know. . . If you really sit back, you know, everybody's had that little voice in their head that's like, 'Why am I really here?' 'What am I doing here?' 'What am I doing?' So, like, I, you know, I have no idea. And that's why I travel."*

Where do you think that "Why am I really here?" voice comes from?

Is the voice universal? Does it tell us something about who we are? If so, what?

Are you content to just "travel"? If not, what's your alternative?

What are some of the consequences when human beings consider themselves to be the ultimate source in determining meaning and purpose in life?

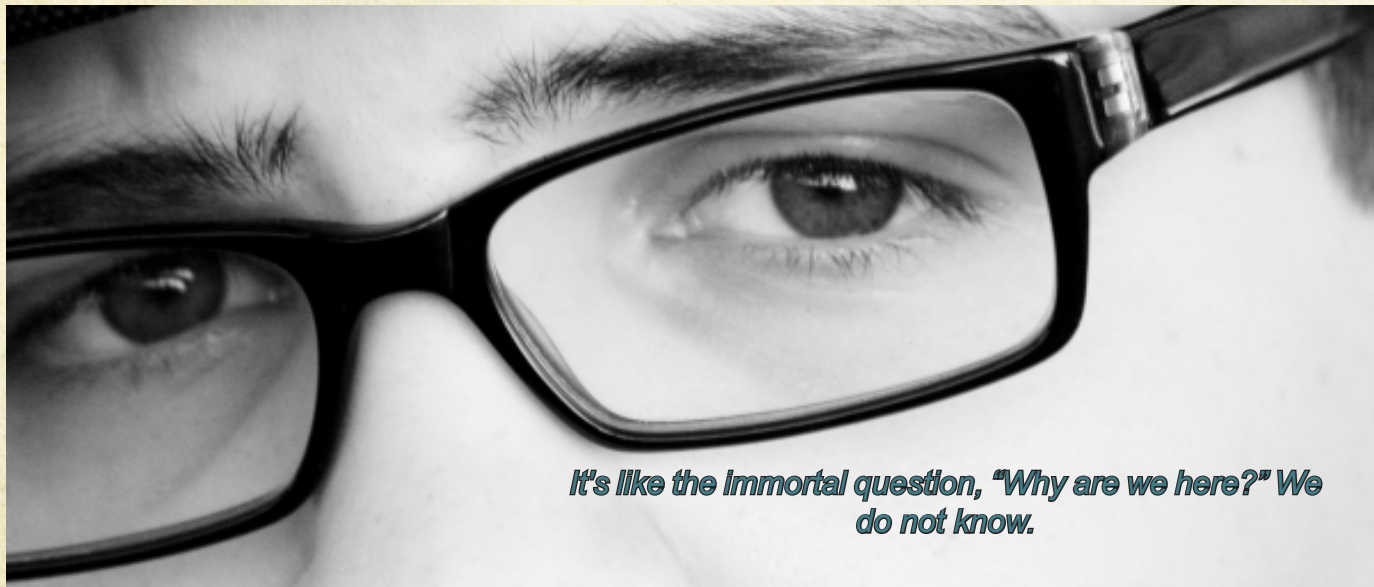
Where does personal identity come from—our sense that who we are matters, that we are each significant?

Show Discussion Segment A:



With so many options available, on what basis do we decide which particular worldview to adopt—or to avoid?

Is it possible for one worldview to accurately describe who we are, why we are here, and where we are going? Why or why not?



It's like the immortal question, "Why are we here?" We do not know.

Are some worldview choices better than others? Why, or on what basis?

How would you respond if someone were to say that creating a hierarchy of choices might at least suggest the possibility of absolutes?

What are some of the ways in which people today find meaning and personal identity?

Is it really satisfying to say, “Gee, I don’t know what life means...I guess it doesn’t matter?” Why or why not?

To what extent would you consider the postmodern elevation of individual authority to be an expression of rebellion against God?

If what works for you and what works for me is based solely on our respective feelings, experiences, and/or reasoning, and we reach totally different conclusions (and we will), where do we go from there?

Are we truly able to live day-to-day with wide disparities, or do we try to persuade others to share our conclusions?

Who or what becomes the “*tie-breaker*”?

How do we handle serious conflict or disagreement that could affect our family, health, or life?



Personal Thoughts

When you find yourself thinking about the BIG questions:

- Why am I here?
- What am I really doing?—what is your response?
- What is your understanding of why you exist?
- In what ways do you go about seeking fulfillment and purpose for your life?
- Do you dig deeper for answers?
- Do you find diversions such as recreation or immersing yourself in work? Pursue a calling that is bigger than you are?
- How well does your response work for you?
- How easy is it for you to understand the perspectives of people who would answer these questions in a different way?
- To what degree is it important for you to have significance and purpose beyond yourself?
- Where do you find meaning and purpose for your life?
- How satisfied are you with the reality you have chosen to live by?
- How do you handle situations when who you believe yourself to be and the values you have chosen conflict with those of another person?
- How does the conflict affect your perception of yourself and your significance? Your view of the other person?

WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.

*A perspective from the ancient hebrew narrative**

Show Discussion Segment B:

Conversations for the Faith Community



What does the Bible say about humankind—who we are, why we are here, how we are supposed to think and act?

Would you consider these to be absolute, universal truths? Why or why not?

What might be some meaningful ways to describe these truths to a postmodern individual?

How much room is there for transcendent truth in a postmodern world? For which truths?

What can make transcendent truth claims acceptable to postmodernists?

How do we go about communicating them in light of a built-in resistance to truth claims?



Session 3

Our Beliefs, Our Relationships, And An Authentic Life

Conversations On Connecting With One Another In A Postmodern World



I don't like to think about questions dealing with evil.

Most of us want to be listened to, to know that our beliefs and opinions matter. We want to share our individual stories and find acceptance, encouragement, and respect. While some worldviews establish a hierarchy for interpreting and evaluating life experiences and our responses to them, postmodernism elevates each individual's experiences, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs to an equal level. In so doing, at least on the surface, postmodernism encourages open communication and nonjudgmental attitudes and actions.

Criticism is out. Consensus is in.
Accepting the validity of everyone's viewpoint is in. Believing in universal truth is out.



Freedom to be authentic is in. Submission of one's behavior to an external standard is out.

Advocating good ways to live is in. Proclaiming the best way to live is out.

Living out these ideals in the context of community relationships becomes a challenge, however. In a diverse society, people can feel good about postmodernism's overarching emphasis on taking people's differing viewpoints seriously. But at the end of the day, when a decision is made in a minefield of conflicting viewpoints, some viewpoints are deemed to have a higher value than others. Win-win outcomes are not as prolific as we might like.

How does postmodernism really work when it comes to one's personal faith? Is it possible, while promoting tolerance of diverse perspectives, for postmoderns to accept the inherently exclusive views of people who claim to have transcendent truth from God? And if those views are excluded, how can one claim tolerance of diverse perspectives?

Since the beginning of the human era, humans living in community have come face to face with the reality of evil

in their personal space. Cain killed Abel, Hitler killed Jews (even though some people claim it never happened), and someone killed Kate. As much as we may want everyone to just get along, the postmodern mantra, *"Whatever I think is right is right for me and whatever you think is right is right for you,"* comes with a chilling downside.

Show Group Viewing Segment 3:



Let's Start the Conversation

"I think that the worst thing about post modernism," says David Fletcher, "is the tendency to exalt relativism. It's the sort of thing Socrates was fighting in ancient Greece, which is the idea that whatever I think is right is right for me and whatever you think is right for you. And as Socrates saw, society cannot stand that. Society cannot live long on the basis of relativism. There has to be some sort of shared values, some shared commitment about what is right and wrong."



To what extent would you agree or disagree with the concern that society cannot exist for very long without shared values and commitments to some standard of right and wrong?

What examples of your position could you share?

Which values and commitments (if any) do you think are necessary for a community to share in order to survive?

How do you go about identifying shared values from equally valid, yet diametrically opposed perspectives?

Show Discussion Segment A:



How can a society have reliable standards of morality if the whole concept of right and wrong is built solely on what each individual feels, thinks, or believes at any given time?

What view of morality would you want your banker, the judge hearing your case, or your surgeon to have?

Would you want to live in a society that claims there are or are no real differences in value between perspectives such as that of Hitler and Mother Theresa? Why or why not?

Which actions can you identify that virtually everyone in your culture would affirm to be always right? Which one would always be wrong?

How long was your list? Does it point to any discernable moral standard?

Where does this sense of what is right and wrong come from?

How do postmoderns, as individuals and as a society, deal with the realities of injustice and evil?

If one opinion is as good as another, and if there are no absolutes, how is it possible to be incensed enough about injustice to do anything about it?

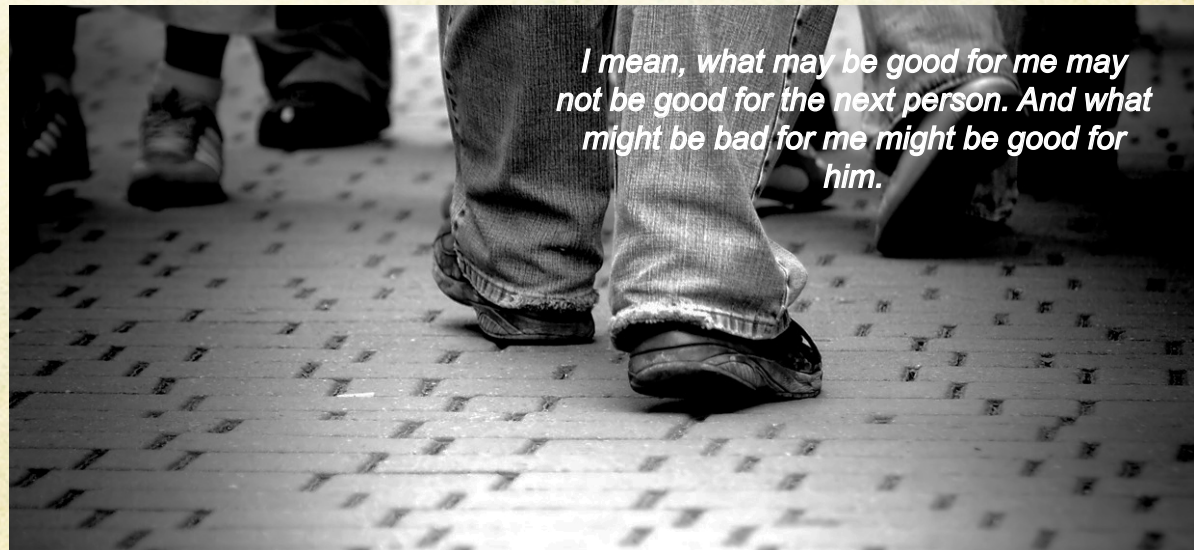
If you have a belief system similar to that which Kate expressed, how do you process what happened to her?

Show Discussion Segment B:



Personal Thoughts

- People can deny the necessity of absolutes and can say that one view is just as good as another, but how does our view change when we are on the receiving end of injustice or evil?
- Is it really okay with you, for example, if another person harms you and claims to be justified in doing so?
- Is your emotional response to the situation consistent with your belief system?
- How does your belief system deal with the realities of injustice and evil?
- How tolerant are you, really, of people who think and live much differently than you?



I mean, what may be good for me may not be good for the next person. And what might be bad for me might be good for him.

- What might be a way to disagree with or reject a particular viewpoint without being judgmental?
- When might you find it advisable—or even necessary—to confront the thinking and actions of someone else with the words, “*That’s wrong*”?
- To what extent are you a “safe” person—a good listener who is open and accepting—for someone who holds views that differ from your own to talk to, and to what extent do you tend to be more judgmental, closeminded, and defensive?
- How would you like to change the way you relate to people of opposing views?



Show Discussion Segment C:

Conversations for the Faith Community

What is your faith community’s perspective on and solution for the reality of injustice and evil in this world?

How important do you think it is for people outside of your faith community to share this perspective? How open or closed to your solutions have you found people of other perspectives to be? What are some caring, humble, nonjudgmental ways you could demonstrate this solution to people who hold different views?

Do all faith communities define injustice and evil the same? If not, why not? What does your faith community have to offer to a postmodern person who faced a loss such as Kate’s family and friends faced?

From a postmodern perspective, can such a loss even be considered to be unjust? What happens to the concept of justice in the absence of absolute truth?

What are the key shared values of your faith community, and how do they help build a strong, highly functioning community? What do you think would happen in your faith community if your list of shared values started shrinking, or if people gave verbal assent to them but failed to live them out in their relationships within the community?

To what extent do you think your assessment of the role of shared values in your faith community applies to society at large? To what extent does your faith community seek to be engaged with the local community, and to what degree is it an accepted participant in your local community?

What can your faith community do to become recognized by

people of differing perspectives as a community of safe, trustworthy people with whom they can establish relationships and cooperate for the benefit of the local community?



THE DESIRE OF THE AGES: TO KNOW GOOD AND EVIL

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God has made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some of it and ate it. She gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

A story from the ancient hebrew narrative*

Session 4

What About The God Question?

Conversations On How We Understand And Relate To God

At first glance, it could seem as if postmodernism and *traditional Christianity* are on a perpetual collision course. The transcendent, personal God of the Bible speaks absolute truth in opposition to finite individuals who deny absolute truth and define their own truth. People who acknowledge God's authority and submit to his standards for living in contrast to people who insist on the freedom to pursue whatever gives them pleasure and fulfillment. The commitment to reality as presented in the Bible versus a framework of reality primarily based on individual perceptions and values. The use of reason

"Everybody, regardless of what they believe, worships something."

to define and "prove" faith issues is in contrast to a preference for supernatural fascination and personal experience. With our foundational presuppositions at such extremes, is it any wonder that our differences have been acted out in sometimes fierce *culture wars* that have further heightened our polarization? But where is God in the middle of all of this? Perhaps, in the midst of the ideological and political turf-building and finger-pointing, we've lost sight of who this entity is in the midst of the ruckus.

Perhaps we ought to take a closer look at who this God might be—what we may have to do with God and God with us. Perhaps our understanding of and interaction with one another could be improved if we recognized that the God of the Bible is:



Show Group Viewing Segment 4:



Let's Start the Conversation

"Most people wind up being at least agnostic about there being some sort of God. Now even if it is a God of our own making and even if it is not much of a biblical picture of God, there are very few people even in a postmodern setting who would just say there really is no God. Most people at least are open to the possibility."

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

What are some of the ways people might describe this "some sort of God"? For example, what is God like? What really matters to God? What does God do? What does God want in relationship to people?

Considering all the possible (and sometimes conflicting) ideas about God, how might a person sort through all these perceptions to discover the "real" God?



Passionate about justice, beauty, the needs of the poor, the protection of the disenfranchised.

Approachable, able to be experienced personally and through a loving community.

Demonstrated in part through the earthly life of Jesus who hated religious hypocrisy and expressed great compassion for every individual—including women, minorities, children, and the outcasts of society.

Eager for people to come to him just the way they are to receive forgiveness and find meaning and fulfillment in life.

What if all of us admitted that we are human and as such don't have everything figured out when it comes to our knowledge of the spiritual realm?

What if we came together, each as travelers on a journey of faith, to discover more of who this "something up there" is and what God might have to do with us and our everyday lives?

Show Discussion Segment A:



We live in a culture in which most people admit the possibility that God could exist and in which Christians affirm that God does exist. So how important then, is it to *make room* for God in the culture, and admit God as a viable player in the cultural dialogue?

What do you think makes people uncomfortable about including God in the picture?

How much does the kind of God we believe in matter?

If the God of the Bible were to be included as part of the broader cultural landscape, what impact do you think it would have on the culture and on our self-perception?

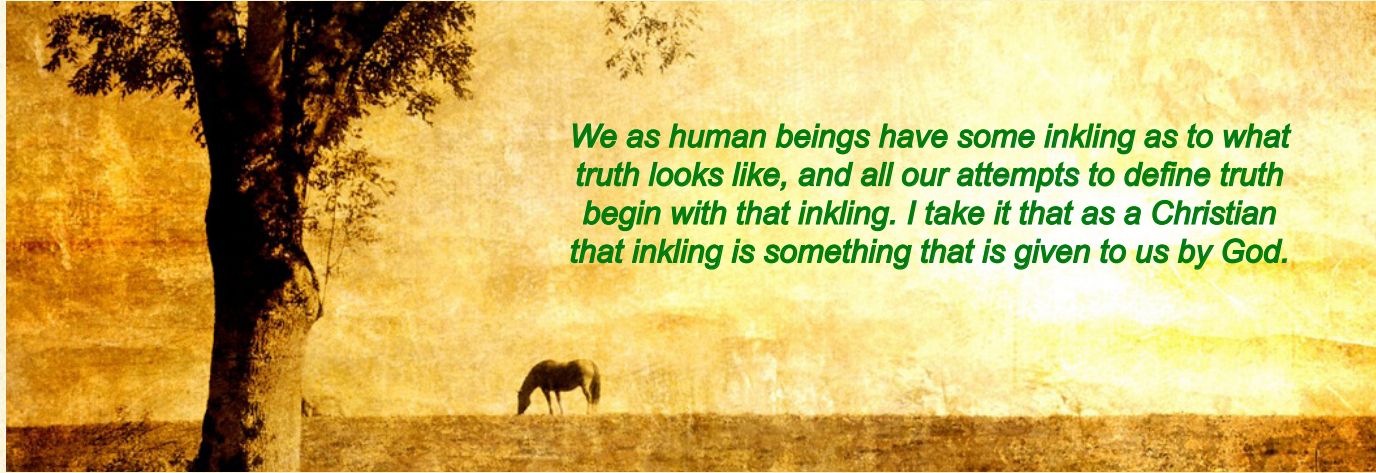
In what ways have other people's perspectives about God positively or negatively impacted your concept of God and your desire to know him?

When it comes to talking about God and how people connect with God, what creates barriers between people of diverse perspectives?

What stereotypes get in the way of meaningful dialogue?

In what ways does postmodern thinking support or refute the idea that Jesus equals Mohammed equally Buddha?

Why is it that discussions about God frequently degenerate into criticism about who believes what in areas of controversial moral and social behavior?



What steps can people take to focus on meaningful dialogue concerning the identity, character, and significance of God?

We as human beings have some inkling as to what truth looks like, and all our attempts to define truth begin with that inkling. I take it that as a Christian that inkling is something that is given to us by God.

How essential is God to daily life?

Does it really make any difference if we view God as being *out there* somewhere or if we view God as being personally involved in a meaningful relationship with us? Why or why not?

AN EXPRESSION OF WHO GOD IS

For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.

By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.

But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

*A song from the ancient hebrew narrative**

Personal Thoughts

- When you hear the word “*God*,” what are your first thoughts and images? To what extent do these words influence not only your response to people who do or don’t seek God but your attitude toward God?
- Which words best describe your spiritual journey,



particularly the nature of your relationship with God?

- What about your walk of faith or spiritual journey is most important to you?
- Which aspect of your spiritual journey are you most excited to share with others?
- Which books, people, experiences, movies, etc. have most shaped your view of and response to God?
- To what extent are these reliable sources for discovering who God is?
- Which other ways of discovering God might you want to pursue?
- Who would you ask, or where would you look, to find out reliable knowledge about God?

Show Discussion Segment B:



Conversations for the Faith Community

How is it possible for the faith community to take a stand for absolute truth without alienating the postmodern thinker?

How might people with a postmodern worldview see God in a different light if the faith community described God more in terms of goodness, justice, compassion, and faithfulness rather than in terms of moral

absolutes and ultimate truth?

Write down *religious* words and phrases that your faith community customarily uses to describe God and his relationship to people that may mean little or nothing to people *outside* the faith community. How could you communicate these concepts in terms that people of different perspectives might, more readily understand?

How willing are you to be available to people who have questions about God, even if it means stepping way out of your comfort zone, learning new terminology, researching what you do not know, and learning to express your views in less confrontational ways?

How might considering yourself to be a spiritual *learner* instead of someone who has all the answers, and viewing your experience with God as a journey instead of a one-time event, help foster meaningful dialogue with people whose viewpoints differ from yours?

Session 5

Being The Church In A Postmodern World

How can we be a connecting point between god and people? *We must learn to live in a way that is consistent with what we believe.*

This session's exploration differs a bit from previous ones. Our conversation will focus on the faith community—the church—and how it goes about doing its job of connecting God with people who do not know him. If you're not a church leader or involved in a faith community, or if you've never even been involved with the church or have withdrawn because of previous disappointment with it, you may be tempted to overlook this session. But please don't. You're an important part of the conversation. Besides, you may come to see the church in a way you've never seen it before.

The church as defined in the Bible is not a building. The church is a community of individual followers of Christ who have been given a mandate to demonstrate their love for God by obeying his commands and loving other people. Does that surprise you? It's no wonder. All of us can think of instances in which the church has not fulfilled that high calling. The pain of those failures has led some people to ignore the church, to dismiss followers of Christ as frauds, and worse, to write off God.

Within the church, there are people who struggle desperately with its failures. They are people of deep conviction. They are people of hope. And they are taking action.

They are not satisfied with status quo of a church isolated from the people it is called to engage.

So come, participate in the conversation. If you follow Christ, you'll be encouraged to *think out of the box* a bit about the church—its calling, its opportunities, its weaknesses. If you're a bit on the outside looking in when it comes to the church, this session will invite you to understand more about it—the real people, not the building or the ideological institution in the news. You'll see firsthand some of the issues with which followers of Jesus wrestle as they seek to live out their beliefs in an authentic way that makes a positive difference in their world.

Thanks for participating in the journey!

“In the past, people who are seeking truth might come to a church but the people who used to come to the church seeking truth aren't there anymore.”



Show Group Viewing Segment 5:

Let's Start the Conversation



The Brothers Williamson observe that *“when people in today’s culture seek this authentic relationship, seek realness with people, I think the church tends to be at a disadvantage. We have been seen as being hypocritical, as living double lives—‘Oh you do this on Sunday, and then you’re this way the rest of the week?’”*

“We do that. It doesn’t seem that way, that’s what we do.”



To what extent do you think the ways Christians *“do”* church has become a barrier instead of a bridge in connecting people with God?



What are the reasons that connecting with God through the church is particularly difficult for postmodernists?

What changes do you think would be helpful for Christians to make in order to overcome these obstacles?

SAGE ADVICE FOR CHURCHES

Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

From an ancient letter to a church pastor*

Show Discussion Segment A:



If the church were really being what it is supposed to be, what do you think it would look like? What would you like it to look like?

How might the activities, services, priorities, and appearance be different from what you see the church being today?

How might the local community—the world outside the church—be changed if the church were being all that it could be?

What about such a world would make it be easier for people to discover and connect with God?

What is it about church buildings, the people, and what happens in them that could be a barrier for most postmodernists?

What might postmodernists experience when they attend a typical faith community event or meeting?

How do you think this would help or hinder their connection with God?

Since the church is not perceived as a neutral environment, where are some places in your community in which people of differing perspectives could come together to talk, listen, and share with one another about identity, community, and spirituality?

Which of your friends might also want to participate in dialogue similar to what you have experienced through the *Rebellion of Thought* film and conversations?

What will you do to promote such interaction?

Show Discussion Segment B:

Personal Thoughts



- When you hear the word “church,” what comes to mind, and how close is that image to being what you believe the church is supposed to be?
- What kind of experiences have you had with the church?
- In what ways have those experiences helped or hindered your efforts to discover and connect with God?
- What have you learned through your conversations with people of differing perspectives—with postmodernists or with Christians—that has enriched your understanding of God or stimulated your desire to be more intentional in connecting with God?
- What might the next steps in your spiritual journey look like?
- In which direction do you want to go?
- How do you think the church, as individual followers of Christ and as an institution, might help you in your spiritual journey?
- If someone were listening to what you say, watching how you live your life, and observing how you treat other people, what do you think they would conclude about your beliefs, particularly your spiritual commitments? (Be honest!)
- How close would their perceptions be to who you believe you are?
- What changes do you need to make in order to live a more authentic life?

Show Discussion Segment C:

Conversations for the Faith Community



Postmodernists recognize the limitations of reason to fully explain the cosmos and are often less attracted to argumentative “*proofs*” than to an authentic life lived in relationship with God. How can members of your faith community encourage—in yourselves and others—this hunger for authenticity in a relationship with God and create a safe environment in which the love of God can be demonstrated?

Jesus called those who follow him to love other people. What does such love—not the emotion, but the priority of putting the work of God’s kingdom and the needs of others ahead of my own desires—require of individual followers of Christ and the faith community?

What in your personal attitudes or lifestyle makes it difficult to love as Jesus loved?

What about the attitudes and expectations of your faith community makes it difficult to love as Jesus loved?

What are some good ways to encourage fellow Christians to spend more time listening and less time telling as they interact with people of different persuasions?

Make a list of half a dozen or more positive ways you can connect with postmodernists. Then start making those connections.

Talk together about ways to communicate the gospel to postmodern thinkers such as how to build trust, how to build the bridge from trust to truth, how to share and explore the gospel as a co-discoverer rather than one who dispenses truth claims. Then start doing it.

This Discussion Guide provides five individual sessions designed for individual and/or group use following the viewing of the dvd "Rebellion of Thought - post modernism, the church and the struggle for authentic faith".

Interacting with video clips in the special 'Discussion Guide menu section of the dvd:

Each session includes:

- * A summary introduction of the topic(s) covered within the session.
- * Select music clips and video segments.
- * Effective discussion questions designed for participants who may or may not be part of a faith community (church).
- * A "Personal Thoughts" section that encourages individual reflection.

The Rebellion of Thought Discussion Guide explores the topic of postmodernism and its impact on culture, the faith community, and the search for living out an authentic faith.

Ideal for use by:

High school and older participants
Neighborhood discussion groups
Church retreats and small group studies
Groups interested in cultural/faith issues

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