

Postmodernism

By Harvey Solganick

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read Colossians 3:5; Mark 13:1–7; Acts 17:23, 29; John 14:6; and Matthew 7:13–14; then read the comments related to 2 Peter 2:1–3 in the section **It's In the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What is something in our culture (movie, song, commercial, common saying, etc.) that illustrates the following concepts?

- postmodernism—replacing universal, unchanging truth with truth that is relative and is created by each person
- relativity—situational answers to changing circumstances and truth
- pluralism—many ways or gods to achieve salvation

Assignment Two

Read Psalm 14:1; Romans 8:38–39; Colossians 3:8–10; and Hebrews 3:8; and then read the comments related to Ecclesiastes 1:1–11 in the section **It's In the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What is something in our culture (movie, song, commercial, common saying, etc.) that illustrates the following concepts?

- absurdity—meaningless values and no purpose in life
- idolatry—worshipping false gods
- deconstruction—believing in no values at all, clearing the way for new values

Assignment Three

Read John 14:6-7; then read the comments related to John 14:6-7 in the section **It's In the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: How can the truthfulness of God's Word prepare you to defend the concept of absolute truth and the existence of the true God, using logical truth, revelation and faith rather than opinion?

Scripture to Memorize

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38–39

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand a postmodern culture of nothingness, relativism, pluralism, and deconstruction and will know how to respond with the application of God's Word.

Harvey Solganick teaches Humanities and Philosophy at The College at Southwestern. Administratively, Harvey was the founding headmaster for Prestonwood Academy of Dallas. He is coordinator of Discipleship University at First Baptist Church of Dallas. Born in Brooklyn, New York, he is the son of Russian and Romanian Jews who immigrated to America in 1914. His PhD is from the University of Texas at Arlington. He has lectured and served on missions throughout Germany, Sweden, Russia, the Ukraine, Israel, Thailand, and China.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Suppose you walk into your favorite coffee shop. You see a variety of people telling stories to one another about their lives. They see the conversation as meaningless chatter and a creative game. They believe in many pluralistic values and in deconstructing any absolute truth. You sit down on the sofa and begin telling them the story of your life, especially your discovery of the certain truth of the Bible and your relationship with Jesus Christ. They respond with their own biased opinions, discussing whether absolute truth and an absolute God exist.

How can you help them realize they need to reach a deeper meaning in life with a true God and absolute truth? Would they accept or reject your story?

Postmodernism

Read 2 Peter 2:1–3 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Postmodernism tends to reject truth which is true for all groups, cultures, traditions or races. Instead, this philosophy holds that truth is relative and each person determines what is true for him or her. Postmodernism rejects the certainty of objective efforts to explain reality.

Verse 1. But false prophets . . . bring in destructive heresies . . . bringing upon themselves swift destruction. Postmodern people tend to think: *If I believe something to be true, that makes it completely true. If I live my life a certain way, that makes it the right way to live. I might change my mind tomorrow, but if I do, then what is true and right will change, as well.*

Verse 2. Many will follow their sensuality . . . truth will be blasphemed. Postmodern people believe that whatever brings pleasure and works for momentary happiness is acceptable. This is true even if it is morally destructive in the long term. There is no absolute truth for guidance.

Verse 3. and in their greed . . . exploit you with false words . . . condemnation from long ago is not idle . . . destruction is not asleep. The Bible records those across the centuries who worshipped false gods and practiced immoral acts, leading to personal and societal destruction. Today, postmodern thinkers do the same thing. They appeal to people through materialism and enticing language while rejecting any absolutes.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share a report.

Discussion Questions

How can you convince others your story, your truth and your moral lifestyle are an absolute foundation for living the “good” life now and forever, based on your reading of 2 Peter 2:1–3? How would you answer someone who makes the following statements?

“Everything people believe in is relative since everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion.”

“As long as you are happy and what you think and do makes you feel good, just do it!”

“All beliefs lead to the same god, so you can believe in whomever or whatever you like.”

Postmodern Vanity

Read Ecclesiastes 1:1–11 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verses 2–3. Vanity . . . All is vanity . . . all the toil. Postmodern people avoid thinking about where they are headed and what their lives mean. For example, workaholics keep themselves busy in order not to seek deeper, spiritual values or to reflect on the meaning of life.

Verses 4–5. generation goes . . . comes . . . earth remains forever . . . sun rises, and the sun goes down. Postmodern people see the generations pass on traditions and values, but they also see all those things change. They see their lives as fleeting moments in this world. They observe that the world can go on seemingly forever. The sun will rise and set regardless. Postmodern people tend to become complacent in their ruts and routines.

Verses 8–9. All things are full of weariness; . . . there is nothing new under the sun. The senses of postmodern people yearn to be excited by new situations and experiences. Learning how to live day by day with purpose and a firm foundation escapes them. Instead, they see life as merely a vapor, but when postmodern people are born again in Christ, everything changes and every day is a new day.

Verses 10–11. it has been already in the ages before us . . . no remembrance of former things, nor will there be . . . to those who come after us. Postmodern people believe nothing exists in this world forever. The past, present and future all seem nebulous. They blindly hope their future life becomes something rather than nothing; that there will be someone/somewhere and not nobody/nowhere.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share a report.

Deconstructing Postmodernism

Read John 14:6-7 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 6. Jesus said to him, “I am the way . . . the truth . . . the life; no one comes to the Father except through me. The false teachers of postmodernism proclaim that there are many ways to know God, that truth is individualistic and situational, and that lots of gods and idols are worthy of worship.

Disciples build the foundation of their lives on the one true God, revealed as truth in the Holy Scriptures. They believe in Jesus as the true God and as absolute truth. Disciples love the Lord with all their heart, mind and power of their will.

Disciples reject the concept that they can create truth through their own choices and thought processes. They embrace unchanging and absolute truth as embodied in triune God, most

clearly revealed in Christ and His written Word. Disciples are able to articulate what they believe and why they believe it.

Verse 7. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him. If you accept Jesus, you accept God the Father as well, since Jesus claims to be the Messiah. Although we cannot produce the “seeing” of Jesus as verification of our faith, we “see” Him in our hearts and the consequences of faith all around us. Because you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord, the change in your life is a witness or testimony to the truth of salvation.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share a report.

Discussion Questions

How can you teach someone to use *lordly logic* (the truth of Scripture) rather than opinion in developing a true belief in Christ as presented in John 14:6-7? How would you answer someone who makes the following statements?

“Everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion.”

“There are many ways to get to heaven.”

“Life is meaningless so whatever you believe and works for you is truth for the moment.”

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

These are the biblical foundations of truth defending the Christian faith against postmodernism:

The tradition of Christianity is based on eternal truth (John 1:1; Hebrews 3:8). Christianity is rational, consistent, coherent, and comprehensive for living an ordered life. The one true God (*Logos*) created an orderly universe (Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:17).

Once someone finds meaningful truth in Jesus Christ by special revelation, one cannot lose the eternal truth (John 14:6; Romans 8:38–39; Colossians 3:8–10; Mark 13:1–7). A simple relationship with Jesus Christ answers the complexity of life.

Objective, absolute truth is revealed to us by the inspired, inerrant Word of God (Isaiah 40:8).

Perceptions are based on individual opinions, while the Christian faith is built on truth based on the language of verifiable reality (Acts 17:29).

The biblical story of Jesus Christ is the greatest story ever told and is the revealed story of God's sovereign and only plan for redeeming mankind (2 Peter 2:1–3; Jeremiah 33:10–11).

The resurrection and life in the eternal kingdom are the firm hope of believers (Acts 17:18). The singular, narrow gate to the eternal kingdom is Jesus Christ, our Lord (Matthew 7:13–14; John 14:6).

The God of the Bible is the Creator of all things. History is *His story*. Believing in God is belief in Someone, not whatever or whomever. Believing in Jesus means accepting His story and His plan as absolute truth. Knowing Him leads to a purposeful and meaning life, not the futile vanity and empty words of the postmodern deconstruction relativist (2 Peter 2:1–3; Ecclesiastes 1:1–11; 5:2–3).

May His blessed assurance become your foundation as you stake your life on His truth (Romans 8:38–39).

Follow up Question

Given that you live in a postmodern world that often abandons absolute truth and embraces believing in whatever one desires, how does your life in Christ and the Bible give you a firm foundation for life?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.