


# A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM



A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's roots are massive and spread out over the ground and the ruins. The background shows more ruins and lush green foliage.

THE FRUIT OF  
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A  
TREE OF LIFE,  
AND HE WHO IS WISE  
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB



# PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLICAL *EVANGELISM* FOUND IN JOHN 4, “THE WOMAN AT THE WELL.”

TAKE

- TAKE THE INITIATIVE! JN. 4:6-9

OFFER

- OFFER GOD’S MERCY! JN. 4:10-14

IDENTIFY

- IDENTIFY SPIRITUAL NEEDS! JN. 4:9-10

CONFRONT

- CONFRONT SIN JN! 4:16-18

REJECT

- REJECT FALSE WORSHIP! JN. 4:19-24

REVEAL

- REVEAL CHRIST! JN. 4:25-26



**THE *CHURCH* AND THE  
*WORLD***



**WHY THE  
*WORLD HATES***

## A *RECENT* BATTLE

- Consider the record of the past century, for example. A hundred years ago, the church was beset by modernism. **MODERNISM** was a worldview based on the notion that *only science could explain reality*. The modernist, in effect, began with the presupposition that **NOTHING *SUPERNATURAL* IS REAL**.
- It ought to have been instantly obvious that modernism and Christianity were **INCOMPATIBLE AT THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL**. If nothing supernatural is real, then much of the Bible is untrue and has no authority; the incarnation of Christ is a myth (nullifying Christ's authority as well); and all the supernatural elements of Christianity, including God Himself, must be utterly redefined in naturalistic terms. **MODERNISM WAS ANTI-CHRISTIAN AT ITS CORE**.

- Nonetheless, at the beginning of the twentieth century many in the visible church were convinced that modernism and Christianity could and should be reconciled. They insisted that if the church did not keep in step with the times, Christianity would not survive the twentieth century. The church would become increasingly irrelevant to modern people, they said, and soon it would die. ***SO, THEY DEvised A “SOCIAL GOSPEL” DEVOID OF THE TRUE GOSPEL OF SALVATION.***
- Of course, biblical Christianity survived the twentieth century just fine. Wherever Christians remained committed to the truthfulness and authority of Scripture, the church flourished. But ironically, those churches and denominations that embraced ***MODERNISM*** became increasingly irrelevant—***THEY PRACTICALLY DIED OUT BEFORE THE CENTURY WAS OVER.***

***HALLELUJAH!***

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- Many grandiose but nearly empty stone buildings offer mute testimony to the deadliness of **COMPROMISE** with *modernism*.
  - But **MODERNISM** is now regarded as yesterday's way of thinking. It was a fad that came and went like withering grass remember (ISA. 40:8) **"THE GRASS WITHERS, THE FLOWER FADES, BUT THE WORD OF OUR GOD STANDS FOREVER"**
  - The dominant worldview in secular and academic circles today is **POSTMODERNISM**.

# THE *CHURCH* AND *PSEUDO TOLERANCE*

- ***“THE GRASS WITHERS, THE FLOWER FADES, BUT THE WORD OF OUR GOD STANDS FOREVER” (ISA. 40:8).***
- Those words from the prophet *ISAIAH* serve as a reminder of one basic truth: ***GOD’S WORD CANNOT CHANGE***. Conversely, the philosophies of the world could not offer a sharper contrast—here today and gone tomorrow. As we have already learned, ***MODERNISM*** was once our culture’s dominant philosophy. But it has given way to a new fad:

***POSTMODERNISM.***



- **POSTMODERNISTS** have repudiated modernism's confidence in science as the only pathway to the truth. In fact, postmodernism has lost interest in **"THE TRUTH"** completely, insisting that **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS ABSOLUTE, OBJECTIVE, OR UNIVERSAL TRUTH.**
- **MODERNISM** was, indeed, folly, and it needed to be cast aside. But **POSTMODERNISM** is a tragic step in the wrong direction. Unlike modernism, which was still concerned with whether basic convictions, beliefs, and ideologies are objectively true or false, **POSTMODERNISM SIMPLY DENIES THAT ANY TRUTH CAN BE OBJECTIVELY KNOWN.**
- TO THE **POSTMODERNIST**, REALITY IS WHATEVER THE INDIVIDUAL IMAGINES IT TO BE. THAT MEANS WHAT IS **"TRUE"** IS DETERMINED **SUBJECTIVELY** BY EACH PERSON, AND THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN **AUTHORITATIVE STANDARD** THAT GOVERNS ALL HUMANITY UNIVERSALLY.

- The **POSTMODERNIST** naturally believes it is pointless to argue whether opinion A is superior to opinion B. After all, if reality is merely a construct of the human mind, one person's perspective of truth is ultimately just as good as another's.
- Having given up on knowing **OBJECTIVE TRUTH**, the postmodernist occupies himself instead with the quest for “understanding” the other person's point of view. So, the words **TRUTH** and **UNDERSTANDING** take on radical new meanings.
- Ironically, **“UNDERSTANDING”** REQUIRES THAT WE FIRST OF ALL DISAVOW THE POSSIBILITY OF KNOWING ANY TRUTH AT ALL. AND **“TRUTH”** BECOMES NOTHING MORE THAN A PERSONAL OPINION, USUALLY BEST KEPT TO ONESELF.

- That is the one non-negotiable demand postmodernism makes of everyone: **NEVER THINK YOU KNOW ANY OBJECTIVE TRUTH.** Postmodernists often suggest that every opinion should be shown equal respect. Therefore, on the surface, postmodernism seems driven by a broad-minded concern for harmony and tolerance; it all sounds very charitable and altruistic. **BUT WHAT REALLY UNDERLIES THE POSTMODERNIST BELIEF SYSTEM IS AN UTTER INTOLERANCE FOR EVERY WORLDVIEW THAT MAKES ANY UNIVERSAL TRUTH CLAIMS—PARTICULARLY BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY.**
- In other words, postmodernism begins with a presupposition that is irreconcilable with the objective, divinely revealed truth of Scripture. **LIKE MODERNISM, POSTMODERNISM IS FUNDAMENTALLY AND DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.**



## *POSTMODERNISM* AND THE *CHURCH*

- Nonetheless, the church today is filled with people who are advocating postmodern ideas. Some of them do it self-consciously and deliberately, but most do it unwittingly—having imbibed too much of the spirit of the age, they are simply regurgitating worldly opinion. The evangelical movement as a whole, still recovering from its long battle with *modernism*, is not prepared for a new and different adversary. Many Christians have therefore not yet recognized the extreme danger posed by *postmodernist* thought.

- **POSTMODERNISM'S** influence has clearly infected the church already. Evangelicals are toning down their message so that the gospel's stark truth claims don't sound so jarring to the postmodern ear. Many shy away from stating unequivocally that the **Bible is true** and all other worldviews are false. Some who call themselves Christians have gone even further, purposefully denying the exclusivity of Christ and openly questioning His claim that He is the only way to God.
- But the biblical message is clear. **JESUS** said, **"I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT THROUGH ME"** (JN. 14:6), and **"HE WHO DOES NOT BELIEVE THE SON SHALL NOT SEE LIFE, BUT THE WRATH OF GOD ABIDES ON HIM"** (JN. 3:36, NKJV).



- Again and again, Scripture stresses that Jesus Christ is the only hope of salvation for the world. ***“THERE IS ONE GOD, AND ONE MEDIATOR ALSO BETWEEN GOD AND MEN, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS” (1 TIM. 2:5). ONLY CHRIST CAN ATONE FOR SIN, AND THEREFORE ONLY CHRIST CAN SAVE.***
- Those truths are *antithetical* to ***postmodernism’s*** central tenet. They make exclusive, universal truth claims declaring Christ the only true way to heaven and all other belief systems erroneous. That is what Scripture teaches. It is what the true church has proclaimed throughout her history. ***IT IS THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY.*** And it simply cannot be adjusted to accommodate postmodern sensitivities.
- In spite of the Bible’s clarity, many Christians just pass over Christ’s claims to ***EXCLUSIVITY*** in embarrassed silence. Even worse, some in the church, including a few of evangelicalism’s best-known leaders, have begun to suggest that people can be saved apart from knowing Christ.

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- BUT CHRISTIANS CANNOT CAPITULATE TO **POSTMODERNISM WITHOUT SACRIFICING THE VERY ESSENCE OF OUR FAITH.**
  - The Bible's claim that Christ is the only way of salvation is certainly out of harmony with the postmodern notion of **"TOLERANCE."** But it is, after all, what the Bible plainly teaches. And the Bible, not postmodern opinion, is the supreme authority for the Christian. **SCRIPTURE ALONE SHOULD DETERMINE WHAT WE BELIEVE AND PROCLAIM TO THE WORLD.**
    - WE **CANNOT WAVER** ON THAT, NO MATTER HOW MUCH THIS **POSTMODERN** WORLD COMPLAINS THAT OUR BELIEFS MAKE US **"INTOLERANT."**

## *INTOLERANT TOLERANCE*

- **POSTMODERNISM'S** veneration of **TOLERANCE** is its most obvious feature. But the version of **"TOLERANCE"** its adherents peddle is actually a twisted and dangerous corruption of *true virtue*.
- Incidentally, tolerance is never mentioned in the Bible as a virtue, except in the sense of **PATIENCE**, **FORBEARANCE**, and **LONGSUFFERING** (cf. **EPH. 4:2**).
- In fact, the contemporary notion of tolerance is a pathetically feeble concept compared to the love Scripture commands Christians to show even to their enemies. **JESUS** said, **"LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO HATE YOU, BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU, PRAY FOR THOSE WHO MISTREAT YOU"** (LK. 6:27–28; cf. vv. 29–36).

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- When our grandparents spoke of tolerance as a virtue, they had something like that in mind. The word once meant respecting people and treating them kindly even when we believe they are wrong. But the postmodern notion of tolerance means we must never regard anyone else's opinions as wrong.

- ***BIBLICAL TOLERANCE*** IS FOR ***PEOPLE***; ***POSTMODERN TOLERANCE*** IS FOR ***IDEAS***.

- Accepting every belief as equally valid is hardly a real virtue, but it is practically the only kind of virtue ***postmodernism*** knows anything about. ***TRADITIONAL VIRTUES*** (including ***HUMILITY***, ***SELF-CONTROL***, and ***CHASTITY***) are openly scorned, and even regarded as transgressions, in the world of ***POSTMODERNISM***.