

## 1. As Christians we know that truth is essential

- A. We worship a God of truth – follow a Savior who came to testify of the truth  
The Holy Spirit was given to guide us into truth – the book we study claims to be the truth

- B. So we have a faith that is built upon and sustained by truth – a truth that is *absolute truth*

**Question:** What do we mean when we say something is absolute truth?

- A. It is a truth that applies to all people – everywhere – it provides a final, ultimate standard
  - 1). Example: The Bible says that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone  
That is a standard that applies to all people everywhere = it is *absolute*

## 2. Problem: Many in the church are rejecting the thought of absolute truth

- A. Stats from Josh McDowell from a study of church youth who claim to be born again  
Young men and women who claim to have trusted in Christ – are forgiven – on way to heaven  
**1991** – 52% claimed that they believed there was no such thing as absolute truth  
**1994** – That number increased to 62%  
**1999** – Rose to 78% (remember - church kids! Claiming to be saved and forgiven!)  
**Today** – 91% of professing born again church youth say - no such thing as absolute truth!
  - 1). There is no ONE truth that applies to all people every where
- B. Fewer than 4% of these youth believed that the Bible is the infallible word of God
  - 1). By infallible I mean that the Bible is dependable and without error

**Point:** These statistics prove the church is losing the battle for truth

- A. This is huge – to lose the battle here means we lose it everywhere  
**We stand by the truth: Eph 6:14 (ESV)** *Stand* therefore, having fastened on the *belt of truth*...
  - 1). We stand by the truth – lose this and we don't stand as individuals or as a church
- B. Without truth the church becomes irrelevant – just another social club with very little to offer
  - 1). Which would explain why church attendance has gone from 47% of Americans in 1990  
To less than 25% now! We've lost what makes us distinct! What makes us effective  
**Jn 8:32 (ESV)** and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
    - a). If we don't give people truth – we give them nothing that sets them free  
Free from their sin – guilt – and eternal damnation
    - b). We might entertain them – we may be able to pack out the pews  
But we give them nothing of spiritual value
  - 2). The church that is letting truth slip away – regardless of how many are attending  
Is a church that is slipping away from being useful in the kingdom of God
    - a). I don't care how many people they are putting in the pew

**Transition:** But how did we get here – where truth is becoming so hard to find?

- A. We need a quick history lesson that will take us through two ages of mankind
  - 1). We need to look at the age we live in – called *"Postmodernism"*
  - 2). But to understand Postmodernism we need to look at the age the preceded it *"Modernism"*
  - 3). Then we'll look at the natural result of these two – *"Relativism"*
- B. We'll end up looking at how all of this has affected the church
  - 1). Hopefully in understanding these things we will be able to stand against it

## I. THE AGE OF THE MODERNIST

Here the foundations were being laid for the age we now live in

## 1. The age of Modernism was approx. 200 years – 1780-1980

- A. Modernists believed that only science could explain reality
  - 1). Therefore they believed that nothing supernatural was real  
Supernatural = anything that couldn't be explained through a scientific explanation
- B. This idea naturally got rid of God and the Christian faith
  - 1). Because you can't take God or faith into a laboratory and do scientific tests upon them

**Conclusion:** God can't be real and anybody who believed in Him was uneducated and unsophisticated  
They were weak – clinging to myths and wives tales that couldn't be validated scientifically

**Point:** Modernism was anti-Christian to the core

- A. But it got rid of God – what the unbeliever wants to do (Romans 1) – so it was embraced

**Transition:** Something very important happened around the middle of the Modernists era

- A. This gave a massive boost to the movement

## 2. The entrance of the theory of evolution

- A. Charles Darwin wrote two books
  - 1859 he wrote – “The origin of the species”
  - 1871 he wrote – “The descent of man”
- B. This theory was widely embraced because it fit the Modernist manifesto perfectly
  - 1). It got rid of the supernatural by supposedly providing a scientific explanation
  - 2). It provided a powerful lie that told man the universe could come into being without a creator

**Transition:** Let's move to the next point on the Modernist timeline

## 3. The retreat of the church

- A. Even though the conclusions of the Modernist were in direct conflict with Scripture
  - 1). Many in the church were intimidated by this new scientific thought – the heroes of the day  
The church felt if it stood against this scientific onslaught it would become irrelevant
- B. In an attempt to remain important the church decided to cozy up to the Modernist
  - 1). Many embraced evolution – but linked it to Christianity – calling it “Theistic evolution”
  - 2). Now we could say “You're right BUT so are we! God did create but used evolution to do it”

**Thought:** There is a huge problem for the Christian that wants to embrace God and evolution

- A. He or she has the same burden of proof that the secular scientist does
  - 1). There needs to be proof of evolution where you say God is involved or not – it isn't there  
**Philip Johnson, law professor at Berkeley:** If we say, "Did a bacterium by gradual steps turn into a lobster or an insect or a worm..." most people ask "Is it possible God could have done it that way?" That's a boring question. Of course it is possible. But if God is in the picture at all, then what's the evidence that he did change a bacterium by gradual steps into a worm? *There's no evidence. It is not recorded in the fossils. It's not testable in the laboratories. It's something that if anybody believes it, they believe it on faith, faith in evolution.*
- B. The question isn't – Could God have used evolution to bring all this about – of course He could
  - 1). But if He did there'd be evidence in the fossil record – transitional – missing link – there isn't!  
**G. K. Chesterton:** The evolutionists seem to know everything about the missing link except the fact that it is missing.
- C. So the church lacked the strength to stand up and say “In this case science is wrong”
  - 1). Science is great when it gives us things like medicines – but lousy when it comes to God
  - 2). We think scientists are neutral – honest – looking for facts without any bias – NO!
    - a). Like any unbeliever (Rom 1) they have a bent against God  
They want to suppress the truth – and are willing to replace it with a lie

- 3). Listen to these two quotes from famous scientists – how they suppress the truth  
**Francis Crick** (Discovered DNA) “Biologists must *constantly keep in mind* that what they see was not designed, but rather evolved.”  
**Richard Dawkins** (famous evolutionist) “Biology is the study of complicated things that *give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose.*”

**Question:** But the Modernist thought they’d done away with God for good

- A. Remember the famous saying of Nietzsche in the 1800’s - *“God is dead”*
- B. This became popular again in the 60’s – Time magazine cover 1966 – *“Is God dead?”*
  - 1). Referring to an article in the magazine on the growing atheist movement in America
- C. As believers we may scoff at that - but is the thought of the true Biblical God dying in our nation today
  - 1). Could the majority of Americans today be described by Paul in Romans 1:28  
 As those who think God is not worthy to be acknowledged at all  
**John Piper quoting from Future Grace:** There are some who naively cling to the nostalgic memory of God. The average churchgoer takes a few hours out of the week to experience the sacred... But the rest of the time, he is immersed in a society that no longer acknowledges God as an omniscient and omnipotent force to be loved and worshiped... Today we are too sophisticated for God. We can stand on our own; we are prepared and ready to choose and define our own existence.
  - 2). Our nation plays at religion – still put in God we trust on our money  
 But the true God of the Bible is no longer a part of our nations thinking – He has been removed
    - a). I’m amazed at how many atheists I witness to now – used to be rare

**Internal Summary:** Modernist Timeline so far – the attempt to remove God

- A. They started with the idea that nothing supernatural is real – so God can’t be real
- B. Darwin comes along with his “supposed” scientific proof to validate that theory
  - 1). We don’t need a God for the creation we see – this can all happen apart from any deity
- C. Rather than standing the church capitulates - compromising scripture to remain relevant

**Transition:** That laid the groundwork for the next stage – “postmodernism” – Unfortunately got worse

- A. At least the modernists cared about truth - just looked for it in the wrong places
  - 1). The Postmodernist doesn’t care about truth at all
- B. Let me give you some of the characteristics of the postmodern age (thanks Norman Geisler)
  - 1). Here is where we will see how all this has affected the church

## II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POSTMODERN AGE

### **First: The death of God (already seen this)**

#### **1. This began in the modern age and has carried on**

- A. This set the stage for the chaos we are seeing today  
 When you remove God from man’s thinking anything goes – free fall

**Transition:** Let’s move to the second characteristic of our age that closely follows the removal of God

The death of God

### **Second: The death of man**

#### **1. Back to Darwin and his books**

- A. In the “Origin of the species” he killed off God
  - 1). There was no creator - animals evolved from lower life forms
- B. In the “Descent of man” he destroyed the value and worth of man
  - 1). Man was not created by God in the image of God

He is nothing more than an animal that has evolved a bit more

## 2. Once you reduce man to an animal you can treat him like one

- A. History has proven this to be true - when evolution is embraced man suffers
  - 1). Hitler embraced this idea and in his book *Mein Kampf* he wrote  
*"Evolution* has taught us to weed out the inferior breed and species, and if we're going to keep evolution going we need to weed out the inferior *human* breeds and species"
  - a). 12,000,000 died under Nazi Germany
  - 2). See same thought embraced under communism with same horrifying results
- B. Trend continues in the West – when God is removed and evolution embraced the slaughter continues
  - 1). Since Roe Vs Wade legalized abortion in 1973 an estimated 60,000,000 babies have died
  - 2). Why not! If man is nothing more than an accident that happened in some cosmic ooze
    - a). If that embryo has no creator - no value - no dignity  
 Just another animal - a bit more along in evolution scale – destroy it

**Point:** You remove the creator - you open the door to all kinds of evil

- A. Paul talks about the results of a society removing God from their thinking in Romans 1  
**Rom 1:29-31 (NIV)** They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, (30) slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; (31) they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

**Transition:** So God dies – then man dies – next step downward – *Truth dies*

- A. Here is where postmodernism comes rushing into the church
- B. Here is where we must look at the thought of *relativism* – *when truth dies relativism is born*

## THIRD: The Death of TRUTH (the entrance of RELATIVISM)

Again the Modernist were looking for truth – just in the wrong places

But Postmodernists don't believe there is truth to be found

### 1. This is a logical downward progression – can't go any other way

- A. When you get rid of God you also get rid of the Bible as a source of authority
  - 1). It is no longer a divinely authored book – just a compilation of man's thinking  
 Which may have been great when it was written but outdated for modern man

### 2. Problem: This leaves man to his own thinking

- A. He has no source of truth to check his thoughts against
  - 1). When we disagree where do we go to settle the argument – we have no final authority
- B. So you say "I think this is right." And I say "No I think this is right."
  - 1). Who is right? Who knows and how can we know? We have no standard of objective truth
  - 2). So we come up with the foolishness of relativism  
 "Hey I know! We're both right. What is right for you is right for you and what is right for me is right for me. What is true to you is the truth for you and what is true to me is the truth for me"

**Point:** That is relativism = There is no absolute, objective truth that is right for everybody

- A. With relativism truth changes with each individual

**Transition:** Bad enough this is alive and well in our society – but it has also come into the church

- A. We've rejected absolute truth and we're left with a form of relativism

---

## III. RELATIVISM AND THE CHURCH

We are going to look at three ways the loss of absolute truth has affected the church

See the new church *authority*. The new church *experience*. The new church *attitude*.

## 1. Relativism is seen in the church through the new church authority: **EXPERIENCE**

A. Because relativism denies the ability to know things for sure – there is no truth to stand upon

1). Since we don't trust the absolutes in the Bible we turn to another authority - *experience*

**Thought:** Where we use to interpret our experience through the Bible

If our experience contradicted the Bible we didn't allow it – we rejected it

A. But now so many interpret the Bible through their experience

1). Now we say the Bible must mean this because I know what I've experienced

2). So our emotions/feelings dominate us and overwrite the truth of God's words

a). I'm going to grumble and gripe because I feel like it

b). I'm not going to be thankful because I don't feel like it – don't care what God said

B. I can't tell you how many people I've counseled – showing them black and white truths from Bible

"I see what that's saying but I know what I feel. I know what I've experienced"

1). Fine – live in constant defeat – receive no peace from the Bible but know what God said

**Is 66:2 (NIV)** These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.

**Transition:** But when truth seeps away – what else is there – the new authority must become experience

A. Leads us to our next point

## 2. The new church experience is **CHAOS** rather than stability

A. It is the scripture that keeps everything grounded – stable – in our lives and in the church

1). Let the authority of the Bible erode and the result will be chaos rather than stability

B. We embrace the foolishness of relativism = where two opposites can both be considered to be true

1). Example we claim that the Bible is God's Word = absolute truth

And the Bible says there is only one way to God – through Jesus Christ

2). But many in the church today are saying there are many ways to God

**Question:** Do you see the chaos? The inconsistency there?

A. Those two thoughts can't connect – it can't be ONE way AND MANY ways at the same time

B. But that doesn't seem to be a problem in today's church influenced by the relativism around us

1). From World Council of Churches website - influencing Christians all over the world

Claim the denominations they work with influence some 550 million Christians

2). On their website they claim the Bible is the Word of God BUT also say

**From World Council of Churches website:** Because we have seen and *experienced* goodness, truth and holiness *among followers of other paths and ways than that of Jesus Christ,.....*

We find ourselves recognizing a need to move beyond a theology which confines salvation to the explicit personal commitment to Jesus Christ...

a). What was the source of authority? "Because we have seen and *experienced*"

b). Interpreting Scripture through experience NOT experience through Scripture

**Thought:** But it sounds so loving – so tolerant – it is the worst kind of intolerance and hatred

A. To say that another way that doesn't lead to heaven does!

1). Don't call that love – strange tolerance that tolerates somebody believing a lie that leads to hell

B. But that's the pressure today isn't it – to be tolerant – the new buzzword of relativism

**Transition:** WE have the new church authority = **Experience** rather than truth

We have the new church experience = **Chaos** and confusion rather stability that comes from truth

## 3. We have the new church attitude: **TOLERANCE** without discernment

A. Tolerance is a wonderful thing when used correctly

1). When we are *tolerant of people* we disagree with but still treat them with respect

- 
- 2). I am going to treat you kindly even though I want you to know I disagree with you
  - B. But today the idea of tolerance has morphed into a very dangerous form
    - 1). Today the pressure is to be *tolerant of ideas* rather than people
    - 2). To think somebody's ideas are wrong is to be intolerant (a hater) and a sign of arrogance
  - Thought:** It is interesting how the pressure has changed for the Christian
  - A. When I was first saved the pressure was to prove what I said was true was true
    - 1). We studied apologetics – to give reasons for our faith – the proof of God etc.
  - B. The pressure today is to be tolerant – therefore I must not claim to know the truth
  - C. It used to be we were silenced because we were afraid we couldn't prove the truth
 

Now we are silenced because we are afraid to say there is truth – one truth given by God

    - 1). Relativism pressures us to widen the way God has made narrow – like the WWCC has done
    - 2). So we're afraid to say to anybody – "God says there is only one way"
      - a). Even though we know that is the truth
 

Even though we know if they embrace any other thought it is a lie that will destroy them
  - Transition:** We have the new church authority = **Experience** rather than truth
 

We have the new church experience = **Chaos** and confusion rather than stability

We have the new church attitude = **Tolerance** without discernment
  - A. We're running out of time – this could be a series – maybe it will be one day
  - B. Right now I just want to hint at a couple of things – to shift your thinking a bit
    - 1). How do we stand against the lies of this postmodern age
- 

## IV. WE MUST RETURN TO THE TRUTH

### 1. You must choose what is going to be the final authority in your life

- A. You must fight the pressure of this age – get your Bible out – read it and believe it – every word
  - 1). This must be your guide – your authority – this must shape your thinking
  - 2). This is how we keep those lies from getting a foothold in our life
 

**Ro 12:1–2 (ESV)** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>(2)</sup> *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

    - a). Do not be conformed to the world – renew your mind with truth
    - b). Put the Bible down and you will be affected!
 

You're constantly hearing lies in the world – that poison will affect you
    - 1a). The only way to fight it is by constantly washing it out with truth
- B. Plus if the Bible isn't your authority – your emotions are
  - 1). This is the modern day Christian – up and down – thrown about by circumstances
    - a). Joyful today – tomorrow discouraged and down – no stability at all
  - 2). Spiritual maturity is learning how to control our emotions with truth
    - a). To let the scriptures rather than emotions control us – guide us
 

I can have joy, be thankful, be encouraged because God said
    - b). To be controlled by experience and emotions – hard way to go!

**Transition:** But what about those who say the Scriptures are old fashioned

Those who say that society has changed so Christianity must change with it! Hear that a lot!

- A. Sex before marriage was wrong 100 years today – but now it's normal – get with the times

Homosexuality was frowned upon at one time but we've grown now – times have changed  
Divorce – drugs – adultery – pornography are all acceptable in today's society

- B. Here's the answer for those who object in this way – and many do!  
1). Wash those lies out with scripture – renew your mind

## 2. The doctrine of **immutability**

- A. Theological term with a simple meaning = God never changes  
**Mal 3:6 (ESV)** “For I the LORD do not change...

**Heb 13:8 (ESV)** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

**Point:** Here is the answer to the relativism of our age where everything is constantly changing

- A. The answer is – While times change God doesn't  
While man's thinking changes – God's truth doesn't  
1). Therefore what He said was wrong 2000 years ago is still wrong today  
And what He said was right 2000 years ago is still right today  
2). Regardless of what anybody says or how much society has changed  
**Ps 119:152** Long ago I learned from your statutes that you established them to last forever

## 3. This is great news!

- A. Now we have a solid - stable - foundation to build our lives upon  
B. Something we can give ourselves totally too that won't change in a year or so – not a fad  
C. We have a standard we can apply to every decision we make that is sure – stable

---

## CONCLUSION

### 1. Postmodernism = The age of relativism

- A. Characterized by the removal (death) of God in society  
1). This leads to the death of man  
2). This leads to the death of truth and opens the door to the foolishness of Relativism  
a). Nobody is wrong - everybody is right - If I feel it's right it is

### 2. The solution - we must return to the Word of God as the final source of authority

- A. To the truth that never changes even though society does  
B. Here is our place of stability in a world that is characterized by chaos and confusion