

**50+ers & Culture:
Terms of Engagement**

**Who Are They?
A Lesson on Postmodernism**

June 13, 2008

**First, a look at the different
generations sitting next to
each other in our
assemblies...**

A Tale of Six Generations:

- Seniors (born before 1926)
- Builders (born 1927 - 1945)
- Boomers (born 1946 – 1964)
- Gen X (born 1965 – 1983)
- Millennials (born 1983 - 2000)
- ??? (born since 2000)

• <http://www.bellarmine.edu/documents/GenerationalComparisons.pdf>

Seniors / Builders (63+):

- Formative Experiences:
 - World War I, The Roaring 20s
 - The Great Depression, Rationing
 - Automobile, Radio, Pearl Harbour
 - World War II, Korean War
 - Family, School, Church
- Common Characteristics:
 - Hard Workers, Savers
 - Loyal, Dependable, Stable
 - Cautious, Intolerant

Seniors / Builders (63+):

- Religious Characteristics:
 - Committed to Church
 - Loyal to faith group
 - Interested in World Missions
 - Interested in studying Scripture and Theology
 - Sacrificial Givers
 - Attractional Model of Church

Boomers (44-62):

- Formative Experiences:
 - Cold War, Civil Rights, Technology
 - Financial Prosperity, Space Race
 - Television, Rock and Roll, Vietnam
 - Assassinations, Energy Crisis
- Common Characteristics:
 - Educated, Media-oriented, Shallow
 - Question authority, Cause-oriented
 - Action-oriented, Independent
 - Wealthier than their parents, Divorced

Boomers (44-62):

- Religious Characteristics:
 - Committed to relationships
 - Supportive of people
 - More withdrawn into the Church
 - More Tolerant of Differences
 - Want Experiences with faith
 - Givers from abundance
 - Want Faith that meets needs
 - Rather give than go
 - Attractional Model of Church

Gen X (25 – 43):

- Formative Experiences:
 - Roe V. Wade, Economic Woes,
 - High Tech, Video Games and MTV
 - Music, Music, Music
 - Gulf War, AIDS, African Famine
- Common Characteristics:
 - Desire Practical Education
 - Freedom, Community Causes
 - Neglected/Lonely, Slow to commit
 - Reject Boomer Values, Relational

Gen X (25 – 43):

- Religious Characteristics:
 - Committed to family and friends
 - Shorter Attention Spans
 - Want less structure; very practical
 - Increasingly non-denominational
 - Slow to commit to church leadership
 - Spiritual, not religious
 - More likely to tithe outside the church
 - Rather go than give
 - Moving towards Missional Model of Church

Millennials (8 – 24):

- Formative Experiences:
 - End of Cold War, 9/11 attacks
 - Collapse of Communism
 - Incredible Technologies
 - More Attentive Parents
- Common Characteristics:
 - Thrive on Change, Local Focus
 - Fast pace of life, Adept at high-tech
 - Poor verbal skills, Low Trust of Adults
 - Not shocked by anything

Millennials (8 – 24):

- Religious characteristics:
 - Spiritual, not traditional
 - Love the ancient rites of the church
 - Passionately tolerant
 - Non-denominational
 - Postmodern
 - Relational
 - Love to serve and go
 - Love to sing and worship
 - Missional Model of Church

Postmodernism...

**WHAT IS
POSTMODERNISM?**

- It simply describes a huge change in the thinking of society. We can see its effects everywhere, from TV to our teens' beliefs.
- Basically, it is a reaction to Modernism, the pattern of thinking that has gripped Western society for almost 400 years.

MODERNISM

- Taught that the universe was a well-ordered machine, with laws set in place by God.
- Humanity had but to discover these laws, and the universe could be controlled.
- Humanity and human thinking is elevated to the highest level.
- Individualism becomes very popular.

MODERNISM

- There is objective, certain truth in the universe, which can be discovered by the use of human reason.
- By finding truth and knowledge, humanity would make the earth continually better and more prosperous.
- Humanity was very optimistic about their chances of ending all wars, famine, and other social evils.

MODERNISM

- Nothing could be “true” if it could not stand the test of human reason.
- Miracles came under heavy attack, as did the supernatural aspect of God, and faith.
- The Holy Spirit faded from view in the Christian religion.
- Christianity became very formal, intellectual, and “reasonable”.

Star Trek and Modernism

- - the crew included persons of various nationalities, all working together for the good of humankind
- - they believed that the “truth was out there”, and they must discover the laws of the universe, in order to gain the knowledge needed for a better life for all.
- - Spock was the ideal Modern Man, completely rational and with emotions in perfect check. His reason in the face of other’s emotion repeatedly saved the day on the Enterprise.

POSTMODERNISM IS A REACTION TO THIS THINKING

- Basically, it comprises two parts:
- 1) A rejection of the abilities of human reason and an openness to “know” things by our experience
- 2) A rejection of the idea of absolute, objective truth.

**THIS IS BOTH GOOD AND
BAD NEWS FOR THE
CHURCH**

**1) A REJECTION OF THE ABILITIES
OF HUMAN REASON**

- The newest generation doesn't believe that human reason can answer all questions
- The optimism that humanity can make the world a better place has been replaced by a gnawing pessimism that things will continue to deteriorate.
- Something can be "true" without being fully understood

**1) A REJECTION OF THE
ABILITIES OF HUMAN REASON**

- Science doesn't hold all the answers for the universe. Things such as intuition, psychics, aliens and other life forms, are all commonly believed.
- The "X-Files", "Roswell", "Supernatural", and "Psychic Chat" are all symbols of this new type of thinking.

1) A REJECTION OF THE ABILITIES OF HUMAN REASON

- Postmoderns are open to the supernatural in a way that hasn't been seen for centuries.
- ***This is great news for the Church!***
- However, if the church doesn't provide a faith that is vibrant, and reflecting a supernatural God, they will look to Eastern religions, and other cults.

1) A REJECTION OF THE ABILITIES OF HUMAN REASON

- Pentecostals are in an ***excellent position*** to reach out to this generation. We believe in a supernatural God, who moves in the lives of His people supernaturally, through the Holy Spirit.

2)A REJECTION OF THE IDEA OF ABSOLUTE TRUTH

- Postmoderns no longer believe in absolute, objective truth.
- Something can be true for one, but not for another.
- Each can believe what he/she wants, all are correct.
- Human intellect is no longer the arbiter of what is true. What is true depends on who you are, where you live, and what you feel.

2)A REJECTION OF THE IDEA OF ABSOLUTE TRUTH

- Teens are much more accepting of the beliefs of their friends, even those completely contrary to scripture.
- All forms of belief and lifestyle are accepted as normal
- Christianity stands out more than ever because it claims to be “the only way”

2)A REJECTION OF THE IDEA OF ABSOLUTE TRUTH

- *The Christian claim of the exclusivity of Christ now runs counter to the prevalent social thought of today*
- There is no “one way”; we’re arrogant and bigoted to think that we have the only way to God

How different is our worldview?

- “I am very uncomfortable when I am around...”
- Pedophiles 96%
- Former Mental Patients 67%
- Policemen 36%
- Born-Again Christians 34%
- Muslims 17%
- Jews 9%

• Source: *Maclean's*, July, 2006

Postmodernism and Star Trek: The Next Generation

- Unlike the original, the crew now includes other species throughout the universe
- Humans are not capable of understanding the universe alone
- The burden for knowledge extends to all living things
- The crew is not trying to “conquer” the universe; they are partners with the universe

Postmodernism and Star Trek: The Next Generation

- Spock is replaced by Data, an android, who is perfectly rational, yet longs to be human. He feels he is incomplete because he has no emotions, sense of humour, or ability to dream.
- - Data alone doesn't provide the crucial help; other skilled in the intuitive and affective dimensions of human life also help

Postmodernism and Star Trek: The Next Generation

- Counselor Troy, a woman psychic is especially helpful.
- In contrast to the original series, which essentially ignored questions of God and religious belief, the Next Generation shows great interest in the supernatural, embodied in the character “Q”.

HOW MUST THE CHURCH RESPOND?

Two Areas:
A) Outreach
B) Discipleship

A1) We must reaffirm our commitment to a supernatural God

- We must reaffirm our commitment to a supernatural God, who acts supernaturally in our lives.
- We must reemphasize the role of the Holy Spirit who connects with us daily on a personal level, in ways that we do not even fully comprehend
- We must continue to proclaim our belief in miracles and the gifts of the Spirit

A2) We must declare again that there is absolute truth

- We must declare again that there is absolute truth, and it is found in God.
- All beliefs are not correct, and all paths do not lead to Heaven
- There is one God, and He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ
- Human reason is NOT the arbiter of truth, but God is.

B1) "Church" will change

- We must recognize that discipling Postmoderns will not look the same as it was for the Boomers or Builders
- Apart from their rejection of rationalism and the concept of absolute truth, many in this generation share other traits:

- 1) A thirst to be "real" and a longing for community – *authentic is a key word*
- 2) A dislike of formal denominations and practices
- 3) An interest in the ancient faith
- 4) The love of media and narratives
- 5) A dislike of formalism

- The youngest generations may be seen as very spiritual, but not religious

- "Imbued with the vision of God's program for the world, we must claim the new postmodern context for Christ by embodying the Christian faith in ways that the new generation can understand. In short, under the banner of the Cross, we must boldly go where no one has gone before."
- S. Grenz
