CURREN T TRENDS
PARADIGMS LOST

Good (and Bad) News for the Thoroughly Modern World
Part One
“New Deep” 
by John Mayer
I’m so alive
I’m so enlightened
I can barely survive
A night in my mind
I’ve got a plan
I’m gonna find out just how boring I am
And have a good time
Cause ever since I tried
Trying not to find
Every little meaning in my life
I’ve been fine
I’ve been cool
With my new golden rule
Numb is the new deep
Done with the old me
And talk is the same
cheap it’s been
Is there a God?
Why is he waiting?
Don’t you think of it odd
When he knows my address?
And look at the stars
Don’t it remind you just how feeble we are?
Well it used to, I guess
Cause ever since I tried
Trying not to find
Every little meaning in my life
I’ve been fine
I’ve been cool
With my new golden rule
Numb is the new deep
Done with the old me
And talk is the same cheap it’s been
Stop trying to figure it out
Deep will only bring you down . . .
Numb is the new deep
Done with the old me
I’m over the analyzing
tonight
Millard Erickson

Modern view of knowledge:

- certain
- objective
- good

Postmodern view of knowledge:

- uncertain
- \textit{not} objective
- \textit{not} good
Modernism: Good News/Bad News
What *is* Modernism?

- Ancient, Medieval and Modern
- Thomas Oden asks is modernism a . .
  - Time period (between the “two walls”)?
  - A moral phenomenon?
  - A worldview?
  - All of the above!
Modernism/Naturalism/Secularism

God?

Nature

Individual

God?

God?
Modernism/Naturalism/Secularism

God?

Nature

Individual

Mechanistic
Materialistic
Individualistic

God?

God?
Nihilism

God

Nature

Individual

So what?!?!
Existentialism

Individual

Objective/Subjective
Post-Modernism

There is no truth, only perception
What is Modernism?

The modern worldview:

1. “The world is a machine” (mechanistic)
   
   sense of control
   
   optimism
   
   pragmatism
   
   analytical thinking
   
   future orientation (e.g. planning, predicting)
What *is* Modernism?

The modern worldview:

1. “The world is a machine” (mechanistic)
   - measurability
   - order
   - fairness
   - frankness
   - luck
What is Modernism?

The modern worldview:

2. “Only matter matters” (materialistic)

“seeing is believing”

focus on the physical and visible
What is Modernism?

The modern worldview:

2. “Only matter matters” (materialistic)

   dualism evident in:
   - spiritual vs. physical
   - faith vs. science
   - private vs. public
What is Modernism?

The modern worldview:

2. “Only matter matters” (materialistic)
   - accumulation of things
   - athletic achievement
   - physical beauty and prowess
   - view of time
What *is* Modernism?

The modern worldview:

3. “I am alone” (individualistic)

- self-reliance
- contractual groups
- private ownership
- future orientation
- privacy
- moral relativism
Hebrews 13:7-8

7Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

8Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
2 Corinthians 10:5

5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.
CURRENT TRENDS
PARADIGMS
LOST

Good (and Bad) News for the Thoroughly Post-Modern World
Part Two
I. What is “postmodernism”? 

Depends on who you ask! People use the term “postmodern” in different ways.
I. What *is* “postmodernism”? 
   
   A. Huston Smith’s three types: 
   
   1. Minimal postmoderns: simply observe that there is no single worldview accepted by everyone. 
   
   2. Mainline postmoderns: believe no single worldview will *ever* be accepted by everyone again.
POSTMODERNISM

I. What is “postmodernism”?

A. Huston Smith’s three types:

3. Hardcore postmoderns: say “good riddance” to the days when major worldviews prevailed because they oppressed people.
POSTMODERNISM

I. What is “postmodernism”? 
   A. Huston Smith
   B. Millard Erickson’s “soft” and “hard” postmodernism:
      1. soft: rejects the absoluteness of science (and other modern excesses) without denying the possibility of truth.
I. What is “postmodernism”?
   A. Huston Smith
   B. Millard Erickson’s “soft” and “hard” postmodernism:
      2. hard: rejects any notion of truth, objectivity or rationality
POSTMODERNISM

I. What *is* postmodernism”?

A. Huston Smith
B. Millard Erickson
C. Stanley Grenz:
   From Mr. Spock to Data
POSTMODERNISM

I. What *is* postmodernism”?
   A. Huston Smith
   B. Millard Erickson
   C. Stanley Grenz
   D. Walter Truett Anderson: From “exoterica” to “esoterica”
POSTMODERNISM

EXOTERIC
  doctrinal
  objective
  external source of authority
  revelation
  exegesis
  outward symbols

ESOTERIC
  experiential
  subjective
  internal source of authority
  mysticism
  feelings
  inward transformation
POSTMODERNISM

EXOTERIC

organizational structures
attempts to order society
worship as information
Holy Spirit wrote the book

ESOTERIC

personal, individualistic
makes no such attempt
worship as celebration
Holy Spirit still inspires
I. What *is* postmodernism”?
   A. Huston Smith
   B. Millard Erickson
   C. Stanley Grenz
   D. Walter Truett Anderson
   E. Monte Cox
POSTMODERNISM

WEST v. EAST
Mechanical Personal
Material Spiritual
Individual Communal
POSTMODERNISM

MODERN
Be rational, be in control.
Plan ahead.
Big and complex is good.

POSTMODERN
Be loose, even lose control.
Focus on the here and now.
Simplify. Minimize.
POSTMODERNISM

MODERN
We can do it.
Be aggressive, aspire to greatness.
Law and order.

POSTMODERN
Go with the flow. Why fight it?
Chill.
Spontaneity.
POSTMODERNISM

II. What’s driving it?
   A. Simplest answer?
      Dissatisfaction with modernity.
II. What’s driving it?

B. Change in the way we view knowledge (Erickson):

1) For moderns, knowledge is certain, objective and inherently good.
2) For postmoderns, knowledge is NOT certain, NOT objective and NOT necessarily good.
II. What’s driving it?
   C. Cynicism about truth
      1. “Why ask why?”
POSTMODERNISM

II. What’s driving it?

C. Cynicism about truth

1. “Why ask why?”
2. “Numb is the New Deep”
POSTMODERNISM

II. What’s driving it?
   D. Four driving -isms:
      1. Pluralism
         a. urbanization
         b. mass communication
         c. immigration
         d. increased mobility and exposure to others
POSTMODERNISM

II. What’s driving it?
   D. Four driving -isms:
      1. Pluralism
      2. Relativism
II. What’s driving it?

2. Relativism

a. Three umpires:

1) “There’s balls and strikes and I call’em the way they are.”

(naive realist)
II. What’s driving it?

2. Relativism
   a. Three umpires:
      2) “There’s balls and strikes and I call’em the way I see’ em.”
         (perspectivalist or critical realist)
II. What’s driving it?

2. Relativism

a. Three umpires:

3) “There’s balls and strikes, but they ain’t nothin’ til I call’ em.” (postmodernist or radical perspectivalist)
POSTMODERNISM

“There is no lighthouse keeper. There is no lighthouse. There is no dry land. There are only people living on rafts made from their own imaginations. And there is the sea.”

(Dominic Crossan)
POSTMODERNISM

II. What’s driving it?

D. Four driving -isms:

1. Pluralism
2. Relativism
3. Individualism
4. Materialism
III. Implications for spiritual formation

A. Changes what it means to be “spiritual.” Spirituality can be customized from many options to suit one’s own tastes.
POSTMODERNISM

1. Phil Jackson’s “Zen Christianity”
POSTMODERNISM

1. Phil Jackson’s “Zen Christianity”
2. “JewBu”
POSTMODERNISM

1. Phil Jackson’s “Zen Christianity”
2. “JewBu”
3. Baha’i
POSTMODERNISM

1. Phil Jackson’s “Zen Christianity”
2. “JewBu”
3. Baha’i
4. Oprah spirituality
POSTMODERNISM

1. Phil Jackson’s “Zen Christianity”
2. “JewBu”
3. Baha’i
4. Oprah spirituality
5. *Eat, Pray, Love*
POSTMODERNISM

Self-identified “spiritual but not religious” rose from 24% in 2005 to 30% in 2009.
“The trouble when people stop believing in God is not that they thereafter believe in nothing; it is that they thereafter believe in everything.”

G. K. Chesterton
POSTMODERNISM

III. Implications for spiritual formation

A. Changes what it means to be “spiritual.”

B. Makes religious exclusivism (and evangelism) extremely unpopular.

C. Frees us from modern excesses
IV. Bridging the gap
   A. Must retool in light of these changes.
IV. Bridging the gap

A. Must retool in light of these changes.
B. Must build bridges using the raw materials of postmodernism.
POSTMODERNISM: Good News/Bad News

story spirituality holism experience tolerance
POSTMODERNISM

Humility . . . because
• “We know in part”
• We are messengers
• We follow Jesus

Confidence . . . because
• “We know in part”
• We are messengers
• We follow Jesus
CURRENT TRENDS
PARADIGMS
LOST
Making the Best of It
Part Three
Jeremiah 29:11

11““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."
4 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease.
Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."  

Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have.
They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the LORD. This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place.
Jeremiah 29:11

"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."
The relationship between “Christ and Culture”? Richard Niebuhr’s (1951) classic categories:

1. “Christ against culture.” Christians should withdraw from society to avoid being tainted by it.
2. “Christ of culture.” Christians should adapt the church to the culture in which they live.
MAKING THE BEST OF IT

The relationship between “Christ and Culture”? Richard Niebuhr’s (1951) classic categories:

3. “Christ above culture.” God is “neutral” on “culture”; Christians should embrace great diversity when it comes to Christian faith and practice.
MAKING THE BEST OF IT

The relationship between “Christ and Culture”? Richard Niebuhr’s (1951) classic categories:

4. “Christ and culture in paradox.” Christians must live in the tension between loyalty to Christ and conformity to culture.
MAKING THE BEST OF IT

The relationship between “Christ and Culture”? Richard Niebuhr’s (1951) classic categories:

5. “Christ transforming culture.” Christians live in the world to transform the culture.
MAKING THE BEST OF IT

Is John Stackhouse, Jr. right? Is “Christ and culture in paradox” the best answer option? Can we only hope to “make the best of it?”
MAKING THE BEST OF IT

Craig Van Gelder in Missiology (October 2002) on postmodern “bridges” and “challenges” . . .
MAKING THE BEST OF IT

Postmodern bridges—good news/bad news:

1. Spirituality
   a. Good news: now people take for granted the possibility of God or the supernatural
   b. Bad news: the relativistic, customized and personalized views of “God.”
MAKING THE BEST OF IT

Postmodern bridges—good news/bad news:

2. Community
   a. Good news: tapping into the desire among many to belong
   b. Bad news: to get past their objections to organized religion
MAKING THE BEST OF IT

Postmodern bridges—good news/bad news:

3. Story/Narrative

a. Good news: to present the gospel as story, not just principles and/or rules

b. Bad news: to not lose the truth in the midst of stories that all seem equally legitimate
MAKING THE BEST OF IT

Postmodern bridges—good news/bad news:

4. Preference for the experiential
   a. Good news: we do offer the possibility of an experiential encounter with the living God
   b. Bad news: experiential faith must be supported and sustained by an intellectual understanding of the faith
MAKING THE BEST OF IT

Postmodern bridges—good news/bad news:

5. Holism

a. Good news: the gospel properly understood does present a holistic view of creation

b. Bad news: presenting a Christian holism that takes sin seriously
MAKING THE BEST OF IT

Postmodern bridges—good news/bad news:

6. Individual preferences
   a. Good news: Christ can come into any and all contexts.
   b. Bad news: convincing people that the “finite” (God Incarnate as a Jew in ancient Palestine) can bear the “infinite” (the timeless message for all everywhere)
MAKING THE BEST OF IT

Postmodern bridges—good news/bad news:

7. Irony and Paradox
   a. Good news: You want irony? There’s plenty of irony here!
   b. Bad news: Can lead to relativism
Postmodern bridges—good news/bad news:

8. Openness to different ways of “knowing”:
   a. Good news: God can and does reveal Himself through intuition and emotion.
   b. Bad news: Grounding intuition and emotion in the facts of the gospel and getting our own folks to embrace these other ways of knowing.