NORM GEISLER INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

WITNESSING IN A POST-TRUTH WORLD

Dr. David Geisler

EQUIPPING THIS GENERATION TO REACH THE NEXT

"Conversational Evangelism will help you become the Christ-follower God intends you to be." J. WARNER WALLACE

Conversational EVANGELISM

Connecting with People to Share Jesus

David Geisler Norman Geisler

How do we make "...the best use of the time...?"

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil." Eph. 5:15-16



By understand the times we live in! See I Chronicles 12:32

HE WAS LOOKING FOR ANSWERS... AND FOUND SO MUCH MORE.

NORM GEISLER:

MOT QUALIFIED

How we dialogue depends on what people believe!

Notice that Paul's approach was different in these two passages (Acts 28; Acts 17). Why? Persuading them From the Law and Prophets (Acts 28:23)

...They came to him at his lodging in large numbers and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God; and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening" (Acts 28:23).



From the Law and Prophets

Paul's approach in Acts 28:23-24

The Apostles' aim was merely to show that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the Messiah (Acts 28:23).



Persuading them the nature of God Paul's approach in Acts 17:16-34

> "Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man."

Acts 17:29

What approach is this guy using?



What does their reaction tell you about his approach?



What might be the Apostle Paul's approach be if living here today?



"To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some."



WHAT DO WE NEED TO REMEMBER ABOUT WITNESSING TODAY?

"We live in a world in which people are reluctant to be told what is true. But they may be willing to see for themselves (as in a mirror) the inadequacies in what they believe by us asking them probing and thoughtprovoking questions." Dr. David Geisler

"A 2018 Barna Poll revealed that almost half (47%) of all practicing Christians Millennials think sharing your faith is wrong."

https://www.barna.com/research/millennials-oppose-evangelism/

"Yet these same Millennials have confidence in sharing their faith! 73% say they know how to handle objections, and 94-97% agree that the best thing their friends and loved ones can do is come to faith in Jesus."

https://www.barna.com/research/millennials-oppose-evangelism/

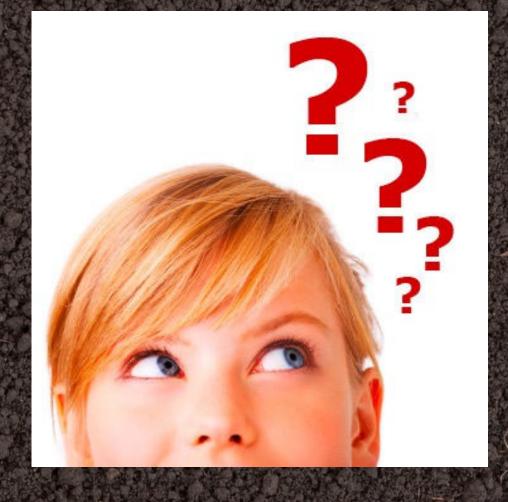
The bottom line is that on the one hand Christian Millennials believe that they should and need to share Christ with friends...



...yet on the other hand, their culture has convinced many that it is wrong to do so!



What Should We Conclude?



NEW PARADIGM AHEAD

Effective witnessing today begins with changing our witnessing paradigms!

Confrontational Rational Arguments Monologue Presentations Salesman Approach

NOW

THEN

Conversational Relational Bridges Dialogue Conversations Co-Traveller Approach



Can I suggest that we all need to better understand the times we live in!

See I Chronicles 12:32

- Why don't we have a greater heart for reaching the lost?
 Why has our world changed and made our evangelism task more daunting?
 - What are the signs of trouble in the east and west?
 - What are the conditions that created the environment for this crisis?
- III. What are the implications of postmodernism that affect receptivity to the gospel?
- IV. Why the need for pre-evangelism?
- V. Ten things to remember about using this new witnessing paradigm?
- **VI. A practical exercise!**
- VII. Some practical suggestions for taking that next step!



Why don't we have a greater heart for reaching the lost?

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- V. Ten things to remember about using this new witnessing paradigm?
- VI. A practical exercise!

VII. Some practical suggestions for taking that next step!

Key Perspective About EVANGELISM

Our problems in evangelism are not of methodology but of <u>MATURITY</u>! Other Reasons Why We Aren't Motivated To Reach The Lost.

1.We aren't totally convinced of the truth of Christianity! (Jn. 8:32)

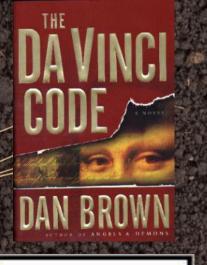
"I believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, but I don't believe it strongly enough that I am willing to tell others." (college student)

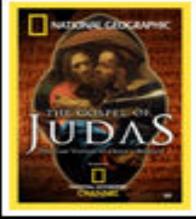
Becoming less certain...

52% of all American Christians think that at least some non-Christian faiths can lead to eternal life.

https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2008/12/18/many-americanssay-other-faiths-can-lead-to-eternal-life/

This Explains Why Many Are Questioning The **Biblical Story of Jesus**





The DaVinci Code The Lost Gospel of Judas The Lost Tomb of Christ The Golden Compass





Know The Truth

"and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:32 (ESV)



Other Reasons Why We Aren't Motivated To Reach The Lost.

2. We don't realize the degree to which we have been forgiven! (Luke 7:36-47)

"Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven —for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." (Luke 7:47, ESV)

Forgive

A Perspective To Remember

 The more we realize our sinful condition apart from Christ, the more we will realize the degree in which we have been forgiven.

— The degree in which you and I realize we have been forgiven a great debt will be the degree in which through God's power we will be able to love in return.

— This love will translate into having a great desire to serve God.

One key lesson we should learn from this story in Luke 7:47:

"If we fail to remember how much we were forgiven it will affect our passion and heart for serving the Lord." If you and I realize how much God has forgiven us, it will free us up... "There is no fear in love, but perfect love cast out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love." (1 John 4:18, ESV)

"We love because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19, ESV)



Other Reasons Why We Aren't Motivated To Reach The Lost.

3. We forget the urgency of the task.

"And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell." (Matthew 5:30, ESV)

A Sobering Verse

Reasons Why We Aren't Motivated To Reach The Lost.

Its not primarily a problem of methodology but maturity.

- We aren't totally convinced of the truth of Christianity! (Jn. 8:32)
- We don't realize the degree to which we have been forgiven! (Luke 7:36-47)
- We forget the urgency of the task. (Matt. 5:30)



Why Is Our Evangelism Task More Daunting Than Ever Before?



There has been an erosion of truth!

II. Why Has Our World Changed and Made Our Evangelism Task More Daunting?

What are the Signs of Trouble in Witnessing in the East and West?

Signs of Trouble Have Surfaced Even In The East

"Many students don't think that there is a standard of right and wrong. Rather, they believe that this is up to the individual. This means they do hold a standard of right and wrong themselves, but they feel that each person's standard of right and wrong differs from the other."

"Personally, I feel stuck as to how to proceed on with the conversation. It's like saying that this food is nice for me but may not be nice for you. They relegate the standard of right and wrong to personal preference."

- Former Student, East Asia School of Theology

Signs of Trouble Have Surfaced Even In The East

"I find that I'm shaken. Not in terms of my faith but in terms of how to answer such questions."

- Former Student, East Asia School of Theology

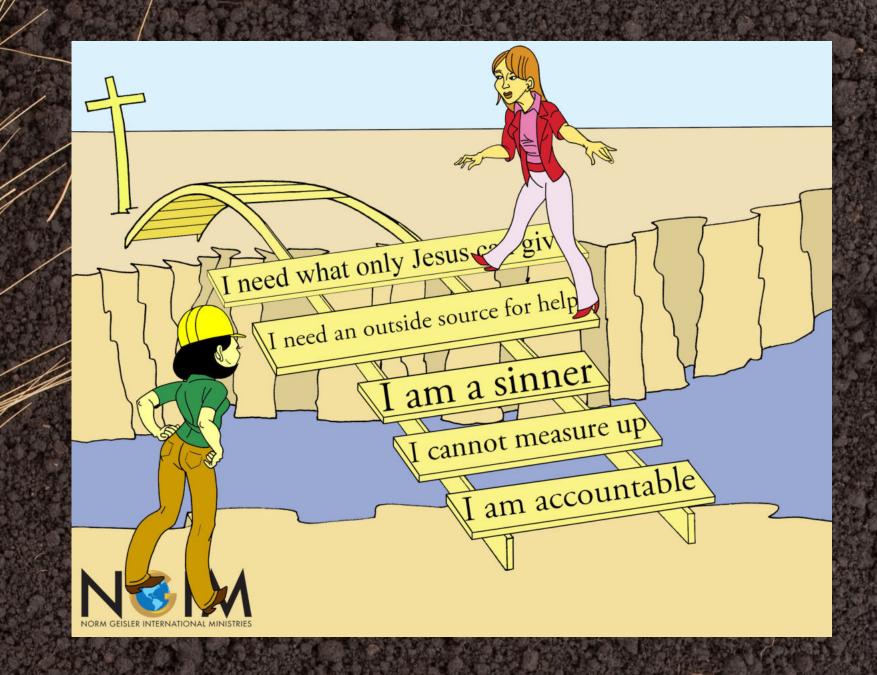
More Trouble...

"As a Campus Crusade Staff, I am trained in using the 4SL and some apologetics skills, but I have problems trying to integrate them during evangelism. When people indicate that they were not interested, I could only ask them for the reason and then invite them for an evangelistic bible study or share my personal testimony.

- Former student at East Asia School of Theology

Signs of Trouble Have Surfaced Even In The West

These problems in witnessing surfaced in the West as early as the 90's.





There is an INTOLERANCE

towards those who claim to know the truth!

What Has Gone Wrong?

"When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do." Psalm 11:3 (N.I.V.)

Key Question

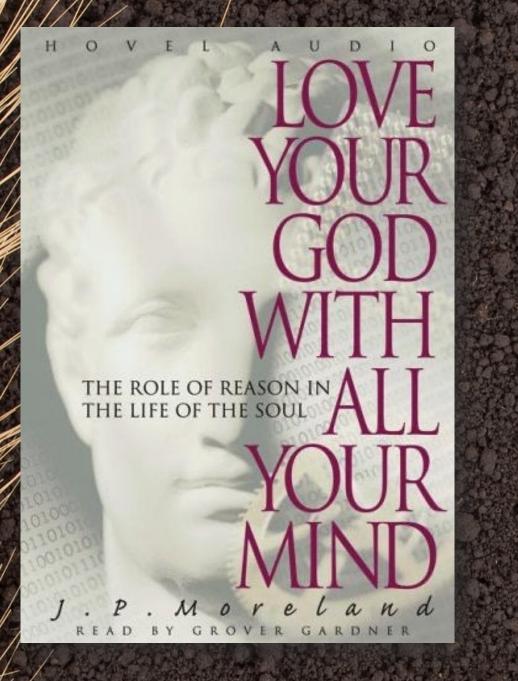
How can we do more effective evangelism in this kind of world?

Key Question

Before we can answer...

Key Question

What Are The Conditions That Created The Environment For This Crisis?





Dr. J. P. Moreland

"...a major cause of our current crisis consists of a world view shift from a **Judeo-Christian** understanding of reality to a post-Christian one."

J.P. Moreland, "Love Your God With All Your Mind," p.21 II. Why Has Our World Changed and Made Our Evangelism Task More Daunting?

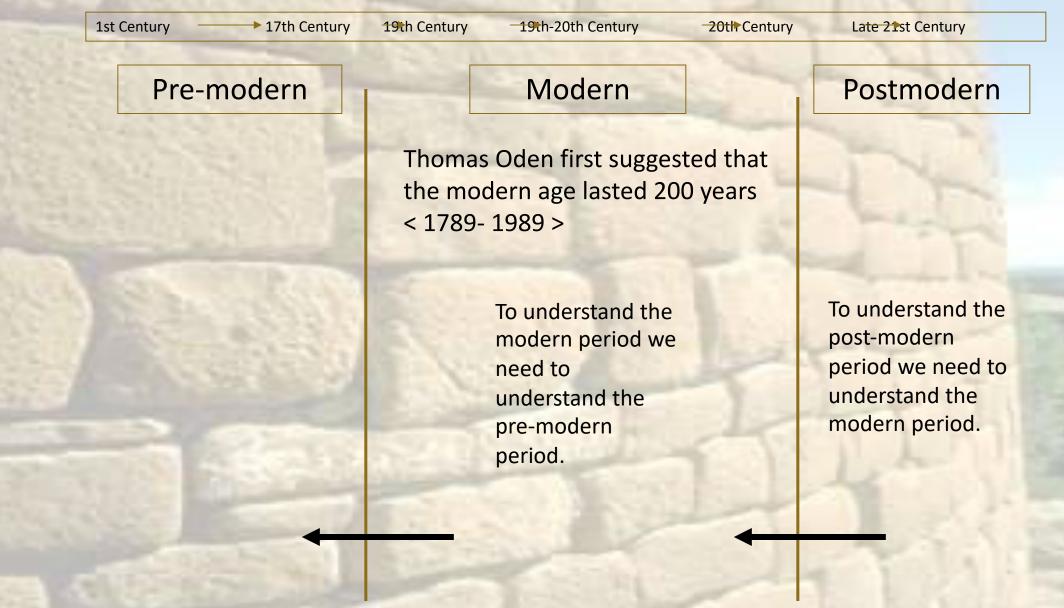
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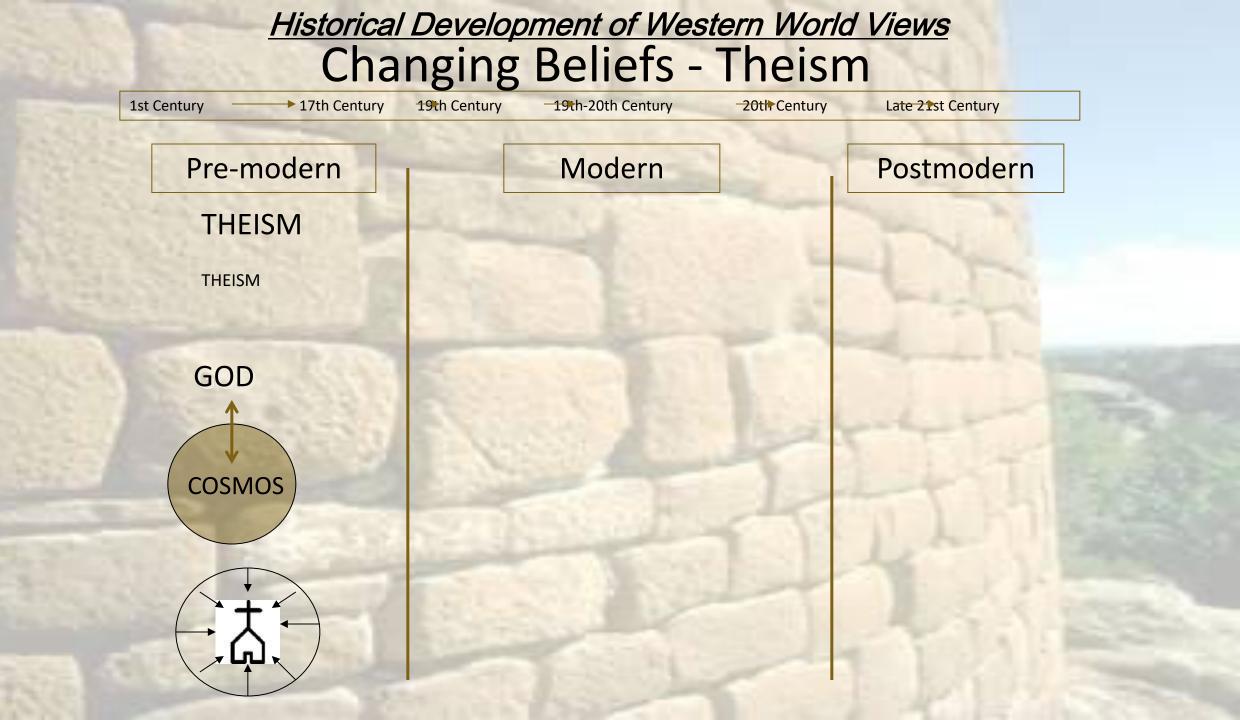
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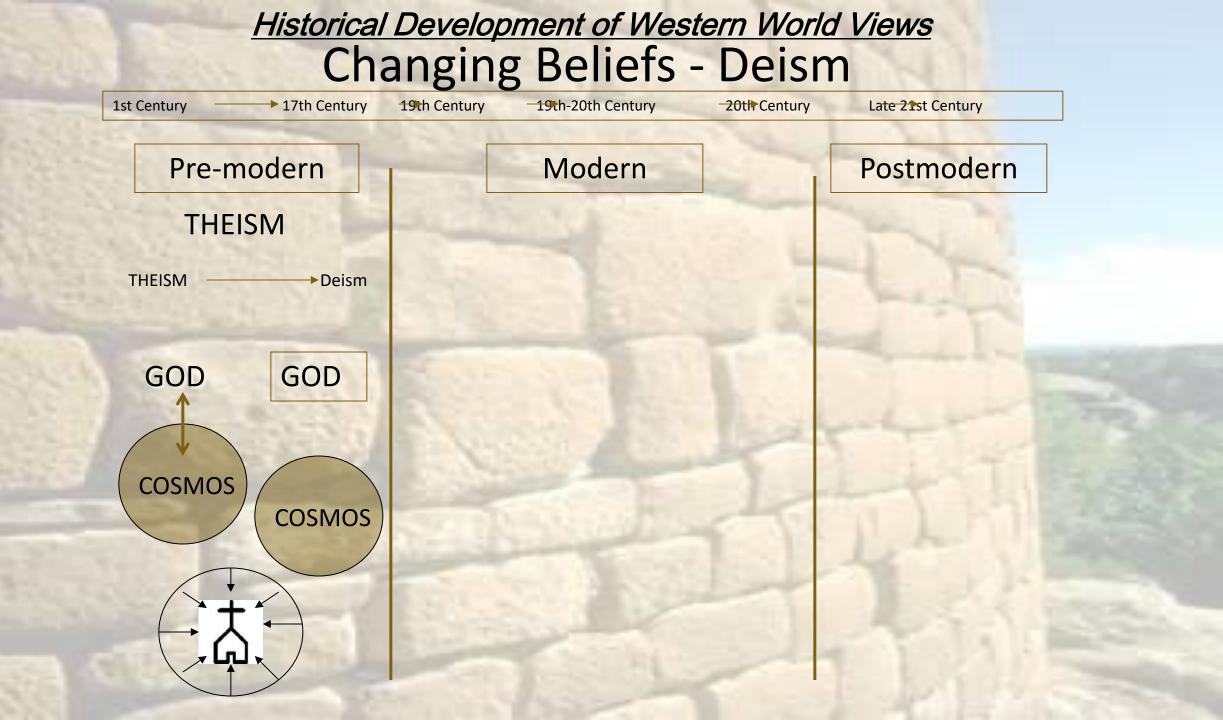
- Understanding the Three Periods in the History of Western Thought.

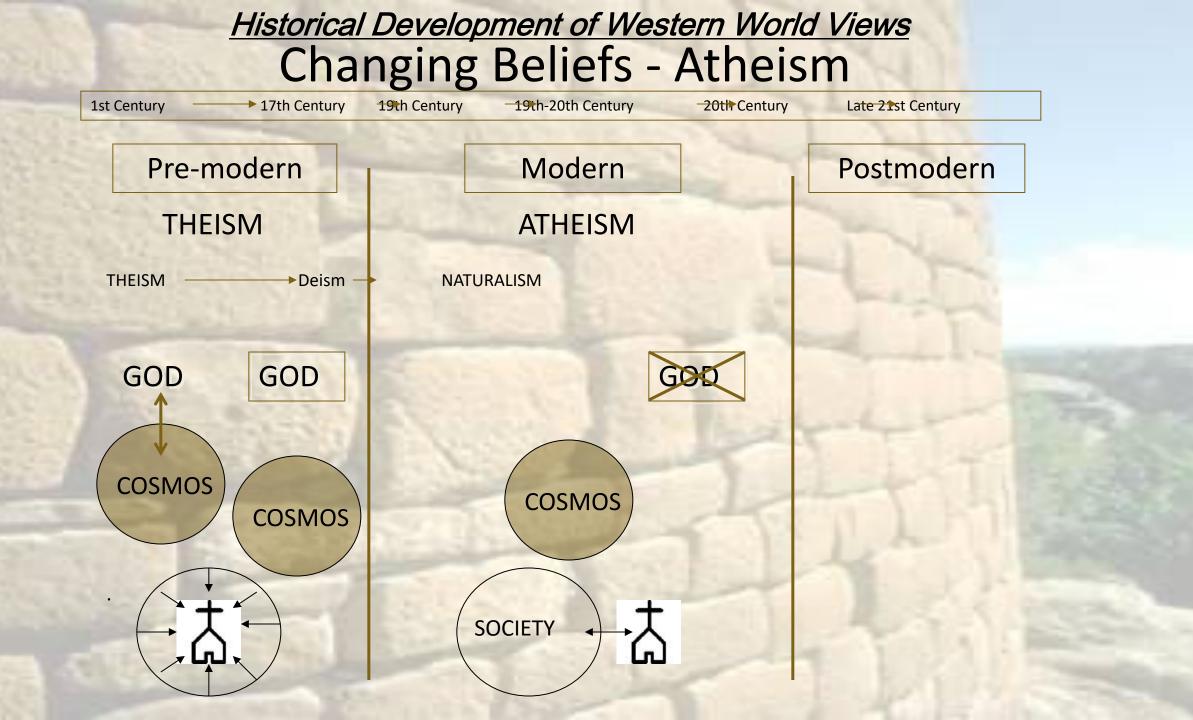
Historical Development of Western World Views

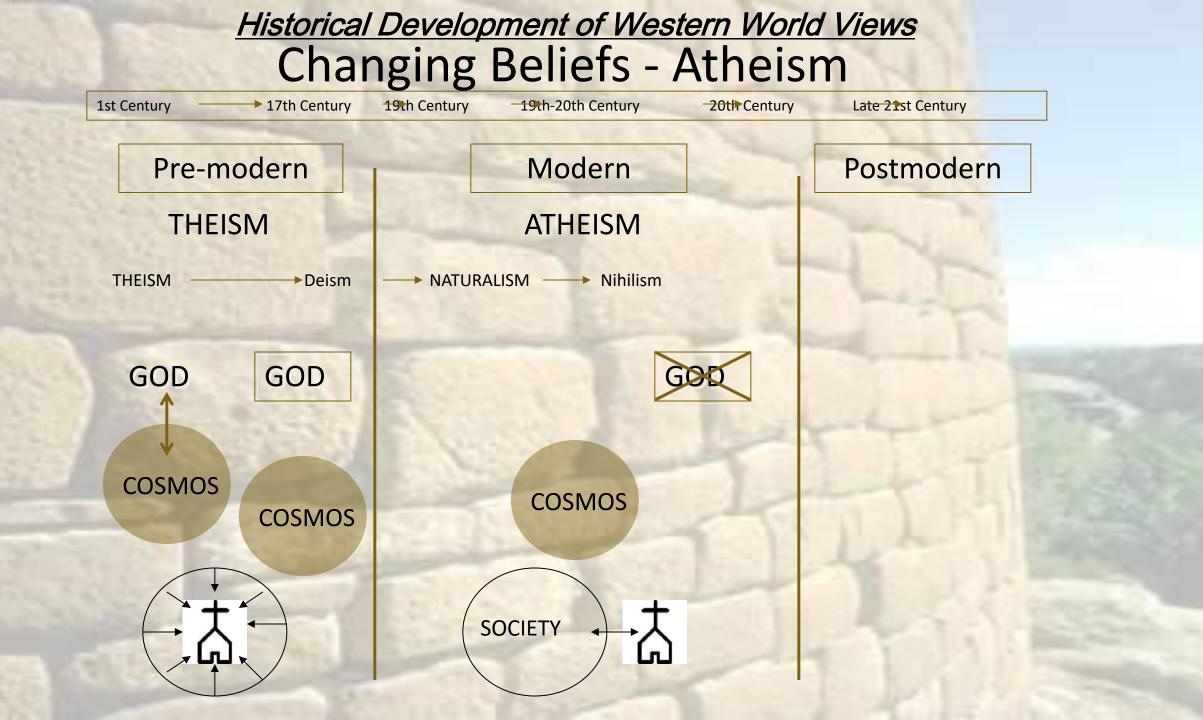
Changing Beliefs Concerning God

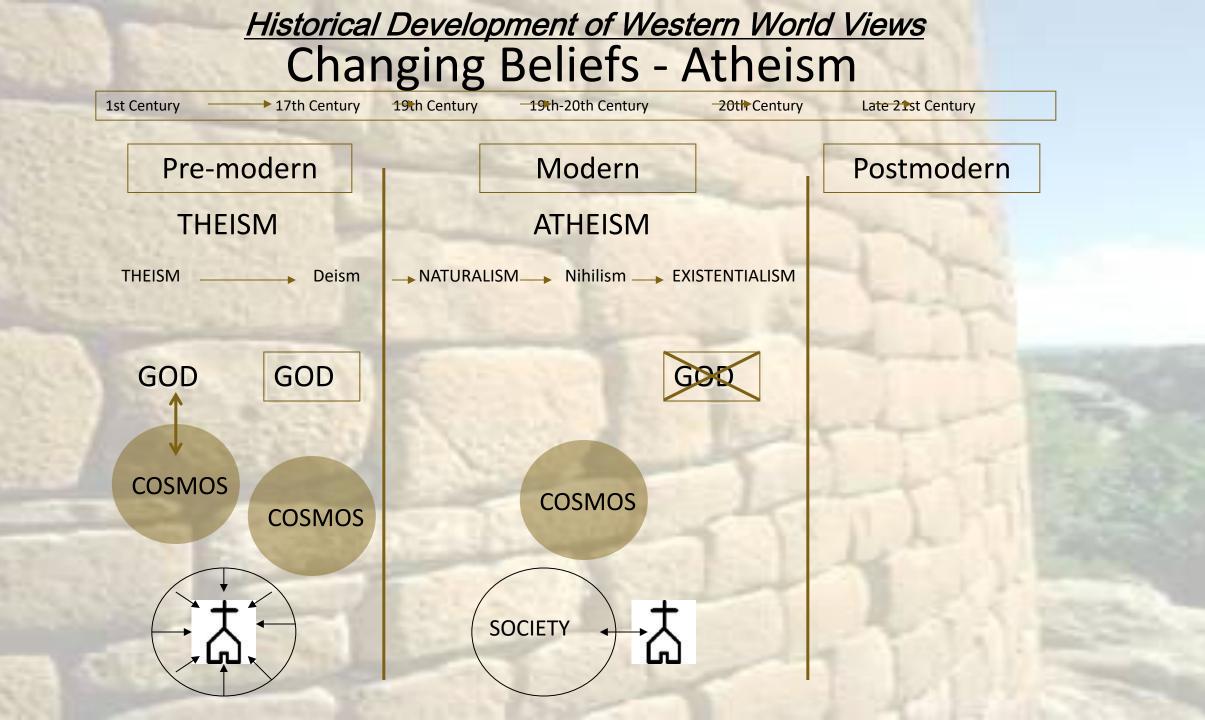












Understanding the Three Periods in the History of Western Thought.

Understanding the Post-Modern Period.

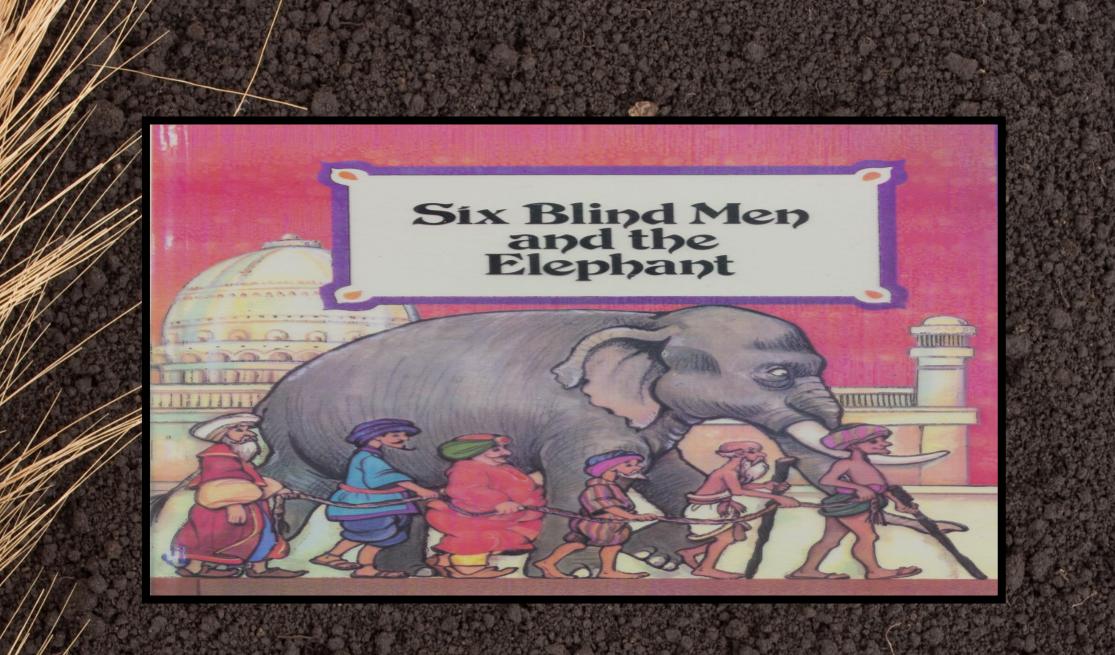
1. Pluralism

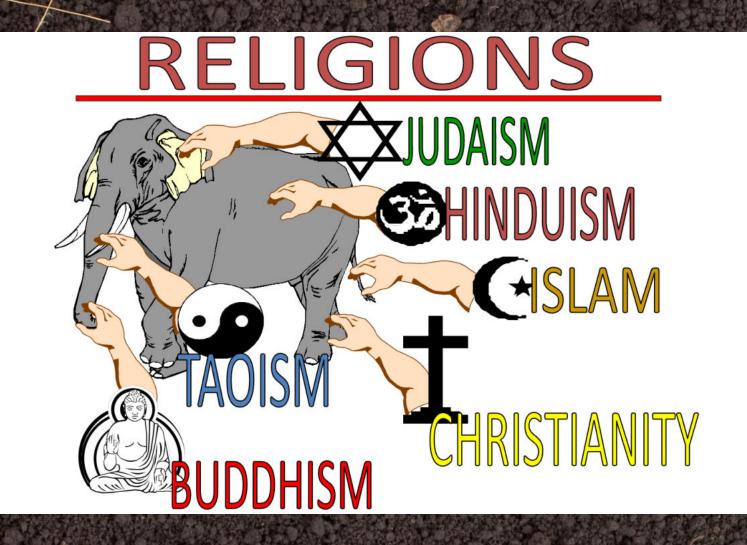
2. Post-Modernism

Religious Pluralism

Is the belief that all religions are true.

(They all have a part of the truth)





II. Our world has changed and has made our evangelism task more daunting.

• What are the Signs of Trouble in Witnessing in the East and West?

 What are the Conditions that Created the Environment for this Crisis?

- Understanding the Three Periods in the History of Western Thought.

- Understanding the Post-Modern period.

1. Religious Pluralism

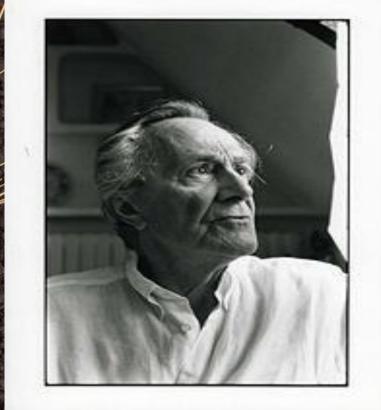
2. Post-Modernism

2. Post-Modernism a. General characteristics

1). In general, it is a rejection of anything modern.

2). It is a denial of <u>meta-narratives</u>.

Postmodernism



"I define postmodern as incredulity toward meta-narratives,"

Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, 1984, xxiv

2. Post-Modernism a. General characteristics

1). In general, it is a rejection of anything modern.

2). It is a denial of <u>meta-narratives</u>.

3). In its most extreme form, it is a belief that our thoughts, attitudes, as well as our very existence is just a social construct and not real.

A Good Example of Postmodernism Is The Movie *The Matrix*

Morpheus asks, "What is Real?"

I. Why don't we have a greater heart for reaching the lost?

- We aren't totally convinced of the Truth of Christianity.
- We don't realize the degree to which we have been forgiven.
 - We forget the urgency of the task.

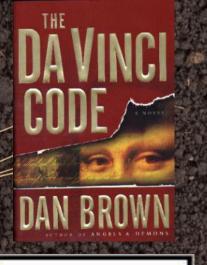
II. Why has Our World Changed and Made Our Evangelistic Task More Daunting?

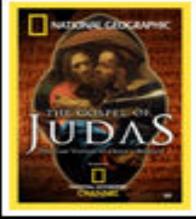
III. What are Implications of Postmodernism that Affect Receptivity to the Gospel? III. What are the Implications of Post-Modernism that Affect Receptivity to the Gospel?

• They feel free to <u>create</u> or construct "knowledges" and "realities."

• As a result, they are less and less sure about anything regarding Jesus.

This Explains Why Many Are Questioning The **Biblical Story of Jesus**





The DaVinci Code The Lost Gospel of Judas The Lost Tomb of Christ The Golden Compass





III. What are the Implications of Post-Modern Thought that Affect Receptivity to the Gospel?

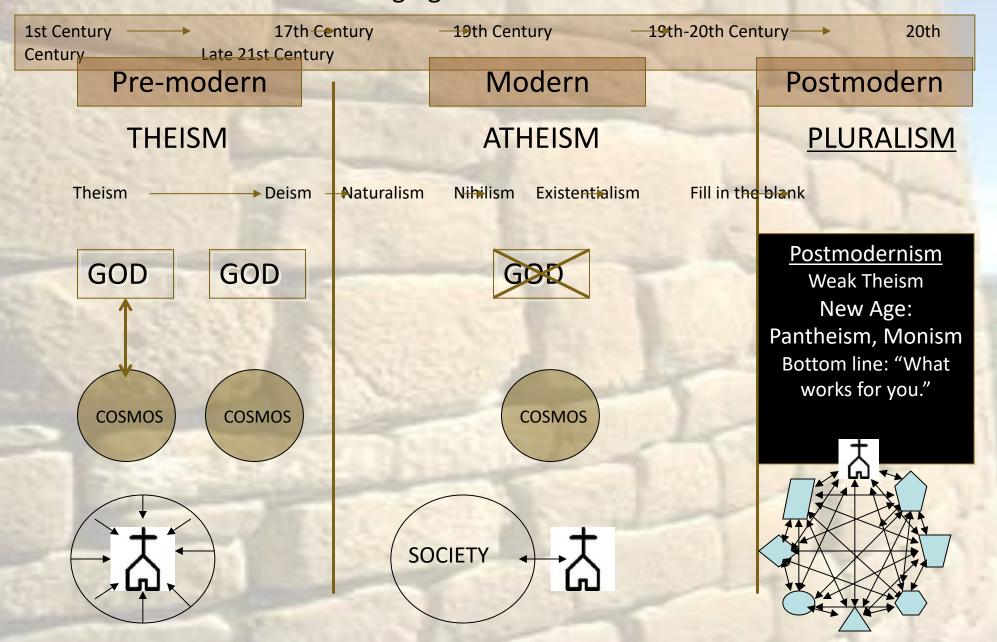
They believe persuasion is to be prohibited.

 They believe that to be exclusivistic is to be <u>arrogant</u>. III. What are the Implications of Post-Modern Thought that Affect Receptivity to the Gospel?

 They believe that our belief that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life is just <u>one</u> of the <u>narratives</u> among other narratives in the world that are equally as valid.

• Their pluralistic mindset gives them no internal motivation to hear about Jesus.

Historical Development of Western World Views Changing Beliefs - Pluralism





It's not so easy today to build a bridge to the gospel with a postmodern person!



The gospel may be simple but getting to the gospel may not always be so simple in the world we live in today!

We should not be surprised by this lack of openness!

"For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wonder off into myths." (2 Timothy 4: 3-4 E.S.V.)

Key Question

How can we talk to people in a way that creates greater interest in hearing our gospel in such a challenging world?

Answer:

We need to better understand the times or culture in which we live.



We need to be like the men of Issachar and understand the times in which we live and therefore know what we should do. See I Chronicles 12:32 If we understand the times we live in we will repackage our approach in witnessing and include pre-evangelism.



If Evangelism is planting seeds of the gospel, preevangelism is **TILLING** the soil of their mind and heart, helping them to be more willing to hear the truth.

But pre-evangelism also involves helping to change the nature of the soil! Our job is to help people to CULTIVATE GOOD SOIL

in their lives so that our seeds can be more fruitful! (Mark 4:8; Matt. 13:23).

Pre-evangelism is important because people have many distortions!



When they don't understand the Word (Matthew 13:19)

¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and <u>does not understand it</u>, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. (ESV)



What keeps nonbelievers from cultivating good soil in their lives?

> They Have a Distorted Perspective



Distortions about...

...themselves

...God the Father ...Jesus Christ

Distortions About Themselves

They don't see themselves as a sinner!

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9, ESV)

Distortions About God the Father

They don't understand God's nature

God's holiness (Matthew 5:48; James 2:10)

Student's Question

Why can't God just let me into heaven?



Theological Truth: We tend to overestimate our own righteousness and underestimate God's holiness.

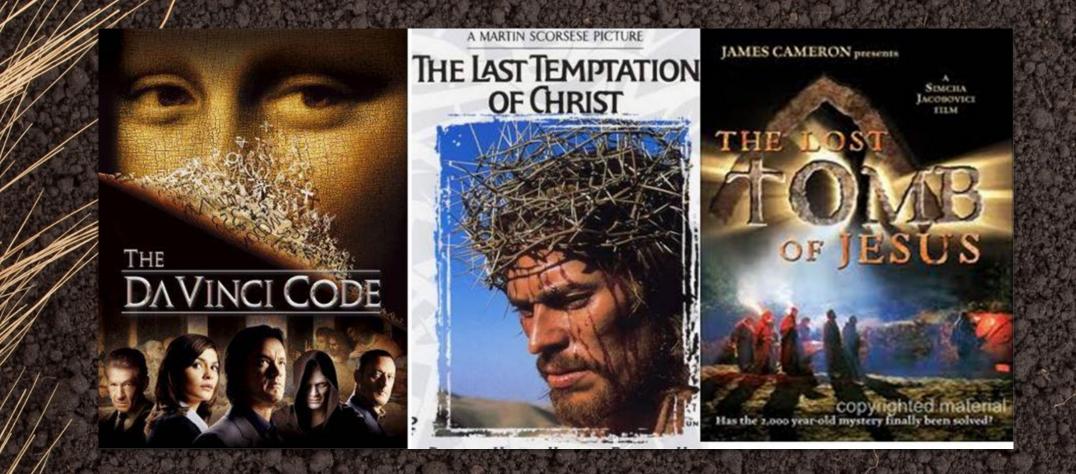


Could I put a little sewage in your water?

If not do you see how something can seem so small but in reality still have a huge impact?

So is it possible our "sins" could cause a bigger barrier between us and God than we think?

Distortions About Jesus Christ



Distortions About Jesus Christ

They don't understand His Uniqueness.

Christ's Unique Life

"Buddha claimed to point to the way, Mohammed claimed to be a prophet of God, but Jesus Christ is the only major religious leader that ever claimed to be God, who fulfilled prophecy, lived a sinless life, and then died on the cross and rose from the dead." **Dr. David Geisler**

Sometimes we can even create good soil by how we live our life as Christians! GROW DEEP. LIVE TALL.

We need to learn how to abide in Christ! (Jn. 15:5) Why don't we have a greater heart for reaching the lost?

II. Why has Our World Changed and Made Our Evangelistic Task More Daunting?

III. What are Implications of postmodernism that affect receptivity to the gospel?

IV. Why the Need for Pre-Evangelism?

A few other things to remember about witnessing today! In 2019 the Barna Group asked 1,001 non-practicing Christians about the "qualities... they value in a person with whom they would talk about spiritual matters" and presented the following results: 1.62% said they would talk to someone about faith who "Listens without judgment."

2.50% said they would talk to someone about faith who "Does not force a conclusion."

3.43% said they would talk to someone about faith who "Allows others to draw their own conclusions."

Barna Group, Reviving Evangelism, 2019, p.45

NEW PARADIGM AHEAD

Effective witnessing today begins with changing our witnessing paradigms!

What specifically needs to be included in this new witnessing paradigm?

Ten things to remember about using this new paradigm! 1. The gospel is offensive but how we communicate the gospel should be done in the least offensive way as possible!





"Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person." **Col. 4:5 ESV**

"I am accountable" **1st Plank** "I cannot measure up" 2nd Plank l am a sinne **3rd Plank** "I need an outside source for help" 4th Plank "I need what only Jesus can provide."

5th Plank

2. People prefer others to walk with them, instead of preach at them.

3. Evangelism is a process (1 Cor. 3:6)



4. Every person is on a spiritual journey.

"He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from the beginning to end." ECCLESIATES 3:11

5. God is already at work in people's lives.

"And the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up and join the chariot." (Acts 8:29)



6. Remember when we co-journey with others, we will change how we define success in evangelism!



"Success in evangelism is having a spiritual conversation with someone that engages them in such a way that the next time they see us, they would want to continue the conversation." 7. In a world that no longer believes in propositional truth, we need to convert our statements of belief into questions, illustrations, and stories.





What does it mean that Jesus was our substitute?

The cancer illustration:



But what if they don't care about any religion?

Answer: "If life is just a drop in the bucket compared to eternity, wouldn't that be worth checking out?" I am not the only one who thinks this! "Two major characteristics of postmodernism are of particular importance to us in evangelism:

(1.) The emphasis on questioning and
(2) the displacement of prepositional truth in favor of stories."

Nick Polard, Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult, p. 70 The Importance of Questions and Stories

"If we are to be effective within this postmodern culture, then, our evangelism must involve the appropriate use of questions and stories."

Nick Pollard, Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult, p. 70



8. Speak in a way that encourages dialogue and not monologue and that reduces their potential for defensiveness.

How!

Remember the Three D's of Conversational Evangelism?



Defensiveness







Helpful Phrases

I am curious to know...?

Would you agree...?

Have you ever considered...?

Did you know...?

How is it possible...?

9. We need to better understand their worldview.

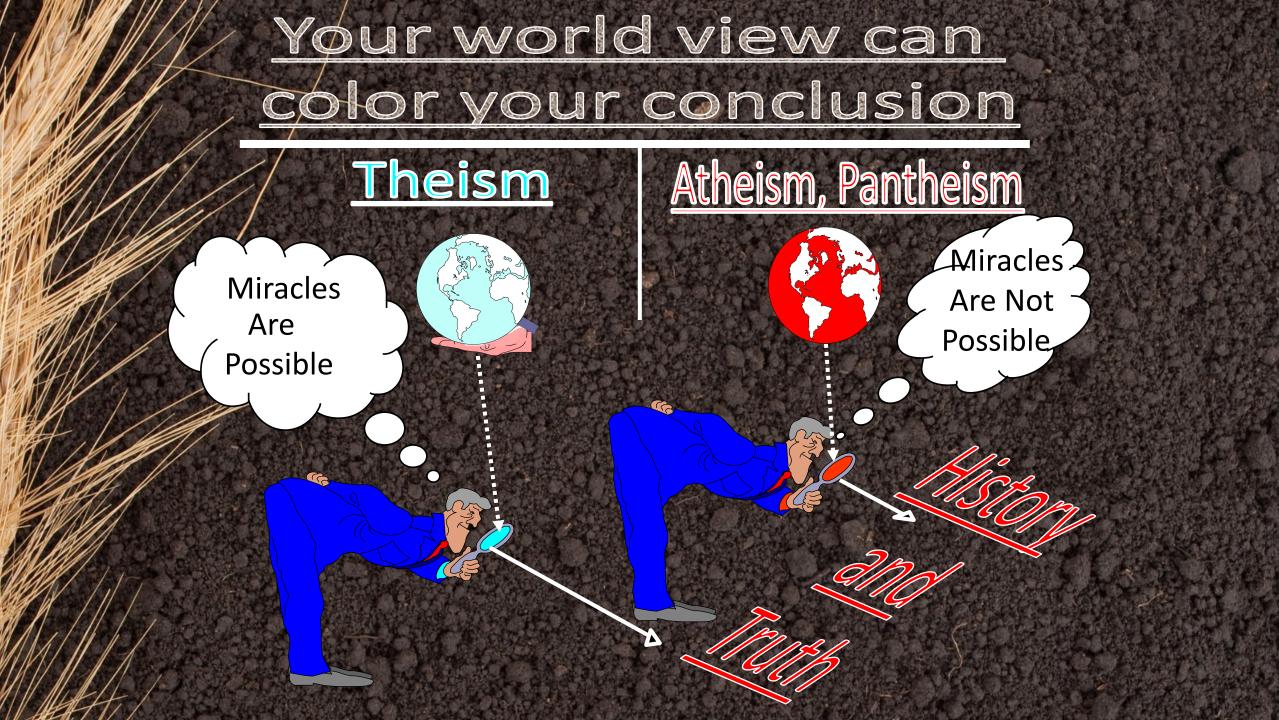


The Three Major Religious World Views

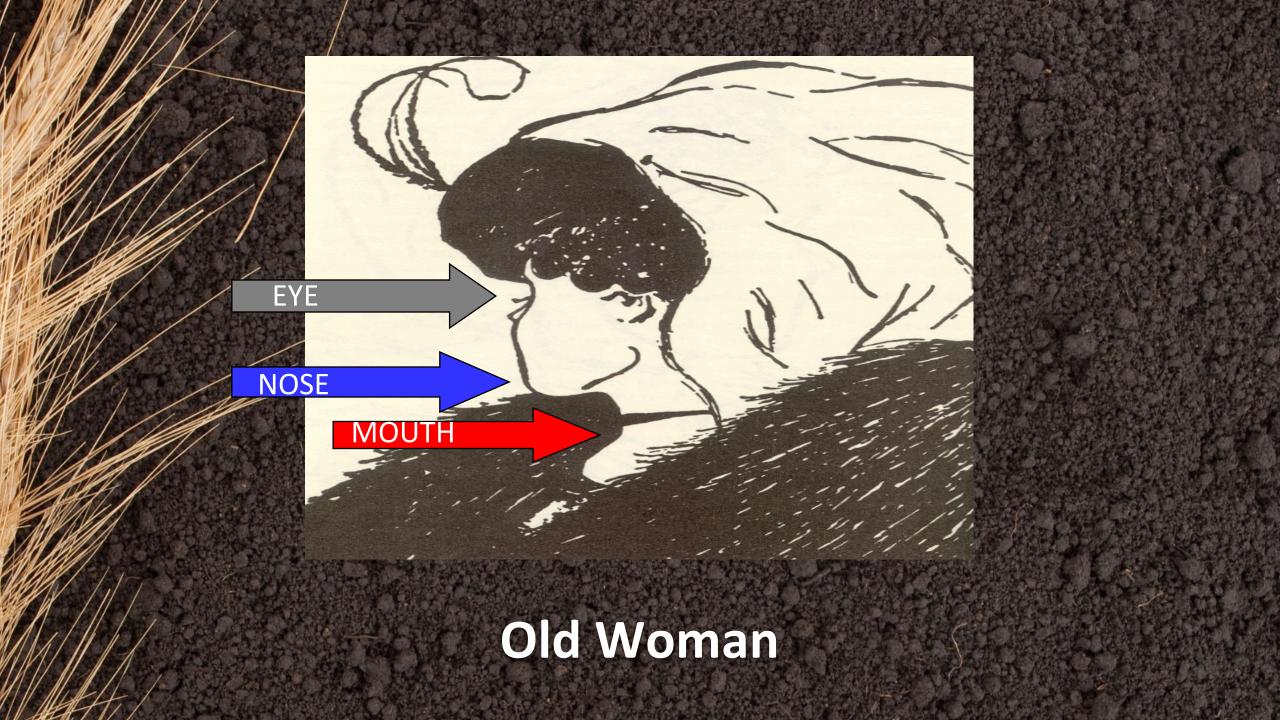


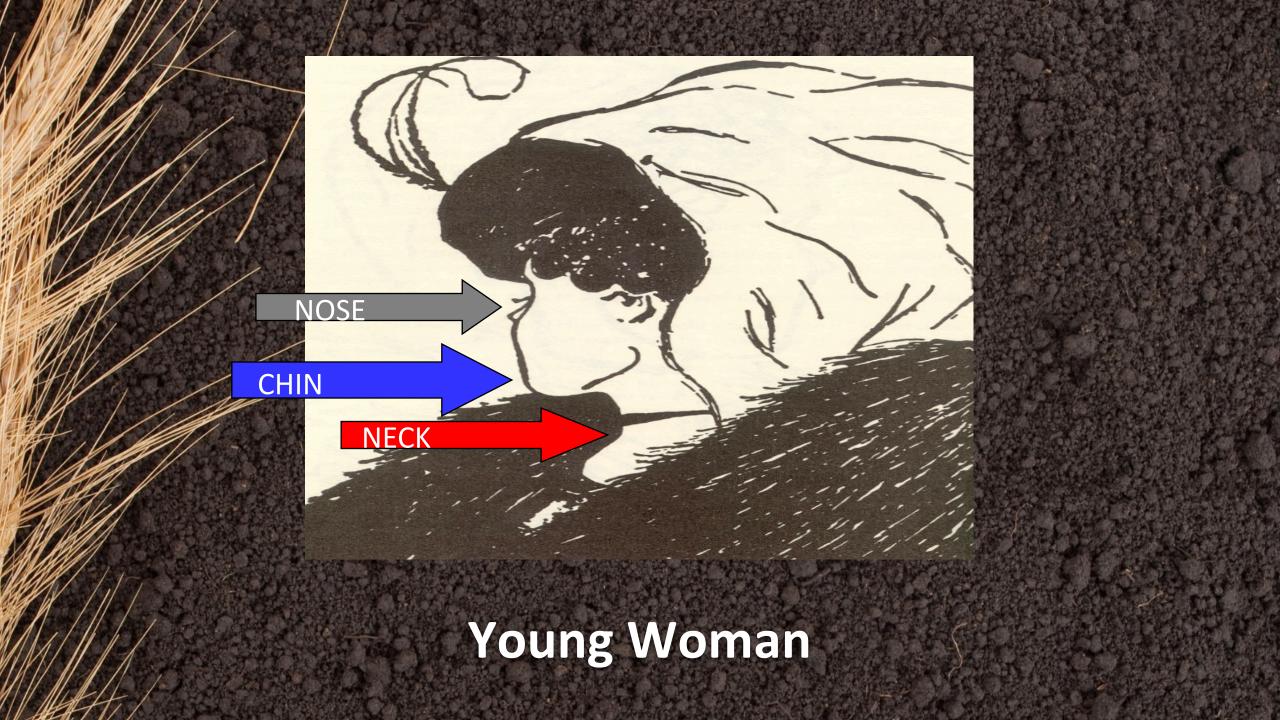
Your worldview lens will color your conclusion!





Old Woman or Young Lady?





Witnessing to a Hindu

Personal Example:

"I believe we all have the power to do what Jesus did."

Hindu Grad Student, University of Texas at Austin JESUS HAD A TWIN BROTHER

"...it's more likely (that Jesus had a twin brother) than the idea that God raised Jesus from the dead..."

William Lane Craig vs Bart Ehrman College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts, United States – March 2006

Why is understanding worldviews so important in evangelism?



"If I am to help people who are not interested in looking at Jesus because they are quite happy with what they believe, I must first set about understanding what it is that they believe."

Nick Pollard, Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult, p. 47

"I must do everything I can to understand their worldview. Only then will I know what kinds of questions to raise with them."

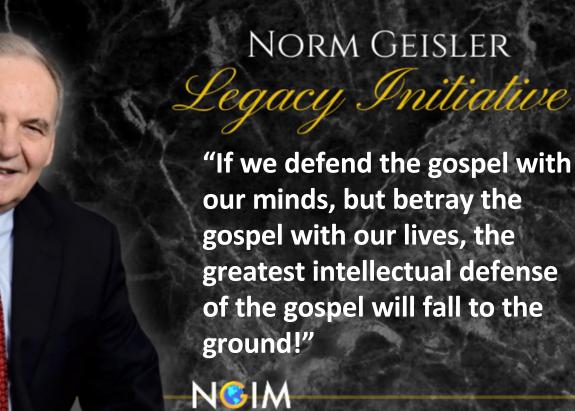
Nick Pollard, Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult, p. 47

10. We have to be good news before we can effectively share good news.





My father once said this:



- I. Why Don't We Have a Greater Heart for Reaching the Lost?
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 VI. A Practical Exercise!

How To Ask Questions

Highway Video clip Who is Jesus Christ?

www.highwayvideo.com

Notice his skill in asking questions in a nondefensive way.

Notice how he is listening to what others say and asking follow-up questions based on what they say.

Good Follow-up Questions

Is there any reason to consider Him further? Have you ever thought about it? What have you come up with? Do you think there is any reason to check it out further? Does He mean anything to you? Do you think there is any reason to decide? Do you care?



Helping Others To Surface The Truth For Themselves

Interview Daytona Beach



Group Discussion

- Give a description of the basic beliefs of the person in your case study based on what you heard in the video.
- 2. Identify a few of their key "sour notes or gaps" that surfaced in the dialog.
- Determine what two specific questions (no more) would be best to help them build a bridge to the Gospel, keeping in mind the "Three D's" of
- 4. Determine what approach you would use long term in reaching this person if this was a person you happen to see on a regular basis (a co-worker, a friend of the family, or someone that lives in your neighborhood).

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Some Practical Suggestions For Taking That Next Step...





Taking That Next Step

 Determine who the Lord is placing on your heart to reach out to!

Who are the three people...?



Taking That Next Step

2. Pray for open doors. (Col. 4:3)



1. Determine who the Lord is placing on your heart to reach out to!

Pray for open doors. (Col. 4:3)

Praying at the same time for us as well that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned. Colossians 4:3



- Determine who the Lord is placing on your heart to reach out to!
- 2. Pray for open doors. (Col. 4:3)
- 3. Look for divine appointments daily! (Acts 8:29)

3. Look for Divine Appointments Daily!



Look for ways God is already at work in the lives of those you want to reach!

"And the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up and join this chariot." (Acts 8:29)

Ask yourself, "What are the signs that God is already working supernaturally In someone's heart?"

3. Look for Divine Appointments daily!



 Ask God for wisdom to know what to say in your conversations with others. (James 1:5; Acts 14:1)



Determine who the Lord is placing on your 1. heart to reach out to! Pray for open doors. (Col. 4:3) Look for divine appointments daily! 3. (Acts 8:29) 4. Make the most of every conversation you have with prebelievers to help them take one step closer. (1 Cor. 3:6; Col. 4:5; 1 Cor. 9:22)

A Biblical Perspective

The Apostle Paul said, "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some."

1 Cor. 9:22 E.S.V.



- Determine who the Lord is placing on your heart to reach out to.
- Pray for open doors. (Col. 4:3) 2.

1.

3.

- Look for Divine Appointments daily! (Acts 8:29)
- Make the most of every conversation you have with pre-believers to help them take one step closer. (Col. 4:5; 1Cor. 9:22)
- a. Listen carefully in order to make every encounter count.



- Make the most of every conversation you have with pre-believers to help them take one step closer.
 (Col. 4:5; 1Cor. 9:22)
 - a. Listen carefully in order to make every encounter count.
 - b. Uncover what might interest them (Jn. 4:10).

Hook Their Interest...

"Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." John 4:10 NIV



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- c. Discover what might create greater spiritual openness. (Acts 17:32).



- Make the most of every conversation you have with pre-believers to help them take one step closer. (Col. 4:5; 1Cor. 9:22)
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- d. Look for ways to create more interest in our Jesus.

You may be surprised...

You may be surprised how easy it is to "catch" someone's interest in spiritual things if God is already at work?

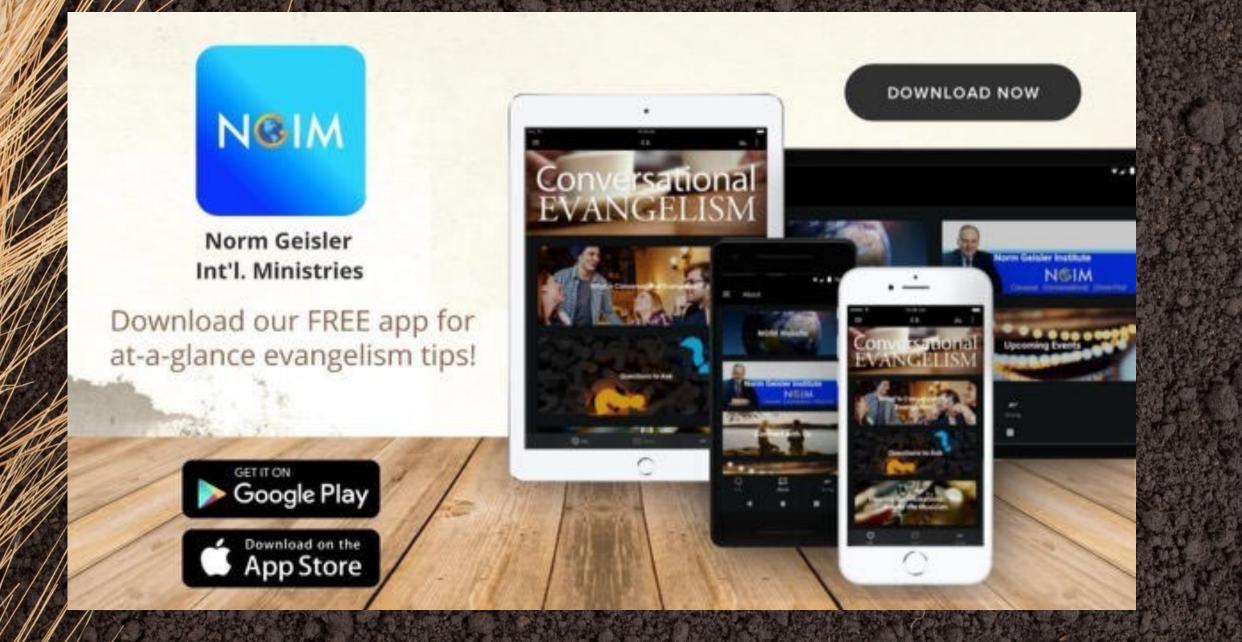


- 4. Make the most of every conversation you have with pre-believers to help them take one step closer.
 - a. Listen carefully in order to make every encounter count.
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Determine who the Lord is placing 1. on your heart to reach out to. Pray for open doors. (Col. 4:3) 2. Look for divine appointments daily! 3. (Acts 8:29) Make the most of every conversation 4. you have with pre-believers to help them take one step closer. (1 cor. 3:6; Col. 4:5; 1Cor. 9:22)

- Why don't we have a greater heart for reaching the lost?
 Why has our world changed and made our evangelism task more daunting?
 - What are the signs of trouble in the east and west?
 - What are the conditions that created the environment for this crisis?
- III. What are the implications of postmodernism that affect receptivity to the gospel?
- IV. Why the need for pre-evangelism?
- V. Ten things to remember about using this new witnessing paradigm?
- **VI. A practical exercise!**
- VII. Some practical suggestions for taking that next step!



NORM GEISLER INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

WITNESSING IN A POST-TRUTH WORLD

Dr. David Geisler

EQUIPPING THIS GENERATION TO REACH THE NEXT

"Conversational Evangelism will help you become the Christ-follower God intends you to be." J. WARNER WALLACE

Conversational EVANGELISM

Connecting with People to Share Jesus

David Geisler Norman Geisler