

## HOW THE WORLD SEES ITSELF

"The Bible does not agree with the view that it's hard to find out about God. It claims people make it hard." (Budziszewski page 41)

## MARS HILL THEN AND NOW

Discuss the similarities between the world of Athens that the apostle Paul was witnessing to in Acts 17 and our culture in today.

### SOME SIMILARITIES

- The political system is characterized by widespread corruption, public distrust of political leaders, and extreme egotism among those people in positions of authority.
- Poverty is widespread. Many people lack housing, food, healthcare and employment.
- Most people look to the state to provide for their ultimate fulfillment and comfort; their idea of happiness and salvation is God providing some type of sociopolitical solution.
- A majority believe that God's favor may be won by a person's performing a sufficient quality and quantity of good deeds.
- Though there are moments of peace, the people live with the constant threat of war and with a constant (and expensive) military presence.
- Sexual promiscuity is common **and even encouraged**.
- A high degree of household transience is in existence, resulting in difficulties in establishing a sense of community.
- Education is a means to economic ascendancy. However, most people do not take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them, choosing to enter the workplace instead.
- The population is ethnically diverse, speaks various languages and exhibits a broad spectrum of lifestyles and customs.
- Most adults adopt the religion of their parents. Christians are deemed to be intolerant, given their espousal of the one true faith and their belief in moral absolutes.
- Human achievement is seen as the pathway to earthly success and immortality. Reliance upon spiritual truth as the means to success and fulfillment is viewed as ignorance, as irrelevant or as a sign of weakness.

List taken from Barna, George *Evangelism that Works* 1995 Ventura California: Regal Books pp 25,26 *italics added*

"Just as on Mars Hill, students and teachers sense that there's something missing in all their learning. But they still think themselves wiser than anyone else. Just as on Mars Hill, the campus debates are only partly a search for truth and partly an intellectual game. But just as on Mars Hill, some people will listen and believe." (Budziszewski page 42)

## THE MOST INFLUENTIAL ANTI-CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHIES TODAY

### NATURALISM—THE OLD GUARD

"Naturalism is the belief that the material world of nature is all there is, all there ever has been, and all there ever will be — that nothing supernatural is real." (Budziszewski, page 43)

**Note:** Naturalism can also be referred to as materialism (not in regards to money, like the "material girl" Madonna, but in that matter is all there is)

What are some of the ways that a naturalistic worldview opposes a Christian.



IN TEXTBOOKS?

PATRONIZE (MAKE FUN OR  
TALK DOWN TO) IT?

TREAT IT WITH CONTEMPT?

Some textbooks completely ignore elements of a Christian worldview in explaining reality. Some teachers will openly and angrily put down Christianity as "backward thinking" or "harmful." Finally others, will simply try to make a caricature of Christian thought and belittle it with statements like: "As we know...there is not life after death" Or "It was once thought that we received moral laws from God or gods, but we know that we make them up ourselves."

### LEARNING TO QUESTION NATURALISTIC DOGMA

How could you question the dogmatic or patronizing statements made by one of your professors?

RESPECTFULLY ask questions like "Who is the WE" or "Who are THEY" in regards to statements like "THEY have proven" or "WE know this or that."

How might you deal differently with such issues in a Biology class about Darwinism?

You must know the other side of the argument from equally accredited scientists. It is hard to say to a scientist "my preacher" said this. She will hear better from one of her colleagues. Do your homework.

Discuss the following statement by Richard Lewontin

"We take the side of science **in spite of** the patent absurdity of some of its constructs,...**in spite of** the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our **a priori** adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door."

Budziszewski, page 43 italics in original

The question of the Naturalist who is skeptical of religious belief can be summarized as follows:

"Do we really know what we think we know — especially in religion—when our beliefs are not properly based on evidence." (*scientific/material evidence*)

Beily and Clark Why Bother with Truth? 2000 Norcross, Georgia: Ravi Zacharias International Ministries page 14. Parenthesis mine

## POSTMODERNISM—THE NEW SKEPTIC

"Postmodernism is the belief that nothing hangs together (*or coheres*)—that everything is in pieces. A postmodernist thinks that truth is fragmented. He doesn't believe in a truth that is the same for everyone, only in 'stories' or 'narratives' or 'discourses' that are different for every group." (Budziszewski, page 45)

In other words...there is no objective truth or reality "out there" it is only how you frame it yourself. You define all truth and reality in your world.

### LET'S PLAY BALL—AN EXAMPLE FROM BASEBALL

Some quick game definitions: By "pre-modern" we mean classical thinkers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle and many of the great early Christian philosophers. By "modern" we mean thinkers who think scientific observation alone leads to knowledge about reality. Postmodern thinking we are in process of defining now.

- The **Premodern baseball umpire** says: "There are balls and there are strikes and I call em **as they are**"
- The **Modern (the materialist) baseball umpire** says: "There are balls and there are strikes and I call em **as I see em**"
- The **Postmodern baseball umpire** says: "They ain't nothing **til I call em**"

Adapted from a message given by Ravi Zacharias at the 1998 conference "Evangelizing Postmoderns" at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Tape set available under the title "Truth, Evangelism and the Postmodern mind at [www.rzim.org](http://www.rzim.org)



### POSTURING AND POSING — DEALING WITH THE MEANINGLESSNESS OF IT ALL

Postmodern thinking struggles deeply to give life meaning. Discuss the three ways in which Budziszewski says that postmodernism deals with meaninglessness.

Make sure you ask the students WHY each of these attempts to deal with meaning fail.

- **Macho** — I live boldly and I am brave enough to live without meaning. Just a front...he 'lives bravely' to overcome meaninglessness and give his life meaning.
- **Pop** — I am too cool and I like life to be pointless...being 'with it' is an attempt to give life meaning. But if life IS pointless, than being cool is pointless just like anything else is.
- **Political** — I find my meaning, my truth, from the group I associate with...there is white truth, black truth, gay truth, feminist truth, Marxist truth, Democrat, Republican, on and on. Great point made by Budziszewski on page 46: "We can't change reality by changing the way we talk; we can only pretend to."

"Meaninglessness does not come from being weary of pain, meaninglessness comes from being weary of pleasure." **GK Chesterton**

### DO-IT-YOURSELF SPIRITUALITY—WHATEVER WORKS FOR YOU



"Do-it-Yourself spirituality is the belief that everyone makes up his own definition about God and ultimate reality, and that the best way to do this is to gather attractive ideas from various sources—from religions, from philosophies, even from movies and TV shows." (Budziszewski, page 46)

Why does Budziszewski almost call this section of his book "Spiritual Stew?"

Let them talk here....then ask them why this approach is not so great. Be careful, this idea is pervasive in our culture, even some of your students may struggle with this idea.

**THE FEW COMMON BELIEFS — THE “USUALLYS”**

- That all religions teach the same things.
- Choose beliefs according to “what makes me feel good” rather than “what seems likely to be true.”
- Put little stock in logical reasoning (because it uncovers flaws in their beliefs).

Discuss each of these — allow the group to do most of the talking here. Ask again, why these would be off base.

**THE FEW “NEVERS”**

- Never consistently believe that the Bible is a true revelation from God.
- Never consistently believe what the Bible actually teaches.
  1. Some say they believe it, but take it out of context.
  2. Some claim special insight no one else possesses.
- Never consistently believe that Jesus was really who He said He was.

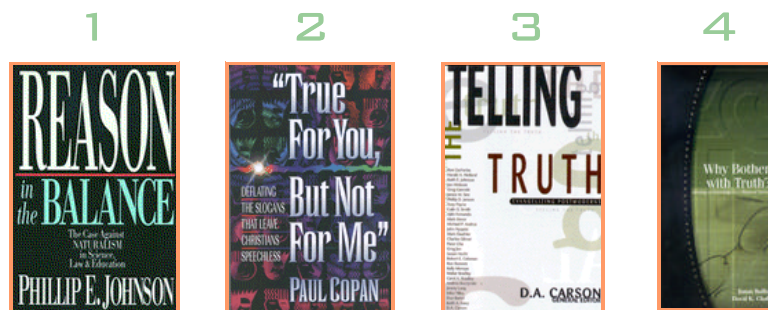
What are the dangers in disconnecting your Christian faith from God's Word and the person of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures?

Without the light of God's Word and his revelation in Jesus Christ — we would not know anything about God. Image having the assignment — sit in a room by yourself, with no knowledge from the outside, and write this essay — Define God. How many different answers would come? Thank God this is not the case; God has spoken in his written Word and the Word made flesh.

**GRAINS OF TRUTH IN EACH**

IDEA	TRUTH	GOES TOO FAR
Naturalism	Nature is real and should be studied.	This in no way could mean that nature is all there is. Nature is expression of God's creativity.
Postmodernism	Life is fragmented without the Creator.	With the Creator life does not have to be fragmented.
Do-It-Yourself Spirituality	If we ignore God's revelation, what he has made know to us, anything <i>might</i> be true.	God has revealed himself to us in His Word and in His Son Jesus the Christ.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY — LEADERS ARE READERS**



1. Naturalism — Reason in the Balance by Phillip Johnson
2. Do-it-Yourself and Postmodernism— True for You, But Not for Me
3. Postmodernism — Telling the Truth, Evangelizing Postmoderns edited by D.A. Carson
4. Good Critique/Analysis of Modern and Postmodern Skepticism (very short too:) — Why bother with Truth? Arriving at Knowledge in a Skeptical Society by James Beilby and David Clark