

# What in the World is Going on?

## Introduction

Read **John 18:37-38a**. What did Pilate mean when he said, "What is truth?"

How does our present world use or define the term *truth*?

## Postmodernism Basics

**"What is truth?"** One of the key tenants of postmodernism is that there is no absolute truth. Truth is thought to be relative to a group whether it be a culture, subculture, or religious group.

What do you find logically troubling about this aspect of Postmodernism?

**Social Constructivism.** Since there is no absolute truth in Postmodernism where does knowledge and "truth" come from? According to Postmodernism, truth and reality do not exist apart from man, rather society constructs/invents them. The purpose of constructing truth is to exert the will of one group over another. For example, a Postmodernist might say that "Christian truths" were constructed to exert itself over other groups or religions. The dominant culture or social/religious group is viewed as oppressive. What that particular group claims as truth has been constructed to win the power struggle.

What are absolute truths that our society would claim are merely social constructs?

**Postmodernism's understanding of language.** Postmodernism claims that language is used to gain and manipulate power. A postmodernist will *deconstruct*, or pick apart, the lingo or literature of a dominant group so that one group cannot be elevated above another. For example, Postmodernists say that the Bible...was put together to give certain men authority and to keep women in their place.<sup>1</sup>

*Deconstructionism* is a postmodern form of literary criticism. It claims that the text really has no fixed meaning. According to this theory, there's plenty of room to read between the lines. It sounds absurd, but why does such a thought appeal to the natural human heart?

**What is "evil" according to post modernism?** The culture or nation or religion or race or worldview or class or gender or sexual orientation that is in power is considered evil, for the group in power seeks to survive by means of repressing others. The postmodern solution for this evil is to defeat those in power by changing the socially constructed knowledge and truths in order to favor the repressed groups.<sup>2</sup>

If there is no absolute truth, if all are equally valid, how can anything be called evil?

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson, p. 49.

# How is Postmodernism commonly seen today?

After studying the basics, take a few minutes to give examples of how you see this world view in our culture today.

In what ways have you seen our culture shift away from this postmodern approach to truth and tolerance?

## The Christian response to Postmodernism

What affect does real, objective truth have on people? **Read John 8:31-32.**

**Jude 3** states, “contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.” Look up the passage in context. What where the saints of that day contending against?

As we contend for the truth, are we to be contentious? (**1 Peter 3:15**)

How might a Christian today be subtly influenced by Postmodernism in the way they talk about Jesus or opposing viewpoints?

“Hate speech” is a term that is used today to shutdown conversations. How can a Christian speak the truth in a way that remains above this reproach? (**1 Peter 3:16; Ephesians 4:14,15**)

Postmodernism likely has a face and a name. Maybe you know someone who speaks in these terms about “truth.” How do you view that person? How do you show love to that person?