



Using popular culture to reach Postmoderns

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The landscape within which we do apologetics has changed. Our arguments can be sound, our evidence convincing (at least to us), but somehow, we fail to connect. Welcome to postmodernity. In this workshop, three things will happen: 1. You will get a short introduction to postmodernity and postmodernism, and why traditional apologetical approaches sometimes aren't as effective now as they once were. 2. You will get to take a look at a different way of doing apologetics, using case studies drawn from popular culture. 3. You'll get a chance to practice some apologetics responses to movie clips and popular songs, and to think through how you can use popular culture to connect with the postmodern people around you.

I. Modernism, Postmodernism, Postmodernity

A. Modernism is a philosophical orientation toward reality and how I can know reality that emphasizes:

- § Autonomy, the knower is independent of revelation
- § Objectivity/neutrality, truth is the same for all
- § Technique, right method will lead to right knowledge.

B. Postmodernism is a philosophical orientation deeply critical of modernist claims. It stresses:

- § "Suspicion of metanarratives" (Lyotard)
- § The situated-ness of all knowing, relativism
- § Modernism (knowledge via logical-scientific method) is simply one more (discredited) metanarrative.

C. Postmodernity is a social context that

shapes the attitudes of those in society.

These attitudes are shaped by two social realities (David Lyon):

- § The rise of computer information technologies (CITs)
- § The dominance of consumerism in society

D. Attitudes influenced by postmodernity are less articulated than a formal postmodernist orientation.

E. The reasons traditional apologetics fails to persuade many postmoderns:

- § It depends upon modernist assumptions
- § It depends upon formal, logical argumentation, and postmoderns often just aren't interested

F. Another approach: the narratives, images and rhythms of popular culture can connect in ways that traditional apologetics cannot.

II. What is Popular Culture?

Popular culture is:

A. Made by human beings who are:

- § Created in God's image (i.e. creative, and as worshipping beings)
- § Fallen (so our worship is warped into idolatry)
- § Recipients of grace (cf. Acts 14)
- § Interpretive (popular culture presents "worlds" that are our spin on reality, a "worldview").

B. Popular culture reflects that human complexity – i.e. that we are a mixture of sin and grace, nobility and idolatry, truth and lie.

§ Our interpretation of popular culture has to be able to cope with that complexity.

III. Five Steps for Interpreting Popular Culture

- <ol type="a"> § What's the story (or quasi-story)?
- § Where am I (the world of the work)?
- § What's true here?
- § What's false here (and how to subvert it)?
- § How does the gospel apply?

IV. How to Use Popular Culture to Reach Postmoderns

- <ol type="a"> § Familiarity with popular cultural gives you a map of the internal world of postmoderns
- § Events – e.g. movie discussion nights (create

community and discuss what matters)

§ Caution: build bridges, go slow, don't force the gospel

§ Workshop examples