

School of Christian Growth Open Session I

Teacher : Associate Pastor Steven Kum

Topic : Christian Witness in Postmodern Society

Text : Psalm 24:1

The reason for the study

- We want to serve our generation (Acts 13:36)

“Now when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed” (Acts 13:36)

- We need to know our cultural/social contexts so we can be effective in our plans (1 Chronicles 12:32)

“from Issachar, men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do—200 chiefs, with all their relatives under their command” (1 Chronicles 12:32)

- We need to know the religious outlook of our society to be effective witnesses (Acts 17)

1. Post-modernity is difficult to define

- a. It is a reaction to modernity when rationalism and scientific certainty took centre stage
- b. It is a rejection of the concept that knowledge is the answer to all and points to the increase in wars and social ills
- c. It is a mindset that rejects the idea that everything fits into a universal plan

2. The main characteristics of post modernity

- a. Rejection of objective truth
 - i. Truth is no longer out there to be discovered, truth is personal
 - ii. Pluralism is accepted and in fact greatly honoured and desired. This has led to a “consumer” approach to knowledge, beliefs, values and behaviour
- b. No universal meaning
 - i. The meta-narrative is replaced by the local narrative
 - ii. There is no one worldview. Every local culture has its own equally valid worldview. No one religious viewpoint has the right to insist it is the only valid. The Judeo Christian world view is no longer seen as that which legitimizes laws and principles of accepted practice
- c. Skepticism and suspicion of all authority
 - i. Any group or individual that claims sole authority is viewed with suspicion
 - ii. Even what used to be accepted as concrete evidence is seen to be possibly part of a conspiracy

- d. Subjective moral values
 - i. A person can give verbal assent to a statement of values and in his personal response behave according to what he personally holds true
 - ii. A person can give assent to a doctrine and then reinterpret the doctrine according to his own perspectives.

- e. Tolerance of lifestyles, faiths
 - i. It does not mean to bear with someone or some opinion not particularly liked
 - ii. It is to give equal weight to differing values and practices, accepting them as being equally true as your own stand

- f. A quest for community
 - i. Online communities – Facebook, Twitter
 - ii. The popularity of flash mobs

- g. A different approach to semantics – new meanings accorded to old words/phrases
 - i. Deconstruction of texts – Each text is constructed on the basis of a specific situation – relationships, values etc and attempts to isolate the meaning of a text sometimes leads to completely divergent interpretations
 - ii. A word means what you want it to mean

- h. Being media savvy
 - i. Knowledge is available to all
 - ii. One can pick and choose what they want to believe

- i. A desire for transcendence
 - i. Spirituality rather than religion
 - ii. Individual rather than institutional

3. Many cultural expressions

- a. Art – from realism to abstract
- b. Movies – an acceptance of open-ended narratives
- c. Music – lyrics
- d. Television – Tolerance of alternate lifestyles

4. Personal expressions

- a. Respect for individuals rather than office
- b. Cautiousness towards labels and classifications
- c. Rejection of absolutes
- d. A consumer mentality

5. A Biblical Perspective

- a. Truth is embodied in Jesus (John 14:7)

“If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him” (John 14:7)

- b. Values are a consequence of a relationship with Jesus (Galatians 2:20)

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20)

- c. Meaning is derived from an understanding of Jesus purpose for us (John 10:10)

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10)

6. Consider also the following Scriptures:

- a. Matthew 24:12

“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold”

- b. 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 15,16

“1 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people”

“15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”

- c. 2 Thessalonians 2:7

“For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way”