



Postmodernism

Parable: Sharing Your Faith with Postmoderns

GYC SE Convention
Baltimore, Maryland



**How do
we share
our faith with
postmoderns?**

What is a postmodern?

- A person who rejects “truth” claims and certainty.
- They focus on their personal feelings and desires and what brings meaning to them

Traditional Evangelism



Understanding postmoderns

- Postmoderns want to **belong** before they **believe**



The Need to Belong

The purpose of our evangelism is to bring people into community. If all we do is bring people to a knowledge of salvation and truth but fail to bring them into community, we have failed in our Christian mission. Here again [the apostle] John is in agreement with Jesus and Paul. The church is not a building; it is not a creed – it is a fellowship. Russell Burrill, *The Revolutionized Church of the 21st Century*, 82.

The Cost of Community



Christ's Method

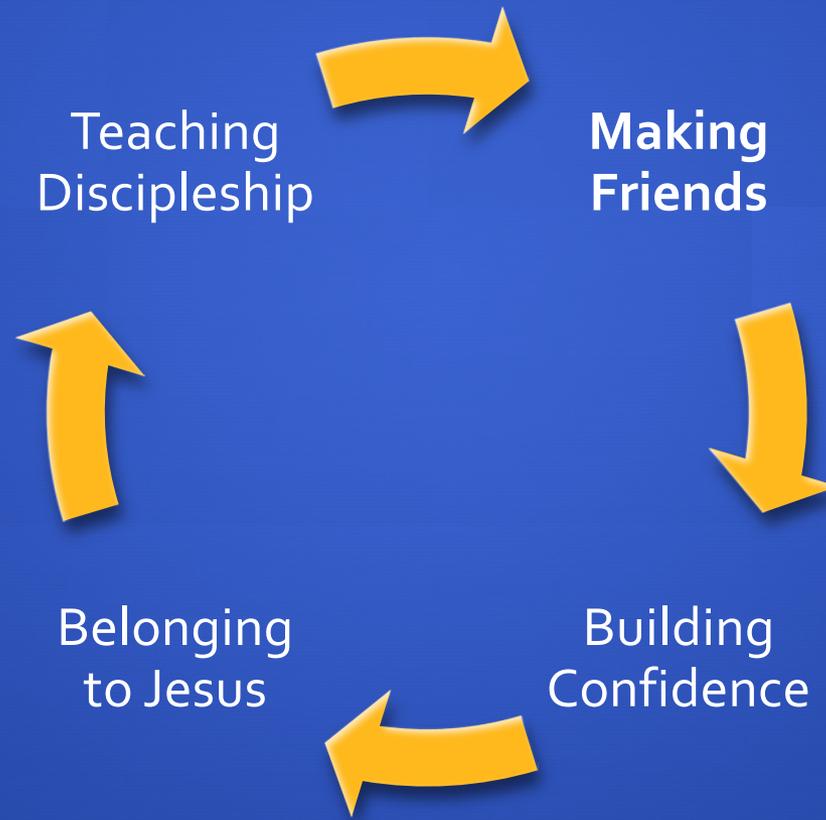
Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me."

Christ's Method

“If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted.... We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. “

Ministry of Healing, p. 143

What Would This Look Like?



The Path to Faith

- Based on a study conducted by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship between 1996 and 2007 on how people became Christians they identified the following factors:
 1. Trusting a Christian
 2. Becoming Curious About God
 3. Opening Up to Change
 4. Seeking After God
 5. Entering the Kingdom (Evrets and Shaupp)

The point is not to create a checklist, but awareness of a gradual process rather than a specific evangelism event.

The Receptivity Scale

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5



It Takes Time

- “Patience is extremely important when working with secular people. To move from a totally secular environment into a traditional Adventist environment is not going to happen in two to three weeks. In my experience the process takes at least two years in most cases.” Paulien, *Everlasting Gospel, Ever-Changing World* p. 158.

Understanding postmoderns

- Postmoderns want to **belong** before they **believe**
- Postmoderns **experience** their faith as a means to engage in **theology**

Truth

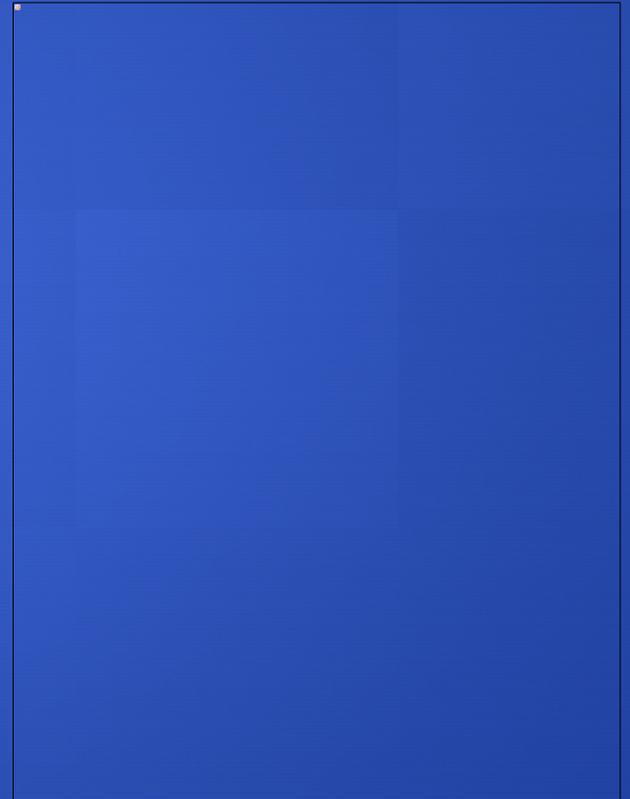
Why am I here?

The Power of a Changed Life

- I've never been able to persuade someone intellectually to abandon the relativistic [postmodern] mindset. That's never the doorway I get someone to walk through. What's more likely to happen is that they'll see the power of a transformed life in another Christ follower and be transformed.
- Quoted in Brett Lawrence, "Starbucks Spirituality," in Carlos G. Martin, *Urban Ministry and Evangelism: A Reader*

Experiencing Theology

- “Postmoderns are looking for a spiritual involvement that goes beyond entertainment; they are seeking for a spiritual experience that engages all the senses” Goncalves



Parable as Theology

Postmoderns and Story

- People don't want more information. They are up to their eyeballs in information. They want faith. Story is your path to creating faith. Telling a meaningful story means inspiring your listeners to reach the same conclusions you have reached and decide for themselves to believe what you say and do what you want them to do. People value their own conclusions more highly than yours. They will only have faith in a story that has become real for them personally. Once people make your story, their story, you have tapped into the powerful force of faith.
- Annette Simmons, *The Story Factor: Secrets of Influence from the Art of Storytelling*

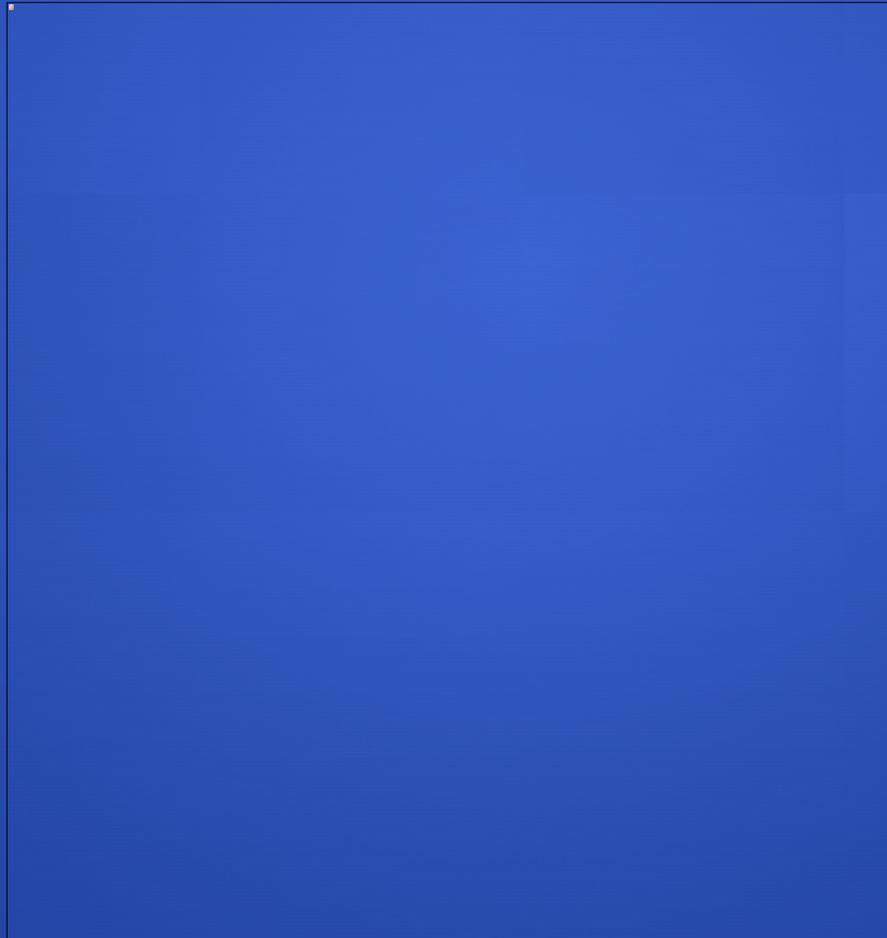
What is the Bible?

- “The Bible is presented as a collection of stories, poems, chronicles and personal letters. Even the apostle Paul, the most preeminent theologian of the Apostolic Age and author of two-thirds of the New Testament, did not present a theological argument when he was brought before the Jewish crowd at the temple in Jerusalem or before King Agrippa. Instead, this master theologian and apologist presented his personal testimony (Acts 22:6-11, 26:12-18).” Jon Paulien, *Everlasting Gospel, Ever-Changing World*, 64.

What is the gospel?

“A gospel that merely addresses an individual’s personal guilt and has no answer to the addictions and evil and bondage of our day will seem irrelevant and reductionistic. In the end, such a gospel will not be taken seriously in a postmodern world.” Richardson, *Evangelism Outside the Box*, 126-127.

The Four Circles of the Gospel



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- Postmoderns value **dialogue** over **monologue**
- Postmoderns find **meaning** as the way to discover **truth**

Dialogue not Monologue

- “I have learned (largely from Jesus’ own example) that one of the most important skills of spiritual friendship is learning to respond to questions with more questions, so that instead of telling your friend what to think, you help your friend keep thinking. I believe that as long as people keep thinking, they are giving God room to work in their lives.” McLaren, *More Ready than you Realize*

Dialogue not Monologue

- Engage secular people in dialogue. If conscious doubt, not conscious guilt is characteristic of a secular population, authoritative preaching is not the best approach to the unchurched masses. The speakers who get a hearing today engage in animated conversation. The evangelist is primarily listening, probing, sharing answers, and confessing faith, but he is also identifying with the struggler and sharing that he knows how doubt feels." Carlos G. Martin, "Ministry among Secularized Urbanites"

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An artistic illustration of Jesus Christ with long brown hair and a beard, wearing a light blue robe. He is standing in a cosmic space filled with stars, nebulae, and galaxies. His hands are outstretched, and he appears to be looking down at the Earth, which is partially visible in the lower right. The overall color palette is dominated by deep blues and purples.

SABBATH



Traditional Presentation of the Sabbath

- God requires that we keep ALL of His Law
- The Law has not been done away with
- God says that we must keep the Sabbath
- The Sabbath is part of the Law of God
- We must obey God and keep His Law

Authority

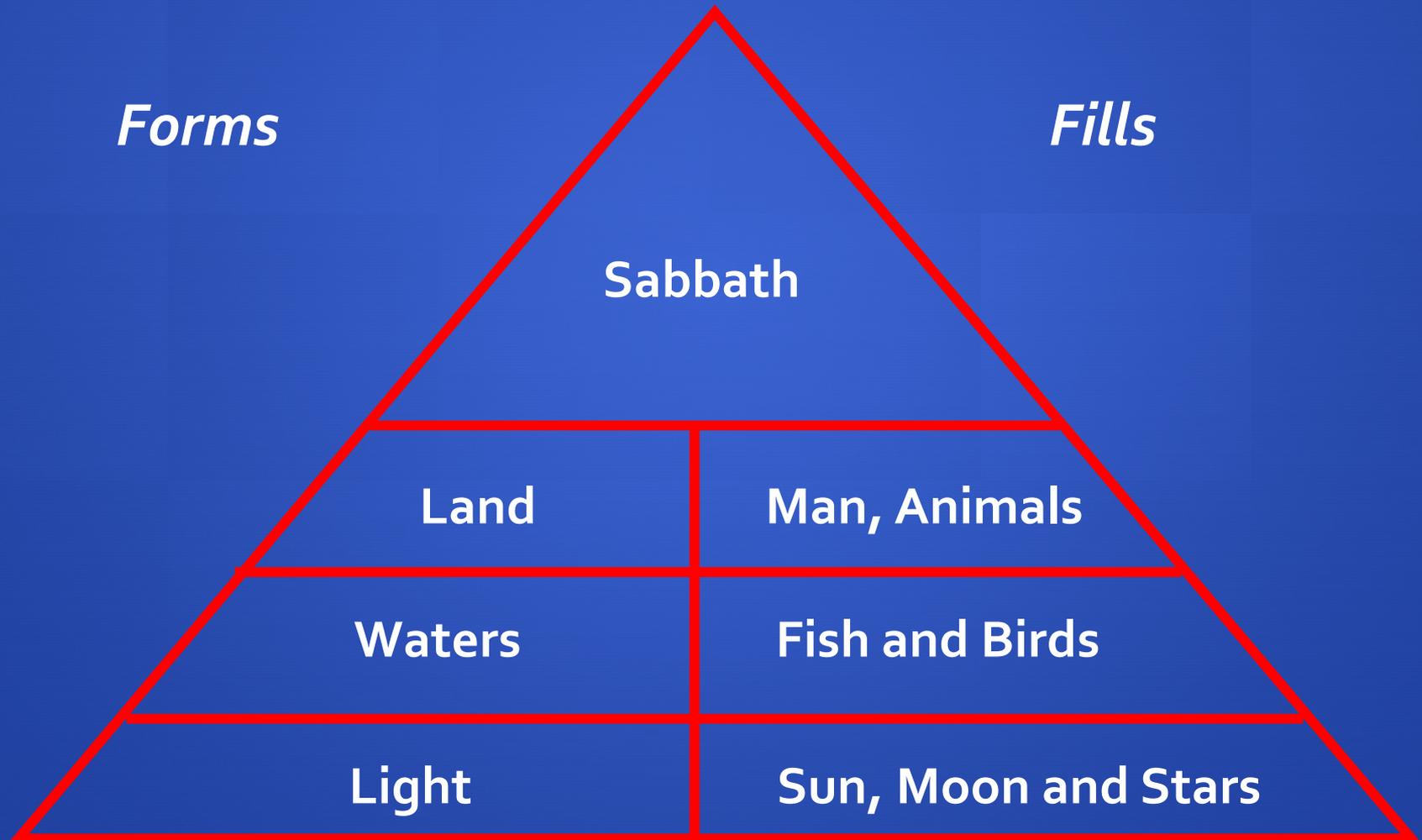
Meaning?

Truth

SABBATH



The Creation Story



How does the Sabbath answer the question of “Who am I?”

- The Sabbath is about resting from anxious striving. The Sabbath reminds me that I exist “to be” and not “to do”
- The Sabbath is a story of a love relationship that God wants with us – a date with God
- The Sabbath reminds me that I’m responsible for creation and that even land and animals rest.
- The Sabbath is a grand feast – a festival of celebration that God invites us to!

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- Postmoderns look for **genuine commitment**

High Expectations?

“Sometimes the conventional wisdom to reach the unchurched has been to lower expectations, to tell guests we really do not expect anything from them.... [but] the unchurched are more likely to return if they understand the church expects much of their members... People have no desire to be part of something that makes no difference.”

Surprising Insights from the Unchurched

A Personal Story

