

*Disciples who think
and engage*

| **Paul Coulter**

Who am I?

- Medical doctor (no longer practising)
- BSc medical genetics
- Youth worker and pastor within and across cultures
- Practical Theologian / missiologist (PhD in divinity)
- Husband and father

Beneath the issues: *worldviews*

Everyday Disciples

Presbyterian
CHURCH IN IRELAND

Thinking Christianly: *gospel*

Everyday Disciples

Presbyterian
CHURCH IN IRELAND

Promoting Change: *discipleship*

Everyday Disciples

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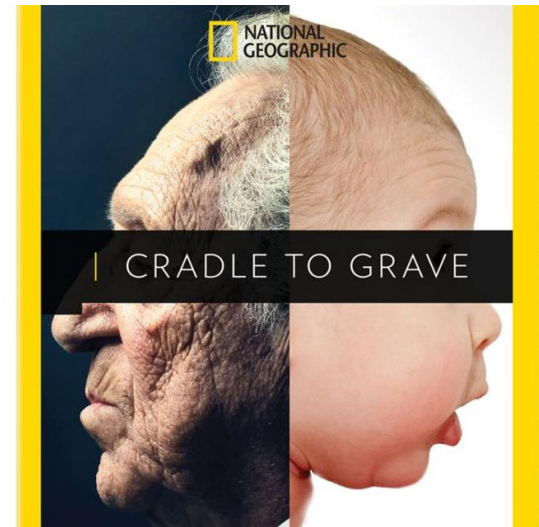
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Everyday Disciples

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Beneath the issues: *worldviews*

Rapid Changes



Worldview questions

- Where do we come from and do we have significance?
- Who are we and how do we find wholeness?
- What is the basis for human flourishing (the good life)?
- Where can we find guidance for good living?
- Where are we going to and how will we get there?

Meaning

Identity

Fulfilment

Direction

Hope

Prevailing worldviews

Modern

Natural order

Reason

Achievement

Natural law

Progress / progeny

Meaning

Identity

Fulfilment

Direction

Hope

Postmodern

Constructed

Self-actualisation

Free choices

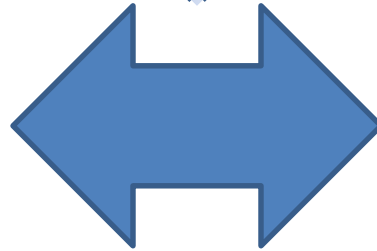
Being true to self

???

Mysticism (premodern)



Modernism



Postmodernism



Autonomy



“we are all
autonomous
individuals”

Modern

Moral responsibility

(I am free to submit to
natural law or not)



Postmodern

Moral relativism

(there is no law external
to my experience)

Unquestionably the central impact of postmodernism on popular thinking is its philosophical reinforcement of the devouring, cannibalistic character of modern consumer culture.

(Os Guinness, 1994, Fit Bodies; Fat Minds, p.107)

I (individualism) **buy** (consumerism) **stuff** (materialism)

Thinking Christianly: *gospel*

**JUST
DO
SOMETHING.**

thinking Christianly is thinking by Christians about anything and everything in a consistently Christian way – in a manner that is shaped, directed, and restrained by the truth of God’s Word and God’s Spirit.

(Os Guinness, 1994, Fit Bodies; Fat Minds, p.146)

How does Scripture speak?

Performative

- **Poetry**, expressing faith and doubts

Formative

- **Narratives**, resonating with experience and imagination

Normative

- **Gospel**, describing the true story of God and humankind

Transformative

- **Principles**, guiding belief and behaviour (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

The normative narrative

- **God rules** (Father) – loving and just Creator
- **We rebelled** – confusion and delusion
- **God redeems** (Son) – Saviour and Lord
- **We respond** – repentance, faith, obedience
- **God restores** (Spirit) – present help; future hope

Worldview questions

Meaning

Identity

Direction

Fulfilment

Hope

Created

Dignity / depravity

Obey

Christ-likeness

Glory

The great difficulty is to get modern audiences to realise that you are preaching Christianity solely and simply because you happen to think it true; they always suppose you are preaching it because you like it or think it good for society or something of that sort.

(C.S. Lewis, Christian Apologetics, 1945)

Preference

Utility

perhaps postmodernism's main challenge to the church is to our central mission as Christians: following Christ and making him Lord in all of life. ... Followers of Christ are custodians of the faith passed on down the running centuries. Never must we allow anyone outside or inside the church to become cannibals who devour the truth and meaning of this priceless heritage of faith. Letting the church be the church and the gospel be the gospel is integral to letting God be God.

(Os Guinness, 1994, Fit Bodies; Fat Minds, p.110)

Promoting Change: *discipleship*

Where does real change happen?

David didn't have a mind; he had a heart

In Scripture, the heart is the seat of:

- Emotional response to experiences
- Thinking and understanding
- Discernment and decision-making

Mental processes

Truth?

Emotions

Instinctive responses



Feelings

Conscious reactions



Thoughts

Meaning / understanding



Beliefs

Convictions / Commitments

The centrality of the mind

In salvation (Romans 10:10,17)

Hear → Believe → Confess / Call

In discipleship (Romans 12:1-3)

Renewed → Discern → Obey

What is a disciple?

Not 'follower', but learner (student / apprentice)

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my **teaching**, you are really my **disciples**.'

(John 8:31)

make **disciples** of all nations ... **teaching** them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20)

So the **word** of God spread. The number of **disciples** in Jerusalem increased rapidly (Acts 6:7)

Damn all false antitheses to hell, for they generate false gods, they perpetuate idols, they twist and distort our souls, they launch the church into violent pendulum swings whose oscillations succeed only in dividing brothers and sisters in Christ.

D.A. Carson (2005, Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church, p.234)

Exposing false antitheses

Apostles (Epistles) v Jesus (Gospels)

Response to gospel v Encounter with Christ

Mind (thoughts) v Heart (feelings)

Truth v Grace

Word v Spirit

Renewed minds – Word **AND** Spirit

Those who live according to the flesh have their **minds** set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the **Spirit** have their **minds** set on what the **Spirit** desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the **mind** governed by the **Spirit** is life and peace. The **mind** governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to **God's law**, nor can it do so.

(Romans 8:5-7)

The centrality of the mind

In salvation (Romans 10:10,17)

Hear → Believe → Confess / Call

Holy Spirit

In discipleship (Romans 12:1-3)

Renewed → Discern → Obey

The nature of knowing

Modern knowledge is characteristically noncommittal. Much is known, but all is consequence-free. What we know and what we do about it are two different things... Never has more been known; never has less been required of what is known ... the common reaction to modern knowledge is, So what? Who cares? What do you expect me to do?

(Os Guinness, 1994, Fit Bodies; Fat Minds, p.146)

The nature of knowing

In the Christian world view how we know is intimately related to how we ought to act. That is, knowledge is so tied to ethics that [...] knowing the good and doing the good are one and the same. The divorce between knowing the good and doing it is one of the legacies of the Fall.

(James Sire, 1990, *Discipleship of the Mind*, p.97).

Believe → Obey → Know

Sober-mindedness

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and
being **sober-minded**
(1 Peter 1:13)

Ready

The end of all things is at hand; be self-controlled
and **sober-minded**
(1 Peter 4:7)

Faithful

Be **sober-minded**; be watchful. Your adversary the
devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking
someone to devour.
(1 Peter 5:8-9)

Aware

Your responsibility

In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

(Titus 2:7-8)



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