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JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

THE EFFECTS OF POSTMODERNISM ON SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCHES AND
TEACHING OF BIBLICAL TRUTH: QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD.

A Prospectus Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Darren Ray Mitchell

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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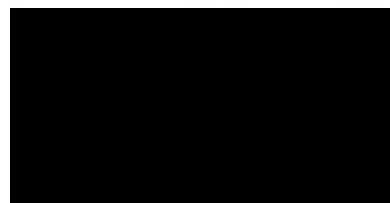
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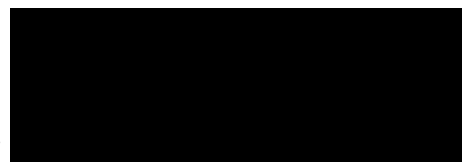
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ABSTRACT

Absolute truth has been denied within the current philosophical ideals as post-modern thought has sought to alter that concept by denying its existence (Siniscalchi, 2011). Post-modern thinking and philosophy have entered and influenced how some churches and denominations are teaching biblical truths and principles (Enns, 2008). The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore how Southern Baptist pastors perceive any post-modern influences in their churches and its effect on how the church presents and teaches biblical truth. This study looks at post-modern thinking, how it has infiltrated the church, and how it has influenced how the church presents biblical truths. This study will discover why so many churches have accepted this post-modern philosophy as seen in the presentation of a social gospel over the biblical Gospel while ignoring the sinful side of human nature (Enns, 2008). It looks briefly at the impact post-modern philosophy has on church attendance and retention and how it leads to the secularization of some churches (Enns, 2008; Erickson, 2013). The research conducted was through an e-mail survey sent to select participants. The participants' answers to the questions were categorized according to their perception of the effects of postmodernism on the church. Survey results were utilized to determine the relevance of post-modern influence on Southern Baptist churches.

Keywords: Gospel, postmodernism, secularism, Southern Baptist, social gospel, worldview.

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to God the Father, the Lord, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit who guided me. Also to Pastor Barry Campbell, Pastor David Cooper, and Pastor David Norrie who always encouraged me.

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List of Abbreviations

Southern Baptist Churches (SBC)

IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

New King James Version (NKJV)

Northwest Baptist Convention (NWBC)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

Post-modern philosophy, especially concerning absolute truth, has infiltrated some churches, and must be confronted (Erickson, 2013; Gonzalez, 2010). This notion of no absolute truth can be traced back to Greek philosophies through the Enlightenment, modernism, and culminating in postmodernism which has led to the secularization of some churches (Wolenski, 2004). Postmodernism affects knowledge, meaning, reason, and foundationalism which ultimately affects how many view biblical concepts concerning truth (Erickson, 2013; Groothuis, 2011). This thinking also stems from the worldview of the reader whether a Christian or not as each person is impacted by the worldview of the culture they reside in or are from (Groothuis, 2011). It is essential for Christian leaders to recognize and address if post-modern thought concerning truth has crept into their organization. Postmodernism seeks to deny and undermine absolute truth which is in contrast and contradicts what Scripture teaches concerning this subject thus, Christian leaders must confront this enemy head-on. Postmodernism also attacks meta-narratives and, since the Christian Gospel is “the” meta-narrative, postmodernism views it and all meta-narratives as oppressive (Mohler, 2005). The church faces several challenges since postmodernism seeks to deconstruct truth, eliminate all meta-narratives, view all texts as invalid with no meaning at all, promote therapies of all kinds since truth is dead, the overthrow of all authority, and the absence of morals (Mohler, 2005).

This study will look at the origins of this post-modern philosophy and how it has evolved through the centuries concentrating on how it has infiltrated and influenced church teaching and doctrine. This study will also look at how SBC’s are seeking to combat this threat and then offer suggestions for doing so successfully. This study will also look at how postmodernism has led to

the possible secularization of some churches as it affects the teaching of biblical truth.

Background to the Problem

Post-modern theology has been seen to encompass many churches and their philosophy toward biblical truth and the Gospel (Enns, 2008). Through the adoption of relativism, this philosophy has sought to deny absolute truth with the outcome of some churches adopting this philosophy which is affecting how they are teaching biblical truths (Enns, 2008). Since, as mentioned above, this post-modern philosophy affects knowledge, meaning, reason, and foundationalism, it has led to the secularization of some churches culminating in ineffective Christians (Erickson, 2013). This secularization has plagued theologians throughout the centuries as it has caused them to grapple with the subject of absolute truth within Christendom (Gill, 2001).

What may be confusing is how some post-modern concepts may closely resemble Christian ideals which can be seen through the writings of some of the early church fathers and theologians (Beilby, 2011; Benson, 2001). Post-modern thought concerning truth has also affected how many view God himself which affects how many view biblical truth (Feinberg, 2001). This view may also affect how churches are presenting biblical truths to the detriment of the congregants resulting in ineffective witnesses for Jesus Christ. This problem can be seen from the time of the early church at Jerusalem to the present as the Apostles often grappled with how to present biblical truths considering Greek and Roman philosophies which can be clearly seen in the writings of the Apostles John and Paul when one studies the New Testament and its background. Even in the time of Jesus Christ this was a problem which can be clearly seen in the interaction between Jesus and Pontius Pilate. In John 18:37-38, when Pilate was questioning Jesus, Jesus said to him, "...I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth..."

and Pilate responded sarcastically, “What is truth?” (New King James Version, 1982).

From Greek and Roman philosophies concerning truth came the Enlightenment as many sought to seek truth from a scientific standpoint through the scientific method of research (Babcock, 2011). The Enlightenment negatively influenced many within the church leading them away from biblical truths because of the cultural mandates placed upon them (Cox, 2000). Through worldview mandates, the church and society began to move toward secularism as most of society moved that direction with the church following or being left behind (Bush, 2003). From this move to the Enlightenment there was a move toward modernism then to postmodernism culminating in a move to secularism we see today (Sire, 2009). To clarify, all this began during the classical Greek period (479 B.C - 323 B.B.) during which Socrates first coined the question, “What is truth?” which we saw was repeated by Pilate. This period was followed by the Roman period (146 B.C. – A.D. 500) which crossed paths with the rise of the church (Babcock, 2011). During the Renaissance humanity saw the rise of humanism (A.D. 1400-A.D.1600) which included the scientific revolution (A.D. 1550-A.D. 1700) when the scientific method was invented (Babcock, 2011). After the Renaissance came the age of reason, or the Enlightenment (A.D. 1685-A.D. 1815) where science and reason were viewed as the foundations of truth (Babcock, 2011). This leads to the modern era (late 19th century to the mid 1960’s) which leads to postmodernism which many view as from the middle 1960’s through 2001 concluding in secularism which we have now (Babcock, 2011). Though many of the changes within society can be seen through the writings of Aristotle and Plato, the position of postmodernism concerning monotheism can be discovered in the writings of Thomas Aquinas showing how Christian theologians through the centuries sought to retain biblical truths (Bush, 2003). Though Christian theologians sought to retain these biblical truths, the Enlightenment has

infiltrated the church resulting in some churches moving from changing the heart of the believer to behavioral modification strategies which result in the church negatively affecting Christians within those organizations that have adopted these philosophies (Cox, 2000). Through the writings of Lyotard and Nietzsche one can see their ideals have led many within Christendom away from sound biblical truth toward post-modern thinking and even secularistic thought concerning God and truth (Sire, 2009). Attempts at changing historical events are leading to an increase in a secular worldview moving beyond a postmodern worldview and attempting to invalidate a biblical worldview and biblical truths (Wineland, 2005).

The above can be viewed throughout church history where one can find examples of people, including professing theologians, denying biblical truths, and attempting to change historical facts. These include Marcion who contradicted when Jesus stated the Old Testament Scriptures testify of him (John 5:39) and "...that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me" (Luke 24:44. New King James Version, 1982) saying Jesus did not fulfill the Old Testament (Ferguson, 2013). Another theologian Cerinthus, who promoted the idea God did not create the world, promoting the idea some lower being did contradicting the Genesis account (Ferguson, 2013). As shown above, Greek philosophers influenced early church theologians in how they incorporated the vocabulary, ethics, and thought process in presenting biblical truths as these theologians revived an interest in Aristotle and Plato (Ferguson, 2013). This thinking led Clement to view Greek and Roman philosophy to unmask their errors and to lead toward a more precise faith moving people on to scientific knowledge which resulted in him promoting the Enlightenment (Ferguson, 2013). Origen began by teaching in a secular school setting, and being affluent in the Greek philosophies, led him to develop a "moral argument for the truth of Christianity" (Ferguson,

2013). Several heresies arose throughout the history of the church with the Arian heresy being one of the most prominent which gave rise to Athanasius refuting the Arian heresy that Jesus was not God but a created being, by writing to correct that heresy showing Jesus as divine is a biblical truth (Ferguson, 2013). One can see how some attempted to utilize Greek and Roman philosophies to contradict biblical truths.

Attempting to utilize Greek and Roman philosophies led to the Enlightenment where human reasoning was viewed as necessary to discover absolute truth and humans were evidently not viewed as fallen flawed individuals because of the fall of Adam and Eve (Wineland, 2005). Throughout the Enlightenment there were many conflicts between the church at Rome and several individuals which eventually led to the Reformation where many sought to return to biblical truths and placed the Bible in the hands of ordinary people so they could discover those truths themselves (Gonzalez, 2010). Reformers such as Martin Luther, sought to return to sound biblical truths and doctrine to refute Enlightenment thinking and false teachings which had infiltrated the church (Gonzalez, 2010).

Though the history of the Christian church is an ugly one, throughout the periods of conflict theologians sought to retain biblical truths and sound biblical doctrine with those conflicts resulting in the formation of new denominations (Gonzalez, 2010). While these events within the church were occurring, the world and society outside the church were evolving in their approach to truth to a worldview which would eventually become entirely secular (Sire, 2009). This move began to fully develop during the Enlightenment and the modern eras culminating in the post-modern era (Babcock, 2011).

With the beginning of the nineteenth century many saw the Christian era, or Christendom, ending which would initiate an intellectual revolution that began during the

Renaissance and evolved during the Enlightenment as science ushered in the industrial age (Gonzalez, 2010). One worldview came to the fore and expanded during this period, Communism, which promoted secularism resulting in the decline of Christian influence in the world (Gonzalez, 2010). This waning influence has begun to affect many churches negatively and how they have presented and taught biblical truths making it imperative churches recognize and be mindful of the postmodern and secular influences of the surrounding culture and society on learners of all ages (Morrow, 2008). This resulted in the Enlightenment with the view of reason being the foundation of truth as it's standard (Babcock, 2011). During this period, humanism and individualism came to the forefront along with materialism eventually leading to the enlightenment resulting in the modern age where one discovers the rise of secularism (Babcock, 2011). This has resulted in differing worldviews.

The worldview of societies at large differs greatly from a biblical worldview as they have become increasingly secular (Sire, 2009). The Christian worldview is one where God is infinite, personal, transcendent, omniscient, sovereign, and good (Sire, 2009). Due to the chaos between theology and philosophy during the Enlightenment period, the Christian worldview began to change for some from special revelation about God found in Scripture to how a person viewed God through their reasoning leading to the worldview of naturalism where God no longer exists (Sire, 2009). Naturalism led to nihilism where humans deny philosophy, worldviews, and anything of value resulting in the formation of the worldview of existentialism which believes matter is eternal, God does not exist, and death is when the personality and individuality of a person is extinct (Sire, 2009). This worldview can have a detrimental effect on young people as they go through the secular educational system unless the church reaches out to them showing them the differences between a secular worldview concerning truth and a biblical one (van der

Walt, 2017). A biblical worldview contradicts a postmodern worldview in that it views all of history as it looks at the “big” picture through biblical history which postmodernism denies (Carson, 2008).

Worldviews and cultural pressures have led many young people to desire seeing biblical truths lived out in the lives of those teaching and leading them or they will reject those truths and view the leader as a hypocrite (Seidel, 2008). Post-modern philosophy concerning truth and the secular worldview of society have negatively affected young people today. Since postmodernism and secularism also stress individuality, many young people are craving real relationships that are transparent and truthful showing Christian leaders must possess those attributes to reach them (Seidel, 2008).

The historical setting shows throughout the history of the Christian church there has been an attempt by many to deny biblical truths. This has been evolving through the centuries into postmodernism culminating in secularism. These two must be addressed as they are the enemies of Christianity and absolute biblical truth.

Statement of the Problem

Post-modern thought concerning absolute truth has infiltrated the church and has led to some churches becoming secular leading to confusion concerning biblical truths which are found in Jesus Christ (Enns, 2008; Latz, 2018). This influence is adversely affecting the lives of Christians everywhere and can be seen as one of the reasons for the apostasy spoken of by the Apostle Paul in 2Thessalonians 2:3 as it leads one to question the absolute truths of Scripture as evidenced by the recent apostasy of the leader of the Hillsong worship band. Marty Sampson stated on his Instagram site, “I’m not in it anymore. I want genuine truth. ...Science keeps

piercing the truth of every religion...All I know is what is true to me right now, and Christianity just seems to me like another religion at this point.” (Elizabeth, 2019).

This shows a need for pastors and the church to work to ensure congregants are being taught sound biblical truths and to equip them to avoid the pitfalls of postmodernism. Congregants need to be taught to discover the differences between biblical truth and what Scripture says about truth and the post-modern concept of truth. The above paragraph also indicates a need for pastors to be aware of post-modern influences on their own concepts of truth and how postmodernism has influenced how they present biblical truths to their congregations.

According to Barna, of those Christians who attend church regularly and consider their faith to be important, 17 percent have a biblical worldview (2017). They also found the following disturbing facts: “61 percent agree with ideas rooted in New Spirituality, *54 percent resonate with postmodernists views* (italics mine), 36 percent accept ideas associated with Marxism, and 29 percent believe in ideas based on Secularism” (2017). This shows a desperate need to study this topic to avoid more people leaving the faith and to help churches address this problem.

Post-modern concepts concerning truth have infiltrated every aspect of church life and must be dealt with to avoid pastors entering into error and congregants leaving the church. If this is not dealt with the results can be catastrophic and will lead churches into compromising with the secular world around it. The Apostle Paul stated he was jealous of the Corinthian Christians as he had presented them to Jesus Christ as a chaste virgin but also warned them to continue in the simplicity of Christ to avoid becoming corrupt in their minds (1 Cor. 11:2-3). When Churches begin to compromise with the post-modern philosophy concerning truth it will be

deceived and corrupted as Paul warned. It is imperative pastors and churches do not compromise with the post-modern philosophy concerning truth but remain steadfast in sound biblical truth. If pastors and churches fail in this area they will begin to compromise their stand concerning truth and will result in congregants leaving the church or adopting the secular social gospel philosophy. This results in Christian who question biblical truths and become ineffective in conducting the Great Commission to make disciples. They must be taught biblical truths and how to apply those truths to their lives to avoid becoming like the Pharisees and lead people away from the truths of the Bible and into error.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how pastors in SBC.s perceive if there has been any post-modern influences in their churches which may affect how the church teaches biblical truths.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

RQ1. Is there a perceived relationship between biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth among pastors?

RQ2. What perceived influences of post-modern thinking do pastors see may be shaping how they teach biblical truth?

RQ3. Is there a perceived relationship between post-modern thought and congregants leaving the church?

Research Hypotheses

H1. There is a relationship between biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth among pastors.

H2. There is no relationship between biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth among pastors.

H3. There are post-modern influences pastors see may be shaping how they teach biblical truth.

H4. There are no post-modern influences pastors see may be shaping how they teach biblical truth.

H5. There is a relationship between post-modern thinking and congregants leaving the church.

H6. There is not a relationship between post-modern thinking and congregants leaving the church.

Assumptions and Delimitations

Research Assumptions

1. In conducting this research it is assumed many pastors may be aware of the impact of post-modern thought concerning truth has affected everyone to some degree.

2. It is also assumed many, if not most, pastors may have some awareness of the extent of post-modern thought and its influence on society by its worldview. It is further assumed they can, if they are aware, recognize this influence.

3. Finally, it is assumed many, if not most, pastors may be unaware of the influence of postmodernism on Christian theology.

Delimitations of the Research Design

This research was delimited to lead (senior) pastors who teach in SBC's. This research only looked at any perceived assumptions pastors may have concerning if the post-modern philosophy concerning truth may have impacted their teaching and whether they see it as an influence for congregants leaving the church.

Definition of Terms

1. *Biblical worldview*. The belief whereby the world is seen through the lens of Scripture where the Triune God is infinite, personal, transcendent, omniscient, sovereign, creator, good with humans created in the image of God who seek to glorify God (Sire, 2009).

2. *Enlightenment*. A period of history where humans decided science and human reasoning were necessary to establish truth and not the Bible or the church (Babcock, 2011).

3. *Meta-Narrative*. A narrative which explains and accounts for everything (Erickson, 2013). Example: The biblical narrative (Story).

4. *Pastor*. Also known as senior or lead pastor. The main pastor of a church.

5. *Postmodernism*. A philosophy whereby absolute truth is denied (Erickson, 2013).

6. *Secularism*. Where God does not exist and he did not create ethical values or truth and is not involved in any aspect of society or daily living (Erickson, 2015; Geisler, 2010).

7. *Worldview*. Is “a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, which can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions...that we hold...about basic constitutions of reality, which provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being (Sire, 2009).

Significance of the Study

This study looked at the different aspects of the influence of postmodernism concerning truth as it relates to churches. Though many studies cover the overall effects of postmodernism on these they fall short concerning how these present the truths of Scripture. This study emphasized how post-modern thought concerning truth developed through the centuries culminating in secularism (Babcock, 2011; Potter, 2017; Wolenski, 2004). This study will enhance other studies by showing how postmodernism views God negatively and has influenced Christian theologians throughout history and showed that secularism has also infiltrated the church along with postmodernism (Erickson, 2013; Feinberg, 2001; Latz, 2018; Siniscalchi, 2011).

Through this study churches recognized how postmodernism has affected them and how they can overcome those ill effects. This study will help Christians recognize how the post-modern culture has influenced their thinking concerning biblical truths (Hendel, 2014; Latz, 2018). Through this recognition Christians and churches can work to return to or maintain biblical truths. Through this study Christians will see the need to get the Gospel out and learn how to present it to a post-modern secular world. This study will help Christians reinforce their biblical worldview to overcome the secular worldview and not be swayed from their faith (Sire, 2009).

Postmodernism can be defined in light of Scripture allowing churches to reach non-believers in a positive way and to successfully present biblical truths to them (Carson, 2008). The results of this study will help Christians live transparent and authentic lives as those around them desire to see biblical truths lived out before them (Carson, 2008; van der Walt, 2017).

Through this study pastors will be able to recognize what people desire to see and adjust their teaching methods and invent new ways to present biblical truths in their groups (Estep, 2008).

Through this study pastors will understand the need to present biblical truths to those they teach so they can live positive and successful Christian lives in a post-modern secular world and will also help pastors realize they need to reach the entire person which may include storying as they live out those biblical truths before the learners (Latz, 2018; Seidel, 2008)

After some searching, it has been discovered there is a lack of research concerning postmodernism and its effects on church teaching though there are studies and dissertations which are directed at church doctrine thus, there is a need for more studies concerning postmodernism and church teachings concerning truth.

Summary of the Design

This phenomenological study was designed to develop a picture of the impact of postmodernism on churches. This study incorporated an e-mail survey which was designed with questions to aid in understanding the overall impact postmodernism on church teaching. This phenomenological study was designed to help in determining any relationship between how churches present and teach biblical truth, perceived influences on pastors.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover how pastors perceive if there are any post-modern influences shaping how the church presents and teaches biblical truths. This study focused on pastors as they teach the congregation and looked to determine if post-modern thought concerning truth has influenced congregants leaving the church.

This chapter will look at the literature relevant to this topic beginning with developing a theological framework for the study. It will then present a theoretical framework followed by a section of related literature. The related literature section will look at how the post-modern thought concerning truth developed throughout history beginning with the influence of ancient Greece leading to the Greco-Roman influence followed by the Renaissance. This will be followed by the Enlightenment influence concerning truth moving into modernism finally culminating in postmodernism. This will be concluded by looking at how the church has been adversely affected by this post-modern thinking and how damaging is it to the church. This section of the chapter will seek to present a history of the development of post-modern thought concerning truth and how it is be impacting how pastors are presenting biblical truths.

The final section of this chapter will look to present a rationale for the study showing why this author deems it essential for this topic to be looked at. This rationale will present reasons this author feels pastors may benefit from what is discovered and presented. It will also present any gaps in the literature which this author believes should be addressed and this author will attempt to do so.

Theological Framework for the Study

What is truth? One of the most asked questions throughout history. From ancient Greek philosophy to the present day this question has been asked for generations. Even Pontius Pilate asked Jesus (sarcastically), “What is truth?” (John 15:38 New King James Version, 1979). Why did Pilate ask this sarcastically? Because the Roman culture had been heavily influenced by the Greek culture as the Roman culture absorbed the Greek culture (Babcock, 2011). Throughout the world today, the idea of truth has been contested so much many have described it as not being able to be known at all (Mohler, 2005). The ancient Greeks were often skeptical of what one perceived as truth especially where religious ideas were concerned, (Netland, 2015). This skepticism was shown in the teachings of the Sophists who were critical of any religious claims concerning truth (Netland, 2015). Another skepticism was that of Sextus Empiricus who carried the Greek skepticism throughout Roman culture (Netland, 2015). Pilate being influenced by this thinking was skeptical of any claims concerning truth. This is the beginning of how through history postmodernism developed and how it has impacted culture and the church by impacting how truth is viewed which has impacted how some present biblical truths.

From the Renaissance through modernism one can see the evolution of the secular ideas concerning truth (Enns, 2008). It is important to work to understand how and why and if postmodernism has impacted church teaching. This can be accomplished by investigating to discover how this has occurred thus, it is beneficial to explore any effects postmodernism has on church teaching especially where truth is concerned. This can be done through a theological search to discover how post-modern thought concerning truth differs from biblical concepts of truth and why pastors need to watch out for its influence. This research focuses on post-modern concepts and biblical concepts of truth and how they differ where teaching is concerned.

Post-modern and Secular View of Truth

It is necessary to look at secular ideas concerning truth then moving on to biblical ideas to glean an overall picture of the influences on postmodernism on church teaching and disciple making. Secularism and secular humanism (also known as modernism) seek truth apart from divine revelation but through the scientific method (Erickson, 2013). Secularism seeks to determine truth through propositions and use those propositions as an explanation which covers all things in a broad manner (Darwinism, Marxism among others) (Erickson, 2013). As mentioned above, ancient Greek culture had heavily influenced ancient Roman culture where many questioned what truth was, and one sees today a renewed skepticism concerning absolute and objective truth (Enns, 2008). When humans began to view science and human reasoning as ways to determine reality and truth these were seen as replacing all biblical concepts of truth where God and Scripture present truth (Babcock, 2011). What one gleans from this is the secular views of truth are determined by human reasoning and not Scripture (Enns, 2008). Immanuel Kant argued it is from reason one develops a concept of God and truth showing he held a secular humanist view of God and truth (Enns, 2008; Geisler, 2010).

Reality and Truth through Experience and Senses

Another secular idea concerning how one determines reality and truth is through the senses and experience though it is through the sense of hearing one learns and understands and learns about God however, secularism judges divine revelation whether it is true through reason and critical thinking (Sire, 2009). These and other secular ideas, as textual criticism, utilize human reasoning to seek to determine truth and question the authorship and dating of biblical writings and reject traditional understandings including those of truth (Pierard, 2001). This concept can be seen in relativism which denies the existence of universal truth as it views

“beliefs are only true to a particular frame of reference or perspective showing truth is how one perceives it” (Beilby, 2011). So, the secularist sees reality and truth as only how one perceives or experiences them and not how Scripture presents them, and this prevails to this day and one can see how this has permeated cultures today and has influenced how many Christians view biblical truths.

Consequences of this View of Reality and Truth

Because the issue of truth has become much contested in the culture of today, many expect to be lied to instead of having the truth presented to them and this has carried over into what people expect from the teachings of the church (Mohler, 2005). Because there is so much confusion regarding truth, many have viewed God as being gone from the scene and the secular and post-modern world sees no one who can determine or communicate absolute or objective truth (Mohler, 2005). The secular world views truth as a part of the culture, biology, psychology, and ethnicity which is determined by individuals and not discovered by them (Siniscalchi, 2011).

Within this context there exists a denial of the existence of God where faith and reason have been separated which has led to humanism and naturalism (Erickson, 2013). With this separation of faith and reason comes the introduction of theological liberalism (modernism) which rejects the authority of Scripture and insists Christianity has always adapted itself to the surrounding cultural situations and Christianity must adapt itself to modern modes of thinking and the mind must be open to new truths and those truths must be proved (Pierard, 2001). With the change in culture and society through the years this thinking has led to postmodernism and secularism.

Secular and Post-modern views on Teaching

This thinking and view of reality and truth has influenced teaching whether in a secular school or some Christian educational settings. One biblical truth being replaced is that of the problem of sin. Postmodernism views education as the answer to this problem and, since sin is learned through education, it must be eliminated through the same (Feinberg, 2001). Since there are varieties of languages throughout the world there are varieties of ideas concerning truth resulting in postmodernism equating the concept of language with the concept of education (Knight, 2006). Post-modern view of education views language and thought as not portraying reality but where people can have opinions but not truth (Knight, 2006). These thoughts, meanings, and opinions are influenced by the writer's experiences and not true objective reality (Knight, 2006).

Knight gives three philosophical foundations of postmodernism regarding truth and reality: "Human beings have no access to reality and, therefore, no means of receiving truth. Reality is inaccessible because we are caught up in a prison-house of languages that shapes our thought before we think and because we cannot express what we think. Through language we create reality, and thus the nature of reality is determined by whoever has the power to shape language" (2006). What postmodernism is stating is objective truth is impossible to determine, we are not put in contact with reality through language, it is through society language and meaning are constructed, knowledge is power, and that power is carried through the manipulation of language through the school (Knight, 2006). Within this context schools must act a agents of change instead of being agents of preserving and transmitting the past (Knight, 2006).

Postmodernism seeks to reconstruct knowledge in order to reconstruct the surrounding culture and the power structure (Knight, 2006). Knowledge is constructed by humans resulting in it being conjectural and fallible since it grows through experience (Knight, 2006).

Postmodernism views the teacher as one who is a social activist who helps students to take personal and social responsibility in order to change the status quo (Knight, 2006). In this capacity, post-modern teachers generate knowledge instead of passing on knowledge supplied by research experts (Knight, 2006).

Post-modern education values include that it is impossible to determine objective truth as language and meaning are constructed by society separating one with reality thus, worldviews (metanarratives) are social constructs developed by dominate groups and not for lower groups and schools function as agents of the power these groups desire (Knight, 2006).

The post-modern view concerning truth succumbs to intellectual indifference as it cannot evaluate its claims against reality (Groothuis, 2011). For the post-modernist, truth is what you make it and nothing more which flies in the face of Scripture (Groothuis, 2011). This has affected how many view religious expression though none of the major religions adhere to postmodernism (Groothuis, 2011). Postmodernism has also had the effect of people to combine and mix elements of different religions creating their own spirituality (Groothuis, 2011). This has resulted in the erosion of religious confidence and the creation of a spirituality devoid of certainty and conviction and this has resulted in a new kind of Christian where those Christians who are attracted to postmodernism apply their own kind of truth to Scripture as they change truth to what they think it should be (Groothuis, 2011).

The Bible and Truth

Christians must return to and remain in sound biblical truth which has all Scripture putting “God’s revealed objective truth at the solid center of spiritual and ethical life and faithfulness” (Groothuis, 2011). Though the Bible does not present a technical view of truth, throughout both testaments it is consistently and implicitly advanced (Groothuis, 2011). The words in the original languages of Scripture for truth, at their core, have the idea of conformity to fact which shows God is true and will not lie (Groothuis, 2011). Throughout Scripture it can be found God is truth, Jesus is truth, and the Holy Spirit is truth who leads Christians into the truth, and the prophets and apostles warn against perverting the truth (Groothuis, 2011). All this is important for pastors to present to their congregants. One basic conflict between Christianity and postmodernism is Christianity is founded upon revealed truths as presented in Scripture while postmodernism denies any revelation and the concept of absolute truth (Knight, 2006). In its denial of the existence of God, postmodernism views him as a social construct (Knight, 2006).

Through Scripture one sees that at the center of spiritual and ethical life are God’s revealed objective truth (Groothuis, 2011). Since his truth is revealed through Scripture, it must be learned, meditated on, and defended and, whether theological or moral, whether that of non-Christians or errant Christians, errors concerning truth must be dealt with in love (Groothuis, 2011). For Christians, truth identifies things as they are facts that conform to reality (Enns, 2008). Scripture shows God and Jesus are truth and God is the source of all truth and his word and revelation are reliable (Enns, 2008. Is. 4:5; Ps. 110:5; 1 Pet. 1:25; Rom. 3:3-4; Titus 1:2). Though God cannot lie as seen in the Titus passage, Satan has sought from the beginning of time to get humans to question the word of God which is seen in the dialogue between Eve and the serpent (Satan) in Genesis 3:1-5 and, as seen in this passage, humans are prone to add to what

God actually said as Eve added "...nor shall you touch it..." (v3). When God told Adam not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he did not tell him not to touch it (Gen. 2:17). This episode has resulted in humans throughout history questioning the truthfulness and inerrancy of the Bible (Towns, 2001).

Biblical Foundations for Education

In Acts 6:1-7 the Apostle Peter called for deacons to be selected to take care of the physical needs of the people so the apostles could concentrate on teaching and prayer thus, beginning Christian education. Throughout the book of Acts one finds the Apostle Paul not only planting churches but teaching and his epistles show his teaching style and how he encouraged others to follow that style. From Peter's statement in Acts 6:1-7, it is clear early Christian education had its foundation in Scripture and it was the scriptures that were taught. This is contrary to postmodernism which views education of all forms from a secular perspective.

For Christians, teaching is a gift of the Holy Spirit who reveals truth, and "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16. New King James Version). God is the one who appoints teachers in the church to equip the learners, and lead Christians into becoming like Christ (1Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11). In Acts one finds Barnabas and Paul, along with others, in Antioch teaching the people showing this gift is not for just a privileged few (15:35). In Romans 12:7, Paul exhorts teachers to continue teaching showing the importance of that gift. In Colossians 1:28, the apostle shows why teaching is essential, to present every Christian complete in Jesus.

Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and Teaching

The ultimate authority for Christian education can be seen when Jesus told the disciples he would send the Holy Spirit who would teach them and "bring to remembrance all things I said

to you” (John 14:26. New King James Version, 1979). The Apostle John picks this theme up in 1John 2:27 as he infers the Holy Spirit is the anointing Christians receives and teaches them. Not only does the Holy Spirit teach Christians he also guides them into all truth (John 16:13). For Christians, teaching is a gift from the Holy Spirit to equip saints for the ministry (Eph. 4:11). As mentioned above, when Pilate sarcastically stated, “What is truth?,” he did not realize truth was standing in front of him in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus stated in John 14:16, “I am the way, the *Truth*, and the life...” (Italics and capitalization mine) thus, Christian teaching must have Jesus, who is Truth, as the main focus and is based on tradition, which postmodernism rejects, as the early church taught his virgin birth, atoning death, and resurrection (Schreiner, 1998). The gift of teaching is also passing on the truth of the Gospel and, while concentrating on tradition, aids in guiding the community to avoid entering into error and helps Christians become more like Christ (Moo, 2000).

For Christians and pastors, the Bible must be the final authority concerning truth. Where postmodernism relies on the individual and flawed human reasoning, Christians and Christian education must rely on Scripture. It is imperative in order to understand Christianity and Jesus, that the Bible becomes the ultimate authority for Christians and Christian education and not post-modern thought (Erickson, 2013). This authority is the right to command belief and action from the Christian and is contrary to postmodernism which takes all opinions at equal value (Erickson, 2015).

Though the Enlightenment and postmodernism have had a detrimental effect on Christian education, particularly secular philosophies that place the emphasis on the individual, intellect, and academic achievement, Christian education should avoid the motivation behind postmodern thought (Cox, 2000). The mandate given in Matthew 28:19-20 focuses on making disciples of

individuals and bringing them into the Christian community (Cox, 2000). What is interesting is, when the Enlightenment principles of human reasoning, science, individual autonomy, pragmatic morality, and democratic processes are utilized in Christian education, Enlightenment Christian educators view the mandate as attained (Cox, 2000). Though Christian education often focusing on aiding Christians and equipping them to fulfill the Great Commission for the glory of God, they are actually performing this through secular means and by secular standards (Cox, 2000). Christian educators, and the church, must return to biblical standards over secular ones or postmodernism may creep in and take over. Christian education must differentiate its goals from secular goals and means through the inclusion of reverence for, and obedience to, God and Jesus mandated by Scripture (Cox, 2000).

Theological Framework Summary

Though postmodernism seeks to deny absolute and objective truth, it is necessary to look at what theology presents regarding truth. The secular world denies this truth however, for Christians Scripture presents absolute and objective truth in the person of Jesus as he reveals God the Father to the world. In this chapter the post-modern philosophy concerning truth has been addressed and how it has affected society and the education system. This influence has permeated society where it has influenced Christian education. It has been contrasted with the biblical view of truth and education showing the need for Christians and pastors be aware of this negative influence. This has been looked at in a theological vein and it has been discovered the post-modern view is in conflict with the biblical view.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

During the last century, the social landscape of the United States has drastically been altered. With the end of modernism came the post-modern age which has brought in the secular

age. This altered landscape has resulted in confusion regarding objective truth where biblical truth has been openly attacked. As mentioned above unfortunately, this thinking concerning truth has infiltrated the church and has impacted how some within the church teach and present biblical truths. As shown above, truth now is dependent upon the individual and their experiences and through the secular education system. Through this the church must decide where she will go, either become like the culture around her or engage the surrounding culture with the Gospel.

With truth being controversial throughout modern history, it is important to retrieve truth as Jeff Malpas has put it (1992) meaning, it is important to return to biblical truth for Christian teachers. From Potter, one discovers there is a need to rediscover truth as a personification of the divine (2017). This includes the concept of truth as presented through the same Greek word utilized by Potter as utilized by Wolenski (2003). This quantitative study will explore the relationship between truth and Christian education and how they have been impacted by postmodernism. Though not theoretical per se, they do impact this study and relate to the purpose statement.

Aletheia and Greek Influence

The Greek word for truth and means “not hidden,” which was personified in the Greek goddess, Althea and according to Martin Luther, this word is ontological and canonically correct in its usage (Wolenski, 2004). Why is this important? Because of the heavy influence of Greek philosophy on Roman culture at the time of the writing of the gospels and was especially influential on the writing of the Gospel of Matthew (as will be seen later) (McCuistion, 2014). For Luther, aletheia was ontological in the Greek concept of truth (Wolenski, 2004). When Paul told Titus, “Cretans are always liars...” though he used a different Greek word, this idea comes

from Epimenides, whom Paul mentions as a Cretan philosopher (Titus 1:12), used *aletheia* when referring to his compatriots (Wolenski, 2004). While *aletheia* refers to real items, it is contrasted with one's opinions which is contrary to post-modern thought concerning truth (Wolenski, 2004).

For Philo, truth expresses a deeper cultural determinant which contrasts with the Stoic concept of truth as a function of logic (Knight, T. 1993). Philo saw truth through text as oral and an interpretation of the divine and not a function of propositional logic since he evidently had a dislike of logic (Knight, 1993). Semantically, *altheia* is originally considered to denote actual facts as referencing verbal accounts of facts (Knight, 1993). Since early Greek notion of truth was steeped in Hellenistic society, it was anything which could be proven objectively and demonstrated to be so making it authoritative when it was established as valid (Knight, 1993).

Publicly, truth was established by appealing to the facts which applied to language as one was compelled to speak the truth to convict others of that truth (Knight, 1993). For Plato, truth was discovered in thought and was an attribute of knowledgeable objects of justice, goodness, and others where the mind latches onto the truth and reality of these while Philo saw truth as the object of the seekers' quest whereby truth is utilized to make a distinction of the pluralities to grasp an object being sought (Knight, 1993). For Philo, truth is founded on experience and how a person arrives at truth through right living, or one can depart from (Knight, 1993).

Philo viewed truth as conformity to education and is conditioned upon maintaining a practice of routine through forced conformity (Knight, 1993). He developed this view from the Septuagint imagery of truth in Genesis 24:48 and saw it as a way or an avenue to attain truth thus, he saw falsehood and truth as ethical notions (Knight, 1993). He considered exegesis as the avenue for presenting truth to the world though truth must be kept out of quarrels and disputes

(Knight, 1993). He saw truth as a set standard and not flexible (Knight, 1993). It was within the Septuagint he discovered his understanding of truth since when one lives his or her life in conformity to the Mosaic Covenant, then they are living in truth (Knight, 1993). Thus, truth is an abstract and attribute of God (Knight, 1993).

Socrates believed truth could not be defined orally or written where, for Protagoras, truth is public property as it is an attribute of judgment whereby one must sift out truth through discourse to correct any misunderstandings of reality and humans may not serve as measures of truth (Knight, 1993). Protagoras saw no written document nor human may claim to have authority concerning truth (Knight, 1993).

Greek culture is the foundation for Western culture and is why this is being touched upon as it relates to Greek philosophy concerning truth and how it came to influence post-modern thought (Potter, 2017). In ancient Greek culture, *altheia* was the removing of the curtain to reveal what was behind it and is equivalent to the Greek *apokalupsis*, which means, revelation, revealing, or unveiling (Becker, 2015). Knowing truth is a process where it is revealed to the individual (Becker, 2015). As mentioned above, Greek philosophy influenced the writing of the Gospel of Matthew as he was also writing to the Hellenistic Jews, those Jews who had embraced the Greek culture (McCuistion, 2014). Matthew apparently followed the outline of the Greek tragedy as he incorporated the elements of those writings (McCuistion, 2014). One sees the influence of ancient Greek culture on not only postmodernism, but also biblical writers of the New Testament. For the culture today one sees the influence of *altheia* on the concept of truth.

Absolute Truth is Essential for Christian Education

Without absolute biblical truth Christian education only becomes another branch of secular education. For Christians, absolute truth is foundational for a biblical worldview and the

source of this truth is Scripture. Though other resources may be utilized, the Bible must remain the primary textbook for Christian education (Estep, 2008). This education must be God-centered with the aim being belief and behavior (Estep, 2008). It is centered on the Creator who is truth and who provided the truth (Estep, 2008). Since Scripture reveals God and his truth it is essential it be interpreted and communicated correctly (Allison & Anthony, 2008). This is why hermeneutics should be taught to the learners so they can correctly study Scripture on their own outside of the group setting (Allison & Anthony, 2008).

The term, pedagogy, suggests leading the learner in a direction of a life view, value system, or religious or spiritual commitment which entails leading them into biblical truth (van der Walt, 2012). Christian education should embrace, honor, and reflect the narrative of the church especially where truth is concerned (Scriven, 1999). This challenges some presuppositions of liberalism and postmodernism (Scriven, 1999). Christian education must embrace its own heritage and discipline and renounce, without apology, congenial neutrality, artifice, and self-deception (Scriven, 1999).

Light, or truth, can come in from either above, the side (outside), or below, or within (Korsgaard, 2000). From above is revelation from God while from outside it is from nature and the senses, while from within it is the individual (reason), or from below (culture or national identity (Korsgaard, 2000). For Christians and pastors light, or truth, must come from above through revelation and study of Scripture and the Bible is the only authoritative source for truths that are only accessible through revelation (Knight, 2006).

Thomas Aquinas' theological and philosophical synthesis sought to incorporate liberal arts into Christian education to help learners seek higher truths (Guttek, 2011). He was convinced the liberal arts were vital for forming Christian education (Guttek, 2011). Augustine believed ,

with the help of faith, education leads the learner to theology whereby they can discover truth (Guttek, 2011). Aquinas concluded education is a means to an end, relates to both dimensions of reality (spiritual and physical), and reality is hierarchal (Guttek, 2011). This led to his realization that the family, church, and society play important roles in education (Guttek, 2011).

Truth is Essential for Teaching

In Scripture teachers would explain to the people what a prophet was telling them in doctrinal statements while applying it to the situation the church was going through (Thomson & Elwell, 2001). Teachers must be able to effectively communicate the truths of Scripture to the congregation through love (Thomson & Elwell, 2001). Teaching is a gift of the Holy Spirit and allows one to communicate biblical truths. For pastors it is essential they have a firm grasp of biblical truths and concepts of Scripture before they begin teaching (Earley & Gutierrez, 2010). They must be prepared to “rightly divide the word of truth” as Paul commanded and exhorted Timothy (2Tim. 2:15. New King James Version). If the teacher cannot correctly understand Biblical truths they cannot teach them to the learners.

When they continued in the teaching of the apostles, the people were having facts communicated to them (Bonhoeffer, 2003. Acts 2:42). Though the content has been objectively determined it needs to be taught to the learners (Bonhoeffer, 2003). The teaching of the apostles were their eyewitness accounts of the events of Jesus’ life from the time he began his ministry through his ascension and what the Holy Spirit brought to their mind as they studied the Old Testament scriptures (Bonhoeffer, 2003). Scripture does give a warning concerning teaching when James declares, “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (Ja. 3:1. New King James Version) meaning it is essential teachers of Scripture rightly divide the word of truth or they will be judged by God.

Truth is Essential for Disciple Making

Jesus commanded all Christians to make disciples and teach them to observe all the things he taught the apostles (Matt. 28:20). A disciple is one who adheres their lives to the teachings of the one they are following, (Estep, 2008). With the other disciples they develop relationships and require a distinctive style of instruction from their teacher (Estep, 2008). Disciples eventually continue what the teacher began as they look out for other groups of disciples (Estep, 2008). All Christians must recognize Jesus calls all Christians to discipleship (to follow him) and he has the authority to command obedience to his word (Bonhoeffer, 2003). That is why it is essential for teachers of Scripture to fully understand biblical truths. The call to discipleship is to be solely connected and committed to Jesus and be obedient to his word and believing his words are truth and a stronger foundation than what the world offers (Bonhoeffer, 2003).

The ultimate aim of Christian teaching and discipling is to help the learner become more like Christ which is a life-long process (Knight, 2006). It is helping the learner to mature in their walk with Jesus Christ and in his truth and entails helping learners develop a biblical worldview to counter the secular worldview around them. To accomplish this it is necessary to define what a worldview is to the younger generation. As mentioned above, James Sire defines a worldview as “a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, which can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions...that we hold...about basic constitutions of reality, which provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being (2009). This is important to understand as young people today are bombarded with a mix of worldviews through electronic media leading to a pluralistic outlook (van der Walt, 2017). With this definition one can help them develop a worldview based on biblical principles and truth.

One's worldview will change as the individual moves through childhood, youth, young adulthood, adulthood, middle age, and old age whether a Christian or not and cannot be "transferred" from an older person to a younger (van der Walt, 2017). A worldview is a view of the world and a way of life which tells one what is and what ought to be so they can walk the way (van der Walt, 2017). A Christian worldview will equip one with directions in life (van der Walt, 2017). A worldview then, relates a person to the rest of the world, provides them with a place in the world, injects meaning into the life of the adherent and helps them to endure death, evil, and suffering (van der Walt, 2017). It integrates the individual into society (van der Walt, 2017).

To help learners develop a biblical worldview it is necessary to avoid looking at a person as either conservative or progressive and this applies to both; the young person and the older person (van der Walt, 2017). Any choice between conservative and progressive should be thrown out when helping one develop a biblical worldview (van der Walt, 2017). A Christian worldview should be regarded as a gift as the foundation has been given by revelation of God and is to be shared with others (van der Walt, 2017. Deut. 6:5-9). The biblical worldview is also a prophetic worldview which is inseparable from the past, present, and future (van der Walt, 2017).

Why share a biblical worldview with the younger generation? Because of the specific stage of life they are in, the present cultural confusion and educational confusion. We live in a polytheistic age with new idols constantly being put before us and young people today need a biblical worldview full of biblical truths (van der Walt, 2017). This will aid in their discipleship development and help them recognize biblical truths and work to become mature and like Christ.

One aspect of a disciple maker is that of mentoring and becoming a mentor is a key to sharing a worldview as the mentor lives out what they teach and believe as that is what young

people today are looking for, genuine people who are transparent and live out their worldview (van der Walt, 2017).

Theoretical Framework Summary

Beginning with aletheia, it can be seen truth is essential for many aspects for sound biblical Christian education. It is essential pastors understand biblical truths to avoid leading learners into error and coming under strict judgment by God. Pastors and all Christians represent Jesus Christ while on this earth and must seek out biblical truth and live and teach it to others.

Biblical truth is essential to differentiate between Christian education and secular education and help learners develop a biblical worldview to aid in their development as a Christian. Truth is essential for developing disciples of Jesus Christ and for mentors who are helping young adults grow in their walk with Christ. Sound biblical truth is essential to counteract the denial of absolute truth of post-modern philosophy. These theories will help guide this study to answer the research questions and purpose statement.

Though the above sections show the framework for this study, this author deems it necessary to look at a brief history of the development of the post-modern concept concerning truth. Beginning with a brief description of truth this section will lead into the history of the “evolution” of truth beginning with ancient Greece concluding with postmodernism and the impact on church teachings concerning biblical truth. This will complete the picture providing a better understanding of the thought process and overview of why the study.

Truth

Many appear to confuse truth with knowledge, and they are not since, when a person becomes aware of truth it becomes knowledge (Clark, 2001). This knowledge, from the formation of truth, leads one into reality (Clark, 2001). Where many view truth as coming from a

collection of knowledge, it appears to be the opposite where truth forms that knowledge (Ross, 2008). This knowledge is stored in one's memory until it is needed to be retrieved and either expanded upon or applied which deems truth finite and through learning this knowledge can be expanded (Ross, 2008). Another idea is truth is repeatable and not dependent on the recorder or observer which are part of scientific discovery (Ross, 2008). Because it fits the popular concept of truth, science, to many, appears to be an acceptable means of discerning truth (Ross, 2008). Since theology is not given by the accepted means of discerning truth, it is much more suspect (Ross, 2008). This shows a separation between those who approach spiritual truth in contrast with a secular worldview (Ross, 2008).

Natural Truth and Spiritual Truth

Some have separated truth into the natural and spiritual and this is brought up since this study is directed at spiritual leaders. Natural (public) truth is experienced in the natural world and all share in it whereas spiritual (individual) truth is based on the beliefs and experiences of the individual (Ross, 2008). This individual truth as seen by others is often put against propositional truth (if Jesus is the truth then he is the only way to God thus, Jesus is the only way to God is true statement) and individual truth and propositional truth must work together (Clark, 2001). This has led others to conclude truth is a road that is expressed by biblical conceptual metaphors that relate to the experiences of a life of faith (Ross, 2008).

Semantics of Truth.

In both English and Koine Greek, the problem with truth begins in the grammatical forms in which a word begins as a noun which represents a concrete item "within the realm of human experience" (Ross, 2008). The grammar will also, in the same way, attribute the word as either an adverb or adjective thus, truth is an abstract noun since it is encoded as a noun (Ross, 2008).

Truth has also been referred to as an abstract noun which is shown in the concept of truth which cannot be applied to an object (Ross, 2008). Since all languages do not skew grammatical forms the same this leaves the concept of truth unsure of what is being described as true (Ross, 2008). This was the problem with the ancient Greek philosophers.

Ancient Greek Philosophy Concerning Truth

Most literature covers Aristotle and his concept of Greek philosophy while touching on Greek philosophers as Plato. Aristotle often began by looking at those who went before him, though often criticizing them he would actually confirm their ideas (Long, 2006). For Greek philosophers, truth was viewed as being concealed within the individual and through searching one discovers truth (Long, 2006). Along with those before him, Aristotle articulated through striving to discover truth, one discovers past articulations of truth resulting in one attaining more effective personal articulations of truth themselves (Long, 2006). What Aristotle did was to look from the outside the mind to experiences to discover truth (Guttek, 2011). Through this discovery of truth, humans have the power to reason as a defining nature (Guttek, 2011).

Though Aristotle viewed truth as something concealed within an individual, he saw the finiteness of humans as the reason they do not have the capacity to adequately obtain the truth (Long, 2006). He saw the obtaining of truth as not through seeing but speaking, through a multitude of voices and this was through the voices of those who preceded him (Long, 2006). From this he articulated language as a repository of truth and each generation can draw from it thus, it is through *λογος* (word) one has access to truth (Long, 2006). This thought was continued by other Greek philosophers who carried it further as they saw public debates as the way to discover truth (Mansfield, 2015). Along with Aristotle and Plato, the Greek philosophers believed everything is measured by human beings and individuals are the final arbiter of their

judgment concerning right and wrong and true or false thus, it is through the experiences of the individual one comes to the knowledge of the truth. The nature of truth has a core meaning which is apprehended through the intellect and this requires the highest form of the intellect which is an immaterial form (Hubler, 2005). It is through experience as articulated by the intellect one discovers truth. This will lead to post-modern thought concerning truth which will be looked at later as it goes through the Renaissance to postmodernism.

The Renaissance

The Renaissance was a period of intellectual awakening where learning increased where modern secular individualism began (Enns, 2008). This brought about a renewed skepticism concerning biblical truths (Enns, 2008). This period was one of rapid change from medieval to modern and rapid cultural change (Mehl, 2000). During this time textual criticism came to the fore in an attempt to restore ancient works by comparing existing manuscripts including the Bible (Gonzalez, 2010). Through textual, or higher, criticism they concluded only logic can analyze names and nouns and this resulted in a double truth (Mehl, 2000). Different from the Greek philosophers however, Renaissance philosophers approached truth from a moral and theological bias (Crocker, 1953). Though they looked at truth overall, their focus was on truth in government and society, and they saw a double standard for truth, one philosophical and the other theological or religious (Crocker, 1953). They saw truth as a social institution and was a dangerous instrument to be handled gently (Crocker, 1953). This view of truth as social, political, and theological was seen as objective and a unified holistic concept (Lee, 1994).

As with the Greek philosophers, the Renaissance philosophers saw an alliance between the value of spoken words and the quality of truth especially in pledges (Lee, 1994). Since there were no conflicts between past precedents and present practices, Renaissance philosophers saw,

because ancient customs could not be proven beyond the memory of the oldest living wise person, truth was flexible and not outdated (Lee, 1994). During this time, the writings of Aristotle were being translated and were available and this presence of non-Christian thought influenced Renaissance philosophers (Ferguson, 2013). The philosophy of Aristotle was incorporated by Thomas Aquinas who believed reason can demonstrate the existence of God and follows Aristotle in believing knowledge is received through the senses and the mind comprehends it (Ferguson, 2013). Aquinas believed revelation, such as the Trinity, can be learned and is necessary for truth and without reason only a few would know these truths but with errors (Ferguson, 2013).

During the Renaissance, the church at Rome expanded its influence and that of biblical truth however, this was met with much criticism when the Enlightenment began where human reasoning, where science and reason alone determines truth, replaced biblical truth (Babcock, 2011). Truth and reality were centered on the individual and reason and were also viewed as coming through experience and the senses (Enns, 2008). During the Renaissance it was seen the truth of the world was reflected in the inner world, that of the human being and Renaissance philosophers and ancient Greek philosophers saw truth coming from within a person and the person's spirit reflects reality (Pearsica, 2015). The inner truth of the human being is the truth claiming universality and is searched out (Pearsica, 2015). Though the physical world is known through the senses, only through reason and recollection can the intelligible world be known (Pearsica, 2015). This was the precursor to the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment is also known as the age of reason as human reasoning took over from biblical teaching as rationalism revived to look at the world (Babcock, 2011). This

rationality came from the ancient Greek culture and the philosophers of the Enlightenment believed for modern humans, reason and science were foundations for truth (Babcock, 2011). Science and reason were not rejected by Christianity at this time but the notion they were the foundations for truth was (Babcock, 2011). During this time philosophers began teaching concepts contrary to Scripture saying humans are born good, through their instincts, which are also good, and through their good natures and rational faculties they can make the world perfect approaching social perfection (Babcock, 2011).

The philosophers of this era viewed humans as becoming mature claiming they no longer needed the Bible, the church, and the state to guide them (Brown, 2001). The Enlightenment has been viewed as the ideology which characterizes the modern age which is contrasted to postmodernism (Brown, 2011). Two proponents of the Enlightenment who stand out are Rousseau and Voltaire who, though attacked the church and institutional Christianity, professed belief in a supreme being (Brown, 2001). Their beliefs were heavily influenced by philosophies which promoted the senses, reason, and nature to discover truth (Brown, 2001). During this period it was thought possible to strip the mind of all preconceived assumptions and religious tenets and commitments to arrive at unvarnished truths derived from human reasoning (Pearcey, 2005). This assumed there is a neutral knowledge which can be discovered apart from religious and philosophical values (Pearcey, 2005). Descartes believed it was possible to strip the mind to reach the bedrock of truths by stripping it of everything that can be doubted (Pearcey, 2005). Descartes, Rousseau and Voltaire, are examples of professing Christians promoting a philosophy that is contrary to Scripture (Pearcey, 2005).

From the Enlightenment came the emphasis on the centrality of humans and reason, the rejection of creeds and doctrines, rejection of the supernatural, and the fallibility of the Bible

(Enns, 2008). Enlightenment philosophy saw, through rationalism, reason as an infallible and autonomous source of truth and the storehouse of truth apart from religion and philosophy (Pearcey, 2005). Immanuel Kant argued it is from reason one develops a concept of God and truth which opened the door for modernism (Enns, 2008).

Modernism

From the Enlightenment came modernism, or modernity, which bases one's thinking on principles so reason can proceed (Erickson, 2013). This has led to the denial of the existence of God as one cannot have any sensory experience of God according to Immanuel Kant (Erickson, 2013). Modernism gave rise to social anthropology in which religion was seen as necessary to keep groups together but not in the sense for spiritual realities since there is no place for God thus, there is no place for truth in an ontological sense (Ott & Netland, 2006). This resulted in a separation of reason and faith leading to humanism and naturalism (Erickson, 2013). Those who promoted the modernist idea saw it as an enterprise designed to create a global society and economy (Ott & Netland, 2006).

Modernism, also known as theological liberalism, seeks to adapt religious ideas to cultural and modern thinking (Pierard, 2001). It was a period where nationalism, religion, and secularism interpenetrated to produce hybrids and permutations all around the world (Ott & Netland, 2006). This led to the distrust among Evangelicals toward personal experience as a threat that will erode the objectivity of authentic truth (Reuschling, 2008). Theological liberalism has led to the rejection of religious authority thus rejecting the authority of the Bible (Pierard, 2001). Theological liberalism falls into three camps of universalism beginning with those who attempt to form their doctrine by exegesis and taking Scripture out of context; the next attempts to take Scripture that speaks of the saved and lost as threats instead of truth; the final are those

who totally disagree with the biblical authors thus taking liberty with their interpretations of the scriptures and focusing only on the love of God while ignoring all other aspects such as his judgment (Miles, 2010). It is through reason and experience all beliefs must be proved and, regardless of where they come from, the mind must be open to new truths (Pierard, 2001). Truth becomes the “sum of total perspectives” (Benson, 2001). Theologically, modernism views God as not transcendent and dwelling above in heaven but present and dwelling within the world which unfortunately, leads to pantheism (Pierard, 2001).

Modernistic thought brought about the questioning of biblical truths and teachings of the early church fathers (Gonzalez, 2010). This questioning and more resulted in Protestants becoming skeptical of modernist philosophy and what it promised and, though all this was occupying theologians and church leaders, they failed to recognize other changes taking place within the church especially among the congregations (Gonzalez, 2010). From this apparent failure comes postmodernism.

Postmodernism

Post-modern philosophy concerning truth views it as a perspective and not “the” truth (Benson, 2001). Through Nietzsche, postmodernism views Christianity as no longer a vital force for the will for power over everything around a person (Benson, 2001). Postmodernists place God at the end of the chain of beings relegating him to a being they can control (Benson, 2001). Through this they attempt to control humans and the world (Benson, 2001). Postmodernism seeks to identify itself as something other than and replacing modernism (Hendel, 2014). Postmodernism came from the perspective there is no longer a single worldview that is holding western culture together (Sire, 2009). Postmodernism seeks to eliminate presuppositions based

on one's beliefs by foundationalism resulting in a pessimism regarding knowledge, objectivity, and truth (Feinberg, 2001).

From postmodernism the world has moved further into secularism where society has moved further and further away from God and the things of God, or religion, and has infiltrated individual lives (Gill, 2001). This came through Renaissance humanism, Enlightenment rationalism, the rise of science, technology, nationalism, and Communism (Gill, 2001). Postmodernism has moved God away from absolute and object worship by making the world, humans, and nature the objects of worship (Gill, 2001). For churches, this shows the need to be alert to post-modern influences which seek to undermine biblical truth and negatively affect church and Christian education as postmodernism sees the end of truth replaced by emotions, inclinations, and biases that interpret the data (Horsthemke, 2017). According to post-modern thought "truth is reached when truthfulness (or sincerity) informs our judgment" (Horsthemke, 2017). The post-modern philosophy concerning truth succumbs to intellectual indifference as it cannot evaluate its claims against reality (Groothuis, 2011). For the post-modernist, truth is what one makes it and nothing more which flies in the face of Scripture (Groothuis, 2011). This appears to have affected how many view religious expressions though none of the major religions adhere to postmodernism (Groothuis, 2011). Postmodernism has also had the effect of people to combine and mix elements of different religions creating their own spirituality devoid of certainty and conviction (Groothuis, 2011). This has resulted in a new kind of Christian who is attracted to postmodernism applying their own kind of truth to Scripture as they change truth to what they think it should be (Groothuis, 2011).

Postmodernism also seeks to either alter or deny historical facts as it sees no "historical standpoint outside our everyday situations" (Hendel, 2014). Postmodernism denies believable

metanarratives seeing no consensus only temporary “contracts” between local narratives (Hendel, 2014). Postmodernism also views all interpretation as political thus relegating reading of Scripture to its political aims and consequences ignoring any historical value they may have (Hendel, 2014).

Teaching Scripture in a Post-modern Age

Those who adhere to postmodernism often hold views of the world that are universal, assert relativity, celebrate diversity and pluralism while exposing and critiquing privilege (Allen, 2001). Because postmodernism is spoken of in philosophy and theology, pastors are slow to think about it and the possible negative influences postmodernism may instill (Allen, 2001). Due to its influence in society, postmodernism also has influenced congregants as they may develop an attitude that reflects post-modern thinkers (Allen, 2001). During the age of modernism, many preachers and Bible teachers often utilized Enlightenment presuppositions when presenting biblical truths to those under them (Allen, 2001). Postmodernism rejects the notion humans can possess pure knowledge of the world as it views interpretation as an awareness and a matter of social construct (Allen, 2001). Postmodernist view language as not referring to reality since it points to other languages within the worldview of the community (Allen, 2001). This has led some to suggest pastors and Bible teachers use a conversational style to present biblical truths (Allen, 2001). Not in the usual conversational way between two or more people but through a monological form which exhibits a conversational quality (Allen, 2001). This is seen being done through deconstruction (overturning and displacing a conceptual order), being encountered by the Other (those being taught) seeing them different and different from the teacher, transgressive (knowledge is separated into different branches or disciplines), pluralistic (using different model of preaching or teaching), and apologetics (seeking to show the Christian faith is harmonious

with objective fact) (Allen, 2001). Many see teaching conversationally as transforming, or converting, the learner as it cultivates change (Johnson-Miller, 2013). Those who utilize this style of teaching see it as tied to experience as it reflects an interaction between past, present, and future and the culture of the church community determines their understanding and faith (Johnson-Miller, 2013). Those who teach conversationally seek to incorporate the presence of Christ into their teaching process to aid in the transformation of the learner (Johnson-Miller, 2013). They also seek to help learners explore their deepest selves, their soul, and their surrounding cultural situations (Johnson-Miller, 2013). To accomplish this many who utilize this style of teaching use storying attempting to make the stories of the Bible clear to the learners since they see God speaking through stories (Johnson-Miller, 2013). This style of teaching seeks to help the learner see God in every circumstance of their life (Diaz, 2017). This style of teaching is connected to postmodernism as postmodernism sees language functioning to construct meaning and it is through stories communities are held together (Sire, 2004). This style is also tied to postmodernism as one of the characteristics of postmodernism is truth concerning reality is hidden so all one can do is tell stories (Sire, 2004).

Postmodernism questions language, truth objectivity, and practical truth and the pastor and Bible teacher should seek to address these (O'Grady, 2003). Concerning language, postmodernism questions how one language can be accurately translated into another since nuances are often lost (O'Grady, 2003). Postmodernism sees objectivity and truth as what is true for one person may not be true for another (O'Grady, 2003). For the postmodernist, practical truth only comes through cultural and historical experiences of heterogenous people (O'Grady, 2003). For centuries Christians have taken Scripture and applied the interpretation to human behavior to help the learner grow in their faith and become like Christ however, postmodernism

has affected all people and those teaching Scripture now must do so slowly and deliberately for ordinary Christians or, if what is being taught makes no sense to them, they will just leave (O'Grady, 2003). Pastors and Bible teachers must be deliberate and carefully explain Scripture to those under them so they will understand what is being taught.

Where modernism sought to cohere, integrate, and unify the world, postmodernism insists the world cannot be represented in a unified manner (Pratt, 2007). Within this context, postmodernism views the naturally unified order of reality as presented in Scripture is an illusion (Pratt, 2007). Postmodernism challenges the notion of unity and seeks to replace it with the notion of plurality (Pratt, 2007). Postmodernism elevates subjectivism thus denying objective truth (Pratt, 2007). Concerning theology, postmodernism rejects the idea of modernism that the true order of the universe can be comprehended by humans through reason (Pratt, 2007). The pastor and Bible teacher should be aware of this view of postmodernism to counteract it when presenting biblical truths.

One result of postmodernism is the widening gap between the biblical culture and the contemporary culture as, concerning the foundation of religious education, the Bible is no longer taken for granted (Pollefeyt & Bieringer, 2005). Another result is the contemporary world being further removed from the biblical world where some even ignore contextual and historical considerations (Pollefeyt & Bieringer, 2005). Learners often confront Bible teachers with difficult passages thus, it is imperative the teacher carefully explain the background and the context to help them better understand what is being taught. Though there is this widening gulf between contemporary world and the biblical world it is essential the pastor and Bible teacher continue to view the Bible as the ultimate authority and the main text for teaching biblical truth.

Contrary to post-modern thought, the Bible needs to be approached as a historical document and the historical critical method should be utilized in the study of and teaching of Scripture (Pollefeyt & Bieringer 2005). This will aid in presenting the historical aspects and facts showing their importance in the origin, meaning, and context of the text (Pollefeyt & Bieringer, 2005). This will help the learner overcome the bias of postmodernism against the accuracy of historical truth and facts. The Bible is a multifaceted text and can be taught not from a single grand story but from many smaller stories within the grand story which may be attractive to young people in a post-modern age (Pollefeyt & Bieringer, 2005). For pastors and Bible teachers it is essential to understand where the learners are coming from and how postmodernism may have affected them concerning truth so they can decide how to effectively reach them.

Summary

This section has presented several examples of related literature which enhances the theological and theoretical sections. It has presented a historical outlook of the development of different ideas concerning truth throughout history beginning with ancient Greece and has given an overview of the evolution of post-modern thought concerning truth and shown how it applies to this study.

Rationale for Study

From ancient Greek philosophy one sees the evolution of the idea of truth toward the post-modern concept of truth being what an individual makes it out to be and is not absolute or objective. This has presented a theological concern throughout Christendom; however, many may be unaware of influences of postmodernism on congregations. Many pastors may not be aware of any possible influences of postmodernism on their teaching of biblical truths. Within

the theological framework it can be seen there is a need to address the views of postmodernism especially where truth is concerned and teaching biblical truth accurately.

Truth

With the postmodern philosophy concerning absolute and objective truth, one can see it is contrary to the biblical concept of truth thus showing this needs to be addressed by pastors.

Different faiths also have different concepts of spiritual truth as does the natural world having various principles concerning truth which shows these may not be transferrable from the spiritual to the natural (Ross, 2008). Natural truth concerns the world one is born into but does not influence one's faith whereas spiritual truth is through the Holy Spirit who helps the Christian acknowledge the deity of Jesus Christ (Ross, 2008). It is shown there is a need to study how pastors may perceive any influence of postmodernism on how they present biblical truths.

Teaching Biblical Truths

Though one may not be aware of it, postmodernism has influenced all humans in one way or another (Pollefeyt & Bieringer, 2005). This author hopes this study will be helpful for pastors to recognize this and determine if and how post-modern thought concerning truth may have affected their teaching. People in this post-modern world view things much differently than those who grew up in the modern age thus, pastors should study how postmodernism has affected young people today to see how they may need to alter their teaching to reach them. This study is designed to help pastors recognize this influence and help them overcome it to reach young people and others who have been influenced by post-modern thought concerning the denial of absolute and objective truth.

Many pastors utilize the expositional style of teaching which involves utilizing hermeneutics and exegesis to glean truths from Scripture (Chisholm, 1998). When one teaches in

this style they begin by summarizing the main ideas of the passage as it is taken into context with the rest of the chapter and book and the entire Bible (Duvall & Hayes, 2012). They may include a brief description of the historical-cultural context of the book followed by explaining what the text says and means within the context (Duvall & Hayes, 2017). This is followed by teaching the learners how to apply the truth discovered in the text to their lives (Duvall & Hayes, 2017).

Another form of teaching the Bible is lecture based where the pastor resolves to interpret the text to aid the learner's natural ability to reason through instruction (Davies, 2014; Maxfield, 2015). This style of teaching relies on logic as they strive to encourage learners to seek as many people as possible to learn from (Davies, 2014). Through lecture style of teaching the pastor is informing the learners as they direct them to what is truth (Davies, 2014). This style of teaching coincides with the post-modern idea how a person interprets a text is how its meaning is discovered and, since learners are encouraged to seek out others to learn from, it also goes with the post-modern idea there is no truth that is the same for everyone and truth is what one makes it out to be (Erickson, 2013).

A fourth style of teaching pastors incorporate is topical where one identifies a topic within Scripture and considers how learners may accomplish goals the teacher may glean from the topic (Shapiro, 2009). Using different scriptures from the Bible, the pastor seek to interpret, explain the topic as the pastor seeks to aid the learner in understanding the topic, perceive, and empathize as they help the learner apply any truths discovered (Shapiro, 2009). How a person interprets a text is how its meaning is discovered is the post-modern idea this style is connected to (Erickson, 2013). These, along with the conversational style mentioned above, are the most common styles utilized by pastors.

Related Literature

Though Deidre Latz looked at Christian education and compared it with secular education she also looked at how the church needs to address this problem of how postmodernism is affecting all Christian teaching (2018). Another study by Wineland was directed toward Christian education however, the author also directed it toward fulfilling the Great Commission which is a directive of and toward the church (Wineland, 2005).

William Cox studied how the Enlightenment affects the Christian mandate for a biblical view concerning education however, his study is directed toward Christian schools, but his principles can be applied to church classes (2000). Though Bennie van der Walt does not address teaching, he does give insight into the thinking of young people today and how postmodernism and secularism has negatively influenced them (2017).

Ove Korsgaard looked at the influence of the Enlightenment on the Danish educational system focusing on the five traditions of enlightenment which are Christian, civic, popular-national, workers', and personal (2000). He viewed enlightenment coming from above, outside, within, and below. He utilized different people for each. For above he equated it with Martin Luther; for outside, John Locke; from within, Immanuel Kant, and for below with Johann G. Herder and N.F.S. Grundtvig (2000). He attempted to show no enlightenment outside, within, or from below can come about apart from enlightenment from above (divine) (2000). He ties these to secular education (2000).

Dirk G. van der Merwe showed how the Enlightenment, modernism, postmodernism, and secularism have influenced the church and how it interprets and understands the Bible (2019). He focused on Bultmann's demythologization of Scripture and the relationship between religion

and science. His purpose was to show Christianity needs to incorporate scientific discoveries to be relevant today and impactful (2019).

Though Scriven focused on Christian education in colleges his research study is relevant for this study. He showed how Christian colleges differ and diverge sharply from the liberal understanding of what education should be and look like (1999). He concluded Christian education must look at the whole person as it requires countercultural framework and truthful participation which is contrary to secular education (1999). This aids this research in discovering the differences between education in churches and secular education and how pastors must work to keep their teaching separated from post-modern influences.

Bennie J. van der Walt investigated how older generations can share their own worldview with the younger generation showing how older Christians can share a biblical worldview with the younger (2017). This study aids this research in showing how younger people have been influenced by a secular worldview and how pastors can successfully present a biblical worldview to them to aid in presenting biblical truths also.

In his study, Glenn B. Siniscalchi shows the need for the church to develop rational apologetics to confront the post-modern philosophy concerning absolute truth (2011). He concluded the theologians have been derelict in their duties in addressing this threat to biblical truth (2011). This study aids in showing pastors need to address this issue in their own thinking so they can correct it within the church.

Johannes L. van der Walt addressed the post-modern aversion to sound biblical truth and doctrine (2012). Looking at education in South Africa, he saw education as a philosophy slowly disappearing being replaced with social education and critical theory (2012). He concluded the

Christian educator is a steward who looks after the students and as he or she seeks to help them form religious and life-forming commitments developing the spirit and applying biblical truths to their lives (2012). This will help this study to show pastors they are stewards who must look after their flocks teaching them sound biblical truths and how to apply them to their lives.

Thomas E. Knight looked at how Plato and Philo used Aletheia and how Philo saw its use in the Septuagint (1993). This article helps to show how ancient Greek philosophy concerning truth has influenced the church and some early church fathers and the translators of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures).

Pearsica looked at the influence of Plato on the Renaissance period where his view of the logos was attributed to the image going beyond what Plato developed (2015). Truth is derived from the visible which comes from the divine (2015). This article aids this research in furthering the how ancient Greek thought influenced historical periods culminating in the post-modern era and the secular.

David Ross studied the divide between rationalism and postmodernism and how that has resulted in the demise of absolute truth (2008). He then shows the results and consequences for Christians and that Jesus is divine (2008). His conclusion is Jesus is God and through him truth comes and is shown in spiritual truth and natural truth showing the fallacy of postmodernism that the two are separate from and divine influence (2008). This study aids this research in showing pastors need to remain in the conviction Jesus is God and he is truth and present that truth to their congregations.

Brian Davies article was instrumental to show the characteristics of lecture-based teaching and was utilized along with the article by John A. Maxfield showing this style of

teaching utilizes post-modern characteristics as shown above. Davies focused on the lecture style of Thomas Aquinas (2014) while Maxfield looked at the teaching style of Martin Luther (2015).

The article by Beverly C. Johnson-Miller was utilized to show the characteristics of conversational teaching focusing on the transformation of the Christian (2013). Her article also showed how this style of teaching is strongly post-modern in its influence and pastors should avoid utilizing it. To show the characteristics of topical teaching the article by Elayne Shapiro was utilized. Her article showed what this style of teaching is based upon by using case studies and teaching about conflict (2009).

These studies on the effects of postmodernism can be seen to look at the effects of postmodernism on church teachings. Unfortunately, they do not address how postmodernism conflicts with church teachings concerning truth showing they lack in how postmodernism is undermining biblical truths and church teaching. This shows there is a vast need to study the effects of this philosophy on churches.

Gaps in the Literature

Though there has been much written concerning postmodernism and truth in general, this author has discovered a gap concerning how the post-modern philosophy concerning truth has affected how pastors teach biblical truth and how learners perceive that truth. There are also gaps concerning ancient Greek philosophers as many focus only on Aristotle and Plato ignoring other Greek philosophers. This will enhance the study of the evolution of truth into post-modern philosophy. This author did not find any literature covering how the ancient Greek philosophy influenced Roman philosophy and extremely little concerning Greco-Roman culture and truth, showing there are gaps in the historical aspect that should be covered.

Though this author did find some literature covering how to teach biblical truths in a post-modern age, there were gaps where modernism and biblical truths are concerned which would augment any historical view. There was also limited literature covering teaching biblical truth and the Renaissance and the Enlightenment which would aid in understanding how postmodernism may be influencing biblical teaching.

Outside of Christian writings concerning sound biblical teaching, there are few if any this author discovered giving a secular view which can be compared with the Christian view. This author also discovered very few literature relating to biblical interpretation and postmodernism and modernism which would show how it may be influenced by both.

Profile of the Current Study

This literature has covered the theological and theoretical framework concerning any influence postmodernism may have had on teaching biblical truth. It has covered the historical aspects from ancient Greece to postmodernism and the influence of ancient Greek Philosophy on post-modern thought concerning truth. Throughout this chapter one can see the evolution of this philosophy concerning truth and the contrast it has with biblical truth. This view shows the need for pastors to investigate if postmodernism has influenced how they teach, and the learners view of truth. This chapter has covered the Renaissance view of truth, the view of truth during the Enlightenment and the modern age concluding with the post-modern view and how Biblical truths can be taught to reach those in a post-modern world. From this one can see a need for a phenomenological study to explore any effects postmodernism may have on the church and teaching of biblical truth. It is through a phenomenological design one will be able to glean how pastors may perceive any influences postmodernism may be having on how biblical truths are presented.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

From the above sections concerning the theological and theoretical frameworks and related literature and what was presented from Genesis 3, one can see the evolution of doubt concerning truth as presented in Scripture. This leads to, as mentioned, the need for a phenomenological study to explore if there are any negative effects upon the church and how it presents those truths.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

With the apparent infiltration of post-modern thought concerning absolute truth into the church, and the denial of it by postmodernists, has apparently led many churches and denominations to turning to secularism and becoming confused concerning biblical truths taught in Scripture (Enns, 2008; Latz, 2018). This has resulted in an adverse effect on the lives of many Christians and can lead to them questioning the absolute truths of Scripture which shows a desperate need for a study of this topic to avoid people leaving the faith and help churches and Bible teachers address this problem.

Current research concerning postmodernism and the church focuses on Christian educational institutions comparing them with secular educational institutions however, they often look at the Enlightenment period instead of postmodernism (Cox, 2000; Wineland, 2005). Though most address postmodernism and education, one addressed how postmodernism and secularism is adversely affecting young people today (van der Walt, 2017). With the above in mind, one can see the post-modern thought concerning truth has infiltrated the church and this

thought on truth has its beginning in ancient Greek thought where truth is what a person makes it out to be (Wolenski, 2004). This idea concerning truth can be further discovered in the Enlightenment period of history and beyond to the present day (Potter, 2017). Where teaching within the church is concerned, this post-modern thought has infiltrated the church and is undermining sound biblical teachings where many churches are “watering” down Scripture to present a social gospel contrary to the biblical Gospel (Erickson, 2013).

Postmodernism affects knowledge, meaning, reason, and foundationalism which also comes from one’s worldview and affects how many view biblical concepts concerning truth, and each person, whether a Christian or not, is impacted by the worldview of the culture they live in (Erickson, 2013; Groothuis, 2011). Postmodernism also attacks metanarratives and, since the Christian Gospel is “the” metanarrative, postmodernism views it as oppressive thus, it is imperative Bible teachers face this threat to truth (Mohler, 2004).

Referring back to the Scripture concerning the dialogue between Jesus and Pilate when looking at John 14:6 one sees where truth is a title of Jesus and postmodernism seeks to show this is not true making Scripture ineffective. This places pastors in the position of being opposed to the post-modern thought concerning truth and in a position of defending Scripture and absolute truth as taught in the Bible.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how pastors in SBC’s perceive if there has been any post-modern influences in their churches which may affect how the church teaches biblical truths.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

RQ1. Is there a perceived relationship between biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth among pastors?

RQ2. What perceived influences of post-modern thinking do pastors believe may be shaping how they teach biblical truth?

RQ3. Is there a perceived relationship between post-modern thought and congregants leaving the church?

Research Hypotheses

H1. There is a relationship between biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth among pastors.

H2. There is no relationship between biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth among pastors.

H3. There are post-modern influences pastors see may be shaping how they teach biblical truth.

H4. There are no post-modern influences pastors see may be shaping how they teach biblical truth.

H5. There is a relationship between post-modern thinking and congregants leaving the church.

H6. There is not a relationship between post-modern thinking and congregants leaving the church.

Research Design and Methodology

This was a descriptive quantitative study that looked at the various aspects of the influence of postmodernism concerning truth as it relates to churches (Joyner, Rouse, & Glatthorn, 2013). This study took on an interpretivist epistemology as it focused on the social realities of the surrounding culture (Gall, et al., 2015). A descriptive quantitative design was necessary to explore and present a description of this phenomenon and effects it may have on

churches (Joyner, et al., 2013). Thus, a descriptive quantitative design is appropriate for exploring this topic and to study the research problem.

A descriptive quantitative design aided in exploring the problem of postmodernism and its apparent influence on teaching truth and it aided in detailing an understanding of this phenomenon (Creswell, 2015). In a quantitative research design the researcher seeks to describe trends associated with the phenomenon and attempt to explain any relationship which may be discovered (Creswell, 2015).

Quantitative research seeks to create generalized knowledge through studying samples of a population as the researcher holds to a belief in objective reality as he or she analyzes the variables and includes this reality in that analysis (Gall, et al., 2015). This is accomplished by the researcher through surveys as he or she seeks to explore and understand a particular phenomenon (Gall, et al., 2015). To further accomplish this, a descriptive quantitative design seeks to describe the phenomenon and understand its effects on a population thus, this study will seek to gather data through an in-depth study of the phenomenon of the effects of postmodernism on biblical teaching in relation to the purpose statement and to help answer the research questions (Gall, et al., 2015) .

Generally, descriptive quantitative research creates, quantitatively, a representation of the phenomenon by utilizing a sample of a population to gather data to draw a conclusion regarding what is generally true rather than what an individual regards as true for him or her (Gall, et al., 2015). The researcher must acknowledge his or her own role in “constructing the social realities that they describe in their research reports (Gall, et al., 2015).

Typically, a quantitative researcher may employ a survey to collect and analyze data to develop a statical representation of the phenomenon (Gall, et al., 2015). This information was

based upon the research questions to obtain measurable and observable data regarding the phenomenon (Creswell, 2015). This data was then organized, analyzed, and broken down into parts to further answer the research questions followed by interpreting the data in light of the research problem and questions (Creswell, 2015). The results were then be presented.

Setting

The geographical setting was SBC's throughout the United States. This allowed for the ability to look at small and large congregations which are representative of the SBC overall. Each church presented the opportunity to explore and discover how postmodernism has influenced different demographics to include ethnic groups within the SBC.

This aided in gathering information which gave a better overall picture as participants had been exposed to the different ideals and their learners have been exposed and as some had come out of either one. This also showed those living within the United States have been exposed to different worldviews which influence how they view truth.

Population

The population for this study consisted of lead pastors within the SBC. This study incorporated maximal variation sampling as it sought to find individuals who have different traits and cover different age groups (Creswell, 2015). The different churches within the United States will have individuals who teach the different demographics, and each will have their own teaching style and view on biblical truth. Through survey sent, with the aid of the Executive Director of the Northwest Baptist Convention and the dissertation supervisor through e-mail to each organization this researcher sought participants who have varying characteristics. This study incorporated the snowball sampling when the Executive Director of the NWBC sent the e-

mail to other executive directors of other Baptist Conventions and the dissertation supervisor also sent it out in his area (Creswell, 2015).

Sampling Procedure

The director of the NWBC was contacted to seek his offices' aid in sending out the consent form with the survey link via e-mail. He also sent the survey information to other Executive Directors of other Baptist Conventions who were able to send it out to pastors under them which gave a sizeable population depending upon the number of pastors who participated in the survey. This allowed for anonymity as the survey did not ask for any personal information of respondents. This researcher hoped for as many participants as possible though many pastors did not participate as they felt they did not have the time for a five-minute survey or, since it is voluntary, chose not to participate.

Limits of Generalization

This study was limited to lead (senior) pastors of Baptist churches within the SBC. Therefore, this study is not applicable to pastors other than lead pastors within these Baptist churches, also it is not applicable to pastors of other denominations. This study was also limited if the survey link was only sent out to the NWBC.

Ethical Considerations

Ethically, for this study this researcher needed to explain the purpose of the study to participants, explain what is in conducting this study for this researcher, describe any possible risks to participants, ensure confidentiality, any informed consent which may be needed, who was the confidant for this researcher concerning ethics, and what ethical framework and

philosophy informs this researcher's work and ensured respect and sensitivity for participants (Gall, et al., 2015). This researcher informed individuals they are participating in a study and was truthful concerning the purpose for the study (Creswell, 2015).

There was no deception on the part of this researcher who also sought to avoid off-the-record information (Creswell, 2015). This researcher avoided sharing personal experiences with participants and discouraged the participant from revealing personal, intimate, details of their lives or experiences, beware and avoid disclosing sensitive and distressing information of the researcher or the participant and ensure confidentiality (Creswell, 2015). Data was stored securely. All participants were over the age of eighteen. This researcher avoided assumptions about the research and did not give any assumptions to participants (Gall, et al., 2015).

Proposed Instrumentation

Through a survey data was gathered to determine how pastors perceive any influences of postmodernism on their learners and if those influences are influencing how they present biblical truths. The same survey was utilized to discover if they perceive those influenced are impacting their discipling of others and shaping how they teach and if there any perceived relationship between people leaving the faith and postmodernism. The survey incorporated multiple choice and open-ended questions. What was gathered are the perceptions of pastors if postmodernism has impacted the way they teach and what they teach concerning truth and how they perceive postmodernism may have affected their learners.

Collection Methods

The following was necessary to collect data for this phenomenological study as they appear to be the best methods for data collection for this type of study. To begin, an online survey link was sent via e-mail to perspective participants to be in the study. The survey was

given to the organization to be sent out to potential participants. This researcher had no access to emails of participants or their personal information. There were no interviews performed during this study as all data was collected through the online survey. Perspective participants were contacted via e-mail with a consent form which contained the link to the online survey. If they desire to participate they only needed to access the survey.

Instruments and Protocols

An online survey was created on the website Survey Monkey which consisted of thirteen questions. This survey utilized some questions from a Barna Group survey with permission from the Director of Research Services of Barna. Those questions were modified for this study. This survey was checked by the dissertation supervisor who gave his input for corrections. The survey consisted of multiple choice, agree, or disagree, with some to describe the demographics of participants.

Validity

To establish validity the research supervisor and second reader were asked for their aid and suggestions. The survey was created via Survey Monkey basic template. The questions were designed to help establish the demographics of participants leading to their perceptions of the impact of the study topic on their church and their teaching of biblical truths.

Reliability

To test for reliability it was beneficial for this study to utilize a Split-half correlation where the data was separated into three subgroups according to the age group of participants followed by utilizing a correlation coefficient on the three groups. This demonstrated a high level of correlation between the three subgroups which confirmed the reliability of the study.

Research Procedures

A survey was developed via SurveyMonkey and was e-mailed to potential participants by the organization the participants belong to. This was done through the consent form, and the recruitment form which contained the hyperlink to the survey. Once the individual clicked the link they were confirming their consent. The survey protocol was approved by the IRB. The email was sent to the director of the NWBC who was previously contacted for permission for his office to send out the emails to potential participants.

After data was gathered it was analyzed using the IBM SPSS statistics software. The data was electronically recorded and transferred to computer where it was password protected. This helped to preserve confidentiality and anonymity for the participants.

Data Analysis and Statistical Procedures

As mentioned above, the IBM SPSS software was utilized for these procedures. It was utilized to analyze the data and place it into categories comparing the variables and the responses to the survey questions. Through this software, tables were constructed to show how postmodernism has influenced how SBC pastors view Scripture and teach its truths.

Data Analysis

The data was collected from the survey and categorized according to the questions on the survey. The answers were then be separated according to how each question is structured whether multiple choice or agree/disagree. The data was then coordinated according to the research questions and separated according to state.

Statistical Procedures

The data was gathered, transcribed, and placed into categories, and examined to gain a general sense of where it is leading the research and whether more data will be needed (Creswell, 2015). A codebook was created according to the survey questions to place each into a category to determine any variables.(Creswell, 2015). The data was inputted into the IBM SPSS software for further analysis. The data was then analyzed to discover any single variables which may be present. This entailed conducting descriptive analysis of the data though the subject of this study is not concerned with trends but a phenomenon, this type of analysis, according to this researcher, produces the best results. This aided in discovering and understanding how the scores varied and how each score compares to the others regarding the survey questions (Creswell, 2015). This was augmented by utilizing the measures of variability to determine a range of how respondents answered each question (Creswell, 2005).

Chapter Summary

This descriptive quantitative study helped to develop a picture of the impact of postmodernism on pastors and the church. It incorporated an online survey where the questions were derived from the research questions and helped to determine if any relationship exists between how pastors present biblical truths and any perceived influences on congregants. This chapter has shown who the participants were and what the role of the researcher is along with ethical considerations. It has covered the methodology, design of the research, the data collection protocols, procedures, and analysis methods and trustworthiness of the study. it has shown this is a descriptive quantitative study concerning the possible effects of postmodernism on teaching biblical truths

Chapter Four: Findings

Overview

This chapter looks at the quantitative results of the survey that was emailed out to various SBC pastors within the continental United States. This chapter also addresses the research questions to determine if post-modern thought concerning truth has infiltrated SBC's and how pastors present biblical truth. The results of the survey, and this quantitative study, are examined in this chapter.

Research Question(s)

RQ1. Is there a perceived relationship between biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth among pastors?

RQ2. What perceived influences of post-modern thinking do pastors see may be shaping how they teach biblical truth.

RQ3. Is there a perceived relationship between post-modern thought and congregants leaving the church?

Research Hypotheses

H1. There is a relationship between biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth among pastors.

H2. There is no relationship between biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth among pastors.

H3. There are post-modern influences pastors see may be shaping how they teach biblical truth.

H4. There are no post-modern influences pastors see may be shaping how they teach biblical truth.

H5. There is a relationship between post-modern thinking and congregants leaving the church.

H6. There is not a relationship between post-modern thinking and congregants leaving the church.

Protocols and Measures

This study was conducted, with the aid of the Executive Director of the NWBC, who helped to send out the information and link to the online survey to SBC pastors. The pastor submitted his or her consent by clicking on the link to the study. There were thirteen questions in the survey covering the research questions along with demographics. The survey was created at the Survey Monkey website which also separated the data according to percentages and created separate graphs for each question. The data from each question was then combined and entered into IBM SPSS version 28 software and analyzed to answer the research questions and to evaluate the hypotheses.

Demographic and Sample Data

Eighty SBC pastors participated in the online survey for this study. Data was collected from SBC's from the following geographical areas: Alabama, Idaho, North Carolina, Nevada, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Washington State, and Vermont. This was further broken down into Inner City/Urban, Outer City/Suburban, Small Town, and Rural areas as table one shows. As table one also indicates, the majority of respondents were from small towns and rural areas followed by outer city/ suburban. Inner city/ urban pastors were represented the least as shown in table one. Unfortunately, these do not show any ethnic contrasts. These were chosen, as the Executive Director of the NWBC explained that those pastors of non-English speaking churches prefer to interact verbally and not through e-mails. He also explained the low number of participants as many pastors will not pay attention to something that is voluntary as they feel they do not have time to participate.

Table 1*How would you describe where you live?*

Area	Responses	
	Percentage	Number of responses
Inner City/ Urban	7.50	6
Outer City/ Suburban	23.75	19
Small Town	40.00	32
Rural	28.75	23

The data concerning the participants was then broken down into age group ranges as seen in table two. This was asked to gain an overall picture and to include as many ages as possible. Those between twenty-six and thirty-five years of age may possibly be influenced by postmodernism more than the older age groups. What the data shows is those under the age of thirty-six were less likely to respond or this age group is severely underrepresented. This is showing the majority are between the ages of 36-55 with the next largest group being over 55 years of age. This shows an interesting contrast between the age groups however, how each group responded to the questions was not covered as this study looked at the overall picture of the subject matter. This is in the following table.

Table 2*What is your age group?*

Age Group	Responses	
	Percentage	Number of Responses
26-35	17.50	14
36-55	52.50	42
Over 55	30.00	24

Data Analysis and Findings

After these, the questions were then separated to view the data to gain an overall picture of the responses. The data was charted to gain a clearer picture and begins with question four which was directed to glean an overall picture of how these pastors viewed their congregations which is shown in table three. The categories were as a family, dysfunctional (separated by cliques), and friends instead of a family. The majority viewed their congregations as a family. What is interesting is five pastors view their congregations as dysfunctional. As in table three.

Table 3*How would you describe the church community where you pastor?*

Choices	Responses	
	Percentage	Number of responses
A family	77.50	62
Dysfunctional (Separated by cliques)	6.25	5
Friends instead of a family	16.25	13

Question five asked whether they preferred to teach the Bible Expositively (book by book), as a lecture, topically, or conversationally. This is shown in tables four and five. This was asked to determine how they presented biblical truth to their congregation. Expositively allows the pastor to reflect upon the entire passage to reveal biblical truth to those being taught.

Topically where the pastor presents a topic from Scripture to convey biblical truths where lecture based the pastor presents Scripture as one would in a classroom.. Conversationally is where the pastor presents biblical truths as one would when speaking to a friend or family member in a casual setting. This question was asked to determine if teaching styles may contribute to congregants leaving the church and how they view biblical truths compared to post-modern concepts of truth. These results are in table fifteen. As one may be able to determine from these two tables, there may be a relationship between the post-modern concept of truth and congregants leaving the church. This will be expanded upon in chapter five. Thus, hypothesis five appears to be true.

Table 4

How do you prefer to teach the Bible?

Method	Responses	
	Percentage	Number of responses
Expositionally (Verse-by-verse)	90.00	72
Lecture based	2.50	2
Topically	10.00	8
Conversationally	16.25	13

Table 5

How do you prefer to present the Bible?

Method	Percentage	Responses
Expositionally (Verse-by-verse)	90.00	72
Lecture based	2.50	2
Topically	10.00	8
Conversationally	16.25	13

Question six asked the participants if they have ever taught their congregations how to read and study the Bible. This was asked to see if congregants were given the opportunity to search out biblical truths on their own and see how those truths may compare to how they were taught outside of church. The results are shown in table six..

Table 6

Have you ever taught your congregation how to read and study the Bible?

Answer Choice	Percent	Response Total
Yes	86.25%	69
No	13.75%	11
Total		80

H1. There is a relationship between biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth among pastors.

The participants were asked which they viewed as more important concerning the Bible. The choices given were: It is true and trustworthy and, it promotes good in the world. The results are in table seven.

Table 7

Which is more important concerning the Bible?

Answer Choice	Responses	Number of participants
It is true and trustworthy	100.00%	80
It promotes good in the world	0.00%	0

It is interesting none viewed the Bible as promoting good in the world and why did they not view the Bible as promoting good in the world? The Gospel is the good news of God in Jesus Christ, and it promotes good in the world though many view it as confrontational.

The respondents were also asked what they personally believed about Jesus Christ. The choices were: Is he truth, our propitiation, our atonement, the only way to heaven, irrelevant, detached from society today, and judgmental. Table eight shows those results. There are two interesting results in this table which shows some possible post-modern influence on pastors as only 96.67 percent say Jesus is the only way to heaven and 3.33 percent say he is judgmental. This question had some technical problems on the Survey Monkey web site resulting in only thirty of the eighty participant results were recorded. It was still included to give an overall perception

of any possible post-modern influences on pastors concerning biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth.

Table 8

Which of the following do you, personally, believe about Jesus?

Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
He is truth	100.00%	30
He is our propitiation	100.00%	30
He is our atonement	100.00%	30
He is the only way to heaven	96.67%	29
He is irrelevant	0.00%	0
He is detached from the issues of today	0.00%	0
He is judgmental	3.33%	1

A one sample T test showed a standard deviation of 12.86 with a mean of 24.00 indicating further a possible influence of postmodernism on these pastors concerning biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth.. This is shown in table seven.

Table 9

One-Sample Statistics

	Mean	Std Deviation
Responses	24.00	12.86

The characteristics and tenets of postmodernism were set in question form for the pastors to evaluate whether they agreed or disagreed with each. The postmodern characteristics and

tenets selected were and numbered for the tables as: 1) Language functions to construct meaning, 2) truth concerning reality is hidden from us meaning all we can do is tell stories, 3) the cohesive character of communities comes through their stories, 4) using one narrative as a metanarrative is oppressive, 5) there is no substantial self, 6) knowledge is conditioned upon geography and culture, 7) how a person interprets a text is how its meaning is discovered, 8) there is no truth that is the same for everyone because, 9) truth is what one makes it out to be, 10) narratives are preferred over truth, 11) foundationalism is to be rejected, and 12) there is no optimism about the benefits of knowledge. The interesting results are in tables eight through eleven.

For analysis of question twelve utilizing SPSS, it was necessary to compare each state individually with the other states according to the choices within the question to glean a better overall picture to determine how postmodernism has affected individual states. The results are in the tables eleven and twelve. States with only one participant did not have a significance value assigned by SPSS.

Table 10*Do you agree or disagree with the following?*

Choice	Agree	Disagree
1. Language functions to construct meaning	60	18
2. Truth concerning reality is hidden from us: All we can do is tell stories	3	77
3. The cohesive character of communities comes through their stories	48	29
4. Using one narrative as a metanarrative is oppressive	7	72
5. There is no substantial self	5	70
6. Knowledge is conditioned upon geography and culture	17	61
7. How a person interprets a text is how its meaning is discovered	19	60
8. There is no truth that is the same for everyone	1	78
9. Truth is what one makes it out to be	1	78
10. Narratives are preferred over truth	9	71
11. Foundationalism should be rejected	9	66
12. No optimism about the benefits of knowledge	5	73

Table 11*Agree: According to State*

Choice	Or	Wa	N.C.	Id	Ut	S.C.	Tn	Ala	Nv	Vt
1	7	17	25	6	1	1	1	1		1
2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
3	6	12	18	6	1	1	1	1	0	1
4	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
5	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
6	3	7	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
7	2	6	8	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
8	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
10	1	0	5	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
11	2	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
12	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

1. Language functions to construct meaning. 2. Truth concerning reality is hidden from us meaning all we can do is tell stories. 3. The cohesive character of communities comes through their stories. 4. Using one narrative as a metanarrative is oppressive. 5. There is no substantial self. 6. Knowledge is conditioned upon geography and culture. 7. How a person interprets a text is how its meaning is discovered. 8. There is no truth that is the same for everyone. 9. Truth is what one makes it out to be. 10. Narratives are preferred over truth. 11. Foundationalism is to be rejected. 12. No optimism about the benefits of knowledge.

Table 12*Disagree: According to State*

Choice	Or	Wa	N.C.	Id	Ut	S.C.	Tn	Ala	Nv	Vt
1	3	3	10	2	1	0	0	0		0
2	9	20	34	8	2	1	1	0	1	1
3	2	7	15	2	1	0	0	0		0
4	8	18	33	8	2	1	1	0	1	1
5	9	18	32	8	1	0	1	0	1	1
6	6	13	28	8	2	1	1	0	1	1
7	8	13	25	8	2	0	1	0	1	0
8	9	20	34	8	2	1	1	0	1	1
9	9	19	34	8	2	1	1	0	1	1
10	9	20	30	7	2	0	1	0	1	1
11	8	16	30	8	2	1	1	0	1	1
12	8	18	32	8	2	0	1	0	1	1

1. Language functions to construct meaning. 2. Truth concerning reality is hidden from us meaning all we can do is tell stories. 3. The cohesive character of communities comes through their stories. 4. Using one narrative as a metanarrative is oppressive. 5. There is no substantial self. 6. Knowledge is conditioned upon geography and culture. 7. How a person interprets a text is how its meaning is discovered. 8. There is no truth that is the same for everyone. 9. Truth is what one makes it out to be. 10. Narratives are preferred over truth. 11. Foundationalism is to be rejected. 12. No optimism about the benefits of knowledge.

Table 13*One Way ANOVA: Agree*

State	Mean Square	F	Significance
Or	6.521	13.042	.029
Wa	40.333	24.200	.012
N.C.	86.031	129.047	.001
Id	7.302	430813	.005
Ut	.219	1.313	.454
S.C.	.240	.719	.686

After running a paired samples correlation, it was found the pastors disagreed with all but two of the characteristics and tenets of postmodernism. The two they agreed with were Language functions to construct meaning and, Stories give communities their cohesive character. This correlation resulted in a -1.00 correlation. This is also indicated in the frequency tables fourteen and fifteen. Though the tables are inverted they indicate the same results. Table ten also confirms H3 and H5 as valid hypotheses and are shown in tables eleven and twelve.

Table 14*Frequencies**Agree*

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1.0	2	16.7
	2.0	10	83.3

Table 15*Disagree*

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	2.0	10	83.3
	1.0	2	16.7

The results shown in these tables show hypothesis one is valid and there is a relationship between biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth among SBC pastors.

H3. There is no relationship between biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth among pastors.

According to the above findings and as the tables show, this hypothesis appears not to be true. The findings show, as mentioned above, there is some relationship between biblical truth and post-modern conceptions concerning truth among SBC pastors.

H4. There are post-modern influences pastors see may be shaping how they teach biblical truth.

Question seven of the survey asked pastors to select how they present Scripture to their congregation. The choices were: The word of God, divinely inspired, error free, truth, contains some errors, and is partially true. The results are seen in table eighteen. While the majority present Scripture as the divinely inspired word of God, only 84 percent present it as truth with 87.5 percent seeing Scripture as error free. One selected that Scripture contains some errors. Though the pastors may not see it this reveals hypothesis three has some credit with the results in tables sixteen through nineteen with table nineteen broken down according to state. This is confirmed through the paired samples correlation between the choices and responses. in table fourteen.

Table 16*Paired Sample T Test**Paired Samples Statistics*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Choices	3.5000	6	1.87083	.76376
	Participants	48.1667	6	37.08054	15.13807

Table 17*Paired Sample T Test Cont.**Paired Samples Correlations*

		N	Correlation	Significance	
				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Choices & Participants	6	-.875	.011	.022

Table 18

Which of the following best describes how you present Scripture?

Choices	Responses	
	Percentage	Number of responses
The Word of God	96.25	77
Divinely Inspired	92.50	74
Error free	87.50	70
Truth	83.75	67
Contains some errors	1.25	1
Partially true	0.0	0

Table 19

Broken down according to choice and state and number of responses

State	The Word of God	Divinely Inspired	Error Free	Truth	Contains Some Errors
Or	10	10	8	9	
Wa	20	18	15	17	
N.C.	35	35	35	30	
Id	8	8	8	8	
S.C.	1	1	1	1	
Ut	2	2	2	1	
Ala	1	1	1		1
Tn	1	1	1		
Nv	1	1	1	1	
Vt	1	1			

Each state had the following number of participants: Oregon had 10, Washington had twenty, North Carolina had thirty-five, Idaho had eight, South Carolina had one, Utah had two, Alabama, had one, Tennessee had one, Nevada had one, and Vermont also had only one.

Question eight of the survey asked participants how they believed the Bible should be interpreted. In table twenty, it can be seen three participants skipped this question however, 85.53 percent believe it should be interpreted, word-for-word whereas 14.47 percent disagreed with this choice. The other choice was the Bible should be understood symbolically, interpreting the text when needed resulting in 45.93 percent agreeing and 54.17 percent disagreeing. Though this table aids in reinforcing hypothesis one, it also reinforces hypothesis three showing postmodernism has some effect on shaping how pastors teach biblical truth.

Table 20

Do you agree or disagree on how the Bible should be interpreted?

Question	Agree	Participants	Disagree	Participants	Total Participants
Should the Bible be interpreted, word for word?	85.53%	65	14.47%	11	76
Should the Bible be understood symbolically, interpreting the text when needed?	45.83%	33	54.17%	39	72
				Answered	77
				Skipped	3

The participants were asked how they present the Bible and were given choices and were asked to mark all that apply unfortunately, this question also developed technical problems with the loss of seventeen response. Thus, the sixty-three responses were recorded and are still helpful in determine the data and any possible relationship with postmodernism. This question sought to understand how the respondents presented the Bible when they taught their congregants. The results are in tables the following two tables..

Table 21*Do you present the Bible as... (Mark all that apply)*

Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
The source of truth	100.00%	63
Contains everything a person needs to know to live a meaningful life	96.83%	61
Has teachings which are relevant today	93.65%	59
Is completely reliable	100.00%	63
Should be followed	100.00%	63
Provides a way to know and follow Jesus	96.83%	61
Provides a way to know Jesus personally	95.24%	60
Is essential for a person to live the Christian life	96.83%	61
	Answered	63
	Skipped	17

Table 22*One Way ANOVA**ANOVA*

Choices

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	14.667	3	4.889	.715	.592
Within Groups	27.333	4	6.833		
Total	42.000	7			

On the surface this invalidates hypothesis three however, upon closer examination it shows some postmodern influence especially when Scripture is applied to an individual life and for an individual to personally know Jesus Christ. One would expect all questions to be 100.00 percent, but they are not. Also, there is some postmodern influence concerning if the Bible is relevant today as that one is not also 100.00 percent.

H4. There are no post-modern influences pastors see may be shaping how they teach biblical truth.

According to the above tables, this hypothesis also, like hypothesis two, is found invalid as the results of the survey show postmodernism has influenced SBC pastors and how they teach biblical truth.

H5. There is a relationship between post-modern thinking and congregants leaving the church.

One question on the survey went deeper into how SBC pastors viewed any influence of postmodernism on the SBC's, how they presented biblical truths and the Bible, and how they viewed the responses of Christians worldwide concerning specific topics which postmodernism appears to be influencing people. The respondents were asked to agree or disagree with whether Christians should stand up against sin, see value in every person, believe God is working in individual lives, see themselves as better than others, have a biblical concept of reality, have a biblical concept of truth, how they interpret a text shows its meaning, see truth as universal, and whether truth is what one makes it out to be. The results can be seen in table twenty-three.

Table 23

Concerning Christians worldwide, do you agree or disagree with the following? Christians should...

Choices	Agree	Disagree
Stand up against sin	60	19
See value in every person	71	7
Believe God is working in individual lives	76	3
See themselves as better than others	11	66
Have a biblical concept of reality	59	20
Have a biblical concept of truth	59	19
Social good is whatever society makes it to be	14	64
How they interpret a text shows its meaning	25	52
See truth as universal	57	21
Truth is what one makes it out to be	12	66

These results show SBC pastors are divided on post-modern characteristics compared to biblical values. Nineteen believe Christians should not stand up against sin and eleven believing

Christians should view themselves as better than others show a disturbing trend possibly beginning. When fourteen think Christians should view social good as whatever society makes it out to be and twenty-one disagreeing truth is universal and twelve believing Christians make their own truth shows hypothesis five is true since, if pastors view these this way, there is a relationship between postmodernism and congregants leaving the church especially in the area of truth since they will utilize post-modern thinking in this area and possibly view biblical truth as false. This table is very telling concerning this hypothesis.

H6. There is not a relationship between post-modern thinking and congregants leaving the church.

As the two above tables show, hypothesis six appears to be false and this will be expanded on in chapter five. If hypothesis six were true, then in table twenty-one the results would be more toward this however, as mentioned above, table twenty-three shows a relationship between post-modern thinking concerning truth and congregants leaving the church.

To carry these further this research looked at questions ten and twelve specifically along with question seven to glean a better picture of the influence of postmodernism on pastors and congregants. This section began by looking at the comparisons for question ten category of agree comparing each state and the total overall responses. This is shown in the following tables.

Table 24*One Way ANOVA: Comparison of all selections**ANOVA*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Agree	Between Groups	1746.900	2	873.450	1.437	.300
	Within Groups	4253.500	7	607.643		
	Total	6000.400	9			
Disagree	Between Groups	1601.350	2	800.675	1.343	.321
	Within Groups	4174.750	7	596.393		
	Total	5776.100	9			

Table 25*One Way ANOVA Comparison of all agree selections*

State	Sum of Squares: Between Groups	Mean Square	F	Significance
Ore	12.600	6.300	.741	.511
WA.	449.400	224.700	.660	.546
N.C.	287.350	143.675	1.211	.354
Id	28.100	19.050	1.636	.261
Tn	.750	.375	1.500	.287
Ala	1.400	.700	4.900	.047
Ut	.150	.075	.700	.528
S.C.	.150	.075	.233	.798
Nv	.350	.175	.700	.528
Vt	.100	.050	.175	.843

Table 26*One Way ANOVA: Comparison of all disagree selections*

State	Sum of Squares: Between Groups	Mean Square	F	Significance
Or	12.600	6.300	.891	.452
WA	137.400	68.700	1.402	.308
N.C.	287.350	143.675	1.211	.354
Id	48.900	24.540	2.463	.155
Tn	.750	.375	1.500	.287
Ala	1.400	.700	4.900	.047
Ut	.150	.075	.700	.528
S.C.	.150	.075	.233	.798
Nv	.350	.175	.700	.528
Vt	.100	.050	.175	.843

Beginning with table twenty-four, one sees a confirmation of H1 and H5 however, with the high significant numbers among the states for agree in table twenty-five there is an indication

of an agreement with H1 and H5 and the high significance numbers for table twenty confirm this. These tables are a comparison between the states, individual state with individual state.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This chapter discusses the results of the survey and explains those results shown in the tables and figures. It covers each research question considering those results and will compare those to any previous studies on this topic. This chapter also covers research conclusions, implications, applications, limitations of the research and the need for further research.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how pastors in SBC.s perceive if there has been any post-modern influences in their churches which may affect how the church teaches biblical truths.

Discussion

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a perceived relationship between biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth among pastors?

As seen in table one, most SBC pastors who participated in the survey were from small towns followed by rural areas with outer city/ suburban areas next. Only six were from the inner city and urban areas. This indicates either a reluctance to participate by those in the inner cities and urban areas or they felt they did not have time to participate as mentioned above. Question one and table one was to give a sample of the demographics related to showing different geographic areas willing to participate.

As shown in table two, most pastors who responded to this survey were between the ages of thirty-six and fifty-five with the next segment over fifty-five. What this shows is most may or may not have been heavily influenced by postmodernism since the literature section of this study

indicates younger people are influenced more by postmodernism however, the results indicate there is a small number overall who have been influenced.

Truth has been separated by some as natural and spiritual truth where natural truth is within nature and shared by all where spiritual truth is experienced by the individual through their beliefs (Ross, 2008). Table three in chapter four showed how pastors viewed their congregations whether as a family, friends, or dysfunctional. When a pastor views the congregation as a family, it is easier for that pastor to relay biblical truths as presented in Scripture and avoid any post-modern influence. Being a family eases tensions allowing for biblical truths to come across more precisely whereas, a dysfunctional congregation is prone to confrontation and disagreements where post-modern thought can negatively influence how the congregation views biblical truth. Viewing a congregation as friends can lead to post-modern influence as, though two people may be friends, they can differ in their philosophies where one is a conservative Christian and the other heavily influenced by postmodernism. An example is a conservative and a liberal being friends but having different philosophies about life. Though post-modern thought may not be viewed as influencing a congregation which is viewed as friends, it may still do so.

Question five of the survey asked the pastors how they preferred to teach the Bible. The majority indicated they preferred Expositively which allows the pastor to present biblical truths as presented within the context of the passage being covered. Two indicated they preferred to teach as a college professor would as a lecture. This may remind the individual of the lecture they encountered if they attended college and may cause them to tune the pastor out thus missing biblical truths. It also indicates a possibility the pastor, instead of presenting Scripture references

to enforce biblical truths, may rely upon the individual taking the pastor as the ultimate authority when stating truth and not studying to discover if the pastor is correct.

Eight pastors showed they prefer to teach topically, which is good as there are many topics within Scripture to cover to aid in the spiritual growth of individuals and the congregation as a whole. This style of teaching may miss teaching specific truths which may only be covered when teaching Expositively. Topically may also allow congregants, who adhere to the post-modern concept of truth, to apply those concepts to biblical areas though they may be contrary to what Scripture is teaching causing much confusion unless the pastor recognizes how congregants today have been influenced by postmodernism and teaches how to avoid those pitfalls.

Some of the pastors indicated they prefer to teach the Bible conversationally. This may be helpful if the pastor engages the congregation in the discussion and helps them to determine biblical truths and recognize the influence postmodernism may have had upon them. If the pastor does not help them, identify any post-modern influences, individuals within the congregation may not be able to separate those influences from sound biblical truths. As can be seen in the literature review section above, to teach conversationally is a post-modern method of teaching showing these pastors have been influenced by postmodernism.

Question six asked the pastors if they had ever taught their congregation how to read and study the Bible. Some pastors indicated they had while others indicated they had not. The result of those pastors who did not teach their congregations how to read and study Scripture shows the congregations may not know how to correctly study Scripture to glean biblical truths from it leading to incorrect views concerning biblical truth if they have been influenced by the post-modern concept of truth. If a person does not know how to properly, and effectively, study Scripture so they can differentiate from biblical truths and how the world views those truths and

can lead the individual into error. To properly study Scripture on one's own will aid in decreasing the number of congregants leaving the church.

As mentioned in the literature review section, Christians must return to and remain in sound biblical truth. This cannot happen unless pastors teach them how to correctly read and study Scripture on their own and if pastors do not correctly present biblical truth to them and show how those truths differ from postmodernism and how the world views truth. If the pastor is not grounded in sound biblical truth then that pastor will not be able to relay those truths accurately and effectively to the congregation. The secular world and postmodernism deny absolute truth whereas Scripture enforces absolute truth in the person of Jesus Christ. Biblical truth is sharply contrasted with the post-modern concept of truth. This leads to research question two.

RQ2: What perceived influences of post-modern thinking do pastors see may be shaping how they teach biblical truth?

Question seven asked the pastors how they presented Scripture which also described how they perceived Scripture to be. Out of all the pastors who participated, one viewing Scripture as containing some errors suggest some post-modern influence with that pastor. As mentioned and shown above, with the majority viewing the Bible as the word of God and the Bible as divinely inspired and as error free with only with a smaller majority viewing the Bible as truth shows a decline among the participants as the choices progressed toward the Bible as truth. This decline in those seeing the Bible as truth presents a problem within SBC churches since, if pastors do not view the Bible as truth, they will not be able to present sound biblical truths to their congregations effectively. One part opened the door for them to enlarge upon this with those responding with reinforcing statements with regards to Scripture being infallible, eternal,

representative, and authoritative. However, some viewed only the original manuscripts as without error allowing for some possible errors to be introduced during translation and these only being minor errors.

Question eight asked their opinions on whether Scripture should be interpreted literally word-for-word or understood symbolically being interpreted as needed. This was mixed for when the majority saw the Bible should be interpreted literally but a small minority disagreeing which shows post-modern influence since postmodernism rejects faith and the authority of Scripture and views every human should be open to new truths (Pierard, 2001). This thinking and view of reality and truth has influenced secular teaching and some Christian teaching. To view Scripture being understood symbolically and interpreted as needed is dangerous as this has led many into error concerning biblical truths as this author has witnessed over the years. Interpreting the Bible literally helps one to study to discover the context of the section of Scripture and who the biblical author was writing to and why leading to discovering biblical truth(s) from that section of Scripture.

Concerning the second part of the question, the gap was much closer as a larger minority agreed Scripture should be interpreted symbolically, interpreting the text when needed while a smaller majority disagreed indicating a stronger influence of postmodernism among pastors than the other showing a disconnect when the majority overwhelming agree Scripture is to be interpreted literally. Prophecy may be interpreted symbolically; however, it is to be compared with the rest of Scripture to obtain its meaning such as prophecies within the book of Revelation compared with those in the book of Daniel. Postmodernism seeks to reconstruct knowledge resulting in it being conjecture and fallible which interpreting Scripture symbolically and the text as needed can lead to. This can also lead to individuals putting their truth against that of

Scripture and coming to an erroneous conclusion resulting in them concluding truth is only a metaphor thus, pastors must guard against this if they interpret Scripture symbolically.

Question nine asked the participants what they believed was more important concerning the Bible with all choosing it is true and trustworthy and none choosing it promotes good in the world. With the above answers to previous questions it appears to negate some post-modern concepts as some people see the Bible as only promoting good and not being true and trustworthy. Secular society and many postmodernists would not view the Bible as true and trustworthy. With this in mind, previous answers would seem to indicate some might have chosen the second option however, since none did it appears to contradict some answers to previous questions.

What is disturbing is how all pastors agreed the Bible is true and trustworthy, when comparing this with the results of question seven, not all agreed the Bible is the word of God, divinely inspired, error free, and truth with one agreeing the Bible contains some errors. If the Bible is true and trustworthy, then how can some disagree it is truth? Thus, there is a contradiction between question seven and nine.

Question eleven asked the participants what they personally believed about Jesus Christ. The choices were, as shown above in table six were: He is truth, he is our propitiation, he is our atonement, is the only way to heaven, is irrelevant, is detached from the issues of today, and he is judgmental. All believe Jesus is truth, our propitiation, and our atonement but, as one goes down the list the majority shrinks where some believe he is not the only way to heaven with a small minority also believing he is judgmental. Though this was one question, as mentioned above, that encountered some technical problems, thirty out of the eighty still recorded the responses correctly and is included to aid in gleaning an overall picture of what SBC pastors believe and if

they have been influenced by postmodernism. With only twenty-nine of the thirty believing Jesus is the only way to heaven and one believing he is judgmental shows some post-modern and secular influence among SBC pastors. The one-sample statistics test (table nine) confirms a post-modern influence on these pastors concerning how they view Jesus Christ.

Question twelve was based upon the characteristics and tenets of postmodernism listing each one as found above with table ten. With the exception of language functioning to construct meaning and the cohesive character of communities coming through their stories, the majority of participants disagreed with the other characteristics and tenets of postmodernism listed. There were some agreements for knowledge being conditioned upon geography and culture at with a small minority agreeing and almost a quarter of the participants agreed how a person interprets a text is how its meaning is discovered showing, with the above, some post-modern influence. There are two this author views as disturbing where an exceedingly small number agreed with postmodernism that narratives are preferred over truth and foundationalism should be rejected. Another area of concern for this author is another small minority see utilizing one narrative as a metanarrative is oppressive and also agreeing with postmodernism there is no substantial self along with agreeing with postmodernism truth concerning reality is hidden from us meaning all we can do is tell stories. For the characteristics and tenets where postmodernism views no truth is the same for everyone and truth is what one makes it out to be one participant agreed with both indicating that participant has been influenced by postmodernism. What these show, as mentioned, is there is influence of postmodernism among SBC pastors. A one-way ANOVA test was also conducted with mixed results and those results indicating the same concerning post-modern influence on SBC pastors as seen in table thirteen. Tables eleven and twelve were

included to show a breakdown among the states to determine if one or more states were influenced by postmodernism than the others.

Going even further, question twelve was broken down comparing the states with each other. As shown in tables eleven and twelve, all the states were closely related concerning agreeing with the choices concerning the characteristics and tenets of postmodernism with the exception of Alabama which went the opposite direction. It must be noted only one pastor participated from Alabama. These tables confirm post-modern influence among SBC pastors and that they agree postmodernism has influenced the church and how they present biblical truth. The pastor from Alabama has been heavily influenced by postmodernism where teaching biblical truth is concerned and is in total agreement with the characteristics and tenets of postmodernism as this pastor agreed with all choices on the survey. These results for tables eleven and twelve were confirmed by the paired samples correlation test above.

When looking at the survey results, all pastors agreed with the first and third choices which were: Language functions to construct meaning and the cohesive character of communities comes through their stories. Agreement for the remaining ten choices were mixed with the majority disagreeing with those characteristics of postmodernism which indicating the majority of participants are aware postmodernism influences their teaching and should avoid those they disagree with.

RQ3: Is there a perceived relationship between post-modern thought and congregants leaving the church?

With the landscape within the United States changing from a modern to post-modern and secular landscape no wonder people today are confused regarding objective and absolute truth and biblical truth. This changing landscape has resulted in truth being dependent upon the

experiences and the secular education system. It is important Christian teachers and pastors return to biblical truth and to view the Bible as truth to avoid becoming just another branch of secular education. To challenge the presuppositions of liberalism and postmodernism, pastors must embrace the absolute truths of Scripture and a biblical worldview if they are to retain their congregants. Many congregants have been taught through the secular educational system there are two truths, natural and spiritual and these are often pitted against biblical truth resulting in individuals confusing knowledge with truth and becoming confused as to what absolute truth really is.

Modernism brought the denial, of the existence of God and, unfortunately brought about liberal theology which has infiltrated some churches and denominations. As mentioned in the literature review section, this has brought about the denial of the authority of Scripture relying upon reason to come to the truth. Postmodernism carried this further and saw Christianity as no longer a vital force and denying a single, or two, worldviews: A biblical worldview and a secular worldview. Thus, one can see how confused many today are where truth is concerned.

Questions four, six, nine, ten, eleven, and thirteen were designed to help answer this research question along with the two research questions as they relate to two or all three questions.

Question ten gave participants several options concerning what they believed Christians worldwide should be doing and what they should believe and were asked which they agreed and disagreed with. Out of the eighty participants one skipped this question thus, out of the seventy-nine who agreed Christians should stand up against sin only a majority agreed with almost a quarter disagreeing which this author finds disturbing as all Christians are encouraged throughout the Bible to stand up against sin. When choosing whether Christians should see value

in every person, it was surprising not all agreed, and a small minority disagreed and whether Christians see themselves as better than others it was shocking to discover some actually believed Christians do indicating some perceive Christians as falling short of biblical standards and truth. Another possible problem area is where around three-quarters of the participants view Christians as having a biblical concept of reality and Christians as having a biblical concept of truth and seeing truth as universal indicating the participants see a strong influence of postmodernism among Christians today leading to some rejecting biblical truths and leaving the church over this. Tables twenty-four and twenty-five confirm are one way ANOVA tests confirming research question three and survey question ten. As shown above concerning survey question six, for this section, these results show if Christians are not taught properly how to read and study Scripture to glean biblical truths for themselves and shown how to apply them to their lives it may result in congregants leaving the church as they may reject biblical truths.

Question eleven, as mentioned under research question two, asked the participants what they personally believed about Jesus Christ. This is being covered here also as how they believe concerning Jesus will be transferred to the people through their teaching. If they, as one pastor believes, Jesus is judgmental, it may turn some away from following Jesus as they would not want to follow someone who is judgmental. Also, since some believe he is not the only way to heaven, it opens the door for some to come into their congregation who may present some heretical doctrine and lead some away from the church. For those pastors who do not believe Jesus is the only way to heaven it shows they have followed the secular believe all roads lead to heaven and there are many avenues to get there. With some pastors not seeing Jesus as the only way to heaven is contrary to what Jesus said that “no one comes to the Father but through me” (John 14:6, NKJV) and shows a disturbing trend creeping into the church. Looking at the

comparison between questions seven and nine, how the pastors answered this question raises some concern when one pastor views Jesus as judgmental since Scripture testifies of Jesus and shows he is truth and love though during the millennium he will judge the nations according to how they treated Israel, he does not judge, or condemn, individual Christians but they will be convicted by the Holy Spirit when they fall into sin so they can repent and return to fellowship with God. Jesus said in John 12:47, “And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world” (NKJV). This is different from being judgmental and Jesus is not judgmental according to his own words.

Another area of concern is where all participants agreed they present the Bible as the source of truth, when comparing with questions seven and nine where some disagreed the Bible is truth as they do not present it as truth as shown in tables eighteen and nineteen What this author found interesting are the results found in table nineteen when the question choices were separated by state which shows even among liberal states there is some consistency with the majority considering the Bible as true.

Question thirteen asked the participants how they present Scripture to their congregations, though seventeen skipped this question as it also, as mentioned above, developed some technical problems, it indicates the majority agreed with all options as seen in table thirteen indicating SBC pastors hold a solid favorable view of Scripture and should be transferring that through their teaching to the people. If they are not, they may be missing helping their congregants grow in their faith and not leading them into biblical truth. This could lead some to not accept biblical truth if they are not being taught it and to leave the church as they may prefer the post-modern concept of truth over biblical truth. Looking at the results in table twenty-one, if majority of pastors agree with all the choices, they will be able to help congregants understand

and apply biblical truths and avoid congregants leaving the church however, since some view the Bible as not true, how can they present the Bible as true and avoid losing congregants. People today, especially younger people, want to see biblical truths lived out in the lives of those teaching them as shown in the literature review section but, if the pastor does not see the Bible as true they will not be able to present it as true in an authentic manner. The significance for the one-way ANOVA for this question shows hypothesis five is correct reinforcing how postmodernism has influenced the average congregant and, if pastors are not showing how biblical truth supersedes the post-modern concept of truth and how to apply biblical truth to their lives, they may leave the church.

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

This research has discovered there are perceived relationships and influences among SBC pastors concerning biblical truth and post-modern concepts of truth and there are post-modern influences among these pastors shaping how they present biblical truth. This research has also discovered there is a relationship between post-modern concepts of truth and congregants leaving the church.

Conclusions

After examining the data from the survey, one can see, as mentioned above, pastors are aware of post-modern influence and/or relationship between this influence and biblical truths as presented by these pastors to their congregations and that influence has been verified through this research. Concerning the first research question, the data proved the first hypothesis as true with the second false.

The data also proved the third hypothesis as true as postmodernism has influenced how these pastors presented biblical truths and shaped how they teach the Bible while proving the

fourth hypothesis as false. In similar fashion, the data proved the fifth hypothesis as true as congregants have been influenced by postmodernism through the secular education system and secular society. The data concluded by showing the sixth hypothesis as false. The data has proven all three research questions as true.

Implications

Regarding research question one, pastors need to be aware of post-modern influences where post-modern concepts of truth contrast with biblical truth. Pastors need to seek to determine what relationships they may see between the two and to strive to show how secular society and postmodernism had influenced their perception and those of congregants. This awareness is necessary where the pastors teaching of biblical truth is concerned as question two showed there is post-modern influences shaping how they teach those biblical truths. If pastors do not recognize any post-modern influences and relationships with biblical truth, it could lead the pastor into teaching errors affecting how they present and teach biblical truth.

Pastors need to be aware how postmodernism and secular society and education have influenced congregants and work to teach congregants how post-modern ideas and secular ideas have influenced them to help stem any “tide” of congregants leaving the church. Connected with the above, if pastors recognize those post-modern influences, they will be able to teach correct biblical truths and show their congregations how to recognize those influences and avoid them themselves.

As mentioned above, with the contradiction between questions seven and nine, pastors need to evaluate themselves on how they perceive the Bible. Is it the word of God that is divinely inspired and error free and truth or is it not? This is disturbing as it shows postmodernism has infiltrated and influenced how pastors perceive the Bible and influencing how they are

presenting biblical truths. As mentioned above, another area disturbing is how the participants agree the Bible is the source of truth but not all see it as truth some only sixty-seven agreed it is truth, but all view the Bible as true and trustworthy, then they need to consider why they are showing they are presenting the Bible as the source of truth. This appears to not be the case as this author views the Bible as true and trustworthy, the source of truth, and true. Thus, postmodernism has influenced how pastors present and view the Bible.

If pastors have been apparently heavily influenced by postmodernism, then they will have difficulty correctly presenting biblical truths to their congregations. They may also see their congregations either dwindling in size or not growing if they do not discover how to present biblical truths to younger people so they can see the difference between the post-modern concept of truth and biblical truth and be taught how to apply those biblical truths to their own lives.

Pastors can also research the characteristics and tenets of postmodernism to discover which ones they may find themselves agreeing with and see how some aspects of postmodernism does agree with church teachings though most do not. This is an area where postmodernism may cause confusion among pastors and congregants concerning biblical truth.

The results of this research have discovered because some pastors have apparently been heavily influenced by the post-modern concept of truth it will also affect their apologetics and apologetics in general as those pastors affected may unknowingly influence apologists they might come into contact with. Many apologists are pastors and if they have been influenced by the post-modern concept concerning truth will influence their apologetics. The results of this research may also show influences of postmodernism on missionaries and church historians as most, if not all, pastors have contact with missionaries their church sends out and may have

contact with church historians. Thus, post-modern conceptions may also be affecting missionaries and church historians.

Application

Pastors can research how postmodernism and secular society is heavily influencing their congregants through the education system and social media and the news and develop teaching methods to counteract those influences. As the data shows, most prefer to teach Expositively, while some chose other methods. It appears to this author from his own research and experiences, teaching Expositively is the best way to correctly relay biblical truth and contrast it with postmodernism and secular views. To counter this influence, pastors can perform their own research to determine if, and how much, postmodernism may be affecting the.

Pastors should seek to further understand how Christians should respond to question ten with regards to how they perceive those responses compared with postmodernism. They should also seek to understand how Christians may respond to question twelve regarding the characteristics and tenets of postmodernism. This will enable them to understand why congregants may believe what they do and lead them into correct biblical truth. They should also research how some of these characteristics and tenets compare with the Bible and sound biblical teaching to help congregants avoid entering error.

Pastors need to be aware of the influences of postmodernism and how it has influenced them directly especially where the Bible and truth is concerned. They need to become aware they cannot perceive the Bible as true and trustworthy but not see it as truth. They also need to have a more positive view of Christians worldwide and see they should have a biblical concept of reality and truth and truth is not what one makes it out to be.

Research Limitations

This research was limited to SBC pastors in the states of North Carolina, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Alabama, Utah, South Carolina, Nevada, Tennessee, and Vermont. This was due to limited reach of this author as he needed to go through the executive director of the NWBC to maintain confidentiality of the participants. The survey was limited in the number of questions which were selected to glean the data needed for the research questions. The small number of inner city and urban participants shows a discrepancy regarding demographics however, it should not affect the results as the training of these pastors may be from similar seminaries.

This research was also limited to exclude missionaries and apologists and church historians. It was also limited to lead pastors only not youth pastors or other pastors. This research was also limited in how it reached out to pastors as it was necessary to go through the Northwest Baptist Convention executive director as he informed this author, he could not give out e-mails of pastors. This was to ensure anonymity of the participants.

Further Research

Further research should be conducted for other denominations and for non-denominational churches and the research survey questions can be expanded upon with more added. This author did not discover any previous research dealing with teaching biblical truth within the church and any influences of postmodernism upon that teaching however, some research was discovered concerning Christian colleges thus, the need for further research directed at pastors teaching biblical truth within the church and among other denominations.

With regards to age and demographics, more research needs to be conducted where more pastors in inner cities and urban areas participate. Also, this research did not consider ethnical

backgrounds of the participants as this author considers God does not look at ethnicity thus, further research can take ethnicity into account if the researcher(s) so decide. This discrepancy may be affecting the results of this research as it pertains to representation of the participants as mentioned above. More research should be conducted concerning the effects postmodernism may have on congregants to help avoid congregants leaving the church when their beliefs contradict biblical truth as the result of post-modern influence upon them.

Further research can be conducted to determine if postmodernism has influenced youth pastors and other pastors. Further research can also be conducted to determine if postmodernism has influenced how pastors and the church conduct apologetics and if postmodernism has influenced the outcome of Christian apologetics. Further research can also be conducted to determine if the post-modern concept of truth has affected how the church and those outside the church view church history. Further research can also be conducted to determine if the post-modern concept of truth has affected missions and missionaries.

Summary

This research has looked at how SBC pastors may perceive any relationship between biblical truth and the post-modern concept of truth. It also looked at how postmodernism may have influenced and shaped how they teach those biblical truths and how postmodernism may be a major factor in congregants leaving the church. This research has concluded the post-modern concept of truth has influenced some SBC pastors and how they present biblical truth to their congregations. It has also concluded that the post-modern concept of truth is having a negative effect on congregants in how they may be perceiving biblical truths causing some to leave the church. One aspect this research has discovered is how pastors who have been influenced by

postmodernism will have their apologetics influenced as well and they may unknowingly influence apologists they may come in contact with.

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APPENDIX A

Dear _____:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate. The purpose of the study is to explore effects of postmodernism on Southern Baptist churches in the Northwest Baptist Convention and how it may affect teaching biblical truths and retention of congregants. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and lead pastor of a Southern Baptist Church in the Northwest Baptist Convention. Participants, if willing, will be asked to take an online survey which should take approximately five minutes to complete. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please click here <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HTP29NC>

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please click the link to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Sincerely,

Darren Mitchell
Principal Researcher/ graduate Student

_____/_____

APPENDIX B

Consent

Title of the Project: The Effects of Postmodernism on Southern Baptist Churches and Teaching Biblical Truth. Quantitative Research Method.

Principal Investigator: Darren Ray Mitchell. Graduate Student. Liberty University.

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 or older and a lead pastor of a church within the Southern Baptist Convention and the Northwest Baptist Convention. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore if pastors of Southern Baptist Churches within the Northwest Baptist Convention perceive if postmodern thought concerning truth has influenced their church and congregation affecting how they present biblical truth...

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Your task will be to take a short anonymous survey. The survey will take only five minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include the possibility of organizations to discover and understand how postmodernism has affected humans individually and society. It may help to discover how and why some people believe and act the way they do whether in a good or bad way.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Participant responses will be anonymous. Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study, Darren Ray Mitchell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Michael Pardue, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

APPENDIX C

snipping tool - Google Search x | Use Snipping Tool to capture s... x | Welcome to SurveyMonkey! x | +

https://www.surveymonkey.com/dashboard/?ut_source=header

Dashboard My Surveys Plans & Pricing Create Team Create Survey dmitchell68

Help with your COVID-19 response plan
Better navigate the challenges ahead with real-time insight.
[Learn more](#)

Welcome back, Darren!
Where do you work?

Open 0	Draft 1	Total responses 0	Average completion rate —	Typical time spent —
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[BUY TARGETED RESPONSES](#)

Recent Surveys [See all 4 surveys >](#)

DRAFT	13 Questions	4 mins Estimated time to complete	0 Collectors	Options
Copy of The Effects of Postmodernism on Southern Baptist Churches and teaching Biblical Truth <small>Created: 09/04/2022 Modified: 09/04/2022</small>				

Showing 1 of 4 surveys | [See All >](#) [CREATE](#)

Survey Examples [Help](#)

See what kinds of insights you can discover from census results. Here is an example of an imaginary company with a realistic challenge. See all examples

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https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/H1P29NC

The Effects of Postmodernism on Southern Baptist Churches and teaching Biblical Truth

1. How would you describe where you live?

Inner city/ Urban

Outer city/ Suburban

Small Town

Rural

2. Where are you located? (City and state only)

0 of 13 answered

Outer city/ Suburban

Small Town

Rural

2. Where are you located? (City and state only)

3. What is your age group?

18-25

26-35

36-55

Over 55

0 of 13 answered

Rural

2. Where are you located? (City and state only)

3. What is your age group?

18-25

26-35

36-55

Over 55

4. How would you describe the church community where you pastor?

A family

0 of 13 answered

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https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HTP29NC

18-25

26-35

36-55

Over 55

4. How would you describe the church community where you pastor?

A family

Dysfunctional (Separated by cliques)

Friends instead of a family

5. How do you prefer to teach the Bible?

Expositively (Book by book, verse by verse)

Lecture based

Topically

0 of 13 answered

snipping tool - Google Search x Use Snipping Tool to capture s... x [SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] The Effects of Postmodernism o x

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HTP29NC

6. have you ever taught your congregation how to read and study the Bible?

Yes

No

7. Which of the following best describes how you present Scripture? Mark all that apply. "The Bible is..."

The word of God

The inspired word of God is truth

The Bible is divinely inspired

Contain some errors

The inspired word of God and is error free

Only partially true

Other (please specify)

8. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Agree Disagree

0 of 13 answered

The word of God
 The inspired word of God is truth

The Bible is divinely inspired
 Contain some errors

The inspired word of God and is error free
 Only partially true

Other (please specify)

8. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Agree	Disagree
The Bible should be understood literally, word for word	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Bible should be understood symbolically, interpreting the text when needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Which is more important about the Bible?

It is true and trustworthy

0 of 13 answered

	Agree	Disagree
The Bible should be understood literally, word for word	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Bible should be understood symbolically, interpreting the text when needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Which is more important about the Bible?

It is true and trustworthy

It promotes good in the world

10. Concerning Christians worldwide, do you agree or disagree? *Christians...

	Agree	Disagree
Stand up against sin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
See value in every person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Believe God is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

0 of 13 answered

10. Concerning Christians worldwide, do you agree or disagree with the following? "Christians..."

	Agree	Disagree
Stand up against sin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
See value in every person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Believe God is working in individual lives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
See themselves as better than others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have a biblical concept of reality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have a biblical concept of truth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social good is whatever society makes it to be	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How they interpret a text shows its meaning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sees truth as universal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Truth is what one makes it out to be	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

0 of 13 answered

Sees truth as universal

Truth is what one makes it out to be

11. Which of the following do you, personally, believe about Jesus? Mark all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> He is truth.	<input type="checkbox"/> He is irrelevant.
<input type="checkbox"/> He is our propitiation.	<input type="checkbox"/> He is detached from the issues of today.
<input type="checkbox"/> He is our atonement.	<input type="checkbox"/> He is judgmental.
<input type="checkbox"/> He is the only way to heaven.	<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above.

12. Do you agree or disagree with the following?

	Agree	Disagree
Language functions to construct meaning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Truth concerning reality is hidden from	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

0 of 13 answered

12. Do you agree or disagree with the following?

	Agree	Disagree
Language functions to construct meaning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Truth concerning reality is hidden from us meaning all we can do is tell stories	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The cohesive character of communities comes through their stories	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using one narrative as a metanarrative is oppressive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is no substantial self	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge is conditioned upon geography and culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How a person interprets a text is how its meaning is discovered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

0 of 13 answered

geography and culture

How a person interprets a text is how its meaning is discovered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is no truth that is the same for everyone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Truth is what one makes it out to be	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Narratives are preferred over truth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foundationalism should be rejected	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
No optimism about the benefits of knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Do you present the Bible as... (Mark all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> The source of truth.	<input type="checkbox"/> Should be followed
<input type="checkbox"/> Contains everything a person needs to know how to live a meaningful life	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides a way to know and follow Jesus
	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides a way to know Jesus personally

0 of 13 answered

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Foundationalism should be rejected

No optimism about the benefits of knowledge

13. Do you present the Bible as... (Mark all that apply)

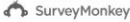
The source of truth. Should be followed

Contains everything a person needs to know how to live a meaningful life Provides a way to know and follow Jesus

Has teachings which are relevant today Provides a way to know Jesus personally

Is completely reliable Is essential for a person to live the Christian life

DONE

Powered by  SurveyMonkey
See how easy it is to [create a survey](#).

0 of 13 answered