



SHAPING GENERATION Z'S WORLDVIEW

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GROWING LEADERS
Ready for Real Life

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I met Jasmine last year when she was 21 years old. She'd asked to meet to talk about her career options, but our conversation turned into something far more important. She expressed to me her doubts about life in general, and her anxieties about so many issues from climate change to mass shootings. To her, the future looks bleak. Barely into adulthood, Jasmine was already melancholy and cynical about the world.

The sad outcome came a month later. Jasmine's body was discovered in her apartment. She had completed suicide and left a note that her parents kept hidden for weeks. It read:

*"When I look around me, I don't see anything I can trust;
I have no passions because I can't see anything I can believe in.
I don't see a reason to go on. Sorry."*

Jasmine's pessimism may sound extreme, but she's a product of a common worldview.

I sat down recently with twenty members of the Generation Z cohort, between 16 and 22 years old. They represented different races, genders, income levels, and perspectives. It was a perfect chance for me to host a conversation and discover what makes them tick. Their responses to my questions confirmed what I've gathered from Gen Zers all over the U.S. One respondent said her identity is fluid, she is constantly overwhelmed, she wants to be an entrepreneur, she is lonely, and her passion. . . is for society to fundamentally change.

What a summary of this generation.



POSTMODERN IDEALS

As each one spoke, I recognized how much this youthful generation's worldview has morphed into complete postmodern ideals. Their perspective has evolved beyond where Gen X and Gen Y stood decades ago. Let me summarize how our society's worldview has shifted over human history:

Premodern Thought...shaped mostly by ritual.

This period lasted for millennia, throughout our long agricultural age. Those living during this period followed tradition, made decisions based on what their ancestors did, and often formed their beliefs and worldview from superstition. Science was archaic and played only a small role in everyday life. Witch hunts occurred, outliers were imprisoned, and people believed the world was flat. Leaders came to power based on divine appointment and familial inheritance. There was not a complete absence of logic, but life was less about common sense and more about common practice. Each generation perpetuated the customs and beliefs of the past. These common practices provided people with a sense of security.

Modern Thought...shaped mostly by reason.

This period lasted for centuries, from the Renaissance through the Industrial Age. With the dawn of the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution, reason played a larger role in our worldview. Logic and rationalism shaped modern thought. This modern worldview was rooted in the search for theoretical, objective, and analytical truth. Science forced people to adapt their beliefs, evidence-based decisions were common, democracies emerged, and leaders were elected by popular vote. The United States was born during this period and in our Declaration of Independence, we stated that some truths were rational and “self-evident.” This logic became commonplace. And this commonsense rationalism provided people with a sense of security during this period.

Postmodern Thought...shaped mostly by relativism.

This period has lasted for decades, and began taking shape following World War II, as education levels rose higher, and people began to question everything. Facts and rules once assumed to be right for everyone and at every time no longer seemed enforceable. Those living today often embrace this perspective without even knowing it, and base it on individual



THE HISTORY OF THOUGHT

Premodern Thought...shaped mostly by ritual.

Modern Thought...shaped mostly by reason.

Postmodern Thought...shaped mostly by relativism.

experience, spiritual perception, and subjective opinion. While science plays a large role in what people say they believe, the complications of life and the overwhelming volume of information available force people to look beyond scientific evidence for guidance. Sadly, this relative worldview embraces fewer absolutes and offers a scarcer supply of security.



Where have you seen evidence of each of these perspectives?

HOW, WHEN, AND WHY WE HAVE CHANGED

It is ironic that postmodern thought entered the mainstream public in the 1960s, when a generation of kids were becoming more educated than ever.¹ The world, however, was becoming more complex as well, and fewer people believed you can place life into neat categories or nice boxes. It's as if we know more today but know less at the same time. While reasonable facts still play a role, they've been often replaced with relative truth. There's less black-and-white and more gray. People commonly believe someone else cannot impose their viewpoint on them, even when it's supported by objective research or logical thought. Now that search engines make information ubiquitous, we can find supporting data for anything.

- People question leaders more frequently.
- People question stories from history.
- People question common assumptions.

This is not all bad. In many ways, it's great that we've learned to question assumptions. Yet, while the modern approach is objective and analytical, the postmodern approach is subjective and independent. Genuinely modern thinkers welcome data and only data in their thought process. Genuinely postmodern thinkers welcome feelings into that process. Everyone enjoys

their own truth. What's the common phrase we hear today? "You do you." In postmodern thinking, we each must figure out what works for us.

The modernist is in search of an abstract truth in life, whereas the postmodernist does not believe in abstract truth, nor in universal truth. In modernism, there is an attempt to develop a coherent worldview. Postmodern thinkers often don't see this as important. For them, faith and morality are relative issues. Yet, we all embrace a worldview.

In fact, all three worldviews still exist today.

In some ways, today's Amish community still embraces a premodern approach to life. They live in communities, share the responsibilities and the fruits of their labor (raising a barn), and don't question the practices or customs handed down to them for centuries. Another less obvious example is the Catholic tradition where people continue to practice rituals and liturgy from ages past. In addition, I know people who practice premodern thought in a different way. They allow superstitions to rule their perspective. On the alert for "Big Brother" who might steal their rights, they embrace conspiracy theories with little legitimate evidence, and some still believe the world is flat. The premodern worldview draws its sense of clarity from the past.

I know modern thinkers who love the security that reason offers. Sometimes they're part of the science community, and sometimes they can be part of the evangelical community. In both populations, the danger can be that placing realities into a tidy box closes our minds to seeing realities outside of that box. Modern thinkers run the risk of placing life into neat categories, and can reduce people to stereotypes, placing all of life in a file. Unknowns need only to be researched for answers to surface. There is no place for



HOW WE'VE CHANGED

People question leaders more frequently.

People question stories from history.

People question common assumptions.

wonder or mystery. While the modern worldview provides a sense of security, unfortunately some can desire that security so much that they oversimplify many gray areas.

It's too difficult to live with ambiguity or uncertainty. All of life becomes either black or white when it's really neither.

I know postmodern thinkers who so embrace mysteries in life (which is good) that they reject the notion that some realities may be absolute rather than relative. A

growing number of our population embraces this view. Frequently, postmodern thought is most popular among the younger generations who see the danger of modern thought which can close our minds and elicit judgmental attitudes and intolerance. Over the last sixty years, higher education has embraced this postmodern worldview in philosophy, social science, literature, and even religion.² Formal education is productive, but it often removes any sense of convictions about one point of view, just as in Jasmine's mindset earlier. In the name of tolerance, people find it difficult to judge anything as wrong. After all, there cannot be just one right answer. It removes clarity from our perspectives, which is a gift people cannot live well without.



“While *reasonable* facts still play a role, they’ve been often replaced with *relative* truth.”



What have been the tradeoffs of your shifting worldview over time?



THE DANGERS OF EACH MINDSET

The danger of premodern thought is that it merely perpetuates the past, without much examination or evaluation. As one teen put it, it's based on

“peer pressure from dead people.” The danger of modern thought is that it boxes everything into a category and reduces life to a series of facts. Most people recognize this oversimplifies issues too much. The danger of postmodern thought is that it purports that all truth is relative when some truth may be objective and universal.

In such a world, it’s important to distinguish between “facts” and “truth.” Facts can change; truth does not. It is a fact that people drive on the right-hand side of the road. That changes, however, if we’re talking about people living in the U.K. or Australia. Hence, driving practices fall into the framework of facts. The law of gravity, on the other hand, falls into the framework of truth. It is universal and works regardless of where or when or how or why you test it. In our world today, this difference frequently gets lost. Postmodern thinkers run the risk of placing universal truths into a relative category.

As you can surmise, there are positive benefits and unintended consequences in all three worldview eras. Note the summary below.



<u>PREMODERN WORLDVIEW</u>	<u>MODERN WORLDVIEW</u>	<u>POSTMODERN WORLDVIEW</u>
Fosters community	Fosters research	Fosters individuality
Built on tradition	Built on reason	Built on subjective opinion
Leads to superstition	Leads to stubborn mindsets	Leads to loneliness/isolation
Ignores the role of research	Ignores the role of emotion	Ignores the role of absolute truth
Everything’s predetermined	Everything is absolute	Everyone is relative
Allowed for past connection	Allowed a break in tradition	Allowed for independence
We are secure in our family	We are secure in our facts	We are insecure in our fluidity
Cultivates compliance	Cultivates rational thought	Cultivates cynical perspectives



From which of these do you draw most of your worldview?

Over time, people witnessed three eras of influence in human history:

1. At first, it was built on tradition and authority. Tribes felt lots of empathy and trust.
2. Later, it was built on “the man” or the establishment. Tribes were about titles and data.
3. Today, it’s built on a mob mentality. It’s neo-tribal often on the internet and social media.

Life is more nuanced today, and, if we’re honest, it is about the loudest voice –the accumulation of followers and who can persuade the most people through their tribe. We’d like to believe we’re logical creatures, but in reality, we are emotional creatures. Millions draw their worldview from those they follow on Instagram or Twitter or YouTube or Tik Tok, and they give those posts seconds, not hours, of reflection. We are “feelers.”

Beyond that, 70 percent of Americans do not think on their own as they make decisions,³ and according to the American Psychological Association, that same number feels the government does not care about their needs and are pessimistic about life getting better.⁴ Nearly two in three Americans believe their rights are under attack. A Horwitz (2018) report finds that perceiving oneself to be a victim is ubiquitous: “the victim has become among the most important identity positions in American politics.”⁵

It is easy to see how the feelings and perception of victimhood color our objectivity.

Consequently, while I partially embrace a postmodern mindset, I see the danger of buying into it hook, line, and sinker. It allows for emotion to cloud my perspective too much, causing me to sometimes be blind to my own narrow perspective and to miss the wisdom of other viewpoints or worldviews. Ultimately, in its quest for opening and tolerance, this mindset ignores the fact that absolute truths do exist. A true postmodern

perspective gives up the sense that there's any (one) meaning in life. Nothing's true. You must mix and match to your liking. No one can judge whether it's right or wrong. =

Paradoxically, Generation Z has been raised to see everything as ranked; black and white; it all has status. It's all measured and evaluated. Each grade in school leads to the next grade. When they reach career and adulthood, however—life is instantly vague. Ambiguous. There once was a “corporate ladder,” but it's become a “corporate lily pad.” Today, 40 percent of the workforce is a 1099 employee—a contractor or freelancer or part-timer.⁶ A growing number of employers complain that recent graduates are unready to work long hours, stay focused, and be punctual or responsible. More experienced generations must equip them on how to process; how to understand nuance; how to know how to think, not just what to think.

Herein lies the danger.

Once we slip into one particular worldview, knowingly or unknowingly, we see life through that lens and miss the value of the others. Our paradigm helps us to see certain realities, but also to miss other realities. Whether we like it or not, our worldview instills in us presuppositions, where we presuppose truths, because our minds need life to make sense. We assume life will fit into our schemas or frameworks, and we begin to presume. We can begin to stereotype people, judge situations, and become predictive of what will happen, leaving out all sorts of data that doesn't fit into our mental filing cabinets.

This reveals our blind spots.

One vivid example is the 2016 U.S. presidential election. I was in Singapore speaking at a university when the election results came in. One faculty member after another approached me to ask how an outsider like Donald Trump had become the president of our country. To be honest, I was as stunned as they were. I didn't see it coming.



EACH WORLDVIEW FOSTERS A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

A premodern worldview fosters realism.

A modern worldview fosters optimism.

A postmodern worldview fosters pessimism.

Pundits everywhere didn't give him a chance. He was old, but so were Bernie Sanders and Hilary Clinton. And they had more political experience than Trump. How did it happen?

Our blind spots prevented us from seeing how unhappy American citizens were with "business as usual." Although Trump had so many flaws, even crimes, in his past, that didn't seem to matter to the public. (Or at least, not enough of the public who elected him.) The worldview of millions of Americans wasn't tracking with where our culture stood. Enough people were unhappy and even angry at how unproductive the federal government was and felt that a businessperson could "drain the swamp" and stir things up enough to bring about change. I am not defending President Trump, only explaining what happened. This is the dilemma of blind spots.

Each historical worldview fostered a different general narrative:

- A premodern worldview fostered realism.
- A modern worldview fosters optimism.
- A postmodern worldview fosters pessimism.



**What dangers have you spotted
in today's cultural worldview?**



THE VALUE OF EACH MINDSET

According to a Pew Research Center poll, 63 percent of Americans say the U.S. would be better off embracing changes over sticking to traditions.⁷ Yet, both the timeless and the timely are important. As I've mentioned, all three worldviews exist today. I know individuals and families who, perhaps without knowing it, have embraced each of these three major worldviews; they build their mindsets from these frameworks and base choices upon them. While there are weaknesses in all three of them (when isolated), they each are important to a sound, holistic perspective.

Premodern worldview: We must remember there is a place for tradition.

We see people embrace the power of tradition in college sports. Fans embrace a team or a school and begin practicing the traditions and rituals, singing the fight songs, and make hand gestures to signal where their allegiance lies. Some fans will make sacrifices on behalf of their team, driving long distances to see them play, painting their bodies certain colors and even spending huge sums of money to signal they are part of this fanbase. Social scientists tell us we do this because we are social creatures and innately possess a need to belong to something. We were not meant to be isolated, and to satisfy our need for community, we do things that we'd not ordinarily do. It's worth the price. We like what it does to us and how it makes us feel.

When researchers tested saliva on student athletes, they discovered something interesting. Testosterone levels were found to be higher in athletes in two circumstances:

1. Levels are higher when playing at home. We tend to feel we're defending our turf.
2. Levels are higher when playing a rival. We tend to play harder against certain foes.⁸

This all illustrates a psychological term: the Social Identity Theory.⁹ Humans are social creatures and created to belong to a group. It's part of who we are. We develop rituals, traditions, colors, language, customs and rivals or enemies.

Modern worldview: We must remember there is a place for universal truths.

There is little doubt that when reason and research became the source of our decisions, it solved many problems. We discovered germs, electricity, and how to print books en masse. We invented automobiles, airplanes, computers, and all kinds of helpful resources that enable us to live our lives more efficiently. Life got better.



THE VALUE OF EACH WORLDVIEW

Premodern worldview: We must remember there is a place for tradition.

Modern worldview: We must remember there is a place for universal truths.

Postmodern worldview: We must remember there is a place for wonder.

This worldview introduced us to avenues that freed us from the bondage of antiquated thinking, such as kings who were tyrants; we built democracies that put leadership in the hands of elected representatives. It liberated us from superstitions like witch hunts or the belief that the earth is the center of our solar system. Science and reason helped us put things in perspective.

Reason stood above those on different sides of an argument as transcendent; it enabled a more objective point of view. Theoretically, evidence rather than tradition became the judge and jury. Reason can unite us, because it is the only value that every person can come to and utilize on their own. The process of reason, of using your senses to gather evidence and then testing your intuition against reality, is so innate that we do it thousands of times each day without even realizing it. If the consequences of our actions are important to us, then reason can support us as we deliberate about what they will be. It can support us as we sift through the evidence and form rational conclusions.

Postmodern worldview: We must remember there is a place for wonder.

While I am intrigued by scientific progress and have benefited from it, as a Type 1 diabetic, I have come to believe that the realities of our universe are endless and unfathomable. In short, not everything can fit into a box. One benefit of the postmodern worldview is that it can include scientific discovery and allow for so much more, even the supernatural. It moves and shifts as life demands it. Postmodern thought allows for so many realities that our finite minds cannot comprehend. Because life is complex and fluid, this worldview enables us to incorporate those complexities into our thought systems.

Postmodern thinkers tend to value the entire soul of a person, their mind, will and emotions, rather than just the cognitive abilities of a person. They can embrace those with alternative lifestyles, including those from the LGBTQ+ community. They tend to be more open to new ideas, fresh options, and out-of-the-box points of view. In our world filled with complexities and complications, this perspective is the one that allows for the most freedom and fluctuation in our paradigms. The downside is simply that it must allow for some absolute truths that exist in our world.

In light of all of this, I have migrated toward a blend of all three major worldviews. Why?

- Each of them contributes to a healthy perspective.
- Each of them is incomplete in themselves.



**How do you embrace the positive elements
of all three worldviews?**



YOUR PERSPECTIVE WILL LIMIT AND GUIDE YOUR CHOICES

The reason we organically create a worldview is we need mental filing cabinets to make sense of our world. We simply must remember one important reality. They are a blessing and a curse. They clarify and they confine. The worldview we buy into begins to inform our lifestyle and guide our decisions and values. And we can be blind to how they restrict us and shape motives.

For example, it should surprise no one that as postmodern thought became normalized, so did tolerance and political correctness. In short, no one should judge someone else because of their differences. So far, so good. As an outgrowth of that belief, the U.S. chose to remove prayer and other religious practices from public schools as they may display bias or judgment on others who are atheists, agnostics, or from a different background. We've seen high school sports coaches sued for praying with some of their student athletes before a Friday night football game. It makes sense. We must recognize, however, that we did this because it was politically correct.

The irony is, in January 2023, Buffalo Bills player Damar Hamlin collapsed on the football field on Monday Night Football.¹⁰ Millions watched as Damar lay lifeless on the field for twenty minutes. His diagnosis came later: he had endured cardiac arrest. In the days that followed, I was stunned at how the tables turned on how people viewed the practice of public prayer. We saw signs everywhere: "Pray for Damar." One ESPN broadcaster even stopped his show and prayed on the air. Why? Suddenly prayer was no longer politically incorrect, but politically correct. No one protested prayer then because they would have been canceled on social media.

On the other hand, many people from a religious or even an evangelical perspective may talk about worshipping a God who is infinite and beyond imagination, but often place certain attitudes and behaviors into boxes, leading them to judge others who don't fit into those boxes. I often hear church denominations reduce faith to acceptable or unacceptable conduct, clothes and clichés, condemning anyone who doesn't fit them before ever getting to know the person.

I was saddened to hear one church member judge a young man who contracted HIV, saying “he got what he deserved.” The assumption was his gay lifestyle was what brought on the disease. We later discovered that the reason for his HIV was a blood transfusion. I later discussed the fact that this church member's modern worldview, even though it included faith, resulted in snap judgments and limited his ability to accept others. What's more, it fostered stereotypes, which oppose what his Savior modeled.

The problem was not his faith; it was his modern worldview. Perhaps this is why Jesus spoke to Jewish audiences about “good Samaritans” and Gentiles with great faith. He attempted to help people break out of their boxes.

Because our culture is so polarized today, people tend to take sides without much thought. We build adversarial relationships when we sniff out anything that may seem contrary to the view we already embrace—modern or postmodern. Both sides become black or white, even when they claim they are not. For example, as evangelicals (and other people of faith) have taken a stand that is countercultural, they've become known for what they're against, not what they are for. Sadly, when those outside a Christian perspective observe that community, they see angry people instead of kind people.

Society at large often questions if anything good can come from religious perspectives. According to Abraham Cho, from the SOLA Network, the religious community suffers from a spiraling opinion of the church's message. Cho observes:

- First, people questioned whether it was true.
- Then, people questioned whether it was relevant.
- Next, people questioned whether it was good.
- Today, people question whether it is even safe.¹¹

The greatest problem, however, is the contradictions that come when we limit our worldview.

When we embrace one particular worldview, we invite contradictions. For instance, while both premodern and modern worldviews can enjoy a deep sense of clarity, those who possess a postmodern worldview find clarity elusive. Since postmodern thought rejects judgment on those who adopt other points of view, those who embrace it find themselves in a quandary. Postmodernists don't believe in judgment, yet they judge others' beliefs.

Take the issue of abortion rights, which remains a controversial issue today. When someone is for abortion rights, they call the opponent "anti-abortion" rather than pro-life. Those on the opposite side of this issue use the term "pro-life" for themselves and "pro-abortion" rather than pro-choice. (You know where a person stands by the language they use.) Most postmodern thinkers value a woman's right to choose, because they often see the woman as victimized or marginalized in a man's world. However, abortion takes the life of an embryo or fetus, also considered marginalized. By the late 1980s, scientists established that the embryo inside a womb is, indeed, a person with a heartbeat five weeks into the gestation period. In fact, if a pregnant woman is killed, the perpetrator is usually tried for two murders.

So, the quandary is whether we believe more in women's rights or human rights: do we side with the woman or the unborn child? Further, we must determine if our decision is made from conviction or convenience for ourselves? I am not saying there is an easy solution, in fact, quite the opposite. This is painfully difficult for anyone who only embraces one of the three common worldviews.

Regardless of your values, or your background, or your faith, I suggest we differentiate these from our worldview. Our worldview informs each of these and colors how we practice them.

I believe we must embrace the benefits of all three.



**Have you observed how your worldview
has shifted due to necessity?**



EMBRACING THE BEST PARTS OF ALL THREE WORLDVIEWS

Throughout history, there has been a reason why each of these worldviews emerged. It's because they each serve a need inside of us. Desires are the chief motivation for our actions. Value-based and reason-based views hold that desires are never complete in themselves. So, consider this hypothesis:

**When we value the benefits from each worldview,
we meet our deepest longings.**

Each worldview builds upon the past. Each worldview exists for a reason. Each worldview makes the promise to fulfill our human needs. I'm not speaking of our three physical needs, which are water, air, and food. I am speaking about our inward needs:

Community

Social science established long ago that humans are social creatures who were meant for connection. At our best, we enjoy social connections with many, emotional connections with a few, and intimate connections with even fewer. But people dwell best together where their strengths complement each other. Millennia ago, people learned to collaborate, forming tribes and communities from which they drew their identity and security. The premodern worldview naturally adopted and embraced this truth. As we develop beyond the limitations of premodern thought, we must not ignore this deep need. Today, people endure greater levels of loneliness and isolation than at any time in modern history. We must recapture these safe relational circles and encourage them to flourish. We're not meant to be "islands."

Meaning

The second great inward longing we have is for meaning and purpose. We find our most satisfying lives when we gain a sense of identity, then leverage our identity for something meaningful, a cause greater than ourselves. I believe we do not flourish without purpose. The modern worldview helped us gain a reasonable sense of this meaning, as science made advances, which later led to advances in art, archeology, academics, and so many other advantages we now enjoy. In short, we captured a collective sense of

meaning with these discoveries and remained in community with others. Reason became the plumbline. Sadly, as humanism took root during the enlightenment, we began to forsake anything beyond our five senses. We began believing we might be the measure of all things in ourselves.

Direction

If we enjoy the first two human needs, we often organically grow toward a third, which is having a clear direction. When we gain clarity on our talents and skills, we experience a sense of competence

and can focus our lives on doing something that matches who we are and what we possess. We cannot flourish without focus and clarity. Fortunately, this clarity of direction can emerge for each of us individually. Unfortunately, we can believe that we can achieve it independently of others. Postmodern thought has nudged each of us into the discovery of what our “truth” is, but has not necessarily nudged us toward each other. It is an evolution, one that I believe has led to progress. At the same time, the outcomes have not all been positive as people have commonly withdrawn from the support and accountability of a community.

My question is: can we enjoy the benefits of all three worldviews in our lives today?

Each of these provide people with a clear sense of security. We long for security and will pursue it even within faulty belief systems. As country singer Johnny Lee states so well, “We’re looking for love in all the wrong places.”

We need traditions and we need to belong to a community. These two things enable us to build a clear sense of identity. We become the best version of ourselves when we’re part of something bigger than ourselves. We fully embrace humanity’s social contract when we cooperate, and both add to and receive value from others. And our need for belonging is satisfied.

We need reason to help answer our moral questions about right and wrong. With logical reasoning, we can use our hard thinking skills to lead us to



**“Every person needs
*community, meaning,
and direction.*”**

making our choice of right from wrong. As individuals, we need a collective sense of judgment to make decisions on right and wrong. No matter who you are, $4 + 4 = 8$. Seven and nine are both close, but only eight is correct. =

We need to recognize that life is bigger than the categories in our brains. We need to file our experiences inside, but our minds must allow for wonder, mystery, and the unknown. Some realities are relative, not absolute. Knowing that many of our choices and options are not black and white, but gray, frees us to accept other points of view and other lifestyles.

When we can see the value and contribution of each of these frameworks, we can stop merely reacting to what we dislike in each one and combine the good from each of them. Our dilemma is: we are always reacting to something that's not perfect, even becoming polarized, instead of learning to embrace what's helpful and setting aside what's not. Further, our world of instant-access, on-demand offerings makes it difficult to see past our shortcuts to answers. We become satisfied with artificial solutions rather than genuine ones.

Systems engineer and author, Donella Meadows, writes:

People don't need enormous cars; they need admiration and respect. They don't need a constant stream of new clothes; they need to feel others find them attractive, and they need excitement, variety and beauty. People don't need electronic entertainment; they need something interesting to occupy their minds and emotions. And so forth. Trying to fill real but non material needs—for identity, community, self-esteem, challenge, love, joy—with material things is to set up an unquenchable appetite for false solutions to never-satisfied longings. A society that allows itself to admit and articulate its nonmaterial human needs, and to find nonmaterial ways to satisfy them, would require much lower material and energy inputs and would provide much higher levels of human fulfillment.¹²

When we combine what we learn from each human era, we can fulfill our human needs.



**How have you experienced
community, meaning, and direction?**



MY GREATEST CONCERNS WITH THE EVOLUTION OF OUR WORLDVIEW

Generation Z, as a population, is frequently the by-product of today's culture. They live in a time of skepticism, much like Generation X, who make up their parent's generation. In fact, there are lots of parallels between X and Z, both of whom question everything. Below are concerns I believe we must address. They represent dangers in our current worldview we must overcome:

Deconstruction without reconstruction.

Consider for a moment the push on many fronts to “deconstruct” the way we do government, commerce, and even religion. Change has often been positive and pursued with good intentions. People spot something that isn't working, and they want to do away with it. The Black Lives Matter movement began this way as stories of police brutality were far too frequent. However, I continued to hear of “Defund the Police” pushes in cities, and those that tried it often didn't have a good reconstruction plan in place. In those cities, they experienced a measurable rise in crime. We must never reject something without a plan to rebuild something better. If we do, this can lead to chaos and hopelessness.

Independence without community.

Another concern I have with the outcomes of today's postmodern worldview is that all truth has become relative and personal, leading us to find our own way and embrace our own truth without recognizing our need for community. I've met very few people who need no support or accountability from others. In postmodernism, people tend to believe they're forced to compromise too much of “their truth,” so they avoid joining a community. To them, it feels as if they must reject part of themselves. This can lead to isolation and loneliness. As postmodern thinkers practice this worldview, fewer get married, join clubs or churches, or even spend time together. These numbers have dropped particularly over the last decade. Today, we have a pandemic of loneliness and a diminishing community experience.

Artificial intelligence without authentic maturity.

As information has become ubiquitous, we've realized that we can know more than we ever have in the past. A person who reads the weekend edition of The New York Times digests more information than a person who lived in the nineteenth century did over their entire lifetime. The unintended consequence is that we can confuse knowledge with maturity. We can assume that a person who knows a lot about everything is genuinely mature. But we know better. Maturation is about so much more than cognitive growth. It is about social and emotional growth as well, which are qualities employers desperately seek in new team members. I wonder if artificial intelligence has led to artificial maturity. The moral implications of ChatGPT, for instance, are huge. Just because we can do something doesn't mean we should do something.

Cynicism without meaning.

Finally, with the emergence of our postmodern worldview, cynicism has become normalized. Because we know the dark side of history, we've seen the underbelly of our institutions, and we've recognized the flawed nature of mankind, it's easy to live with perpetual skepticism. Once we finish college and grow out of adolescence, we can become permanently jaded. We don't let others get too close. We don't trust organizations. We fear the worst in many of our regular transactions. Often, we are jaded for a reason. We've been burnt by others. If we have never embraced any meaning for life, it can leave us unhappy, and a little helpless and hopeless. Sometimes we feel "too smart" for faith or spirituality. We're above the masses who need those crutches. Meaninglessness can be the beginning of the end. He who marries the spirit of the age soon becomes a widow.



**How can you overcome these dangers
as you develop your worldview?**

Our worldview is the foundation for every perspective we embrace and choice we make. It is vital we get this right, especially for today's younger generation.

When my wife and I moved into our current house years ago, we noticed some cracks in the walls. They weren't bad at first, but we could see them. Because they weren't bad, I wondered if I could just fill them with putty, then paint over the cracks and be done with it. Over time, I recognized that would not be enough. The cracks got bigger. When we spoke to a contractor, he revealed the obvious to us: it was a foundation problem. Almost every time a house has cracks in the walls or the floors, it's due to a shifting foundation.

So it is with us. Our worldview serves as our foundation. And if it's faulty, our lives will begin to show cracks in them.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are your thoughts as you evaluate your personal worldview? Are any changes needed?
2. How would you go about combining the strengths of each worldview listed here?
3. What one action step should you take to improve the way you view your life and values?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Tim Elmore is the founder of Growing Leaders (www.GrowingLeaders.com), an Atlanta-based non-profit organization created to develop emerging leaders. Since founding Growing Leaders in 2003, Elmore has spoken to over 500,000 leaders in businesses, universities, athletic teams and non-profit organizations, including The Home Depot, Coca-Cola Bottling Company Consolidated, American Eagle, Ford Motor Co. and Chick-fil-A as well as the San Francisco Giants, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Ohio State University, Stanford University and the University of Alabama athletics department.



His work grew out of twenty years serving alongside Dr. John C. Maxwell where he focused on leadership for the emerging generations. Elmore has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and *Psychology Today* and he's been featured on CNN's *Headline News* and *Fox and Friends* to talk about leading multiple generations in the marketplace. Tim was listed in the top 100 leadership speakers in *America by Inc.* magazine. He has written more than 35 books, including the best-selling *Habitudes: Images That Form Leadership Habits and Attitudes*. His latest book, *A New Kind of Diversity: Making the Different Generations on Your Team a Competitive Advantage* released in the fall of 2022. Tim and his wife, Pam, have two adult children, Bethany and Jonathan. He and Pam live outside of Atlanta. You can also find his work at: TimElmore.com.

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