



FROM LEADERSHIP NETWORK

*At the dawn of the 21st Century, the challenges of ministry have never been greater — or filled with more opportunity. We find ourselves in the midst of sweeping changes in social structures, institutions, relationships and culture. Deeper than fads and trends, these shifts are more than just generational differences or alternative worship styles and music.*

*We are in a period of significant transition from one world to another. At the core of this transition is a fundamental shift in the way we understand and process information and how we communicate with one another.*

## DISCERNING THE TIMES...

### It's More Than Just Generations and Worship Wars

*The Winter issue of NEXT attempts to illustrate this transition from two perspectives. One is the Millennial Matrix,<sup>®</sup> a model based on communication theory integrated with philosophy and historical church traditions, developed by Rex Miller.*

*The second perspective, a Ministry Transition Timeline,<sup>®</sup> developed by Brad Cecil, is based on a fundamental shift in epistemology and the transition from a modern to a postmodern world. We thank both Miller and Cecil for the use of their models.*

**NEXT: What is the Millennial Matrix<sup>®</sup> and how was it developed?**

**Rex Miller (RM):** When the dominant means of storing and distributing information changes, so does the world in which we live. The Millennial Matrix provides a window into the future by comparing three fundamental historical shifts in communication. Some divide history into agricultural, industrial and information ages. Some use generational cycles, while others focus on technological shifts, social trends and changing cultural values. All of these are helpful, but none deal with the fundamental structures of our identity, relationships and social institutions in the way that examining our communication systems provides.

**NEXT: Will you trace the three historical periods and the corresponding communication mode?**

**RM:** The three historical periods include oral, print and the current broadcast culture. The Liturgical tradition, birthed in an oral culture, dominated until the Reformation. The Reformation churches, birthed in a print

culture, peaked in the 1950s as television became the dominant form of communication. The Celebration tradition has been the primary growth segment of the Church for the past 25 years. The challenge for Celebration churches is this: in the height of their current success, will they and can they see the tidal wave of change fast approaching? I want to be clear that this is not about the value of one tradition over another. Each has important characteristics that the others need.

The Matrix resembles a prism refracting light through each era of communication. "Light" that traveled through each era emerged with new meaning that created new realities. The matrix format provides categories of comparison between each era that have been helpful in perceiving the structural effect that each mode of communication had in shaping our understanding of the world.

**NEXT: Why do changes in communication create such far-reaching changes in society?**

**RM:** Briefly, there is a cascading effect when the fundamental means of perceiving our world changes. This redefinition moves to our

relationships that impact social structures, institutions, society and culture. It is not a coincidence that the Reformation and the invention of the printing press are linked. Nor is it a coincidence that the first generation raised on television brought about a spiritual and social revolution in the 1960s. Our challenge today is to consider the radical changes coming from an emerging society that operates in an interactive, globally linked, instantaneous, 24/7, virtual communication environment.

*The Ministry Transition Timeline® provides a framework for understanding foundational changes in the context of ministry.*

**NEXT: What prompted you to create a timeline to help explain the postmodern transition?**

**Brad Cecil (BC):** Rather than a historical event, postmodernity represents a transition in the way of knowing and understanding. In trying to illustrate the effects of postmodernity, I found myself referring to the transition from the medieval world to the modern world, and that gave me the idea for a timeline.

**NEXT: If postmodernity is not a historical event, what is it?**

**BC:** I think it is best described as a shift in epistemology or the way we understand and process information. The significance of the postmodern transition is that a new way of understanding the world is emerging and it is causing a significant shift in the way we think, learn and communicate. It is evidenced in the business world, in the entertainment world, in literature, in art, etc.

**NEXT: Describe what you mean by a shift in the way we think.**

**BC:** Prior to the Enlightenment and the start of the modern era, there was more unknown about our world than was known, which allowed for a great deal of mystery to exist. Because more was unknown than was known, the underlying epistemology was a mystical understanding. The shift from the medieval to the modern world started out in skepticism — the only things that should be believed are things that can be proven to be certain. The goal was to enlighten people to “facts,” to remove the mystery, and to challenge all belief that was not founded in evidence. This was a shift from a mystical to an empirical epistemology. To address this understanding,

apologetics sought out empirical evidence to prove the validity of Christian belief. The goal of the Enlightenment was to remove all mystery, but it failed. While the modern era produced great evidence and understanding, it could not remove all the mystery of our existence. I believe we are headed into a new understanding that is unlike anything we have seen before, an era of what I am calling “Enlightened Mysticism.” We still desire to explore and understand our

| Cultural Implications   |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| MODERN                  | POSTMODERN               |
| • Enlightenment Project | • Deconstruction Project |
| • Objective Truth       | • Subjective Truth       |
| • Scientific            | • Mystical               |
| • Dualistic             | • Holistic               |
| • Empirical             | • Experiential           |

world but we recognize our limitations, and this is leading to a renewed mysticism.

**NEXT: What do you see as the most significant challenges for church leaders?**

**BC:** The largest challenge will come from the new view of truth, that truth is no longer easy to grasp and understand. People are now living with the recognition of our limitations. This is not to say that a particular view is wrong, it is just limited. More and more people realize the dynamic nature of our understanding, that most of what we believe is what we believe right now and that new observations and understanding may alter that belief in the future. This will be a challenge to the contemporary church, which for the most part, has been built on a modern epistemology where truth is logical, rational and can be proven.

The other big challenge will come in the area of spiritual formation. In the modern era, information was transformational, so most churches have adopted teaching models for spiritual formation. Our structures and organizations were developed to facilitate teaching, so they were designed to have large groups of people taught and are set up like classrooms. Many Protestant churches removed art because they felt it was insignificant

and distracted from teaching. Spiritual formation in the future will have to adjust for the new epistemology and incorporate symbolism, art and experience into its design.

**NEXT: Where does the church growth movement fit into this new way of understanding?**

**BC:** One of the most significant influences of church growth in the last 20 years has been the application of marketing principles. Since many people view the church from a consumer perspective, churches that have addressed the needs of the consumer have grown. The new epistemology appears to be rejecting standard marketing principles and the consumer “felt-need” orientation. This will present a significant challenge to larger, more consumer-oriented churches.

**NEXT: How do you respond to those who say that postmodernity poses a threat to Christianity?**

**BC:** While there are definitely challenges, I feel it is just a reminder that we are always missionaries. We have visited the mission field and it is us! We have to think again as missionaries, re-think what it means to be the Body of Christ in this new culture, and view postmodern culture as we would any other foreign culture. ✨

| Spiritual Formation                       |   |
|---|---|
| MODERN                                    | POSTMODERN                              |
| • Primarily Through Presentation/Teaching | • Primarily Experiential/ Participatory |
| • Reduction of the Arts                   | • Integration of the Arts               |
| • Reduction of Mystical Elements          | • Integration of Mystical Elements      |
| • Individualistic                         | • Communitarian                         |

**The complete models of the Millennial Matrix® and the Ministry Transition Timeline® can be found on the Young Leader web site.**

[www.youngleader.org](http://www.youngleader.org)

# RESOURCES

CULTURE  
and MINISTRY  
POSTMODERNITY



R E X M I L L E R

*Rex Miller has integrated his academic, spiritual and business disciplines to assist secular and religious organizations in times of transition. A theology and communications major in college,*

*he has worked for Fortune 500 companies in sales, marketing and management. Currently, he is vice-president of The Spencer Company, a furniture distributor located in Dallas. Miller has been part of two church plants and is a frequent speaker at churches and conferences related to issues addressed in the Millennial Matrix.® He can be reached at [rexmiller@compuserve.com](mailto:rexmiller@compuserve.com).*

## The Millennial Matrix<sup>®</sup>

The full text of the matrix, plus an extensive bibliography by Rex Miller, have been posted on [www.youngleader.org](http://www.youngleader.org). Audiotapes of Miller's presentation on the Matrix can be accessed at [www.worshipinstitute.com](http://www.worshipinstitute.com).

## Books

For further background reading related to the Millennial Matrix,® Rex Miller recommends the following:

*The Technological Society and Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* by Jacques Ellul

*The Medium is the Message* by Marshall McLuhan

*Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* by Neil Postman

*Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* by Jerry Mander

*Future Worship: How a Changing World Can Enter God's Presence in the New Millennium* by Lamar Boschman



B R A D C E C I L

*Brad Cecil is an associate pastor at Pantego Bible Church in Arlington, Texas, where he leads axcess ([www.axcess.org](http://www.axcess.org)), a learning community developing ministry and leadership for the future.*

*Cecil has served as a church planter, national youth ministry director and shelter director. A business owner as well, Cecil leads BCA ([www.bcalink.com](http://www.bcalink.com)), an integrated marketing communications company that assists organizations in developing relationships through communication streams. He can be reached at [axcessbrad@aol.com](mailto:axcessbrad@aol.com).*

## Ministry Transition Timeline<sup>®</sup>

The complete timeline, available in a PowerPoint presentation with additional comments by Brad Cecil, can be downloaded from [www.youngleader.org](http://www.youngleader.org).

## Books

[www.youngleader.org/coolstuff.html](http://www.youngleader.org/coolstuff.html) is the reference page for LN's Young Leader Networks and includes an extensive list of books.

## Web sites

[http://www.baylor.edu/~Scott\\_Moore/Xnty\\_Pmism.html](http://www.baylor.edu/~Scott_Moore/Xnty_Pmism.html) is a web site on Christian Faith and Postmodernity with excellent links to other sites, journals, magazines, essays and book reviews.

<http://broquard.tilted.com/postmodern/intro.html> is a web site called Everything Postmodern, and it appears to come close to the title. Note: the site is not religious in nature.

<http://www.gocn.org> is the web site of the Gospel and Our Culture Network. It includes all the books in their series on The Gospel and Postmodern Culture, as well as other information about the Network's mission and activities.

<http://home.pix.za/gc/gc12/genx/links/xpomo.htm> is an extensive listing of postmodern resources on the Internet. It is a part of the Generation X Internet Onramp.

<http://www.marshallforum.org> is the web site of the Mars Hill Forum, whose mission is to reveal Christ in culture. It includes their excellent journal and other initiatives.

<http://www.nytimes.com/specials/index-millennium.html> is part of *The New York Times'* web site and its special millennium series that ran in the Sunday magazine. Three issues are of particular interest concerning the cultural shifts from modernity to postmodernity: *Into the Unknown* (June 6, 1999); *New Eyes* (September 19, 1999); and *The Me Millennium* (October 17, 1999).

<http://www.regenerator.com> is the web site of *re:generation quarterly*, a Christian journal targeted at postmoderns.

<http://www.next-wave.org> discusses the nature of ministry, faith and leadership in the 21st Century. Be sure to check their links.

<http://www.focus.org.uk> is Resources for Leadership, whose mission is to help Christians engage postmodern culture. It includes links to web sites, articles, books and tapes.

## Video Game Junkies and Cultural Semioticians

Jason Mitchell, Director, Young Leader Networks

I stayed up until 4:30 am on New Year's Eve playing computer games with Jeff, my brother-in-law. We had a bunch of fun, but spent a ton of time trying to configure the new games on his computer, not to mention the time spent trying to make our fingers move fast enough and smart enough to play the game. I reflected on that evening the other day as I watched a seven-year-old boy playing a video game in a computer store. It was both enjoyable and annoying to watch the little guy play the game so fluidly. His fingers moved around the keyboard like a classical pianist, and I am sure he will be going public with his Internet startup in a few months.

There was There was once a day when we would say this kid would outgrow his video game obsession. Likely he won't. It's time to admit that the platform he is learning and living on is the mode of the future, so it really doesn't matter if he plays fewer video games as an adult. What matters is the fact that he is growing up in a completely different world than most of us adults have known.

A few years ago, it seemed like the only people who were talking about this cultural shift stuff were a bunch of wild and passionate revolutionary church leaders who had to shout to be heard and understood. I suppose some of that shouting has accomplished something. Yet, while the landscape has changed, there are still people who continue to say, "Yeah, we went through that when we were young and you will outgrow it." Or in other words, this excitement that we are feeling is merely "youthful enthusiasm" that will go away when we have kids and get minivans. I am 36 and I know Brad Cecil is at least six months older than I am. I already have hair growing on my ears, but I am still waiting to grow up and out of my condition.

The reason the landscape has changed is that we now have young people emerging like the 21-year-old who recently told me, "I am tired of people telling me how to be and act postmodern. I *am* postmodern." In other words, "Yeah, got it." Done. This is the group of people I want to spend time with in the future.

Besides, they like to play video games. ✱

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| church champions network    | <a href="http://www.churchchamp.org">www.churchchamp.org</a>                                    |
| leadership training network | <a href="http://www.ltn.org">www.ltn.org</a>  |
| knowledge network           | <a href="http://www.leadnetinfo.org">www.leadnetinfo.org</a>                                    |

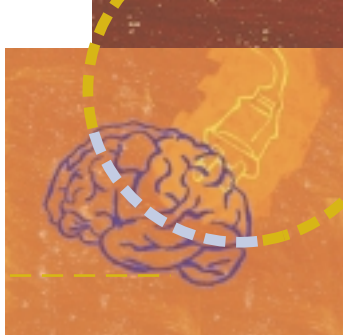
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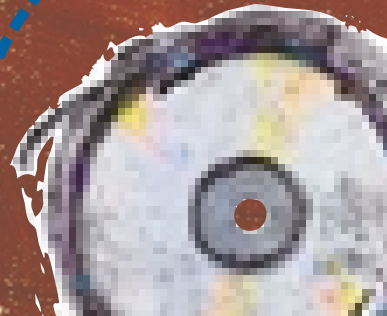
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## plug into the young leader networks

Check out the Young Leader site at [www.youngleader.org](http://www.youngleader.org) for fresh resources and tools for leaders in the emerging church. And be sure to see the new look for the site beginning in March.



## Explorer

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