

I. There Is a Line

A. The Common Emergent Claim: Centered vs. Bounded Sets

1. Bounded Sets: build fences. E.g., American farm.

a. Modern, Western, Conservative

b. Sharp boundaries, Doctrinaire

c. Exclusive, Defensive

d. Result: the church is clearly defined but appears hostile and unwelcoming.

2. Centered Sets: dig wells. E.g., Australian outback.

a. Postmodern, Eastern, Liberal

b. Fuzzy boundaries

c. Inclusive, Nonjudgmental, Inviting

d. Result: the church is welcoming but lacks an identity.

3. My Critique

a. The bounded-centered set distinction is self-stultifying

b. Advocates of centered-set thinking exaggerate the differences between East and West.

c. Advocates of centered-set thinking forget that everyone has boundaries and defends the things they love.

B. My Centered-Bounded Set (see <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/network/rationale>).

1. Doctrines and ethics are essential for our ecclesiastical boundary (1 John 3:23).
2. Doctrines matter because they praise (reveal) and protect (defend) the center, Jesus Christ.

II. Where Is the Line?

How Do People Join the Church?

	<u>Priority</u>		<u>Should Do</u>		<u>May Do</u>
Modern Conservatives	Believe	→	Belong	→	Become
Postmodern Liberals	Belong	→	Become	→	Believe

A. Conservatives: believe, belong, become

1. Believe
2. Belong
3. Become

B. Liberals/Emergents: belong, become, believe

1. Belong: encourage non-Christians to participate in fellowship, ministry, and Lord's Supper
2. Become
3. Believe

C. The Difference Between Conservatives and Liberals

Why Different People Do Church Differently

	<u>Modern Conservatives</u>	<u>Postmodern Innovators</u>
<u>Our Condition:</u>	Fallen Sinners ↓	Created Seekers ↓
<u>Our Goal:</u>	Conversion ↓	Journey ↓
<u>Our Means:</u>	Find Answers/Truth ↓	Ask Questions/Wonder ↓
<u>Our Ministry:</u>	Confident, Authoritative Hierarchical ↓	Humble, Democratic Mutual ↓
<u>Our Church:</u>	Exclusive/Bounded Set Pure church, but few converts	Inclusive/Centered Set Many “converts,” but still church?

Key Distinction: Creation/Common Grace vs. Fall/Antithesis

1. Individual people
2. Other religions

D. A Conservative Synthesis

Combining Modern and Postmodern Views of Church

<u>Pre-Christian Journey to Faith</u>			<u>Christian Journey in Faith</u>		
Belong	→	Become	→	Believe	
welcoming acceptance		change by common grace		grow toward God	
				Believe	→
				change by special grace	→
				church membership, participation	→
					Become
					grow in Christ