

Series: What's Your Personal Worldview?

Lesson #1: What is a Worldview?

I. Introduction (Some initial thoughts re. What is a Worldview?):

Everyone has a worldview. Many persons just don't know that they have one. In its simplest sense, a worldview is just "how you individually view the world".

How you view the world almost always determines how you respond to observations and events in your daily life. You don't even necessarily have to think about it if your response is based on your own personal worldview. This worldview of yours determines much of your life without you even giving it much thought.

Sometimes when you are questioned why you did something or said something, you might act like your average teenager with a shrug of the shoulders and an "I don't know" answer. The truth is that you really don't know because most day to day responses and behaviors are pretty much on automatic based on your worldview.

Each person's worldview is likely to be incomplete, may be mixed with several different worldview positions, making it inconsistent.

II. Definition

"So what is a worldview? Essentially this: A worldview is a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic makeup of our world."

James W. Sire; *The Universe Next Door*; p. 16

You and everyone you know (over age 2) holds a personal worldview which informs their mind minute by minute as to how to make decisions and how to respond and behave based on what they believe about the world that they live in.

In our early life (2-16), we are usually evolving a world view of our own making that consists of ideas that we have about the world that we live in. This worldview is personal and not likely to be one of the worldviews that we will talk about in this course.

If there are two bullies on the playground, it is likely that they share some elements of their worldview in common with one another.

"When detectives examine a crime scene, their goal is to develop a narrative of events - a story - that explains as many of the details of evidence as possible in as plausible a way as possible. In other words, they develop a hypothesis that covers the facts. Similarly, a worldview might be seen as a hypothesis that aims to take into account as many of the observed phenomena of the world, life, and experience as possible in a coherent, unified way. The more phenomena that can be reasonably and plausibly explained by a given hypothesis, the greater is that hypothesis' explanatory power."

Professor **Robert A. Harris** from Kenneth Sample's *A World of Difference*; p. 34

III. The 12 Elements of a Comprehensive Worldview

A "comprehensive worldview" (mature, thoughtful, and integrated) consists of what you believe 12 different elements of your view of reality. At least 7 or 8 of these are essential to understanding oneself and one's own behavior and philosophy of life. The twelve elements are listed below with broad generic definitions.

1. Epistemology – The study and beliefs of origin of, nature of, limits of, and validity of knowledge of truth. επιστημη episteme re. knowledge & truth

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Some people's "mature" (adult) worldview does not mature and their behavior and personality shows it. You may discover that you meet adults (older than 14 or 15) that you will probably never be friends with because their worldview is still pretty primitive making them poor candidates for adult relationships, friendships, and dependability. In other words they are so self-centered that they make poor candidates for friendship relationships. We often say that they are immature. When we say that about a person, we are often identifying a problem with an immature worldview.

By people with an "immature worldview" we mean that their character, their understanding, their lack of wisdom, etc. is still quite primitive. As with a toddler, they are self-centered, they are "entitled", they are needy, they are "snowflakes" in today's expressions. Like a toddler, they have never learned to deny self-gratification.

If one gets stuck with an entirely immature worldview (that of childhood) this results in what is called "**Psychopathy** is traditionally a [personality disorder](#) characterized by persistent [antisocial behavior](#), impaired [empathy](#) and [remorse](#), and [bold](#), [disinhibited](#), and [egotistical traits](#).^{[1][2][3]} It is sometimes considered synonymous with [sociopathy](#)." Wikipedia

In times of emotional, physical, or spiritual weakness, we can all revert to a more primitive, needful worldview and behave badly. It takes a very mature, integrated worldview to minimize this reversion to infantile reactions during times of great stress.

B. Changing a Worldview:

Growth of a worldview in adulthood is usually very slow so as to be imperceptible. But any serious life crisis can cause a person's worldview to grow in rapid spurts to varying degrees or even to make a person's worldview revert to a more infantile one.

Examples of things/crisis that that cause these periods of rapid worldview maturing or reversion:

- Loss of a job.
- Being threatened by great debt.
- Good marriage (a serious one).
- Gaining a family (children).
- Bad marriage.
- Divorce.
- Persecution / discrimination.
- Disease of oneself, within family or close friends.
- Death of loved ones.

There is one event in life that should/will cause a very dramatic shift in worldview and continue to mature that worldview for years to come. That is the Christian "new birth" as caused by the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit within our souls.

2 Cor 5:14-21 *For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; ¹⁵and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.*

¹⁶*Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. ¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

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¹⁸Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

If there is not such shift in worldview, then it is likely that that one is not “in Christ” but is in fact a “tare” (weed). A “tare” (weed) is the Biblical term for a religious lost person within the communion of the Church.

V. Why Do Worldviews Matter?

For most people, as a comprehensive set of beliefs, worldviews do not matter. Hence, that is what is wrong with the world?!!

Remember our “Definition” section above that a worldview is our attempt to systematically compile a set of beliefs that work for us as individuals to live our lives in such a way as to be successful (blessed and/or profitable) in a world that is tough and often unforgiving. Our worldview is a compilation of what we believe to be true about the world. If we fail to compile a “good” (correct) worldview that corresponds to the actual truth/reality of the world, life will be much tougher and we will suffer.

Remember, most of our behavior and everyday decisions do not occur in the light of reasoning analysis, but rather occur automatically based on our worldview.

If we don't have a worldview that accurately reflects the truth of Christ in the world, our chances of living successfully without pain and suffering is nil.

For the Christian, we look to Christ:

John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*

John 8:31-32 *So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."*

Caution: A little humor: Where does good judgment come from?? It usually comes from our learning when we exercise bad judgment! It could come from parents, but “naw” we’re not going to listen to them for wisdom! (once we’re in the teen years)

"**The unexamined life is not worth living**" is a famous dictum apparently uttered by **Socrates** at his trial for impiety and corrupting youth, for which he was subsequently sentenced to death, as described in Plato's *Apology* (38a5–6). Wikipedia

In growing up and maturing, it is vital for faithfulness to Christ and for successfulness in serving Him that we operate in accordance with a “Christian” worldview. In next week's lesson (#2) we will be laying out in detail what is a Christian Worldview and what it is based on.

VI. Concluding Remarks

In this introductory lesson, I hope that we have convinced you that there is a part of your mind which holds views about essential elements of life, many of which you may not even be aware of. Nevertheless, these ideas and views constitute your own personal worldview.

This worldview is not harmless. It determines, moment by moment, how you react to events, relationships, conditions of life, difficulties and can easily bring failure and defeat into your life. This is

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the only thing that you are largely unaware of, that you are most certainly proud of. As a Christian, we are called to have a specific worldview which will bring you great personal blessings and emotional stability.

Important Quotations

A. J. Hoover cautions that even the best worldviews come with limitations. "A good worldview does not have to be perfect to be held by reasonable men . . . Every worldview has a few loose ends, a few bits of data left unexplained, just as every big court case has a few uncoordinated facts scattered here and there. No worldview is perfect in explaining reality. Instead, a worldview functions much like a scientific model in its attempt to provide a broad and general explanatory theory about reality. Lack of perfection should not prevent anyone from evaluating various positions and embracing the one that scores the highest on the nine critical tests. **Kenneth Samples; *A World of Difference*; p. 37**

Christian faith and reason also connect in the renewing of the mind. This important transformation involves individuals using their cognitive faculties to the fullest extent in devotion to God. Christian philosopher and theologian Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 345-430) called this indispensable intellectual and spiritual activity "faith seeking understanding." Believers should use their God-given reason to explore the depths of their faith. They should strongly endeavor to discover the Bible's truths - stretching mental and spiritual muscles, so to speak, to apprehend (yet never fully comprehend) such doctrines as the Triune nature of God and the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Such exercise moves a person from the initial stage of faith to the deeper stage of a reflective understanding and a greater sense of God's infinite and eternal majesty. Loving God with a person's mind is part of fulfilling the overarching commandment to love and honor God with one's entire being

Kenneth Samples; *A world of Difference*; p. 83

If the history of mathematics reveals anything, it is the crucial role that the Christian faith has played, and must play, in the world of science and scholarship. The history of mathematics was decisively shaped by its interaction with Christianity. This is not to assert that the early mathematicians were evangelicals in the modern sense of the term. Yet they did assume a broadly Christian worldview - that the world has an ordered structure because God made it; that humans made in God's image can decipher that order; that in studying the creation, we honor its Creator. The notebooks of such giants as Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton overflow with praises to God for His orderly creation.

Nancey Pearcey & Charles Thaxton; *The Soul of Science*; p. 161