

A Christian Worldview

Trinity Baptist Church Discipleship Training
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Introduction:

A person's worldview is important because it effects his understanding of everything else. Our worldview brings about presuppositions that govern our point of view and shape how we live. The truth is everyone has a worldview; basic beliefs about who we are, where we came from, and where we're going. We are all molded by atheism, secularism, humanism, naturalism, materialism, rationalism, etc. What we believe or don't believe about God affects our worldview. Many other factors affect our worldview including cultural, economic, educational level, national heritage, and historical context. Even people who are unable to identify rationally their worldview are still governed by these basic beliefs. It controls how we think and it sets the parameters that affect how we live.

Christian worldview is a relatively recent development in Christian thought but by no means a new way of understanding the world. It has been in existence since creation. The Shema was a foundational worldview: "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" (Deu. 6:4). The Sermon on the Mount was merely an exposition on how to view the world and live in it; how to view the world through the Christian lens.

The Christian (or Biblical) worldview is viewing the world through the reference point of Divine revelation. Worldview thinking helps Christians engage in the marketplace of ideas. It does this by showing how Christianity relates to everything in life— not just the private life of personal piety but also the public life of art, music, science, business, politics, sports, and popular culture. In addition to providing intellectual perspective for every academic discipline, worldview thinking is useful for apologetics and evangelism.”¹

In this brief study there is the presupposition that a Christian worldview is the only proper method of understanding the world. In other words, the only proper way to view this world is through the eyes of its Creator. Sadly, few Christians actually have a Christian worldview. If we are going to be successful in engaging our generation it is essential for us to have right thinking. It's important for us to understand the things that shape our worldview.

While our focus in this study will be on the Christian worldview, other worldviews will be briefly considered at times by way of comparison/contrast. For an examination of some of the other worldview possibilities I'd suggest reading James Sire's *The Universe Next Door*.

¹ Ryken, Philip Graham. *Christian Worldview: A Student's Guide (Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition)* (Kindle Locations 274-277). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

Bibliography (and suggestions for further reading):

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Sire, James, *The Universe Next Door*, Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2009.

Before looking at the elements of a Christian worldview two parameters must be understood:

- I. A Christian worldview demands a heart for God's glory
 - A. Only a heart desirous of God's glory can see the world properly
 1. This is at the heart of Paul's words at the end of **Romans 11**
Romans 11:33-36 NAS - "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? ³⁵ Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? ³⁶ For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever."
 2. We see God in everything and are driven to worship Him. The Christian worldview has the glory of God as the heart of everything.
 - a. This is the unity that we enjoy as the Body of Christ
Psalm 34:3 KJV - "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together."
 - b. Christians share the great desire to glorify God upon the earth
1 Corinthians 10:31 NAU - "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."
 - B. If God's glory is the motive for everything in our life it is essential that we consistently live for His glory.
 1. Too often there is a disconnect between what we believe and how we apply it to our lives. In other words, our worldview does not shape our life.

2. Too often Christians seem to reflect the prevailing worldview of our secular, God-denying culture. We look, talk, and live just like them.
 - a. A particularly striking example was a Christian lawyer who worked for a Fortune 500 company. A deacon in his church, he tithed generously, taught Sunday school, and was in every way a model church member. But on the job, his sole responsibility was . . . to break contracts. Whenever the company decided it was no longer in its interest to work with someone, this man's job was to find a legal loophole that allowed the company to break the contract. He seemed to have no sense that his work involved violating moral principles every day— ideals of truth, integrity, and keeping one's word. He was just "doing his job."²
 - b. A ministry newsletter for Christian men, "For every ten men in your church, nine will have kids who leave the church, eight will not find their jobs satisfying, six pay the monthly minimum on their credit card balances, five have a major problem with pornography, four will get divorced, and only one has a biblical worldview."³
 - c. Phillip Johnson: "It is not uncommon to find well-meaning evildoers, as it were, who are quite sincerely convinced that they are Christians, and attend church faithfully, and may even hold a position of leadership, but who have absorbed a worldview that makes it easy for them to ignore their Christian principles when it comes time to do the practical business of daily living."⁴
 - d. Robert Bork wrote: "While most people claim to be religious, most are also not comfortable with those whose faith is strong enough to affect their public behavior. Americans are the most religious people among the industrial democracies; 90 percent of Americans say they believe in God, over half report they pray at least once a day, and more than 49 percent claim to have gone to church in any given week. The truth is that, despite the statistics on churchgoing, etc., the United States is a very secular nation that, for the most part does not take religion seriously. It is increasingly clear that very few people who claim religion could truthfully say that it informs their attitudes and significantly affects their behavior."⁵

² Pearcey, Nancy. *Total Truth (Study Guide Edition - Trade Paperback): Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (pp. 97-98). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

Philip Graham. *Christian Worldview: A Student's Guide (Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition)* (Kindle Locations 356-358). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

³ Ryken, Philip Graham. *Christian Worldview: A Student's Guide (Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition)* (Kindle Locations 356-358). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Pearcey, Nancy. *Total Truth (Study Guide Edition - Trade Paperback): Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (p. 12). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

⁵ Bork, Robert H. *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996) pages 277, 279.

3. A solid Christian worldview rejects the notion of a division between the sacred and secular arenas of life. For the Christian our faith dominates every area of our life. This is where we run into serious conflict with postmodernism that insists on a strict dichotomy of private and public life. It is OK for you to hold to your view on marriage at church; just don't allow it to shape your values in business.

II. The Christian Worldview is looking upon the world through the lens of Scripture

A. The Christian worldview presupposes God's revelation of Scripture as absolute truth.

1. How can we know the truth about anything apart from God's revelation? Postmodernism denies the existence of absolute truth. The Christian worldview teaches absolute truth as revealed by God in his Word. The Bible has a perspective on everything.
2. God is truth and that which He reveals is truth. The Bible reveals the truth about the universe and God's purpose in everything.
3. We live in a universe of absolutes because it is governed by an absolute God. He has created a world of absolutes, thus the Christian worldview applies to everything.
Postmodernism denies absolutes. They even deny the absolutes of mathematics.

Nancy Pearcey writes: "In Minnesota, teachers are instructed to be tolerant of "multiple mathematical worldviews." In New Mexico, I met a young man who had recently graduated from high school, where a mathematics teacher had labeled him a "bigot" for thinking it was important to get the right answer. As long as students worked together in a group and achieved consensus, the teacher insisted, the outcome was acceptable."⁶

B. We must have our minds continually shaped by Scripture

1. Paul exhorted us to transformed by the renewing of the mind. This renewal takes place by having our minds shaped by Scripture.
Romans 12:2 NAU - "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
2. It's through the Word of God that the Holy Spirit changes our way of thinking.
1 Peter 2:1-3 NAU - "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, ² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, ³ if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."
2 Timothy 3:16-17 NAU - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

⁶ Pearcey, Nancy. Total Truth (Study Guide Edition - Trade Paperback): Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity (p. 44). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

2 Timothy 2:15 NAU - "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."

3. Only through the Word of God can we see the world the way that God sees it.
4. The problem with most who profess Christianity today is they are not grounded in the Word of God. You can't have a Christian worldview if your mind is not informed by Scripture. Sadly, most Christians are conduct their lives more on the secular worldview than upon a solid understanding of the Bible and how it relates to all of life.
Philip Ryken: "But here is the problem: according to one influential survey, only 9 percent of all born-again adults and only 2 percent of born-again teenagers truly espouse the basic principles of a biblical worldview. If people in the church do not think Christianly, it is hardly surprising that they do not live Christianly, either."⁷

The four elements that provide the basis for a distinctive Christian Worldview- Creation, the Fall, Grace, Glory

(Through these elements we can answer the questions of why everything exists. What went wrong with it? What can make it right? What is the ultimate end of all things?)

- I. Creation – God's ultimate purpose of displaying His glory in creation
 - A. All things exist through God
 1. The clearest statement of existence is found in Genesis 1:1
"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
 2. The Christian worldview sees a six-day creation with God resting on the seventh day. The mandate of the Sabbath's rest was ordained at creation.
 3. The Christian worldview recognizes the uniqueness of humanity as the grand climax of God's creation. We were created male and female in the image of God. Human beings have value. The Christian worldview treasures life.
 4. The Christian worldview recognizes the Creation mandate for man to have dominion over the earth. We have the responsibility to work it and take care of it. We have the right to use its resources for the good of humanity and God's glory.
John Calvin: "The custody of the garden was given in charge to Adam, to show that we possess the things which God has committed into our hands, on the condition, that being content with a frugal and moderate use of them, we should take care of what shall remain. Let him who possesses a field so partake of its yearly fruits, that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by his negligence; but let him endeavor to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or even better cultivated. Let him so feed on its

⁷ Ryken, Philip Graham. *Christian Worldview: A Student's Guide (Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition)* (Kindle Locations 352-355). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

fruits, that he neither dissipates it by luxury, or permits to be marred or ruined by neglect.”⁸

5. The Christian worldview recognizes the uniqueness of male and female and the gift of marriage between men and women as a creation ordinance. It recognizes the importance of family as the building block of human society.
6. The Christian worldview sees work as a creation ordinance and recognizes the importance of reflecting God in our work. The Christian worldview seeks to maintain the God-given pattern of labor and leisure. Philip Ryken states it well:

“The Sunday rest that comes through worship and God-centered recreation is part of what it means to be created in his image. But even beyond the divine gift of this weekly pattern, there are opportunities for leisure as well as labor in the rhythms of our daily routine. Many Christians leave too little time for play or else treat what ought to be play as another form of work. But hiking through the woods, playing tag with children, sailing a boat, knitting a scarf, and enjoying other body-renewing, soul-restoring forms of recreation give us opportunities to rest in God and enjoy the goodness of his gifts.”⁹

 - a. The Christian seeks to maintain a good work ethic following the principles of his God-given dominion.
 - b. The Christian sees work as the God appointed means of acquiring wealth
 - c. The Christians sees work as the means of material provision for the family.
 - d. The Christian worldview is opposed to socialism or government sponsored redistribution of wealth. The mindset of socialism has become entrenched in the modern American mind.
7. The Christian worldview sees the goodness of God in creation and receives of His goodness with thanksgiving.
(as opposed to the ascetic who feels guilty for partaking of anything that brings pleasure.)
1 Timothy 4:4 KJV - "For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving."
8. God made all things for Himself to reflect His divine essence
Colossians 1:16 KJV - "all things were created by him, and for him:"
The *Children's Catechism* states it well:
Who made you? *God mad me.*
What else did God make? *God made all things*
Why did God make you and all things? *For His own glory.*

⁸ Calvin, John, *A Commentary on Genesis, Geneva Series*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), Page 125.

⁹ Ryken, Philip Graham. *Christian Worldview: A Student's Guide (Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition)* (Kindle Locations 788-792). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

- B. God not only created all things, He also governs all things
1. What is the ultimate reality?
 - a. Postmodernism says there is no ultimate reality. You have your view and I have my view but there is nothing that holds all things together. There is no absolute overarching principle that provides a framework for absolute truth.
 - b. The Christian worldview teaches that God is the source of all things. God is at the center of all things. Nothing can be understood apart from God. God declares what is true. All reality is defined by Him.
 2. The Christian worldview defines all meaning and purpose in relationship to God.
 3. In the Christian worldview God is governing His creation.

Isaiah 46:9-10 NAU - "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me,¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'"

 - a. There are no accidents
 - b. Everything is happening by Divine design
 - c. God is the sustainer of all things.

Colossians 1:16-17 NAU - "all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."

Hebrews 1:3 NAU - "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power."
 - d. The problem with radical environmentalism is the failure to recognize God's ultimate dominion over His creation.
 4. Atheism teaches we are from nowhere and going nowhere. There is nothing but an existence that is meaningless resulting in ultimate hopelessness. The Biblical worldview teaches we were created by God with the purpose of glorifying Him.
 5. Materialism and naturalism leaves everything to chance.
 - a. Atheist Richard Dawkins reflects this sad outlook: "There is at the bottom no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference."¹⁰
 - b. In the Christian worldview everything is unfolding according to God's perfect design and according to His infinite wisdom.
- C. Most in the U.S. have a theistic worldview but few recognize God's absolute sovereign dominion over all things.
1. Few Christians live in light of the worldview of God's overarching control of all things.
 2. Few see their life in terms of Divine calling. Few live with confidence that they are living according to God's divine appointment.

¹⁰ Ryken, Philip Graham. *Christian Worldview: A Student's Guide (Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition)* (Kindle Locations 632). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

- D. The Christian worldview seeks to reflect our Creator in everything
 1. Post Modernism says beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. Beauty is whatever you think is beautiful.
 2. The Christian worldview understands the intrinsic nature of beauty. Beauty is that which reflects our Creator.
 3. Architecture, media, literature, fashion – all should reflect our Creator.
 - E. The Christian worldview recognizes the creation dominion mandate
 1. It maintains a distinct sense of vocation. We recognize our distinctiveness as individuals and seek to use our particular gifts to God’s glory.
 2. We work with joy as we exercise stewardship over God’s creation
- II. The Fall – the failure of man to continue in their original righteousness and the curse of a fallen nature and God’s just condemnation
- A. God as Creator is also Lawgiver
 1. God has sovereign dominion over His creation and has the right to govern according to His Law. He has the right to expect obedience and to threaten punishment upon lawbreakers.
 2. God made a covenant of works with Adam. God offered the gift of life for obedience and the curse of death upon breaking the covenant.
 3. The Christian worldview recognizes God’s right to rule and sees the excellence of God’s Law.
Psalm 119:97 KJV - "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day."
 - B. The Christian worldview recognizes the whole world suffers under the consequences of God’s Law being broken.
 1. All of creation is in a state of disorder
Natural disasters reflect God’s wrath kindled against creation
 2. There is a universal corruption of humanity. It spans every race, every culture. God has given us over to our corrupted heart. We love our sin and hate God. We are estranged from our Creator.
 - C. The Christian worldview sees a holistic effect of sin upon the human being
 1. It affects his mind. The lost man isn’t able to understand the unity of the universe. The Bible teaches the blinding effect of sin. The Christian worldview recognizes this.
“There may even be occasions when Christians are mistaken on some point while nonbelievers get it right. Nevertheless, the overall systems of thought constructed by nonbelievers will be false— for if the system is not built on biblical truth, then it will be built on some other ultimate principle. Even individual truths will be seen through the distorting lens of a false world-view. As a result, a Christian approach to any field needs to be both critical and constructive. We cannot simply borrow from the results of secular scholarship as though that were spiritually neutral territory discovered by people whose minds are completely open and objective— that is, as though the Fall had never happened.”¹¹

¹¹ Pearcey, Nancy. Total Truth (Study Guide Edition - Trade Paperback): Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity (p. 46). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

2. The fall also affected our hearts. We despise God and His rule over us. We despise authority and lust after personal autonomy.
 3. We hate one another. Relationships suffer because of our sinful hearts. Lost humanity has perpetrated unspeakable atrocities against one another. Wars, human trafficking, pornography, drugs, violence knows no limits.
 4. We take all that is lovely and corrupt it. Fallen humanity sees value only in what pleases the flesh. We abuse that which God has entrusted to us. Seeking to recover Paradise lost, we turn to every possible artificial means of pursuit of pleasure. We recognize that something is terribly wrong but, apart from a Christian worldview, we are oblivious to find a cure.
 5. We despise our work and give little attention to excellence, not understanding our purpose to glorify God.
- D. The Christian worldview recognizes the distinct characteristics of this fallen world and live in a state of caution.
1. The Christian is careful to maintain a separation from the corruption of this world while still seeking to display the beauty of our Creator
 2. We maintain caution in our interaction with unbelievers
Matthew 10:16 NAU - "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves."
- III. Grace – God’s purpose for the redemption of man through Jesus Christ and transforming grace through the Holy Spirit
- A. As the fall affects the whole person so does redemption
1. Our minds are renewed. Our wills are renewed. Our hearts are renewed.
 2. Our entire outlook upon God and the universe is changed.
- B. Every worldview besides the Christian worldview is seeking wrong ways to restore the effect of the fall
1. Many look to the government to be the solution to the ills of society.
 2. Wealth and prosperity is seen as a cure and much effort is given to redistribute wealth equally among all.
 3. Every effort to bring peace and prosperity to humanity fails because they do not understand the problem, nor the single solution.
 4. There is but one way for us to be reconciled with God. There is but one solution to the corruption of sin—not Islam, not Buddhism, not Judaism. Jesus Christ is the only way. Christianity is the only way.
- C. The Christian worldview sees God’s redemptive purpose running throughout history.
1. History is flowing forth with focus and purpose as God is redeeming His people from sin.
 2. God sent His Son into the world to deliver His elect people and bring restoration to a world ruined by sin.
 3. The resurrection announced the victory of Christ over sin.

- D. God works grace in the lives of His people
1. His purpose is to continue to conform us to the image of Christ
Romans 8:28-29 NAU - "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren"
 2. God ordains suffering in our lives (sickness, disease, disaster) in His work of redeeming grace. He uses affliction to show us our weakness and need of Him, keeping us always on our knees in prayer.
- E The only hope for humanity is the Gospel
1. Humanism says we are naturally good. Better education and human effort will continue to improve our condition. They develop endless schemes for social improvement. It is the force that drives politics.
 2. A Christian worldview understands the nature of our problem. While we see the need for social benevolence the Gospel is always at the heart of our good works.
 3. Faith in the Gospel of Christ is the only solution for sin's curse upon humanity. The Christian worldview maintains a high emphasis upon the proclamation of the Gospel, commanding men to repent of their sins and trust Christ as Lord and Savior.
Isaac Watts:
*No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.*
 4. Only as men are united to Christ are they delivered from their enslavement to sin. Only then are they indwelt by the Holy Spirit who begins the work of sanctification, renewing them through the Word of God applied to their hearts. Only through Christ is it possible to reverse the curse.
 5. The Christian worldview sees the spread of the Gospel in the hands of every believer. The Great Commission is set before all believers.
- IV. Glory – God's ultimate purpose of an everlasting kingdom and restoration of all things
- A. The Christian is living a renewed life
1. His life is a continual testimony to the reversal of the curse of the fall
 2. The Christian seeks to honor God in life as he awaits his final glorification.
- B. The Christian Worldview sees Christ as reigning victoriously now
1. He is presently upon His throne
 2. The Christian worldview is not threatened by worldly politics or the present political system. The Kingdom of our Lord transcends this world.
Daniel 2:44 NAU - "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever."

3. The Christian worldview recognizes the supreme lordship of Christ over every aspect of life. He is exercising His sovereign dominion over both Christian and non-Christian.
- C. History will end with the victorious return of Christ
1. We shall see Him coming in clouds of glory. We shall be changed and made like His holy character.
1 John 3:2 NAU - "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is."
 2. God will bring all things to a glorious restoration in the New Heavens and New Earth.
 3. The Christian worldview keeps an eye on eternity
Colossians 3:1-4 NAU - "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."
2 Peter 3:10-13 NAU - "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."
- D. The Christian worldview sees the significance of the coming judgment.
- 2 Corinthians 5:10 NAU** - "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."
1. Christians are always mindful of an all-seeing, all-knowing God
 2. Even our casual words have significance
Matthew 12:36 NAU - "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment."
 3. The coming judgment also means the end of all sin. Satan and all who die outside of Christ will forever be removed from the presence of the righteous.
 4. God's ultimate purpose will be the restoration of creation. All things will be new.
1 Corinthians 15:51-53 NAU - "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality."

- 2 Peter 3:13 NAU** - "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."
5. Human beings will return to the heights for which they were created: To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.