

Northview University: Worldviews 101

“Learning to Love God with Your Worldview”

Session 3:

“Detecting Worldviews in the Bible and in Our World: Theistic Worldviews”

ANSWERS IN COLOR

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Introduction

A. Review of previous sessions

1. A “worldview”:
 - a. A definition: A WV is the “core” of a person’s beliefs, attitudes, behavior, and values.
 - b. Basic facts about worldview (WV):
 - (1) EVERYONE has a WV.
 - (2) WVs are initially SUBCONSCIOUSLY adopted and often subconsciously held.
 - (3) WV includes the assumed answers to the BIG questions of human existence.
 - (4) A WV is the core of our BELIEFS, ATTITUDES, BEHAVIOR, and VALUES.
2. A person with a CHRISTIAN (or biblical) worldview:
 - a. _____ LOVES God with heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mk. 12:30).
 - b. Is adequately _____ INFORMED by God’s revelation (2 Tim. 3:15).
 - c. Is NOT taken _____ CAPTIVE by deceptive philosophies (Col. 2:8).
 - d. Takes every thought _____ CAPTIVE to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).
 - e. Strives to _____ LIVE its implications consistently in _____ EVERY area of life (Rom. 8:5 “set their minds” on the things of the Spirit).
 - (1) Relationally:
 - (2) Culturally:
 - (3) Professionally:
 - (4) Intellectually:

B. Worldview BELIEFS can be organized in different ways.

1. By key **TOPICS** or “categories” (James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*).
 - a. **God or Prime Reality** (e.g. Is there a God or not? What *kind* of God/god is it? What is the relationship between this God/god(s) and the physical world and humanity?)
 - b. **Nature** (e.g. Is the universe eternal? self-generating? created? real or illusion? self-operating? purposeful or accidental?)
 - c. **Humanity** (e.g. origin? purpose? value? unique?)
 - d. **Knowledge** (e.g. Can we truly know *anything*? How much? How? Is there any *revelation* from a supernatural source? What kind?)
 - e. **Ethics** (e.g. What is the *basis* for judging right/wrong, if anything? Are there any “absolutes”?)
 - f. **Death** (e.g. What happens afterward? Judgment? Reincarnation? Nothing?)
 - g. **History** (e.g. Is there any overall purpose? Endless cycle? Any miracles or providence?)
2. By **TIME**.
 - a. Past (e.g. Where did the universe, man, life, truth, ethics come from and how?)
 - b. Present (e.g. Why are the universe & humans here? What is truth? What is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’?)
 - c. Future (e.g. Where is the universe going? Where is humanity headed? What’s comes after death?)
3. By a **PROBLEM/SOLUTION** scheme (see Nancy Pearcey’s *Total Truth*).
 - a. Creation (e.g. Where did we come from?)
 - b. Fall (e.g. What’s wrong with us?)
 - c. Redemption (e.g. How can we ‘fix’ it?)
4. Our conscious, and even subconscious, answers to these questions can be organized into identifiable worldviews.

C. Identifying and classifying worldviews.

1. The *number* of identifiable worldviews depends on the level of our consideration.
 - a. If a ‘worldview’ includes *every* belief a person has, then there would be as many worldviews as there are people.
 - b. If a ‘worldview’ refers to *very general* beliefs and values that are shared by people, then we can significantly reduce the number of identifiable worldviews.
 - c. No one system is “THE right one.” Different classification systems can be useful.
2. Worldviews, world religions, and Christian denominations.
 - a. A worldview does not correspond directly to (a) a particular religion or to (b) any specific sect or denomination within a religious tradition.
 - b. One “worldview” may encompass several different “religions” (e.g. a “pantheistic” worldview would include Hinduism, Taoism, and some forms of Buddhism).
 - c. The worldview of “Christian Theism” would refer to a general perspective by those in various Christian traditions (e.g. Roman Catholicism, Calvinism, Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, Christian Churches [Stone-Campbell], Pentecostal, etc.)—what C. S. Lewis called “mere Christianity.”

D. ISM overview

1. James Sire's "catalog" of WVs (see *The Universe Next Door*, 5th ed.)

Christian Theism	Deism	Naturalism
Nihilism	Existentialism	Eastern Pantheistic Monism
New Age	Postmodernism	Islamic Theism

2. Examples of other kinds of worldviews in Steve Wilkens and Mark Sanford, *Hidden Worldviews* (InterVarsity, 2009).
 - a. Individualism
 - b. Consumerism
 - c. Nationalism

E. The importance of knowing about worldviews for Christians.

Nancy Pearcey: "Like so many young people, I had learned my Bible but had not clue how to relate biblical doctrine to the realm of ideas and ideologies. When I first encountered the broader intellectual world beyond the circle of family and church, I was an easy target.... Before they leave home, they [Christian teens] should be well acquainted with all the "isms" they will encounter, from Marxism to Darwinism, to postmodernism. It is best for young believers to hear about these ideas first from trusted parents, pastors, and youth leaders, who can train them in strategies for analyzing competing ideologies" (*Total Truth*, pp. 124,126).

F. Overview for the next two sessions:

1. Theistic worldviews (worldviews that affirm a god or God).
2. Non-Theistic worldviews (worldviews that deny God).

G. Biblical examples of worldview conflicts

1. The garden of Eden (Gen 3)
2. The biblical creation account vs. other creation accounts (Genesis 1-3).
3. Moses vs. Egyptian religion (Ex. 1-4; 7-11)
 - a. Many gods (e.g. of sun, joy, war, air, earth, water) were worshipped, including Pharaoh.
 - b. The ten plagues involved God's judgment on "all the gods of Egypt" (Ex. 12:12).
4. Elijah vs. false prophets who worshipped Baal (I Kings 18).
5. Daniel vs. Babylonian religion (Daniel 1-4) and Persian religion (Daniel 5:30-31; 6:1-28).
6. The apostle Paul vs. the Greek philosophies of the Epicureans and Stoics (Acts 17:16-34).
 - a. The Epicureans had a philosophy that denied God's existence (only "atoms" exist) and emphasized the pleasures of this physical world.
 - b. The Stoics accepted a kind of impersonal "force" that permeates the universe—a kind of "pantheism" where *everything* is God.

I. Christian Theism (*theos* = Greek for “God”)

A. Overview ideas

1. C _____ CREATOR GOD
2. S _____ SAVING GOD
3. I _____ INCARNATE GOD

B. Basic theme: “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.”

C. Object illustration: A _____ CROSS.

D. Specific concepts and terms

1. God

a. _____ TRANSCENDENT (1 Kings 8:27; Is 66:1) and

_____ IMMANENT (“Immanuel” – Is 7:14; Matt 1:23).

b. _____ TRINITY

(1) Father

(2) Son, Jesus (Phil 2:5-11; John 1:1-3,14; John 14:8-11).

(3) Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9-14; 2 Cor 1:21-22; Eph 1:13-14; Eph 4:30).

(4) One _____ NATURE in three _____ PERSONS.

c. The “OMNIS”:

(1) Omnipotent: All _____ POWERFUL

(2) Omniscient: All _____ KNOWING

(3) Omnipresent: All _____ PRESENT

(4) Omnibenevolent: All _____ GOOD

2. Jesus

a. Son of God (Jn 1:33-34; 3:16; Matt 1:23; 14:32-33; Mk 1:1; Lk 4:40-41; Acts 8:36-38; Rom 1:1-4; 2 Pet 1:16-18; 1 Jn 5:5-12).

b. Jesus died for our sins (Rom 5:9-10; Rom 8:2-4; Gal 4:3-5; 1 Jn 4:9-10).

3. The cosmos (the universe)

a. Created _____ .EX NIHILO

b. An _____ OPEN system.

4. Revelation

a. _____ NATURAL revelation (Ps 19; Rom 1:18-25).

b. _____ SPECIAL revelation (1 Pet 1:10-13; 2 Pet 1:16-21; 2 Tim 3:14-17).

5. Death, future resurrection, and judgment (Heb 9:27-28; Luke 23:43; Matt 22:23-33; Matt 12:36-37; John 5:28-30; Rom 2:4-6; 2 Pet 2:4-11; Rev 20:11-15).

One _____ LIFE; one physical _____ DEATH; then

_____ JUDGMENT.

II. Deism (*deus* = Latin for “God”)

A. Overview ideas

1. C _____ CREATOR
2. A _____ ABSENT GOD
3. N _____ NATURAL REVELATION ONLY.
4. T _____ TRANSCENDENT _____ ONLY

B. Basic theme: “God’s gone. Let’s reason it out ourselves.”

C. Object illustration: _____ GRANDFATHER
CLOCK

D. Worldview implications:

1. God is NOT _____ IMMANENT.
2. God is NOT _____ INCARNATE.
3. There are NO _____ MIRACLES.

It is a _____ CLOSED system.

E. Cultural connections

1. Notable examples: Thomas Jefferson; Thomas Paine; Antony Flew, a recently converted famous atheist.
2. Most American teens are “moral therapeutic _____ DEISTS”
(Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, 2005, 2009).

III. Pantheism (and New Age)

(cosmos = Greek for “world” or “universe”; (pan = all) + (theism = God)

A. Overview ideas

1. A _____ ALL is God.
2. I _____ ILLUSION of this world.
3. M _____ MYSTICAL awareness.

B. Basic theme: “Connect with the oneness of the universe.”

C. Object illustration: _____ **YIN YANG**

D. Specific concepts and terms

1. Hinduism: *Atman* [true self] is *Brahman* [the one].
2. Samsara: The wheel of rebirth or _____ **REINCARNATION**
3. Karma
4. Everything is _____ **CYCLICAL**.

E. Cultural connections: Hinduism; Taoism; some forms of Buddhism (e.g. Richard Gere, Steven Segal, Phil Jackson); New Age (e.g. Shirley Maclaine); Animism; Wicca; Yoda in *Star Wars*; Scientology (e.g. John Travolta, Tom Cruise); Deepak Chopra; Eckhart Tolle; *Lion King*; Oprah.

F. Biblical connections

1. Gen 3 (The serpent and Adam/Eve)
 - a. The serpent questioned their _____ **ETHICS** (“Has God said, ‘You shall not eat ...?’”).
 - b. The serpent questioned their view of _____ **DEATH** (“You surely will not die”).
 - c. The serpent questioned their view of _____ **KNOWLEDGE** (“... you will become like God, knowing good and evil”).
 - d. The serpent questioned their view of _____ **GOD** and _____ **HUMANITY** (“... you will become like God ...”).
2. Acts 17:16-33
 - a. The Stoic philosophers
 - (1) Universe is god.
 - (2) Fatalism (“acquiescence”).
 - (3) Humans are god (a “divine spark”).
 - (4) No resurrection.
 - b. Paul’s message to the Stoics (Acts 17:16-33)
 - (1) Universe created (v. 24).
 - (2) God is Lord of heaven and earth (v. 24).
 - (3) God communicates (v. 30).
 - (4) Repentance is required (v. 30).
 - (5) Judgment is coming (v. 31).
 - (6) Resurrection (vs. 31-32).

IV. Various Religious “Sects” and “Cults”

A. Jehovah’s Witnesses (Charles Taze Russell, 1852-1916)

1. Jesus is a _____ **CREATED** being.
2. Jn 1:1 “In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god” (New World Translation).

B. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Joseph Smith, 1805-1844):

The Book of Mormon

1. God
 - a. “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens” (Joseph Smith, “The King Follett Sermon,” 1844).
 - b. “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us” (Joseph Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 130:22).
2. Jesus
 - a. Jesus was the firstborn of all spirit children, including humans.
 - b. “Christ, the Firstborn, was the mightiest of all the spirit children of the Father” (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 93:21-23).

C. Scientology (L. Ron Hubbard, 1911-1986): *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*

1. Our true identity is that of a “Thetan” which had a pre-bodily existence.
2. We must remove the “negative forces” (Engrams) that have accumulated in previous existences and become “clear” in order to be an operating Thetan.
3. This process involves e.g. auditing with the use of an “E-meter” that helps an auditor expose hidden negative forces.

V. Islamic Theism

A. Overview ideas

1. _____ ALLAH is God.
 - a. Master, not _____ FATHER.
 - b. _____ DISTANT.
 - c. _____ POWERFUL (Qadr).
2. _____ MUHAMMAD is Allah's last and greatest prophet.
3. Jesus (Isa):
 - a. Not God's _____ SON.
 - b. Not _____ CRUCIFIED for our sins.
 - c. Not _____ RAISED from the dead.
4. _____ KORAN is Allah's "recitation."
5. _____ SALVATION not assured.

B. Specific concepts and terms

1. Allah: Arabic for _____ GOD.
2. Islam: _____ SUBMISSION.
3. Muslim: One who _____ SUBMITS.
4. Koran: "_____." RECITATION
5. The Bible is _____ CORRUPTED.
6. Jihad: _____ STRUGGLE.