

## What Is a Worldview? How Does It Shape the Way We See the World and Do Evangelism?

Thinking about worldviews is important because of the power and effect of a worldview, but what are the different elements of a worldview and how can we uncover them? How can we help people decide which worldview is a good one and which worldview is a bad one? This seminar will give tools and teach practical skills that will enable people to have helpful and enjoyable conversations about our deeper beliefs with those around them.

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### Introduction

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote about a layer of beliefs which influence and shape everything that we see, hear and experience. Wittgenstein wrote that, ‘**these underlying webs of belief serve as the axis, riverbed, scaffolding, and hinges of the way that we understand the world.**’ Bernard Williams noted the effect of an unseen layer when he said that, ‘**we are all under the influence of thinkers that we do not read.**’ We will consider what the Bible says about the idea of worldviews, what a worldview is, and what it may contain. Then, in evangelism and discipleship we can help people to decide which worldview is a good one and which worldview is a bad one. The Christian faith is a compelling and comprehensive worldview which is intellectually satisfying and coherent, but this still uniquely stands or falls and centres itself around a *real and living relationship with the God who is personal*. Jesus Christ did not come to change our worldviews, he came to be with us and to give us life.

### **I. What does the Bible say about the idea of worldview?**

- A. **Engaging with the world of the listener:** Jesus’ parables, and illustrations, John’s Prologue in John 1:1-18, Paul in Athens & Acts 17

<b>Bible reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Starting point</b>
Acts 2:14–41	Jerusalem	Jewish	Jewish scriptures
Acts 3:12–26	Jerusalem	Jewish	Jewish scriptures
Acts 7:1-53	Jerusalem	Jewish	Jewish scriptures
Acts 13:14–43	Psidian Antioch	Jewish	Jewish scriptures
Acts 21:40–22	Jerusalem	Jewish	Jewish scriptures
Acts 14:8-18	Lystra and Derbe	Gentile pagan farmers	Natural theology
Acts 17:16–43	Athens	Gentiles	Greek thinking

Acts 26	Caesarea	Gentiles	Legal argument, personal testimony, prophecy
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## B. An example of Jesus' use of worldview & questions

Luke 10:23-37

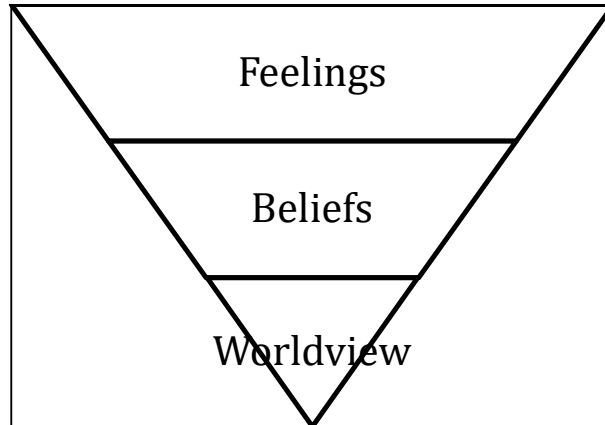
## C. Jesus' use of questions indicates an awareness of a hidden layer of human thinking

• What are you looking for? • Why are you looking for me? • What do you want me to do for you? • Who do people say that I am? • But who do you say that I am? • Why do you ask me about what is good? • Why do you call me good? • Who is my mother? Who is my brothers and sisters? • Who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator? • How long will I endure you? • Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me? • What are you thinking in your hearts? • Why do you harbour evil thoughts? • If you love only those who love you, what credit is that to you? • If you do good only to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? • Do you want to be well? • Who touched me? • What is your name? • How long has this been happening to him? • Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven" or to say "Rise, pick up your mat and walk" ? • Do you see anything? • You see all these things do you not? • Can a blind person guide a blind person? • Do you see this woman? • Why do you make trouble for her? • Where are they, has none condemned you? • What good is it to gain the whole world but forfeit your soul? • What could one give in exchange for his life? • Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life? • Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? • Are you not more important than the birds of the sky? • Who is greater, the one seated at the table, or the one who serves? • What is the reign of God like? To what can I compare it? • Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? • Which of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asks for a fish? • Where is your faith? • Do you believe that I can do this? • Why are you terrified? • Do you not yet have faith? • Why this commotion and weeping? • Why does this generation seek a sign? • To what shall I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? • How can you believe, when you accept praise from one another and do not seek the praise that comes from the only God? • Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God? • Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? • Do you believe now? • I am telling you the truth, why do you not believe me? • Is it lawful to cure on the Sabbath or not? • Show me a denarius; whose image and name does it bear? • Why do you not understand what I am saying? • Do you not yet understand or comprehend? • Are your hearts hardened? • Do you have eyes and not see, ears and not hear? • Do you still not understand this? • If I tell you about early things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? • Do you understand these things? • Why do you not interpret the present time? • Does this shock you? • Why do you call me "Lord, Lord," but do not do what I command? • Why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? • What were you arguing about on the way? • Why are you testing me? • Is it not written: my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples? • Will you lay down your life for me? • Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink? • Do you also want to leave? • Do you realise what I have done for you? • Why ask me? • Why are you trying to kill me? • For which of these good words are you trying to stone me? • Do you think that I cannot call upon my God and he will not provide me at this moment with more than twelve legion of angels? • Would you like some breakfast? • Have

you anything here to eat? • Why are you troubled? Why do questions arise in your hearts? • Have you come to believe because you have seen me? • I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die; do you believe this? • What are you discussing as you walk along? • Do you love me?

## **II. What is a worldview and what does it contain?**

A. We all have a worldview



**B. Like a coloured lens over your eyes**

C. **Worldviews are formed through** culture, relationships, history, things we do and feel as well as through conscious reflecting. Isn't necessarily conscious.

D. **A worldview in some instances can cause us to see less clearly**, become less rational or can reinforce our rejection of God or self-denial of unappealing realities. Worldviews can be collectively and/or individually held and maintained (e.g. group think).

**E. Worldviews help us deal with questions about everyday life**

A way of living? • A strategy to deal with suffering and pain? • A way of dealing with selfishness? • Freedom from... rule based living, duty, addiction, unforgiveness? • Happiness? • Guidance in the decisions of life? • A way of justifying something that we want to lay claim to or be able to do • What do we do about poverty? A way of dealing with regrets or being alone • It might be a system for coping with our own tendencies • It could be a phrase or mantra that helps us to be resilient • Our worldviews can contain broader ethical concerns and motivations such as: poverty, the environment, racism, gender, human rights and injustice.

**F. Worldviews help us deal with big philosophical questions**

What is reality? • God? • Who am I? • Where do I come from? • What do I do with my life/retirement/gifts? • What should I do? • How can I do something

of purpose/significance? • What can I hope for? • Where am I going? • What can I know? • What is wrong with the world/people/human nature?

### James Sire's big philosophical questions

1. What is prime reality - the really real?
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?
3. What is a human being?
4. What happens to a person at death?
5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know what is right and wrong?
7. What is the meaning of human history?

G. There are **three basic types or families** of worldview

THREE CORE WORLDVIEWS	
NATURALISM	NO GOD
MONISM	UNIVERSE IS ONE / GOD
THEISM	GOD EXISTS AND IS DISTINCT FROM UNIVERSE

The first of the three kinds is **atheism or naturalism**. The principal belief here is that natural processes or properties are the true explanation. This is where you would locate atheism, new atheism, nihilism, atheistic existentialism, humanism and types of atheistic secularism.

Then the second family of worldview is **monism or oneism**. This is the belief that all that is will eventually be, or should be perceived as being in unity or oneness. Monism emphasises the unity of everything. This is the route family of worldview for Buddhism, some of Hinduism, and many modern spiritual writers like Paulo Coelho, Deepak Chopra, James Redfield and Rhonda Burne.

The third family of worldview is **theism**. Into this family fits deism, Judaism, some Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The core belief in theism is that there is a God who is distinct and different from the cosmos and creation.

### H. Core creeds and worldviews

At the deepest layer of worldview there are touchstone phrases or creeds. This is sometimes referred to as a 'schema' or an internal monologue. These are the really

honest, boiled down, practical – when the rubber hits the road – ways that we think about ourselves, the world and God.

In a similar way to that fact that many organisations and churches have creeds or vision statements – which try to express the core ideals of that group. So too do people - some people have a stronger inner monologue (some have none and that's ok too) than others but we all carry core creeds – often phrases that can spur us into action or lock us down in fearfulness.

Here are some of the core creeds that people have told me that they carry...

- “no regrets”
- “keep calm and carry on”
- “believe in yourself”
- “don't chose you'll miss out”
- “don't choose the wrong thing, you'll miss out”
- “you're a failure”
- “you're hopeless”
- “always expect people to let you down”

I am convinced that freedom is increased by coming to and living in the truth (John 8:32).

And I think that as we journey with people in what we believe, we need to be relational, gentle and kind because these worldviews and core creeds can run deep and can be connected to the ways that we see ourselves, and others both in healthy and in unhealthy ways.

#### I. **REAL** as a way of understanding worldview

- What is **reality**?
- What is the **error**?
- What is the **answer**?
- What does **life** look like?

<b>R</b> REALITY	Why is there something rather than nothing? What is the nature of the most basic reality? What are human beings?
<b>E</b> ERROR	What is wrong with the world? How do you explain human nature? Are some things right or wrong?
<b>A</b> ANSWER	What is the solution to the problem? Is there a way to be rescued or to self-rescue? How should we respond?
<b>L</b> LIFE	What can we hope for? What does the future hold? What does life become now?

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### III. How can we uncover worldviews? How can we help people to decide which worldview is a good one and which worldview is a bad one?

When we actually choose a worldview, here are some things to avoid:

- You only choose it because it makes you feel good
- You don't like the alternatives as much
- Everyone/culture/family/friends else believes it
- It increases your income/safety/status
- Someone told you to believe it, and you don't care what their reasons were
- You'll get a higher mark or do better at work – don't cause waves
- It's a way of avoiding something – like being accountable for what you do with your sex life/money

#### **A very good reason to adopt a worldview**

- **It is true**, or you have good reasons to think that it is true – even if you don't feel it is so




*The Christian faith is often considered true because it works, but it is closer to reality to say that it works because it's true.*

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#### **How can you come to believe what is true?**

- Compare your thinking to Jesus' viewpoint
- Think carefully; Think critically
- Be courageous
- Ask hard questions
- Don't expect every single question to be answered
- Take issue with suffering: expect a worldview to make sense in the storms of life, as well as the celebrations.

## HOW DO YOU KNOW IT IS TRUE?

-  DOES IT MAKE SENSE?  
COHERENT?
-  DOES IT TELL IT LIKE IT IS?  
ACCURATE?
-  IS IT LIVEABLE?  
PRACTICAL?

1. **Tell it like it is (Correspondence test)**
  - It describes reality accurately. It tells the truth about the way things are. It doesn't ask you to believe that up is down.
2. **It makes sense (Coherence test)**
  - It's ideas cohere together and are consistent with each other. It doesn't say that you can't know what is real at the same time as telling you how reality really is.
3. **It's liveable (Pragmatic Liveability test)**
  - If you live it out it leads to real happiness (more than a happy feeling). And if we all tried it out – what would happen? Does it lead to genuine human flourishing?

As you engage with ideas and worldviews, remember this: Christian faith is a comprehensive worldview; which is intellectually satisfying and coherent, but this centres around a *real and living relationship with Jesus Christ*. Jesus didn't come to change our worldviews, he came to be with us and to give us life.

### ***Suggested Readings:***

<http://beliefmapping.com/>

<http://beliefmapping.com/explore-beliefmaps/what-is-a-beliefmap/>

<http://beliefmapping.com/explore-beliefmaps/3-beliefmaps/>

<http://beliefmapping.com/4-key-questions/>

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

LENS by OWLINSPACE <https://youtu.be/mmZ4lqSXJz8>

### **Introductory**

Beckwith, J., Craig, William Lane, and Moreland, J.P. *To Everyone An Answer* (InterVarsity, 2004)

### **Intermediate**

Craig, William Lane. *On Guard*

Moreland, J.P. *Love Your God With All Your Mind* (Navpress, 1997)

Schaeffer, Francis A. *Trilogy* (Crossway, 1990)

Sire, James. *The Universe Next Door*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed (2020)

Sire, James. *Naming The Elephant* (

Nash, Ron. *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in the World of Ideas* (2010)

Peterson, Michael. *C. S. Lewis and the Christian Worldview* (2020)

### **Advanced**

Naugle, David. K. *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (2002)

Craig, William Lane & Moreland, JP. *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (2009)