

A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

Understand the concept of worldview—your fundamental understanding of the world and life in it—and how it influences beliefs, values, actions, and feelings; explore how to develop your worldview according to a biblical perspective.

THE DISCUSSION

STARTING THE DISCUSSION

1. “What’s true for you isn’t true for me.” “You deserve to be happy.” “If you believe in yourself, you can do anything.” How might someone who lives by these sayings behave? What do you think might be important to them? What do they tell you about the person’s understanding of right and wrong, life’s purpose, and human nature?

DIALOGUE TOGETHER

What is a worldview?

In his book, *The Universe Next Door*, James Sire describes worldview as a commitment expressed as a story or set of presuppositions (foundational beliefs) that may be conscious or unconscious, consistent or inconsistent, and that is played out through our words and actions.

2. How could your worldview be conscious or unconscious? Why might it be consistent or inconsistent?
3. Why are words and actions an important part of a worldview?

A worldview attempts to answer a set of five core questions: What is reality? What is a human? What is life’s purpose? What happens after death? What determines right and wrong?

4. Which of these questions have you considered before? When?

Where does worldview come from?

5. What are two values your family emphasized? What are two that your ethnic community lived by? Other communities that influenced you growing up?
6. How might those values connect to a worldview?

A Worldview Example in the Bible: Acts 17:16-34

7. What can you learn about the worldview of the Athenians from Paul’s observations (vv. 21-23)?
8. What key points of Paul’s worldview can you discern from his speech (vv. 22-31)?
9. Consider again the values and worldviews of the cultures that influenced you. What of the biblical worldview that Paul presents is similar, and what is different? What values are “neutral,” or aren’t directly addressed in a biblical worldview framework?
10. How do you think the Bible answers the five core worldview questions we saw earlier?

THOUGHTS, TAKE-AWAYS

YOU FORM YOUR WORLDVIEW

Understand the concept of worldview—your fundamental understanding of the world and life in it—and how it influences beliefs, values, actions, and feelings; explore how to develop your worldview according to a biblical perspective.

WEEK TWO DISCUSSION

WEEK ONE RECAP

1. What are some indicators of a person's worldview?
2. What are the most influential "cultures" in your life right now? What are a few elements of those cultures' predominant worldviews?
3. List as many elements of a biblical worldview as you're able:

WEEK TWO DIALOGUE

Broken Worldview

4. Read Romans 3:10-18. What does this passage say about human nature? How do these verses relate to the topic of worldview?

A cyclical human pattern: Pain > Thirst/Need > Idolatry/Sin > Guilt/Shame/Fear > More Pain

5. How could the saying "What's true for you isn't true for me" be an attempt to deal with guilt?
6. Thumbs, likes, retweets, followers: all indicate acceptance in social media. How might pursuing these be a way to deal with rejection and shame?
7. What does our culture's fear of death tell us about our perspective on death?

8. What other ways do guilt, shame, and fear affect our lives? Where do you typically turn in response?
9. What are two or three "idols" common to your city/campus/nation/culture? What do those idols point to as answers to the key worldview questions?

Transforming Worldview

10. How did Jesus's life, death, and resurrection address our guilt, shame, and fear?
11. How do each of these verses hint at how our worldview becomes more aligned with that of the Bible? Can you think of a few other verses that describe this process?

Read Romans 12:2, Hebrews 4:12, Psalm 1:1-3, and Colossians 3:2-3.

12. What are some activities that allow our "roots" to be nourished in ways that build a biblical worldview? What fruit might be produced naturally as a result? Which of those activities are you already doing, and which might be ones to start pursuing?

OBSERVATION AND NOTES

GOING DEEPER

BY ALAN TUNG

Background content for the discipler to read before the lesson and disciples to read after.

WHAT IS A WORLDVIEW?

To help visualize the concept of a worldview, picture a tree: The roots represent your worldview; the trunk and branches what is important to you (beliefs and values); the leaves and fruit your words and actions.

Expanding on Sire's definition in *The Universe Next Door*, identifying worldview as a "commitment" doesn't necessarily mean it's chosen, articulated, or even realized. It's primarily an alignment of the heart. If someone hasn't given thought to the values and beliefs that lie within, that commitment is mostly unconscious. But, like roots in soil, it's still present. And just as the trunk, branches, leaves, and fruit are ultimately a product of the roots, our words and actions will always reflect our worldview. They give evidence to our operational beliefs, which—and this is important—may differ from our intellectual beliefs.

WHERE DOES WORLDVIEW COME FROM?

A worldview attempts to answer a set of core questions:

- What is reality?
- What is a human?
- What is life's purpose?
- What happens after death?
- What determines right and wrong?

Regularly discussing or reflecting on these questions is fairly uncommon, but everyone operates on assumed answers that have developed as a by-product of their cultures. Author David Foster Wallace captured this idea via a parable he shared during a commencement speech:

There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, "Morning, boys. How's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, "What the hell is water?"

Like the young fish, we're often unaware of the cultures in which we swim. And they are many: family culture, community culture, ethnic culture, socioeconomic culture, popular culture, etc. While we can never fully step out of these waters, we can intentionally seek to gain perspective on what's informing our words and actions, and even values and beliefs.

A WORLDVIEW EXAMPLE IN THE BIBLE

In Acts 17:16-34, Paul visits Athens, a hub of philosophy, learning, and culture where belief in many gods was a primary part of their worldview. For some, pleasure was life's chief purpose (Epicureans), while for others logic, reason, and harmony with nature were utmost (Stoics). They also loved debate, which created an opportunity. As Paul addresses the Areopagus, sort of an intellectual city council, he presents a radically different worldview: there is one God who created everything and sets the boundaries of life and morality, he desires for people to seek and know him (purpose), and there is life after death.

The worldview presented in the Bible differs from those surrounding us today as well. Some cultural worldviews may differ little; others greatly. But regardless of how our worldviews developed and in what cultural waters we swim, followers of Jesus are invited to adapt and begin living according to a new and distinct worldview. The second half of this module examines how we can embark on this worldview transformation.

BROKEN WORLDVIEW

Romans 3:10-18 describes a sad state of human affairs: we are innately sinful, and we reflexively turn away from, not toward, God in our insatiable quest to remedy our broken state. We turn to idols.

Paul was distressed by the idols of Athens (Acts 17:16). Statues of various gods and goddesses dotted the city. Idolatry in this form—belief in many supernatural beings, represented by (or even thought to physically be) some carved statue or image—was rampant in ancient cultures. But though the form may differ, idolatry is still prevalent today. An idol is anything that pulls us away from worship of God to worship of self. Today's idols may be jobs, relationships, possessions or accomplishments, even intangibles like comfort or control. One of the reasons Paul was likely

so upset was that he knew idolatry's cost. Idols inevitably make demands (time, money, attention, etc.) that enslave us. They promise something (life, satisfaction, freedom, joy) they can never deliver, yet our thirsty hearts are easily tempted to follow.

This creates a spiraling pattern: **Pain > Thirst/Need > Idolatry/Sin > Guilt/Shame/Fear > More Pain**

- We experience guilt when we violate moral standards (either God's or those of society).
- We experience shame when we're rejected.
- We experience fear when we're powerless and insecure (physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually).

These three categories define the chief (internal) consequences for sin. Experiences of guilt, shame, and fear are often so powerful that we're compelled to do whatever we can to feel them less, including shifting our worldview to something that's more comfortable.

In other words, idolatry reflects a broken worldview: the idea that we can define reality and purpose and remedy our pains and failures apart from God, whether through ourselves or something we elevate to god-like status.

TRANSFORMING WORLDVIEW

According to the Bible, we experience guilt, shame, and fear because we've actually broken God's law (guilt), dishonored him (shame), and rejected his provision (fear). Try as we might, we cannot fix these things on our own; we need a savior. Our sin and its consequences can only be dealt with through Jesus's work at the cross. Jesus bore the guilt for our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21), was rejected by God (Matthew 27:46), and even experienced silence from God when he asked if an alternative way was possible (Matthew 27:39). Transforming our worldview begins with faith in Jesus.

But while righteousness, adoption, and eternal provision are true of us permanently, we still struggle with feelings of guilt, shame, and fear. Much of our growth as a Christian, and much of our ongoing worldview transformation, comes through renewing our minds with what God says is true (Romans 12:2). This too is a matter of faith, believing God's Word and acting on it. God's Word is living and active

(Hebrews 4:12), so as we consistently read and internalize it (Psalm 1:1-3), fixing our eyes on Jesus and that which is eternal (Colossians 3:1-3), the Holy Spirit works steady transformation within.

As you grow in understanding, you'll find that you increasingly desire change in your values, words, and actions, so that the "fruit and leaves" of your life more closely reflect God and his purposes. As this happens, you'll be able to do what we started doing at the beginning of this module: identify and evaluate the cultural messages surrounding and influencing you, contrasting them with God's truth.

ADD A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

- Perspective Cards are a fun conversation tool that makes the abstract concept of worldview tangible. You can use it to explore your own and your disciple's worldview, and engage with others. They also help illustrate elements of a biblical worldview. Download the Perspective Cards app, or purchase at www.crustore.org.
- Bring up a few current events or issues in your personal lives (some possibilities: money and its purpose, dealing with difficult people, social justice, moral gray areas); discuss how differing worldviews lead to radically different perspectives and positions on each subject.

NOTE TO LEADER ABOUT THE LESSON

The "Starting the Discussion" exercise seeks to identify the potential heart-posture behind some common sayings.

"What's true for you isn't true for me" might reflect a worldview where everyone determines their own right and wrong. This person might prize tolerance and individualism.

"You deserve to be happy" might reflect a worldview where life's purpose is to seek personal fulfillment.

"If you believe in yourself, you can do anything" might reflect a worldview that says humans are by nature good, and able to control their own destiny.