

CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

and the General Education
Student

What is a Worldview?

- "A worldview (or vision of life) is a framework or set of fundamental beliefs through which we view the world and our calling and future in it." --James Olthius
- "A theory of the world used for living in the world." --Craig Rusbult
- Other useful metaphors:
 - Glasses or lenses through which we see
 - Mental map or navigational chart

Basic Worldview Questions

- Where did we come from?
 - Made by God, in His image
 - Result of blind, material forces, evolution
- What is wrong with the world?
 - Sin
 - Family of origin, society, government
- How can it be fixed?
 - Redemption by Savior
 - Unhampered personal freedom
 - Increased governmental intervention

Everyone Has One

- "Everyone has a worldview because otherwise it would be impossible to learn, to make decisions, to decide on values and priorities—in short to function at all in the world."
--Glenn Sunshine, Why You Think the Way You Do

Yet many cannot articulate theirs, and rarely examine them.

And the worldviews of many are a smorgasbord of ideas and beliefs, often contradictory.

Do Christians Really Understand Their Worldview?

2009 Barna Survey on Biblical Worldview:

The Barna Group conducted a nationwide survey of American adults, including those who identified themselves as "born again Christians."

- ❖ 70% of adults believe God is all-powerful, all-knowing creator of universe He still rules today
- ❖ 90% of born again believers

Barna Survey cont.

- ❖ 72% of adults believe it is possible to earn one's way into heaven by good deeds
- ❖ 43% of born again believers
- ❖ 50% of adults believe the Bible is accurate
- ❖ 79% of born again believers
- ❖ 40% of adults believe Jesus led a sinless life
- ❖ 62% of born again Christians

Barna Survey cont.

- ❑ 27% of adults believe Satan is a real person
- ❑ 40% of born again believers

And perhaps most telling:

- ❑ 34% of adults believe that absolute moral truth exists
- ❑ 46% of born again believers

Where Do Our Worldviews Come From?

- ❖ Family:
 - what is taught
 - what is modeled
- ❖ Culture:
 - what is listened to (music)
 - what is watched (TV, movies)
 - what is read (books, Internet)
- ❖ Education:
 - What is taught in church
 - What is taught in school

Test of Worldview

Because the human mind is made by God and in His image, it is not satisfied with piecemeal knowledge, but seeks, rather, integration.

Worldview must satisfy certain requirements:

- ❑ It must be comprehensive, i.e. an all-encompassing description of reality
- ❑ It must be rational, i.e. coherent, not contradictory
- ❑ It must be supported by evidence, i.e. consistent with what we observe
- ❑ It must provide a satisfactory basis for living.

Christian Worldview is Coherent and Comprehensive

- ❑ "He who with his whole heart believes in Jesus as the Son of God is thereby committed to much besides. He is committed to a view of God, to a view of man, to a view of sin, to a view of redemption, to a view of the purpose of God in creation and history, to a view of human destiny, found only in Christianity. --James Orr
- ❑ "Christianity is a system, a whole view of things thought out together." --Nietzsche
- ❑ "The Christian faith [is] a . . . system of biblical truth, characterized by inner integrity, rational coherence, empirical verisimilitude, and existential power. --David Naugle
- ❑ "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ . . . does not cry 'Mine!'" --Abraham Kuyper

Making the Case for Worldview

- ❑ "God . . . wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."
John 17:17
- ❑ "... Your word is truth."
John 17:17
- ❑ "Our major task in life is to discover what is true and to live in step with that truth."
Chuck Colson
- ❑ "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge."
Hosea 4:6

Mind/Faith Divide? Or Leave Your Mind in the Chem Lab

- ❑ "At a Christian high school, a theology teacher strode to the front of the classroom, where he drew a heart on one side of the blackboard and a brain on the other. "The two are as divided as the two sides of the blackboard, he told the class: The heart is what we use for religion, while the brain is what we use for science."
--told by Nancy Pearcey, in Total Truth

The Biblical View of the Mind

- ❑ "As a man thinks within himself, so he is." (Prov. 23:7)
- ❑ "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." (Mt. 22:36-37)
- ❑ "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." (Rom. 12:2)

Students Love Worldview

- ❑ Freshmen to seniors are stimulated and engaged by discussion of worldview.
- ❑ Most are hungry to know how their faith applies to all aspects of their lives.
- ❑ They enjoy being challenged to move beyond an internalized, privatized view of their faith to one which embraces their calling in the kingdom of God.

Primary Reasons to Know Worldview

Knowing our worldview enables us:

- ❑ To make sense of world we live in;
- ❑ To order our lives rationally;
- ❑ To understand and withstand forces opposed to our faith;
- ❑ To equip us to defend our faith and present it winsomely.

The Cultural Mandate

"In Genesis [1:28], God gives us what we might call the first job description: 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.' The first phrase, 'be fruitful and multiply' means to develop the social world: build families, churches, schools, cities, governments, laws. The second phrase, 'subdue the earth,' means to harness the natural world: plant crops, build bridges, design computers, compose music. This passage is sometimes called the Cultural Mandate because it tells us that our original purpose was to create cultures, build civilizations — nothing less."

Nancy Pearcey, Total Truth

Getting Down to Specifics: Worldview in Freshman Comp

- ❑ In my opening lectures in Composition 101 and 102, I ask my students the following question:
- ❑ What is their purpose in attending ORU?
Their answers almost always focus on vocation — to learn how to become a nurse, an accountant, a pastor . . .

Purpose of Liberal Arts Education

I respond by outlining the general purposes of a liberal arts (general) education:

- historical Greek and Roman education
- "liberalis" means "free"
- education as freeing
 - Not bound by narrow view of life's possibilities
 - Able to step outside parochial perspectives
 - Able to evaluate other viewpoints
 - Prepared to be responsible citizens
- ❑ "Christian liberal arts education has as its primary aim person formation, not job training . . ."
-- Jeffrey Davis, Wheaton College

Teaching Worldview in Composition Classes

Three fold cord: reading, writing, thinking

Synergy: good readers make good writers and good thinkers who make better readers and better writers and better thinkers

Critical Thinking

□ “Critical” from Greek word “kritikos”

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, it *judges* the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

□ Hebrews 4:12

Critical Thinking

“Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.”

Michael Scriven and Richard Paul

Critical Thinking and Reading

□ Readers who are strong critical thinkers will be able to:

- ❖ articulate the author’s audience and purpose
- ❖ identify the author’s thesis or theme
- ❖ analyze the structure of the essay or literary work
- ❖ discern assumptions (stated or unstated) and/or biases
- ❖ evaluate the effectiveness of text

Critical Thinking and Writing

Because God chose to communicate with us in words, communicating clearly and effectively, with grace and precision, is a high calling and responsibility as Christians.

- Effective writers will be able to:
- Communicate to a particular audience (tone, diction)
 - Communicate ideas clearly and fluently (correct grammar as well as accurate and varied sentence structure)
 - Organize ideas logically (coherently develop a main idea with clear supporting points)

Worldview Analysis of Contemporary Culture

Composition 303 Worldview Assignment

- Discussion of prevalent worldviews in contemporary culture
- postmodernism
 - naturalism
- Analyze a pop culture artifact: movie, television program, music video, album, interview, etc.
- Analyze audience, purpose, structure, style
 - Determine worldview(s) of piece

Worldviews Prevalent in Contemporary Culture

"There is nothing deep down inside us except what we have put there ourselves." --Richard Rorty

Postmodernism: difficult to define because there is no core integrative value

- "Anti-worldview"
- No objective truth
 - conceptual relativism rather than truth of correspondence
 - only pragmatic truth (what is useful)
- Meaning only from the stories we construct
- The self is created by story we tell about ourselves
- All stories mask a drive for power

"... A mind so open that everything falls out." -- James Sire

Naturalism

"The cosmos is all there is or ever was or ever will be." --Carl Sagan

- There is no God
- Universe is a closed system of cause and effect (no supernatural)
- The self is a complex machine
- History has no goal
- Values are a human construct

Some Examples

- John Mayer's "Who Says?"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akvu1AOnUIw&ob=av2n>

"Who says I can't get stoned?
Turn off the lights and the telephone
Me in my house alone
Who says I can't get stoned?"

Who says I can't be free
From all the things I used to be
Rewrite my history
Who says I can't be free?"

It's been a long night in New York City
It's been a long night in Baton Rouge
I don't remember you looking any better
But then again I don't remember you ..."

Worldview Assumptions/Values in Mayer's Song

Postmodern:

- Exaltation of personal freedom: "who says I ...?"
- Self is a subjective creation: "rewrite my history"
- No ultimate reality or authority or truth
- Melancholy that this is all there is

Naturalism/Hedonism:

- Physical sensation: "who says I can't get stoned?"
- Physical pleasure: "call up a girl that I used to know/fake love for an hour or so"
- Self-centered: "I don't remember you looking any better/but then again I don't remember you"

Peter Singer Interview

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bi81JcdWc>
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AF3VTu5IR_o&feature=related

Worldview Assumptions/Values

- Singer's worldview: Darwinian naturalism
 - Humans product of natural forces
 - Not made in God's image
 - Not more valuable than animals (speciesism)
 - Morality is relative to consequences
 - Greatest good for greatest number

Worldview and Whole Person Education

- ▣ "ORU is grounded in the liberal arts and sciences tradition with a wholehearted dedication to the education of the whole person." --ORU Catalog

"What ultimate benefit do we gain from investing time and effort to develop a Christian worldview, if it is only a new way to think? A mental exercise? A slick set of arguments? New ideas have limited value unless they transform the way we actually live—the day-to-day decisions we make, the way we interact with other people, the way we run our organizations . . . We cheat ourselves terribly unless we take the final step and restructure our entire lives by the life-giving truths in God's Word." --Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth*

Christian Worldview: Orientation of the Heart

- ▣ To accept [a] Christian [worldview] only as an intellectual construct is not to accept it fully. There is a deeply personal dimension involved with grasping and living within this worldview, for it involves acknowledging our own individual dependence on God as his creatures, our own individual rebellion against God and our own individual reliance on God for restoration to fellowship with him. And it means accepting Christ as both our Liberator from bondage and Lord of our future. To be a Christian . . . is not just to have an intellectual worldview; it is to be personally committed to the infinite-personal Lord of the universe. And it leads to an examined life that is well worth living." --James Sire