

I. Introduction: What is a Worldview?

A. The Focus of a Worldview

Why don't we all see life the same way? Why are there so many philosophies and religions that confront the same questions but answer them so differently? Sometimes it's pretty confusing listening to all the views people have about the ultimate questions of life – and they're more than opinions, they are convictions that people live for and sometimes die for.

How do we sort through all these views so they make some sense? All of these perspectives of life arise from what is called a worldview.

B. What Our Worldview Does

“Worldview” sounds like a head game. But it's not. Our worldview orients us to life. It's something we do without thinking too much about it.

Life is like getting lost in a mall. It all seems like chaos. There's a clothing store over there, a luggage store there, the coffee shop right next to it, the bookstore. No rhyme or reason, just so random. Then I see a map of the mall layout. There I can see where I am and what I need to do to get where I want to go.

That's what your worldview does. It is the map that you have drawn for the world that shows where you are and where you want to go. It's the contacts you wear that focus everything you see. It's the picture on top of the jigsaw puzzle box that shows you how all the pieces of your life fit together.

But even more, our worldview is a story – *the* story of our life and how it fits into the big story. That's why we like stories so much. We want to get insight into the stories of others while we try to figure out our own. Great classic movies stir us because of the connection with ultimate issues in the story: *Casablanca*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Star Wars*, *Rocky*, *Braveheart*, *The Matrix*, and *The Lord of the Rings*.

You may say, “I need to get me a worldview.” Well, actually you already have one. In fact, you see it in action all the time. Most of the choices you make in your life come from your worldview. Do you go to church? Do you pray? These reflect your worldview. What are your views on marriage and sex? Believe it or not, these are also derived from your worldview. Is it OK to lie and to cheat if you don't get caught? Ah, another worldview question. Where did everything come

from? Is there a God who created everything or did everything just happen? Another worldview question. What happens to you if you die today? Again, your worldview determines what you believe about this.

II. How Our Worldview Works

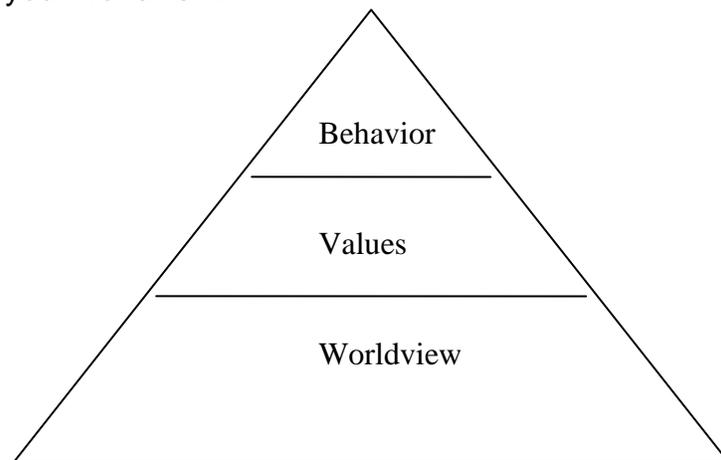
Before I go on, let me give you a description of a worldview. A worldview is, first of all, your explanation and interpretation of the world, and second, your application of this view to life.

Let's break this down a bit. First, your worldview is your explanation of the world. It is how you answer the ultimate questions of life. It's your story of how everything got here and how you fit in and where everything is going. That sounds like a simple statement, doesn't it? But it's not. What you just heard is a pretty full description of a worldview.

You see how this explanation of the world can guide you in what you consider to be important in life? As a result, this worldview becomes your interpretation of the world. Whatever happens in your life or in the world goes through the lens of your worldview. People can see the same event and yet interpret it differently depending upon their worldview.

Your worldview is more than your view OF the world; it is also your view FOR the world. It does more than explain and interpret the world around you; it then directs how you live. You apply your worldview to your decisions and your actions. You may not live what you profess, but you will live what you believe. It is inevitable.

Let this triangle represent your life – every one person's life. At the foundation of who you are is your worldview.



Coming from your worldview are your values – the preferences and priorities you have in your life. Look at how you spend your time. Think about the activities that are really important to you. The reason they are important is because they let you see the world in such a way as to make them important. The same can be said for how you spend your money and who you choose to be your friends. What music groups do you really like? What are your favorite movies? How do you choose what is a good movie or not? All of these choices express your values that arise from your worldview.

As a result, your behavior arises from your values. You do the things that are important to you, and they are important to you because that's how you see the world.

Just think for a moment how the values and behaviors of an atheist, a Buddhist, and Christian are different.

Let's go back to the ultimate questions. You can tell what a person's worldview is by how they answer the ultimate questions. For example, let's take the question of destiny ("what happens when we die?"). People will give you all kinds of answers. You go to heaven; you come back as another person; you are gone, really gone. Each of these reflects the way a person sees the world. And it affects the way you live your life.

III. The Three Major Worldviews: An Overview

Most people will have their worldview fall into one of three categories: Naturalism, Transcendentalism, or Theism. We are going to explore each of these in the next few sessions. Here's a quick overview.

Naturalism is the group of worldviews that believe the universe is entirely physical. There is no God, no spirits. Everything is natural; nothing is supernatural. Everything is physical; nothing is metaphysical. All you are is "an episode between two oblivions."

The second category is called *Transcendentalism*, the belief that everything is really spiritual. This worldview is wide-open and includes many of the Eastern religions and a lot of what we call New Age beliefs. There is no "god" out there; rather, "god" is everything. He is not a personal being but an impersonal force. Like the force of the Star Wars movies, "god" is a spiritual or psychic power that can be used if we know how to access it.

The third category of worldviews is *Theism*: the belief that the universe was brought into existence by God, a being who can communicate with us and who is intensely interested in us as people. This is the worldview at the heart of the Jewish faith, the Muslim religion, and Christianity. So, you think, they must be the

same, right? No, not at all. They are as far apart as you can imagine. In fact, the Person of Jesus Christ redefines all of our notions about how we find truth and a life of meaning.

IV. Conclusion: Worldviews Are Seen Everywhere

The most important attitude to have about worldviews is this: don't find a worldview that fits you, find the worldview that fits the world. Don't be fooled by the imitations. Find truth.

Worldviews are everywhere. Every song, every movie, every television show, and every book has at its foundation a worldview. They are telling us how to live, what is important in life, and what our values should be. So as we explore worldviews together, we are going to talk about how our culture is screaming worldview messages at us all the time. Do you hear them?