

Lesson 2: What goes into a Worldview?

The smorgasbord of ideas: you are what you *believe*!

Background Knowledge

In Reality Bites we are trying to avoid too many words not likely to already exist in our students' vocabularies. Two words we are avoiding are presupposition and ideology, yet since these are among the most important concepts we present, we have chosen starting point and big idea as their replacements.

In general use, the term worldview is used in two different ways. The first is for an individual's actual mental model of reality (this is our usage in this course). The second is for formally defined systems of thought that typically have a label, such as Marxism or Islam. Instead of giving our students a vocabulary that permits confusing statements like "Her worldview is based on the Marxist worldview," we avoid the second usage completely. Instead, our students would say something like "the big idea of Marxism" or "Marxist theory," or simply "Marxism." With this helpful constraint on the term worldview, we avoid the phrase "the biblical worldview." We do use the phrase "a biblical worldview," referring to the worthy goal of ensuring our individual belief system (together with our thoughts, attitudes and behaviour) is informed and derived from God's revealed truth.

We teach that people's worldviews are a mosaic of ideas and big ideas about all kinds of things, normally drawn from different sources, and based on a foundational starting point. It is our responsibility as Christians to sift through our beliefs, ensuring they derive from God as the true starting point, and are compatible with and informed by His revealed truth. It is also our responsibility to understand something about alternative beliefs, so that we may be ready to explain why they are inconsistent with reality (hence false) and within themselves, and why we accept Christianity instead.

In this second lesson we are only introducing the term ideas, which refers to viewpoints about almost anything. At this point we don't need to be overly concerned about definitions - just as long as we are beginning to use terms and concepts consistently. Our goal at this early stage is merely for our students to understand what a worldview is, that it is something everybody has, and that it is composed of various ideas about what's true.

Also note: while our concept of ideas is similar to that of opinion, we would like to avoid this latter term because of the way it is used today. In our scheme, ideas are seen as truth-claims, whether or not a person would assert that others should accept them.

Biblically, we are instructed to take captive every thought, or idea, that sets itself up against the revealed knowledge of God. This of course does not mean we should "steamroll" individuals, but it does mean we reject the modern myth that the right of an individual to hold their own opinion somehow protects the content of that opinion from outside scrutiny. It has been said,

"Ideas have consequences," and "bad ideas have bad consequences." Christians are uniquely equipped to expose false ideas, and are uniquely apprised of their bad and potentially eternal consequences.

Key Concept

There are many ideas and beliefs in the world today fighting to capture our minds. Whatever we choose to believe will form our worldview. Worldview is an important part of who we are as it is our model of reality which guides the course of our lives.

Activity: Smorgasbord of beliefs

The goal of this activity is to help the class understand that ideas and beliefs on different topics are what form a worldview. The most relevant way to do this is for the class to discover their own worldview through discovering their collection of beliefs. And because a person's worldview is a big part of who they are, we adapted the phrase "*you are what you eat*" to "*you are what you believe*". Hinging on the idea of eating, we use the idea of smorgasbord meals (which comprises of various dishes) in this activity. The students will each have a plate which represents their worldview. Then they will walk around the smorgasbord table, collecting ideas or beliefs they believe to be true about each topic and put them on their plate. Those ideas they choose are what form their worldviews. To make it fun and memorable, we use real food to represent each idea, for example, on the topic of Origins, Mars Bar is used to represent the belief that we originated from Aliens, a weird-looking chewing jelly for the belief in Evolution's "From Goo to You", and a rose cake decoration for the belief in man being fearfully and wonderfully created by God.

Bible study: Colossians 2:6-8

As the students discover their individual worldviews through the "smorgasbord of beliefs" activity, they would have seen other beliefs and ideas available on the same topics as competing choices. This raises the question of what we ought to do with the "other" ideas. This passage is chosen because it gives us a strong and clear answer. We are to be careful not to be fooled by the seemingly true and sometimes wise ideas that come from mere humans and are not founded in Christ. And to do this we must *stand firm in faith* just as we are *taught*.

Notice the word “*taught*”. It suggests that it is not something we can concoct on our own but through the revealed Word of God, the person of Jesus Christ and the teaching of the Holy Spirit that our faith is founded. And we must measure all things against these.

.....

Conclusion

Worldview is a collection of ideas and beliefs a person have about what’s true. The bible teaches that we must have Christ as the foundation of our life, and that includes our worldviews as well. The bible also teaches us to not be fooled by human teachings no matter how clever they might sound. These points should be keep in mind as we look further at the *starting points* and *big ideas* in our study of worldview.

.....

Further Study

This list contains some suggestions for further studying for this unit which is on the topic of worldview introduction.

Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey. [How Now Shall We Live?](#) Zondervan, 2000.

David K. Naugle. [Worldview: The History of a Concept](#). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002

David A. Noebel. [The Battle for Truth](#). Harvest House Publishers, 2001.

James Sire. [Naming the Elephant: Worldview As a Concept](#)

James Sire. [The Universe Next Door](#). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1976.

Nancy Pearcey. [Total Truth](#). Crossway Books, 2004.

For more books and other resources on this topic, visit www.thinkchristianity.com.