

Does It Really Matter How I View the World?



**I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes;
I hate the work of them that turn aside;
it shall not cleave to me.
Psalm 101:3**

For many years psychologists have used projective assessments to try to understand people's problems. Perhaps the most famous one is the Rorschach inkblot test. The therapist shows a series of ink blotches and asks the client what they see. The theory is that what they see is something that comes from the unconscious and will help the therapist understand what the underlying cause of the issue(s) is the client presents.

There is also the TAT (Thematic Apperception Test) in which the therapist shows a series of pictures and asks the client what is happening in the picture. Again, the theory is what they see are reflections of what is inside them. Well, as a student of psychology, I don't place a lot of capital in projective techniques to reveal hidden issues, but it does remind me that we all view life and our world in a particular way.

That is, we all have a lens through which we look and interpret life and our world. We call it our worldview. Whether we recognize and acknowledge it or not, we all have a worldview. There have always been several differing worldviews. However, with modern technology and media, secular worldviews are rapidly changing the American cultural landscape.

Christ compels us to have a Christian worldview, or perhaps better stated, a Biblical worldview. That is, we view all of life through the lens of Scripture. Have you ever been frustrated in church or Sunday School when you hear a speaker begin by saying, "I think..."? I always want to scream, "I don't care what you think. What does the Bible say?" I restrain my oft wayward tongue, because I realize I say the same thing far more often than I wish. Regardless of what we think or feel, the bottom line is what does God say.

Maybe an example will be helpful. One of the "hot" issues today is the realities of immigration in America. Most of us will have certain opinions or ways of looking at the issue. Some will look at it from a geopolitical view, others a social view, or even an anthropological view. But what does the Bible say about immigration? If you want to do an interesting study, go to a good concordance or a Bible app and search "strangers in our land." I will let you draw your own conclusions.

So, what is a worldview and does it really matter? Worldview in its basic form answers three critical questions:

*Where did we come from,
and why are we here?*

*What went wrong with
the world?*

How can we fix it?

The non-Biblical worldview most often espoused today is naturalism. Naturalism answers the three questions like this:

- Where we came from is simply a product of random acts of nature. There is no real underlying purpose for us.
- What went wrong...we do not respect nature as we ought.
- We can fix it by giving widespread attention to ecological and conservation issues.

A naturalistic worldview gives birth to other common philosophies such as moral relativism, existentialism, pragmatism, and utopianism.

However, a Christian or biblical worldview answers the same three basic questions:

- Where did we come from? We are created by God and uniquely designed to govern the world and fellowship with Him (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:15).
- What went wrong? We sinned against a holy God and subjected all of mankind to a curse (Genesis 3).
- The fix is God Himself, who redeemed the world through the atoning sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ (Genesis 3:15; Luke 19:10), and will one day restore creation to the perfect form in which it was designed (Isaiah 65:17-25).

A biblical worldview will give rise to a belief in moral absolutes, human dignity, and the possibility of redemption.

Our worldview is not simply a religious concept but governs our entire life and how we think about who we are and what we do. Colson and Percy, in their book, *How Shall We Now Live*, describe the Christian worldview,

Genuine Christianity is more than a relationship with Jesus, as expressed in personal piety, church attendance, Bible study, and works of charity. It is more than discipleship, more than believing a system of doctrines about God. Genuine Christianity is a way of seeing and comprehending all of reality. It is a worldview.

Let's stop here for a moment and ask a few honest questions:

Application: How would you describe your worldview in a few brief sentences?

What are some other Scriptures that might answer the three basic questions other than the ones listed previously?

In what area of your life do you struggle the most while maintaining a biblical worldview?

If we are not intentional and observant, everyday culture that is progressively moving away from biblical foundations will reshape our worldview. The media has become the preachers and teachers of our day. Culture is dynamic; that is, it is constantly changing. Culture and change are not bad in and of themselves, but they need to be moored in Biblical truth. A couple of my friends often say, "We want to be biblically accurate but culturally relevant."

There are two dangers. One is that we will isolate ourselves from culture to the extent of

paralyzing our effectiveness to reach that culture for the glory of Christ. We are not to isolate ourselves but to be agents of change in a fallen world.

We are to be peculiar people—not weird (1 Peter 2:9; Titus 2:14). Have you ever been with followers of Christ who were so culturally maladapted they were more of a repellent than attractant? "Peculiar" suggests we are different in a way that would make people curious. That curiosity is a product of a different worldview. They are curious because we are different than them. We are differ-

ent because we hold a different worldview.

A second danger is that we will sit passively by and allow the culture to shape our worldview, rather than using it as a springboard to present the gospel. We simply complain that it isn't like it was in the old days. Do you know what they complained about in the old

days? They would say, "It isn't like it was in the old days." Just a reminder, these are someone's "old days." Unfortunately for many who name the name of Christ, we sit idly by and are not keen observers of what is transpiring around us. In Acts 17, Paul was very observant of the culture around him in Athens. Read what he says:

"For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you"
(Acts 17:23).

Paul made keen observations about the cultural landscape where he found himself and used it to confront the culture, not isolate himself from it.

If you visit or talk to missionaries from Africa and other parts of the world, you will discover that the evil one and his demonic forces often use incredibly open and blatant spiritual encounters that would make the latest horror movies seem tame. They rarely talk about them because those living in a post-modern culture would struggle with the integrity of the stories.

But as Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, the evil one uses various "schemes" (plural). Here his attacks are far subtler.

Have you noticed that everyday adults and teenagers watch TV shows and movies that, as a teenager, I could not go to the theater to watch because they would have been R-rated? Yet, Christian homes view them every day. The evil one is alive and on the prowl.

To understand what God wants, it is important to understand the cultural milieu (setting) in which we live and in which our worldview is shaped. Clint Morgan, General Director at IM, defines culture as "the sum of all learned behavior." In the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, missiologist Lloyd Kwast gives a model for understanding culture and why worldview is critical. Using the



Behaviors come from
our **VALUES**
and our values are based
on what we **BELIEVE**.

Kwast model, let's us look at culture, regardless of where the culture is located—in the savannah lands of Africa, the Appalachian, the suburbs of Paris, or downtown Manhattan.

So, if I dropped you into a culture outside your own, the first thing you observe is their **behavior**. What and how do they eat? How do they greet each other? How do genders interact with each other? How do they dress? You are just making observations about behaviors. But no behavior happens in a vacuum. There are reasons why people do what they do.

When we probe a little deeper, we develop an understanding of the reasons for the culture's behavior. Kwast's model answers the why questions—the second step in understanding culture. Behaviors are a product of our **values**, that is, what is good or best. Kwast notes that “values are pre-set decisions that culture makes between choices commonly faced. It helps those who live within the culture to know what ‘should’ or ‘ought’ to be done to

‘fit’ in or conform to a pattern of life.” Should I work overtime or attend my child's ballgame or recital? What ought to be my work ethic? Am I intentional about relationships?

But values are not snatched out of the air. Our values, Kwast argues, are birthed in our **beliefs**, that is, what is true. As Christ-followers, we hold the Scriptures to be true. It is imperative then that we become students of the Word. We must commit ourselves to the systematic study of the Bible. If you are in culture for very long, you will notice there will be those whose behaviors and values appear opposite of what they say they believe. Kwast makes an interesting observation, “The problem arises from the confusion within the culture between operating beliefs (the belief that affects values and behavior) and theoretical beliefs (stated creeds which have little or no practical impact on values and behavior).”

Behaviors come from our values, and our values are based on what we believe, but Kwast suggests that we go one step further. Our beliefs are based on our **worldview** or what is real. What *is* real returns to our three basic questions, *where did we come from and why are we here? What went wrong with the world?*


How can we fix it? Is there more to life than what we gather from our senses, or is there something more?

Does your worldview matter? Yes! Absolutely! The psalmist's words echo as true today as they did when he wrote it long ago.

*“I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me”
(Psalm 101:3).*

Application: How does understanding Kwast's model inform your faith journey?

How do you think this framework helps you understand the cultural context of the culture you are in?

Watch one of the TV shows or movies you enjoy and look at it through the lens of the Kwast model (WARNING, it may change your viewing habits!) 

Notes

Colson, C. & Percy, N. (1999). *How shall we now live*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishing.

Scripture is from the KJV.

Kwast, L. (2009). Understanding culture. In R.D. Winter. & S.C. Hawthorne, S.C. (Eds.) *Perspective on the world Christian movement: A reader*. (pp.397-399). Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

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