

1 Introduction to Worldviews

- Module: Worldviews
- Lesson 18

2 Some Recommended Sources For Worldviews

- Abdu Murray, Grand Central Question
- James Sire, The Universe Next Door
- Winfried Corduan, Neighboring Faiths
- Norman Geisler, "Worldview" in The Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics

3 What Is A Worldview?

- A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.
 - —James Sire in The Universe Next Door—

4 Breaking Down Our Definition

- "A worldview is a commitment..."
 - It is more than intellectual only, more than just our ideas.
 - It is a spiritual orientation of the heart.
 - It is a perspective on the whole of life that profoundly directs our outlook and how we live.

5 Breaking Down Our Definition

- "...that can be expressed as a story or a set of presuppositions..."
 - As a story—
 - The "grand story"—One's understanding of where we came from and where we're going.
 - Our individual story fits in as part of the grand story.
 - As a set of presuppositions—
 - e.g. Naturalism without a coherent "story" (e.g. the Enlightenment: "liberty, equality, fraternity") was chiefly a set of presuppositions.
 - Darwinism (the story of evolution by mutation/natural selection) provided a grand story for a naturalistic worldview.
 - According to Richard Dawkins, Darwinism "made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist."

6 Breaking Down Our Definition

- "...assumptions which may be..."

- True, partially true, or false.
- "...that we hold..."
 - Consciously or unconsciously.
 - We may have thought carefully about the worldview we adopted or hold.
 - We may be largely unaware of our worldview.
 - Consistently or inconsistently.
 - The worldview itself may be consistent or have elements of inconsistency.
 - We may be consistent or inconsistent in how we live out our worldview.

7 **Variety Within A Worldview**

- Not all adherents to a general worldview, such as theism, agree at every point with others holding to the same general worldview.
- e.g. The differences among those holding a theistic worldview—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- e. g. The wide variety of expressions generally classified under the label of Christian. (Such as evangelical, liberal, Calvinist, Armenian, protestant, Catholic, Russian Orthodox, etc. etc.)
- e. g. The existence of folk religions within a broader religion. (Where a religion is subsumed under the influences of culture, and functions without strong adherence to doctrines and practices of the "official" religion.)
- Given that there can be wide variation within a worldview, we need to be careful not to stereotype people, or "pigeon-hole" them, without carefully listening to them.

8 **Why Are Worldviews Important?**

- Our worldviews have a profound influence in our lives.
 - They are what allow us to think coherently.
 - They influence how we conduct ourselves in our personal lives and in our relationships. (Our duties and
 - They influence our relationship to and understanding of reality, for example:
 - Our understanding of the material world around us
 - Our understanding of our history
 - Our expectations regarding our future
 - Our understanding of the Transcendent

9 **How Are Our Worldviews Shaped?**

- Worldviews are shaped primarily by our religious, spiritual, or metaphysical beliefs.
- Culture, apart from religion, also plays a crucial role in shaping our worldviews.
 - Consider Old Testament characters like Abraham and David.

- Their worldviews were shaped, in part, by the tribal and patriarchal nature of their culture—aspects of their culture which are foreign to ours.
- In contrast, our worldviews are influenced by notions such as democracy, urbanization, and modern science that were foreign to biblical era cultures.

10 **How Are Our Worldviews Shaped?**

- Hence, the question: What is a “biblical” worldview?
 - Is it a worldview that rigidly adopts the worldview of the peoples of the Old or New Testament including their cultural aspects?
 - OR
 - Is it a worldview profoundly shaped by the message and meaning of the bible in whatever culture someone lives?
- Something to consider: At what points are our culturally shaped views affirmed by the bible, at which points are they countered by scripture, and to which points does scripture not particularly speak?

11 **How Are Our Worldviews Shaped?**

- Worldviews in flux.
 - Worldviews are not set in concrete.
 - They can and do change and develop over time.
 - They can be completely exchanged for another worldview. (Though most people in the world go through their entire lives without making such a dramatic leap.)

12 **How Are Our Worldviews Shaped?**

- What kinds of things cause flux in our worldview?
 - The influence of those around us.
 - Our progressive discovery of truths or acceptance of falsehoods.
 - Our shrinking world. (The close interaction we now have w/other worldviews and cultures that was not as common in the past.)
 - Modern transportation
 - Information technologies and their instantaneous nature (Computers, cell phones, television, radio, print media, movies, etc.)
 - Population movements (e. g. tourism, immigration, refugees)
 - Religious conversion

13 **Some Common Worldviews**

- Theism (monotheism)
 - Biblical

- Judaism
- Christianity
- Islam
- Deism
- Atheism/naturalism
- Continuity
 - Pantheism
 - Monism
 - Polytheism
- Animism

14 Why Learn About Other Worldviews?

- It helps us be more understanding and compassionate towards other people and cultures.
- It helps us understand what their questions and obstacles may be as we seek to share Christ with them.
 - e. g. An atheist will likely have different objections to the resurrection of Jesus than a Muslim.
 - e. g. A Hindu and a materialist will likely have radically different understandings of external reality.
- It helps us to understand and refine our own worldview.
 - Causes us to ask “Why do I believe what I believe?”
 - Helps to make it more consistent.
 - Helps us to define and state our worldview more carefully.

15 How Can We Gain an Understanding of a Worldview?

- Asking questions of the worldview. For example:
 - Abdu Murray’s Four Questions (from Grand Central Questions)
 - James Sire’s Eight Questions (from The Universe Next Door)

16 Murray’s Four Questions

- What explains existence?
- Is there an objective value and purpose to human existence. If so, what is it?
- What accounts for the human condition? (Suffering, pain, evil, etc.?)
- Is there a better life or a salvation from our present state or condition?

17 James Sire’s Eight Questions

- What is prime reality—the really real?
 - The most fundamental question, sets the boundaries for the answer to the others.

- e. g. God? cosmos? Brahman?
- What is the nature of external reality, of the world around us?
 - How do we view the world around us?
 - e.g. Is it matter or spirit, created or eternal, objective or subjective, good or evil?

18 James Sire's Eight Questions

- What is a human being?
 - A god?
 - A material mechanism only? Does it possess an immaterial aspect?
 - A product of chance mutations? A bearer of the image of God?
- What happens to a person at death?
 - Annihilation?
 - Reincarnation?
 - Continuation of the person?

19 James Sire's Eight Questions

- Why is it possible to know anything at all?
 - Is rationality only a delusion?
 - Is rationality a product of evolution?
 - Is rationality sourced in a rational god?
- How do we know right from wrong?
 - Is there such a thing as right and wrong?
 - What is the source of morality?
 - Is morality objective or subjective?

20 James Sire's Eight Questions

- What is the meaning of human history?
 - Does history have a meaning?
 - What, if any, is the purpose behind history?
 - Is history linear or circular?
- What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview?
 - What obligations flow out of this worldview?

21 What Is Your Worldview?

- Take some time this week to answer the nine worldview questions on your handout.

- See if you can think of a passage or verse of Scripture that expresses or supports your answer to each question.

22 **Next Week:**

- Theism and Deism