

DEVELOPING A

CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW



*“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”
~ Romans 12:2*

INTRODUCTION

In the 1999 movie, *The Matrix*, Neo knows something is not quite right with his understanding of the world, and then Morpheus gives him the rest of the story. “The world you see is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth...Like everyone else, you were born into bondage, born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch; a prison for your mind.” Neo takes the red pill and begins the journey of understanding reality, understanding the Matrix.



Salvation is not unlike the red pill. According to the scriptures, humanity is blind to the truth of our sin, the truth of a holy God, the truth about Jesus. Like Neo, if you have believed in Christ, you've crossed over. Your eyes are opened and you've begun the journey into reality. But now, you need to gain clarity on the world you live in. You need to understand the Biblical worldview.

A worldview is based on your personal truth. These truths or claims have been embraced so deeply that you see them as a reflection of what is genuine and real. They drive what you think, how you behave and what you're feeling. Essentially, a worldview deals with two questions:

"What is reality?"
"How, then, do I live?"

The purpose of this study is to consider several different worldviews and contrast them to the Christian worldview. Our hope is to help you understand how the way we see the world affects our interpretation of reality in order to develop a Christian worldview as we follow Jesus.

THE MATERIALIST WORLDVIEW

For a materialist, reality is the physical world; what we can see and what our senses can experience. This is the only reality. There is no God to whom we will one day give account. The scriptures, regarded merely as a product of man, are not inspired by God. There is only the here and now. Therefore, there is no real basis for morality or ultimate meaning to life.



"How, then, do I live?" This philosophy is best summarized by "whoever has the most toys, wins." If this is all there is then you live for yourself and for pleasure; however that is defined. Every person is different, and many materialists don't truly live out their philosophy, but the point is that they are alone. Their lives, according to their philosophy, have no meaning or purpose. When they die, that is it. God is not real, the cosmos is all there is, and there is no real basis for morality or ultimate meaning to life because this worldview has no place for God and the Bible.

THE DEIST WORLDVIEW

For a deist, there is a God, but not the God of scripture. The deist tends to regard God as an impersonal “divine watchmaker” who got the universe started but does not interact with humanity. While the materialist denies the existence of God, the deist believes God to be real but not real in our world. He doesn’t interact with us. The stuff in the box, the world, is reality. God is in the picture but outside of our everyday experience.



“How, then, do I live?” This person is usually moral, believing there to be a God, but typically does not have a relationship with God; not having a worldview based upon scripture. The belief in God that this person arrives at is one that is typically based upon the evidence for God’s existence that can be found in creation, yet not from the description of God found in the scripture. The result is a “god” who is a dumbed-down version of the Biblical God to fit the conceptions of god in our culture.

THE RELATIVIST WORLDVIEW

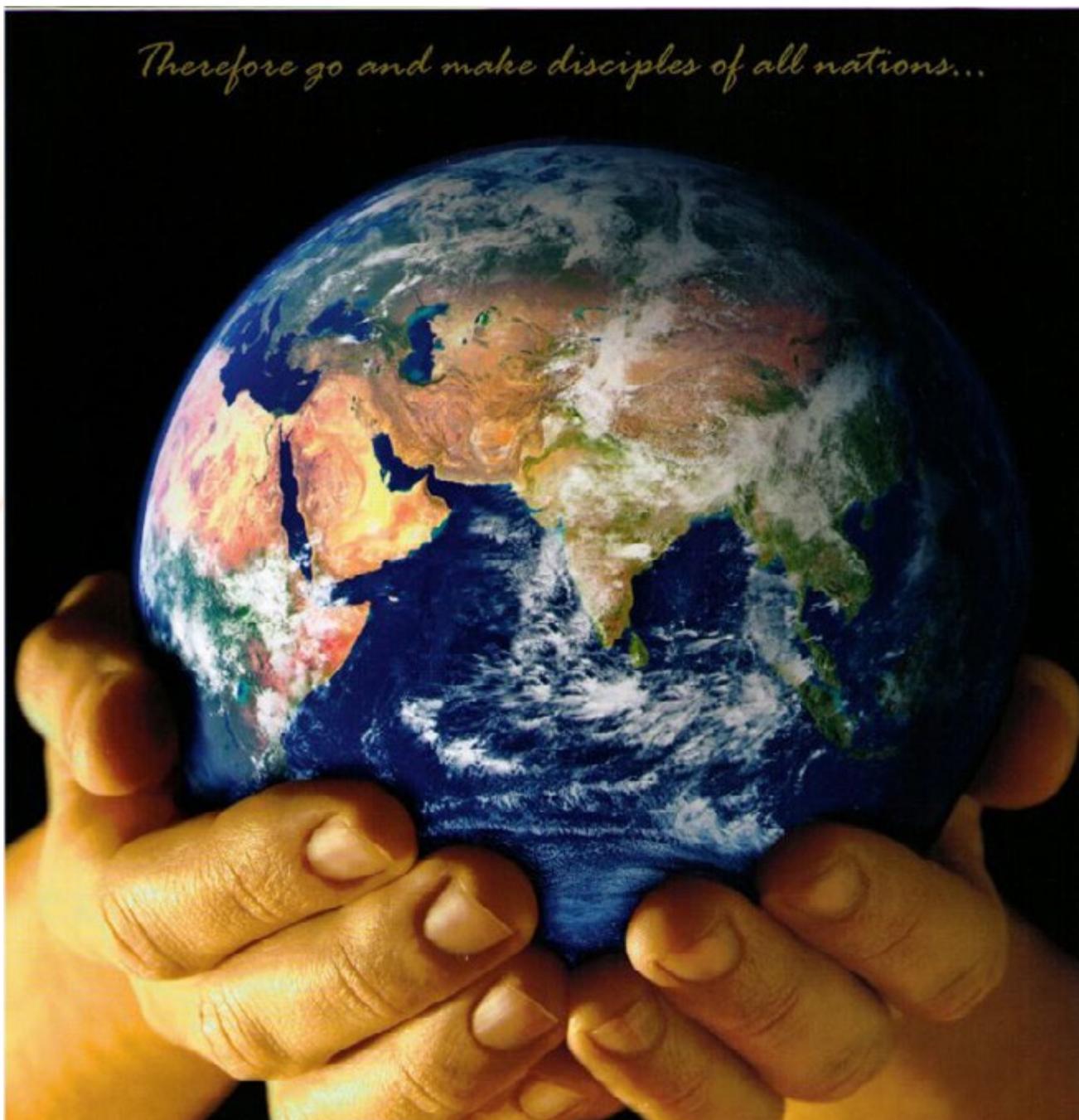
For a relativist, people hold numerous, equally valid views with God in or out of the box; whatever. Since there is no such thing as absolute truth, anything is true if it works for you personally. In other words, truth cannot be objectively known, but I can arrive at “my truth,” which is what works for me. A relativist is sometimes similar to a deist, believing there to be a God, but, again, not the God of scripture which we are personally held accountable. More often, this person’s belief system is typically a combination of various thoughts from various sources, like culture, feelings, upbringing, the Bible or other religions.



"How, then, do I live?" Few people actually think through their worldview to arrive at its logical results, and the relativist is no different. If this worldview is consistently held, the relativist has no basis for any morality and cannot acknowledge that we can know anything. Of course, no one lives this way. As a result, this person typically lives as if there are truths and morals, but strongly defends his/her position of relativism when confronted with the concept of truth or morality given by God as absolute.

THE PANTHEIST WORLDVIEW

For a pantheist, God is in everything; rocks, plants, puppy dogs, people. As a result, everything is somewhat divine. There is no distinction between a Creator God and the creation. God is in everything. Instead of nature being the revelation of a God worthy of being worshipped, the creation itself becomes the object of worship and the Creator is denied.



"How, then, do I live?" A pantheist will typically have a profound appreciation for all of life, as God is in all. Therefore, the universe and nature are worthy of the deepest religious reverence, be it a human or a fly. Any hierarchy of being is denied. That is, they do not think human beings are more significant because they are made in the image of God. They see all things as equal in their importance. Preserving nature becomes a central focus of life, and faith in a supreme Being is replaced with common sense and science.

THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

God has entered into human history and revealed Himself through Jesus Christ. Unlike the materialist's view, God is the ultimate reality since He is the Creator of the physical world. Unlike the deist, God is not outside of the box, apart from His creation, but also interacting intimately within the box. Unlike the relativist, since God is real, reality is what God says it is, not simply what works for me or "my truth". Truth is knowable since God has revealed it. Unlike the pantheist, the creation is to be admired and its beauty seen, but God alone is to be worshipped as Creator of all.



"How, then, do I live?" The rest of this study will focus on this question, as it relates to the Christian worldview. Being a Christian and having a Christian worldview are not one in the same.

- *Any questions?*
- *Which world views have you held at different times in your life?*

OUR DILEMMA

Most of us develop a contradictory set of ideas, drawn from multiple sources that don't really work together. Our worldview is a mixed one, rather than a Christian one.

OUR SOLUTION

Becoming a Christ follower does not mean you think "Christianly". If we are to be Christ's followers, we must develop a Christian worldview.

- *Where do we get our beliefs?*
- *Who are the various people who shape them?*
- *Do you think we choose our beliefs or do you think they are given to us?*

Mom and Dad
Our peers
Our religious upbringing
Cultural icons
Science/schooling
Reason or common sense
Whatever works
Whatever fits our desires
Whatever is popular
Our experiences

These different sources of our ideas get molded in our minds into contradictory mixtures of thought; some healthy, some unhealthy, some godly, and some shaped by our culture. We end up having inconsistent, far-from-thought-out worldviews.

Example 1

The Darwinian evolutionist who believes it would be morally wrong for someone to steal from him

If Darwin was right, someone robbing an evolutionist is merely survival of the fittest, however the evolutionist will undoubtedly feel moral outrage in regards to being robbed. This is inconsistent with his philosophy.

Example 2

The Christ Follower who believes Jesus is the Son of God based on the scriptures, but doesn't believe Christ is the only way, which the scriptures teach

This worldview is Christian but completely mixed up with a rationalistic one.

THE CLASHING OF WORLDVIEWS

Because Christ came to give us a worldview that is based on truth, not self, His words clash with people holding different world views.

“Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”...Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

~ John 8:33-36

In this scene, there are two characters. The first is a worldly king, Pilate, and the second is Jesus, the King of kings. The first is a material relativist and the second is a truth-teller with a God-centric worldview. Notice that in Jesus’ answer He begins to explain reality to Pilate. He explains that there is more than Pilate knows; there is another realm, and He is king of it.

- *For what purpose did Jesus come to earth?*

“You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

‘What is truth?’ Pilate asked.”

~ John 18:37-38 (emphasis added)

Compare Jesus with our post-modern relativism: The relativist says, “Truth cannot be known.” Jesus said, “I tell you the truth” more than 75 times as recorded in the gospels. (Matthew 5:18, 10:15, 13:17, 16:28, 17:20, 18:3, 18:18, 19:23, 21:21, 23:36, 24:2, 25:40, 26:21, and 26:34 are a few examples). Jesus said, “Truly, truly” 25 times in the gospel of John alone. (John 3:3, 3:5, 3:11, 5:19, 5:24, 6:26, 6:32, 6:47, 6:53, 8:34, 8:51, 8:58 are some examples).

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Pilate’s question, “What is truth,” is answered by scripture. Truth is that which corresponds to reality, as revealed by God. This shows why the other worldviews are skewed. They begin at the wrong point. They attempt to answer the questions of life by using the wrong authority sources. While culture, mom/dad and common sense all have significant roles to play in our lives, only an all-wise God can speak truthfully about life’s most important questions:

Origin: where did we come from?

Purpose: what is the meaning of life?

Morality: who decides right from wrong?

Destiny: where are we headed?

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW?

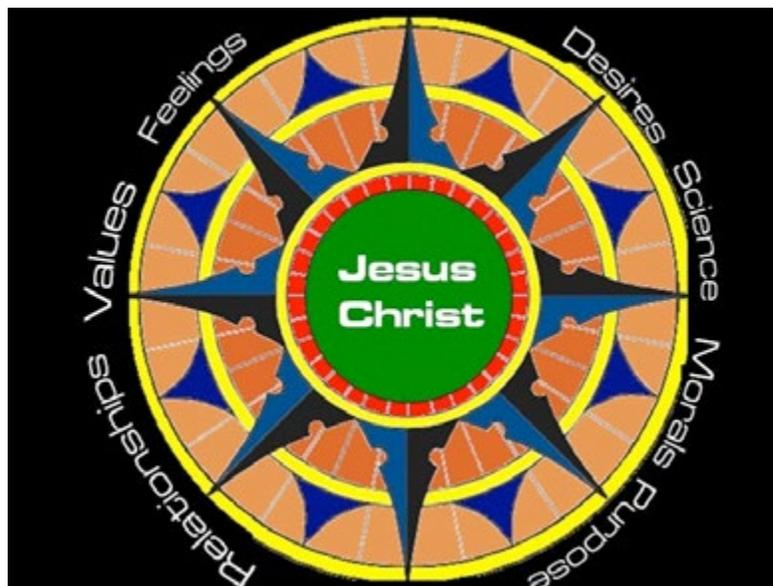
In the center of a Christian worldview is not our feelings, our desires, our values, our rationality, but a historical event; the life and death of Jesus Christ and His words of truth. Jesus' words and life affect every area of our lives; our relationships, our values, our feelings, our desires, our understanding of science, our morals, our purpose.

Point: Those that call themselves "Christians" may have any combination of the previously mentioned worldviews, but a genuine Christ-follower desires to have Jesus and His words as the center of all he/she does, says, and believes.

HOW DO WE KNOW THE TRUTH?

Empiricism teaches that knowledge comes from experience, (I know what I have been through). **Rationalism** teaches that knowledge comes from reason, (I know because it makes sense to me). **Romanticism** teaches that knowledge comes from feeling, (I know truth because I feel it). **Naturalism** teaches that knowledge comes from scientific study, (I know because of science). Relativism teaches that there are no absolutes, (you cannot really know, but what you can do is find what works for you).

Since God is infinite and humanity is finite, reality is that we cannot reach up and discover ultimate Truth or discover God. Science and other disciplines have discovered "truths" but not ultimate Truth, and the truths discovered are sometimes skewed, having begun without God in the picture. In reality, if we are to know Truth it is because God has revealed Truth through the scriptures and through the person of Christ.



Again, since humanity cannot reach up and grasp ultimate truth, God has revealed truth through the scriptures and through the person of Christ. Empiricism is flawed because your experience is limited and is not objective. Rationalism is flawed because finite humanity cannot reach up to infinite truth. Romanticism is flawed because our hearts are not designed to be accurate guides, and our desires have a very strong grip on our feelings. Naturalism is flawed because it treats scientists as unbiased people with no agenda, and any information can be bent by the will of the possessors. Relativism is flawed because it dismisses the notion of absolute truth that Jesus clearly taught.

CHRISTIAN KNOWING

The Bible does not teach the rejection of these other knowledge sources as invalid, but rather, it places them as inferior to God, the ultimate Source who reveals truth to us in scripture. A Christian DOES pay attention to feelings, rational thought, science and experience in a way that is subordinate to scripture.

- *How does it feel to you to hear that ultimate truth is only found in God?*
- *How does it feel to hear that we really do have access to ultimate truth in scripture?*

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”
~ Romans 12:2

SUMMARY

As previously stated, a worldview is based on your personal truth. These truths or claims have been embraced so deeply that you see them as a reflection of what is genuine and real. They drive what you think, how you behave and what you’re feeling. Jesus came to reveal truth in the ultimate questions of life to give us a Christian worldview.

The material in part 1 of this study was drawn from the Truth Project, Focus on the Family.

- *What practical steps can you take to conform your mind to God’s ways rather than the world’s?*