

Introduction

Since the 1960's, Christians have created a host of slogans and mottos, the most famous of which may be "**WWJD.**" As you know, it stands for "**What would Jesus do?**" But there is another question we need to ask that's prior, in sequence, to that one. It's a fact that behavior modification requires belief modification. So, the first question isn't "**What would Jesus do?**" It's "**What would Jesus believe?**" And that's what I'm going to preach about today, "**WWJB.**"

The Text

Paul founded the church in Corinth and visited it two times, once after 2 Corinthians. He also wrote four letters to it, the last also after 2 Corinthians. Over the years, critics of Paul rose in the church who accused him of being confident and bold in his letters but timid and weak in his visits. He answers those accusations in verses 1-2. He asserts that he will visit them again, which he did, and be bold when he does if they continue to challenge his apostleship. He prefers to gently persuade them, but will discipline them on his next visit if he has to.

In the last part of verse 2, Paul notes something else his critics claimed. It's that he walks or ministers "**according to the flesh.**" "**According to the flesh**" likely means in his own natural abilities and powers, which his critics found unimpressive.

He answers that claim in verse 3 and the first part of verse 4. He doesn't minister in his own natural abilities and powers, but in God's power. His resources for ministry are "**divinely powerful.**"

He then proceeds in the rest of verse 4 to identify one of his ministries. It's "**the destruction of fortresses.**" "**Fortresses**" refers to strongholds where evil is entrenched.

Paul reveals one of those strongholds in verse 5. It's "**speculation and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God.**" "**Speculation**" and "**every lofty thing**" refer to "**the opinions or**

convictions of those who set themselves against the knowledge of God,” to quote Bible commentator Charles Hodge. They refer, in other words, to what we’re examining this month, worldview.

Worldview as a Stronghold of Evil

Now let’s bring verses 4 and 5 together and learn what is just a vital insight. Worldview can be a primary stronghold of evil.

It can be because it’s the chief focus of Satan’s efforts to defeat people. In John 8:44, Jesus teaches that Satan is **“the father of lies.”** The word **“lies”** refers to false ideas. False ideas are his preferred way of dealing with people. Think about the first sin ever committed. Satan didn’t hit Eve over the head with a stick, but with an idea – that God can’t be trusted; that her well-being depended on her not Him. False ideas are how Satan most routinely influences people. He presents false ideas to them in various ways. He then works in their circumstances and, if they aren’t following Jesus, their mental processes as well so they come to believe them. Come to believe them means they incorporate them into their worldview as beliefs.

But as we’ve learned before, beliefs are a basis of feelings and actions. False beliefs, therefore, because they don’t accord with reality, corrupt feelings and actions. Those corrupted feelings and actions in turn cause dysfunction and, on occasion, even ruin in persons and lives.

I once counseled a young husband, for instance, who told me, **“Anger is an effective means for getting my wife to do what she needs to do.”** That false belief led him to countless destructive encounters with her and the eventual termination of their marriage.

What Satan delights in most though is people incorporating false ideas *about God* into their worldview as beliefs.

Michael Shevak and Jack Bemporad co-authored a book titled *Stupid Ways, Smart Ways, to Think About God*. They describe one of those stupid ways as follows: **“The Marquis de God. Ready to show you how much He cares by punishing you The Marquis de God is**

simply a God who hates. This is a deity who despises sin and sinner with such passion that he'll murder in order to exterminate them. He forces His noblest creation to dance like a trained poodle on the brink of annihilation. Grace, like a dog biscuit, offered or withdrawn, depending on performance." That is a dreadful mistake that leads to devastating consequences.

I once visited a woman who was diagnosed with cancer. While we were conversing, she suddenly blurted out, **"Why does God hate me?"** That, she believed, explained her cancer. A belief in the higher level of her worldview, **"God hates people,"** engendered a belief in the lower level, **"He inflicted cancer on me."** Those are false beliefs and caused her great spiritual and psychological distress before she died.

It's true. Our worldview can be a primary stronghold of evil that corrupts our feelings and actions and thus our persons and lives as well.

Worldview as Stronghold of Good

But it doesn't have to be. We can make it a primary stronghold of good instead. We make it that by incorporating true ideas into it as beliefs. Those beliefs, because they accord with reality, generate feelings and actions that are sound, not corrupted. Those feelings and actions in turn enable us to be functional people who live abundantly and well. They enable love, joy, and peace to prevail inside us and out.

Take the subject of our identity, for instance. For much of my life, a false idea occupied my worldview as a belief. I am what I am before people. I am what people perceive me to be. That belief conditioned how I felt. It placed upon me the crushing burden of people's opinions. It also conditioned how I acted. I said and did things to get people's approval and praise. But now a true idea occupies my worldview as a belief. I am what I am before God, nothing more or less. That belief conditions how I feel. It releases me from the crushing burden of people's opinions. It also conditions how I act. I say and do things to get God's approval and praise, not people's.

That experience and others have taught me how vital it is that we identify false beliefs in our worldview and replace them with true beliefs. Those true beliefs then make our worldview a primary stronghold of good, one that enables us to be functional people who live abundantly and well.

Catch Beliefs from Culture

At this point, we know what we need to do. Make our worldview a primary stronghold of good not evil. In the last line of verse 5, Paul teaches us how to do just that, **“take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”** That’s how we should build our worldview. Most people, however, including Christians, don’t. I’d explain it this way.

They’re immersed in a secularized culture that bombards them with false ideas on a daily and even hourly basis. They come at them on all sides from movies, television shows, commercials, billboards, magazines, books, video and computer games, social media, and more. Living together is an alternative lifestyle. Your body is your own. Casual sex is safe and fun. Listen to your heart not your head. All you ever needed to know you learned in kindergarten. You have the power to be, have, and do anything you desire. Stand up for your rights. Christians sin in word, thought, and deed every day. You can be a Christian but not a disciple. Those are just a sampling of the false ideas floating all around them in the environments of people’s personal and cultural life.

The problem is that most of those ideas are so frequently taught, clearly expected, and obviously modeled that people equate them with reality. They don’t recognize them as ideas. They consider them natural truths. So, they don’t require anyone to explain them. They just thoughtlessly incorporate them into their worldview as beliefs instead. They **“catch”** them in other words like they **“catch”** a cold. Or I like Dallas Willard’s metaphor just as well, **“Our minds and bodies pick them up like a dark suit picks up lint.”**

The result, when professing Christians do that, is what I call a **“hyphenated”** worldview. It’s a secular-Christian worldview, an odd

concoction of secular and Christian beliefs.

For instance, Les Stekel, president of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and former NFL head coach, was an advocate of cut blocking, which aims at an opponent's knees. When his players balked at doing it, he'd tell them to man up. **"I'd say, 'Go cut 'em,"** Steckel recalls, **"and they'd say, 'But they have a career like me.' And I'd say, 'Well, they're trying to take your career away from you.'"** Given his role as FCA president, one would think he'd have regrets about that but he doesn't. **"God loves us just the way we are,"** he says, **"But at the same time He does require excellence. And in the NFL performance is ultimate."** The idea that God endorses cut blocking in the name of excellence is ludicrous. Sekel has an odd hyphenated worldview in that regard that mixes secular ideas of sport with Christian ideas of God.

He illustrates well how easily and frequently people, including Christians, **"catch"** or **"pick up"** beliefs from the culture around them.

Take Beliefs from Jesus

But we, if we're devoted to Jesus and wise, don't. What we do, in verse 5, is **"take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."** The idea is that we make His thoughts our thoughts. Thoughts include beliefs. So, we make His beliefs our beliefs. We incorporate them into our worldview, removing any beliefs in it that they contradict. We **"take"** our worldview, in other words, from Jesus. The word **"take"** implies intentionality. We firmly make and devotedly carry out the decision not to **"catch"** our beliefs from our culture but to **"take"** them from Jesus instead. Carrying out that decision is a four step process.

First, we build a thorough and comprehensive vision of Jesus. We learn everything we can about His goodness and greatness. The *First Aim* study on our church's website assists us in doing that.

Second, we routinely engage Jesus. Again, our *First Aim Study* assists us in doing that. We act upon and interact with Him as much as we can in day-to-day life. He in turn acts upon and interacts with us so

that we have relationship with Him. We know Him not just intellectually, the first step, but experientially as well.

Third, we learn the beliefs of Jesus. What He says in the Bible reflects what He believes. So, we devote ourselves, over the course of our lifetime, to carefully interpreting everything He says. We do this systematically, beginning with the most important matters.

Finally fourth, we incorporate everything Jesus says into our worldview as beliefs. The Holy Spirit works in the first three steps of the process to create something in us – trust. We come to trust Jesus and His beliefs. We become convinced it's safe and best to believe what He believes, which then prompts us to make His beliefs our beliefs.

I have a set of beliefs, for instance, about anger. I developed it, relying on people in the know and my own observation, analysis, thought. But I began with the beliefs of Jesus – like anger is on the same continuum as murder (Matthew 5:22), anything that can be done with anger can be better done without it (James 1:20), and anger lets loose more than one can predict, retrieve, and control (Proverbs 17:14). I learned those beliefs of Jesus by carefully interpreting those verses. I then incorporated them into my worldview.

What I've done with anger I've done with all the most important matters in life – like love, words, work, marriage, life after death, manipulation, money, giving, technology, funerals, and sports to name a few. I learned the beliefs of Jesus and made them mine.

Conclusion

I believe what Jesus believes in other words and that's our call today. Yes, we must do what Jesus would do. But we must also and first of all believe what Jesus would believe. It isn't just "**WWJD**" in other words. It's also and first "**WWJB**."