

Introduction

I'd like to begin by asking you a question. Do you have 20/20 vision optically? Do you, with your eyes, see the material world clearly? Look at this vision chart. Can you read this line? You likely have 20/20 vision, optically at least, if you can.

Let me ask you another question. Do you have 20/20 vision ontologically? Do you, with your mind's eye, see reality clearly? Do you envision our world and life in it as they really are?

If you don't, you can, which is what our *Worldview Month* is all about. The purpose of an optometrist is to assist you in having 20/20 vision optically. The purpose of our *Worldview Month* is to assist you in having 20/20 vision ontologically.

What Is a Worldview

We begin our pursuit of that in Colossians 2:1-10. Paul wrote this letter to various churches in the Lycus Valley region, including those in the cities of Colossae and Laodicea. He wrote it to combat pre-Gnostic teachers who were leading Christians in those churches astray.

In verse 1, he expresses his deep concern for those Christians, which he defines more specifically in verse 2. One concern is that they be unified. The false teaching of the pre-Gnostics was causing divisions among them. They can overcome those divisions, Paul asserts, through agape love. The other concern, which he discusses in the rest of verse 2 through verse 10, is that they know the truth about Jesus.

With that background in mind, notice two words Paul uses, "**faith**" in verses 5 and 7, and "**philosophy**" in verse 8. Both words are synonymous with what we're examining this month, "**worldview.**"

The first thing we need to do in examining it is to define it. James Sire, a foremost authority on the subject, defines it as our "**set of assumptions about the basic makeup of our world.**" I'd define it this way. It's systematic sets of assumptions or beliefs we have about

our world and life in it.

That's what a worldview is and it has two levels. The higher level is sets of beliefs about certain broad subjects. The lower level is particular beliefs about specific facts. The lower level derives from the higher level. I believe, for instance, that there is as much glory in collecting garbage as there is in performing brain surgery. That particular belief of mine doesn't stand alone. It comes from two sets of beliefs I have, about God and about knowledge. It illustrates that a worldview has two levels: sets of beliefs about certain broad subjects and the particular beliefs about specific facts to which they lead.

There are seven basic questions, the answers to which comprise the higher level of a worldview. James Sire identifies those in his book *The Universe Next Door*. David Quine uses a similar seven-question approach in his book *Worldviews of the Western World*. They are as follows:

#1 – What is prime reality – the “**really real**” as Sire calls it? Is it a spiritual being called “**God**” or is it matter, the material world we call the universe. Our answer to this question is foundational. It directs our answers to all the other questions.

#2 – What is the origin and nature of the material universe? Is it designed and created by God and under His control or is it self-existent and autonomous, running on its own.

#3 – What is the origin and nature of humans? Are they created by God or did they evolve from self-existent matter by chance? Are they wholly good, wholly bad, or a combination of the two?

#4 – What happens to humans after death? Every worldview, including secularism, addresses this subject because it's so vital to us. Will we or will we not survive our deaths. If we survive them, what will the condition and state of our person and life be?

#5 – What is the basis of knowledge? This is one of the hot button issues in our current culture. What can we know and how can we know it? Our answer to this question conditions our answers to the others.

#6 – How do we know what is right and what is wrong? Are there ethical

and unethical behaviors? If so, how do we identify which ones are which? What is the true basis of ethics in other words?

#7 – What is the meaning of human history? This question is about the significance or insignificance of humans. Is there a purpose for human life collectively and human lives individually? If so, what is it? This is one of the most profound issues with which humans struggle.

The answers to those seven questions comprise the higher level of a worldview, which in turn generates its lower level.

Who Has a Worldview

Now that we know what a worldview is, also know this. We all have one. Think of the most uneducated and uninformed person you know. He or she has a worldview. And so do we, whether we know it or not.

On Father's Day, my wife showed me a comment someone posted on Facebook. Listen as I read it and try to identify which worldview questions it addresses: **"I'm smiling as I read the tributes to dads who are in heaven. As much as I support the sentiment and faith, you might notice I've never posted similar thoughts. My father was a diehard atheist. He was also a quantum physics/mechanic hobbyist who believed we are energy and consciousness that extends in a state of being after physical death of the body. Specifically, he concluded from his readings that our energy and some level of consciousness continue to exist and extend into space for eternity. No supreme being, not happy reunions in heaven. Just science. So, if he remembers me in his new state of consciousness, happy father's day, dad. Where ever you are!"**

That comment is deeply moving and highly instructive on so many levels. Notice that it wasn't a philosopher, theologian, or academic who made it, but a common average ordinary person like us. Also notice that it wasn't made in the halls of academia but on social media, Facebook. Yet, it addresses at least three of the worldview questions I explained.

#1 – What is prime reality? Matter is. **#4** – What happens to humans

after death? Our energy and some level of consciousness continue to exist in space. #5 – What is the basis of knowledge? **“Just science”** to quote her father. That woman’s father, as you can see, had a worldview and so does she. The fact is all of us do.

What a Worldview Does

We do because it’s unavoidable.

In verses 5 and 6, Paul links **“your faith in Jesus”** with **“walk(ing) in Him.”** The word **“walk”** refers to how we live daily. The linking of our worldview and our living teaches us something about worldview. It’s a biological necessity. Day-to-day life can’t be lived without one.

Think of it this way. Our worldview, generally, is about what we assume is real and valuable. And what we assume is real and valuable is the basis of almost every action of ours. That means we almost always act when we act in relation to our worldview.

Dallas Willard gets more specific. He writes about our worldview: **“(It) determines what we shall undertake to deal with or omit in our actions day by day and hour by hour. It dictates what we will or will not count on as resources and recognize as dangers. It determines our aims and our means and, eventually the quality of our life and the kind of person we will become.”**

Several examples speak a thousand words.

Consider tattooing. Question – What is the basis of people getting or not getting tattoos? Answer – It’s their worldview. Based on a set of beliefs they have, some assume that tattooing is art that enhances the body. They then act accordingly and get tattoos. Based on a set of beliefs they have, others assume that it’s mutilation that defaces the body. They then act accordingly and avoid getting tattoos.

Or consider parents and children. Question – What is the basis of the particular activities to which parents direct their minor children? Answer – it’s their worldview. Based on a set of beliefs they have, the majority, according to Dennis Kinlaw, assume that success and status are

most important. They then act accordingly, and direct their children to activities that achieve that. Based on a set of beliefs they have, a few assume that friendship with Jesus is most important. They then act accordingly, and direct their children to activities that achieve that.

Those examples make it clear. Worldview is a biological necessity. All of us, you and me, have one.

What Worldview Most Accord with Reality

We now know what we can't do. We can't "**opt out**" of having a worldview. But there is something we can do. Notice the words "**delude**" in verse 4 and "**deception**" in verse 8, which refer to the worldview of the pre-Gnostics. That worldview doesn't accord with reality, Paul tells his readers, and so they must reject it. That implies something we can and must do. Make sure the worldview we have accords with reality. Choose the worldview that's most in line with the way things are in our world and in life in it.

But which one is that? The first century Christians were bombarded with various worldviews like pre-Gnosticism, Judaism, polytheism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism. Well, so are we. Five major worldviews are competing for supremacy in our nation and world. One is Naturalism, which asserts that nature, the material world, is all that exists. A second is Islam, which contends that Allah is the one and only God. A third is Eastern Religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Shintoism, and Taoism, which gave rise to the New Age Movement in America. A fourth is Postmodernism, which rejects any notion of universal truth, and acknowledges and values multiple perspectives on reality. Finally, a fifth worldview is Christianity, which avows a triune God who created and sustains the universe and everything in it.

Several years ago, the Barna Research Group conducted a worldview survey of Americans. Listen to its findings: "**In the past when most people determined their theological and moral points of view, the alternatives from which they chose were exclusively of Christian**

options – e.g., the Methodist point of view, the Baptist perspective, Catholic teaching, and so forth. Today, Americans are more likely to pit a variety of non Christian options against various Christian-based views. This has results in an abundance of unique worldviews based on personal combinations of theology drawn from a smattering of world religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam as well as secularism (Naturalism)."

I think of a highly educated and successful professional I know well, for instance. She believes only matter exists, which is naturalism. But she also believes in reincarnation, which is Hinduism. She illustrates that Christianity is no longer America's **"default religion"** to quote Barna.

That's a catastrophic development though and here's why. All the non-Christian worldviews have something in common. Their answers to the seven worldview questions are, generally, wrong answers. But the Christian worldview's answers are right answers. Only Christianity, in other words, accords with reality. It's most in line with the way things are in our world and in life in it.

In verse 7, Paul tells us what we need to do because it is, be **"firmly rooted and . . . built up in Him (Jesus) and established in your faith."** We need to embrace the Christian or Biblical worldview devotedly and competently in other words, which I'll explain specifically how to do next week.

Conclusion

This slide shows, by way of analogy, the result if we don't embrace it. We will not see reality clearly, as it is. This slide shows, by way of analogy, the result if we do embrace it. We will see reality clearly, as it is. So, let's embrace the Christian worldview. We'll have 20/20 vision if we do.