

What Is My Worldview

You've probably never heard the name Sayyid Qutb, but he has had a profound effect on your life, your future, any travelling you do. Even though he died fifty years ago he has a profound influence on you through his worldview.

How did he do that? Sayyid Qutb was an Egyptian politician and a radical. He developed a worldview of hatred. He hated all Jewish people, Christian people and western culture. He provoked so much violence that he was jailed by the Egyptian government. In prison he continued to spread his worldview. Finally the Egyptian government executed him. That was the end of his life but by that time he had passed on his worldview to others and his brother took his worldview to Saudi Arabia and began teaching it in a university there.

You've never heard of this guy, but you've heard of one of his pupils - Osama bin Laden - who made that worldview the basis of Al-Qaeda. Even with him gone, that worldview continues in groups like Isis and we live in an age of terrorism. That's the power of a worldview.

Every day you're influenced by many worldviews - whether you're aware of it or not. Worldviews of friends; relatives, coworkers; neighbors, people who write for TV. They all influence your life in ways you're not even aware of. And everyday your life and the lives of the people around you are influenced by **your** worldview.

Today we begin a new series looking at various worldviews, at God's perspective and at the errors in unbiblical worldviews that have tremendous influence on your life. To get started, let's look at what a worldview actually is and why it's important.

Your worldview is the set of fundamental beliefs you hold that define your life values, decisions and actions. It's the sum total of beliefs I build my life on. It's how you view everything and, YES, it matters! Everyone has a worldview whether they realize it or not. It's all the ideas, experiences, images, beliefs, convictions, concepts, principles, standards, hurts and joys you've put together and you make decisions based on them. So few things are more important to how you live your life or to your relationship with God. It's how I view God, myself and other people, it's how I view evil. Everything you think about life is included in your worldview.

Everyone has a worldview whether they realize it or not. You operate according to one and it's the most important tool you have in life. It determines all of your choices. Your mind takes it into account with every decision you make. It's all the ideas, experiences, images, beliefs, convictions, concepts, principles, standards, hurts and joys you've put together.

For instance if you thought in your worldview that the world was going to end tomorrow it would certainly change your decisions today. You would act in a different way based on what you believed. So this series isn't some academic exercise, intellectual theory or philosophical concept. It's the most practical thing in the world. Your worldview determines your relationships, successes, failures, goals and motivations. To change your life you've got to change your view first.

Most of your worldview is unspoken. In fact you never think about most of it. But for a few weeks we ARE going to think about it. Because too many of us are operating with broken, faulty or false worldviews. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *"...anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"* If you've begun a relationship with Christ, you have a new identity. Everything you've done is forgiven. Things you wish you hadn't done are wiped out. It's called being born again.

The problem is, in your mind, you're still hearing things people told you when you were growing up - things that may not be true. When you're a kid people say things and you believe them. Like, you're uncoordinated; you're shy; you're slow; you're never going to amount to anything; you're not good at this or that. All these things are in you and some need to be deleted. You need a new view of you, of God, of the world and of where we're headed in life. God's view.

This is important because if you base your life on a faulty worldview the results are faulty. We're going to look at what's real and true and what's not. God doesn't force you to believe anything. It's your choice. God created you in God's image and gave you free will to choose what you believe and don't believe. You can change your worldview. In fact, during this series I hope you'll get more in line with God's view of reality and God's view of you as we move ahead.

We're going to look at a range of worldviews today. There are four worldviews researchers have discovered are prevalent in most churches today. I'm going to use the terms that were used in the research:

The first is **Secular** - These are believers who act like there's nothing supernatural about life. They may maintain a belief in something more, but their lives aren't really different from the people around them.

The second is **Soft-secular** - Research shows this includes **most** church people today. They attend because of the things they enjoy about it and participate as it fits into their lifestyle and activities. They participate in ministries as it fits

their interests and energy level. They come for the music they like - traditional or contemporary - for the activities they like that fit their self-concept and the time they have available.

The next group is **Post-Secular/Post-Modern** - These are people who are open to the supernatural but believe in expressive individualism - they accept what works for them and reject what doesn't. Everything for them is about the present and their life. They fit Christ into their worldview rather than fitting their worldview into Christ.

The final group found in churches today - and remember, I'm using the terminology researchers chose - is **Christian** - This is the only view consistent with Jesus' teachings and life.

These are people who realize that it's bigger than my life. They understand that the truth will work and it will prevail but it might not prevail in my lifetime or for my immediate benefit. Indeed truth may cost me my life. They are willing to sacrifice; to be a part of activities where there is no benefit to themselves or their family - maybe not even any sense of satisfaction or accomplishment. If it doesn't match up with their likes and dislikes, well, that's not the point. They realize the truth of Christ's statement that you have to lose your life to find it - so they realize it's not about me, not about my needs, my wants, my preferences. It's all about God's reign.

This is by far the smallest group, but the more people in it, the more vibrant, alive, effective and growing the church is.

Those are the basic worldviews of people in churches, but there are a wide variety of worldviews widespread in our culture. These worldviews influence us even when we're unaware of them or don't consciously subscribe to them. There are hundreds of popular ones but eight are common and we're constantly bombarded by them.

The first one is **Materialism**. Materialism says that the thing that really matters in life is the acquisition of things. It confuses our value with our valuables. Materialism isn't new, but our culture raises it to new heights and gives it legitimacy.

Jesus loved to challenge conventional wisdom. Jesus challenged materialism. In Luke 12:15 he said, "*A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.*" The New Living Translation of that is, "*Life is not measured by how much you own.*" Don't judge life by how much you've got. This dangerous worldview influences us constantly. We talked about the cure for this last week - generosity in our finances.

Another worldview is **Individualism**. We live in a culture that says your life is all about you. Advertisements cater to this in our culture. They say "Have it your way," "You've got to think of what's best for yourself," "I deserve it."

We live in a culture of narcissism. It's a self centered, individualistic way of life. I do what's best for me. Centuries ago we had a good idea - that everyone is entitled to a freedom to believe and do what they feel is best. But over the last 240 years we've taken the idea of personal freedom that was the foundation of our country and made it into something different - the worship of individualism.

Jesus taught a totally different worldview. In Matthew 16 He says, "*If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.*" You only begin to live when you begin to give your life away. Significance in life doesn't come from serving yourself and your own. It comes from serving God and others. It challenges conventional wisdom that says to live for yourself.

Some people think choosing to give away your life means giving away freedom - it doesn't. You're always free to choose. But if your choice is to give your life to gain the best benefit to others and life with significance that's eternal, is it really freedom to choose something else that feels good short-term but long-term means discouragement and death? It would be like having seven doors, six of which lead to death and one of which leads to be life and having someone let you in on which is the good door and you feeling like they've taken away your freedom to choose the other doors!

How do you fight back against this worldview that you're bombarded with every day? Choose to serve. Use your freedom to make the choice to do things to serve Christ; serve the community in Christ's name; serve in the church as a follower. Serve in harmony with others using your gifts because that's how you get energy; when you operate outside of your gifts it takes away energy. Operating within your giftedness should be most of what you do in serving. It's like when you hit a ball in tennis and you get it right in the sweet spot - it has much more power and energy. 80% of what you do needs to be in your sweet spot. The other 20% is what you NEED to do for the church and your ministry to work.

Next is **Hedonism**. That I should do what feels good, feels comfortable; gives me pleasure. Ethical Hedonism adds that it also won't hurt others. The basic idea is that the most important thing in my life is how I feel. If I feel good, life is good. If I feel bad, it's bad. Your feelings judge everything. The primary goal is to feel good, be comfortable, enjoy

yourself. Now, God created pleasure and means for us to enjoy life, but pleasure and enjoyment aren't the goal of life. They're benefits, not goals.

You can be a hedonist and not even know it. For instance, if you come to church just to enjoy it and get something out of it for yourself, that's being a hedonist. If your goal to have time to sit back and just enjoy life, that's being a hedonist. Those things aren't bad in themselves, they're just not meant to be goals of life.

Solomon tried pleasure and in Ecclesiastes lamented, *"I said to myself, 'Come on, let's try pleasure. Let's look for the 'good things' in life.' But I found that this, too, was meaningless."* Mick Jagger's been singing "I can't get no satisfaction," for over fifty years now. The pursuit of pleasure is never satisfied. You always want more.

How do we fight this? Realize that there's a difference between pleasure and fulfillment. 1 John 2:16 says, *"...the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world."* Temporary rewards don't fulfill us. We need to concentrate on the joy we receive through our relationship with Christ and one another and the fulfillment we receive through serving in ministry and mission. Only those will last.

Another worldview is **Pragmatism**. It's summed up as Whatever gets the job done; whatever works for you. Right or wrong doesn't matter as much. If it works, fine. In our multinational culture, this is a popular view. In our economic culture, if it makes money, it's great.

The problem is there are things that work well, but are evil. If I committed a crime and I got away with it and didn't get punished, that would work for me; it would be pragmatic. The only problem is it's wrong. If a corporation creates jobs, makes a profit and benefits its investors but does so at the expense of polluting the land or ruining people's health or by undermining and destroying other companies, it might work for the company and investors, but it would be wrong.

Proverbs 21 says, *"There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death."* It seems right but in the end it leads to death. A lot of things might work for you, but in the end lead to death.

Let's say I get on top of the Empire State Building and jump. I'm going by and you stick your head out a window and ask, "How's it going?" I say, "So far so good." I see people who are saying "So far so good" all the time: "You cheating on your wife?" *Yeah.* "How's it going?" *So far so good.* "You being unethical?" *Yeah.* "How's it going?" *So far so good.* Just because it's working right now doesn't mean it's right.

We live in a very pragmatic culture. How do we deal with that? Ask yourself, Is this in line with what Jesus said and did? Ask yourself, is this fair to everyone concerned? Ask yourself, would this work for me if I were the other person?

Other views are **Atheism, Naturalism and Deism** - these worldviews assert that God doesn't exist or if God does exist it doesn't matter in a personal way. It's all random chance or mechanics. Deism claims that some divine power created everything, but it's not something you could have a relationship with. Any design is a clock-work design that was set up and is running on its own.

But if God doesn't exist or doesn't matter, the logical extension is *you* don't matter. Because then you're just well-developed well-educated slime that just accidentally showed up on the planet. If you happen to get murdered or run over by a car... so what? You're just an organized pile of cells.

If there is no overall plan, no purpose, no design then your life doesn't matter. It has a no real value. Your value comes from the fact that God created you and loves you.

Romans 1 says, *"For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature..."* In other words, look at nature and you learn a lot of things about God. We know God is creative, God is powerful, God likes diversity, God is organized. There's lots we know just from nature. Then it says *"So they have no excuse for not knowing God."* It takes a whole lot more faith to be an atheist than it does to believe in God. It takes far more faith to believe it just happened by chance.

There's truth to be found in the universe and science is a method for uncovering that truth. But truth is only there because it was created by the one who's the source of truth. Romans 1:25 says, *"They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise!"* The beauty of a painting is a reflection of the mind and heart of an artist. The beauty of the universe is a reflection of the mind and heart of God. If we see the order and beauty of the universe and ignore the one who created it, that's idol worship, turning the entire physical universe into an idol.

There are many other worldviews - let's look at one more: **6. Theism**. That God made me for God's purposes. Judaism and Christianity and some other religions are theistic and believe a personally accessible god made us and the universe for a purpose. We're only concerned with Christian Theism which believes that absolutely everything was created by God, for a purpose. Colossians 1 says, *"God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see... Everything was created through him and for him."* Until you understand that, life doesn't make sense.

So those are the basic range of worldviews in our culture. Everyone's beliefs generally fit into that range. But why does it matter? There are two common myths about what you believe:

The sincerity myth says it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere. The problem is you can be sincerely wrong. I could have a glass of liquid here and sincerely think it's water. But if I drink it and it's really sulfuric acid it's going to sincerely kill me no matter what I believe.

The other myth is the situational myth - that everything depends on the circumstance. You can believe one thing in one situation and another thing in another. A lot of people like to pick and choose. During the week they have one worldview; at church they have another. It doesn't work that way. You can't just go with what's convenient for you. All that does is create confusion, stress and negative emotions.

A national survey by Barna Institute showed an absence of a biblical worldview in America. Only 4% of adults have a biblical worldview. Four percent! More shocking was that even among church members only 9% have a biblical worldview influencing how they make decisions.

In another study, 62% of people consider themselves deeply spiritual. When they checked to see if that really affected day to day decisions, it didn't. 24% said they make their moral choices based on what feels comfortable. 9% on what makes other people happy or causes the least conflict. 7% on what produces the most beneficial outcome for themselves. Of those 62% only 1/6th mentioned the Bible.

Then they asked about absolute truth. One third of America believes moral truth is absolute. True is always true. Another third believe morality and truth are only determined by the situation. Another third believe that moral truth simply doesn't exist. That's why we're doing this series.

A faulty worldview causes all kinds of unnecessary problems in your life. Proverbs 29:18 says, *"When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild. But whoever obeys the law is joyful."* And our world needs people who communicate the truth to others, because most people don't have a clue. They have a hodge-podge of these worldviews thrown in together. Did you know God expects you to not only know what you believe and why; God wants you to be able to explain it to others. 1 Peter 3 says *"you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it."* God wants you ready to explain your worldview caringly and carefully.

So, how do you strengthen your worldview? You... **Base Your Life on What Is True**. That's the first step. Jesus told a story. He said two guys go out and build houses. One builds a house on a shaky foundation of sand. The other on a solid foundation of rock. When storms come along the house on the shaky foundation collapses. The house on the solid foundation stands the test. Then Jesus said, the point is you'll either build your life on what I say, on the truth, or on what other people say. If you build it on sand, it will crumble when times get tough. Build your life on rock solid truth and you'll stand up under difficult circumstances.

You're going to have lots of storms in life. I guarantee you'll have health storms, relational storms, financial storms. If your foundation is built on popular opinion or how you feel at or on cultural ideas and trends or what other people think, what happens when opinions, trends and ideas change? Then you're just drifting with no solid foundation. The only way to stay relevant is to build on truths that don't change.

Proverbs 23 says, *"Learn the truth and never reject it. Get wisdom, self-control and understanding."* How do you learn the truth? By studying the Bible. By reading good Christian books. Take Crosstraining Classes – 101, 201, 301, 401 – they're built to reinforce that foundation of truth.

Be Aware of What Is False. 1 John 4:1 says *"Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world."* There are people out there... they're just liars. So we need to study the truth to discern what's false.

That doesn't mean being cynical. Cynicism is about resentment, bitterness and hurt. Cynics are people who've been hurt. Don't be cynical, be discerning. That's about love and truth.

Be Focused on the Word, Not the World. Romans 12:2 says, *“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.”* God’s will for your life is good, but you’ve got to have a worldview shift, transforming, renewing you. You’ve got to choose: Am I going to get my direction for life from God’s word, which is eternal, or the world, which is shifting. Pretty much all of us spend a LOT more time with TV than the Bible. What you put into your mind is what’s going to come out.

Finally, **Be Concerned about God’s Agenda.** Jesus said *“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need.”* You can’t have two primary concerns. Jesus said you can’t serve both God and money. Not shouldn’t - can’t. You can’t have two number ones.

Everywhere, people need God and truth but they’ve built their lives on sand so when the crisis comes everything will fail. We have what they need: the living water of God’s truth that refreshes, restores, rejuvenates, revitalizes and changes our lives. We have to know what we believe, know why we believe it and then live it so we’ll be able to share it.

My goal for you and for our church is what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14: *“Stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants. [so, be innocent regarding evil.] But in your thinking be adults.”* What we need today in our world more than anything else are believers who have a clear worldview. They know what they believe, can explain it to people in the world and, most importantly of all they live what they believe.

That, my friends, will change the world. Let’s pray.