

Worldviews and Discipleship

George Barna in his book, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, states a concern held by many in the evangelical community regarding the battle of worldviews

Simply put, if you want to win a war, you must control the battlefield. In the complexity of the world these days, we sometimes lose sight of the fact that life is ultimately a spiritual battle and that each of us is a spiritual being who must declare a side in the war and then fight to the end for what we believe is truth. In that process, we must identify the boundaries of the battlefield before we can take command of it.¹

The battlefield is emerging in the area of worldviews regarding what Christians believe, the values that govern their lives, and the behaviors that characterize their lifestyles. In short, the worldview battleground must be defined, clarified, and strategies implemented that work toward spiritual victory. Each Christian must be influenced and developed toward a Christian worldview, more specifically a Biblical worldview, which transforms their values, beliefs, and behaviors as a result of a life long pursuit of obedience to Christ.

Battlefront

An alarming amount of professed Christians seem to be adopting lifestyles and articulating beliefs that are not supported by and many times are in direct contradiction to revealed Biblical truth. Research from the Barna Group illustrates the beliefs and behaviors of many and how one's worldview impact ones beliefs and behaviors.

The research indicated that everyone has a worldview, but relatively few people have a biblical worldview - even among devoutly religious people. The survey discovered that only 9% of born again Christians have such a perspective on life. Upon comparing the

¹ George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2003), 50.

perspectives of those who have a biblical worldview with those who do not, the former group were 31 times less likely to accept cohabitation (2% versus 62%, respectively); 18 times less likely to endorse drunkenness (2% versus 36%); 15 times less likely to condone gay sex (2% versus 31%); 12 times less likely to accept profanity (3% versus 37%); and 11 times less likely to describe adultery as morally acceptable (4% versus 44%). In addition, less than one-half of one percent of those with a biblical worldview said voluntary exposure to pornography was morally acceptable (compared to 39% of other adults), and a similarly miniscule proportion endorsed abortion (compared to 46% of adults who lack a biblical worldview).²

Those lacking a Biblical worldview have separated their lives into two stories. This two-story divide exists between private faith and public faith; between ones private values and ones public values. It has manifested itself in a sacred and secular divide in a person's worldview. An example would be a person who professes Christian salvation, yet does not allow it to influence how they live and what beliefs they hold in their public secular life. Simply stated, what happens on Sunday has no impact on their life on Monday through Saturday. Nancy Pearcey, in her book *Total Truth* states,

We have to reject the division of life into a sacred realm, limited to things like worship, and personal morality, over against a secular realm that includes science, politics, economics, and the rest of the public arena. This dichotomy in our own minds is the greatest barrier to liberating the power of the gospel across the whole culture today.³

Definition

Evangelical authors have offered several definitions and insights regarding worldviews. It is important to define what is meant by a Christian, or Biblical worldview:

² [A Biblical Worldview has a Radical Effect on a Person's Life](http://www.barna.org). Article from www.barna.org (Ventura, California: Barna Group Inc., 2003)

³ Nancy Pearcey, [Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity](#) (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004), 20.

A world view is a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic make-up of our world. (James Sire)⁴

The term worldview is a translation of the German word *Weltanschauung*, which means a way of looking at the world (*Welt* = world; *schauen* = to look). German Romanticism developed the idea that cultures are complex whole, where a certain outlook on life, or spirit of the age, is expressed across the board – in art, literature, and social instruction as well as in formal philosophy. (Nancy Pearcey)⁵

It is simply the sum total of our beliefs about the world, the “big picture” that directs our daily decisions and actions...Every world view can to analyzed by the way it answers three basic questions: Where did we come from, and who are we (*creation*)? What has gone wrong with the world (*fall*)? And what we can do to fix it (*redemption*)? (Charles Colson)⁶

Your worldview is your framework for understanding existence – the way you look at the world. The terms worldview and religion are really interchangeable, when properly understood, because at the bottom every worldview is based on certain faith assumptions and offers answers to the “why” questions – Why am I here? Why do I think I ought to do some things? Why does evil exist? Etc. Your worldview is an invisible pair of eyeglasses – glasses you put on to help you see reality clearly. If you choose the right pair of glasses, you can see everything vividly, and can behave in sync with the real world. (J.F. Baldwin)⁷

Those who aspire to possess a Christian worldview must make a commitment to think in a manner that is consistent with propositional truth of the Bible; to learn why the truth of the Bible is both reliable and rational; to understand the way in which a biblical worldview differs from other worldviews; to live in accord with the truth of the Bible; to develop the ability to communicate to others coherently and compelling the basis and implications of a biblical worldview. (N. Allan Moseley)⁸

⁴ James W. Sire, The Universe Next Door (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 17.

⁵ Pearcey, 23.

⁶ Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, How Now Shall We Live (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), 14.

⁷ J. F. Baldwin, The Deadliest Monster: A Christian Introduction to Worldviews (Eagle Creek, Oregon: Coffee House Ink), 29.

⁸ N. Alan Moseley, Thinking Against the Grain: Developing a Biblical Worldview in a Culture of Myths (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing, 2003), 22.

Our most basic core beliefs determine our behaviors and our values. These most central ideas control how we perceive the world around us. Our Biblical worldview is our perception of the world through the teaching of Scripture. Scripture, the Bible, gives us a “lens” through which to view the world. The lens is Biblical doctrine that allows us to discern revealed truth, correct wrong beliefs, and give direction to our spiritual habits (disciplines) that lead us to godliness (sanctification).

Solutions

Several solutions have been articulated in regards to how one develops a Biblical worldview in the lives of Christians. Most include strategies for replacing false beliefs with Biblical truth and seeing a result where behavior and values are changed. Allan Moseley suggests that a worldview be developed that is consistent with historic Christianity by critiquing the culture and submitting to Scripture by reading, studying, and meditating on the Bible. “Christians at the beginning of the twenty-first century must move beyond the idea that “merely” knowing the Bible is somehow simplistic and not sufficiently sophisticated to prepare them to engage the complex but errant ideas of our culture.”⁹ Other approaches address developing a Biblical worldview by an understanding of apologetics and trying to engage the culture through apologetics and polemics. Colson articulates a defense for creationism and argues against a naturalist worldview addressing many postmodern mindsets. He states, “The most significant clash of worldviews is not between traditional religions or culture, it is between classic theism and naturalism – in both its modernist and its rapidly growing postmodernist forms.”¹⁰ Other writers have addressed the conflict of worldviews and articulated strategies for developing more

⁹ Moseley, 35-36.

¹⁰ Colson, 26.

Biblical belief systems by educating persons on the major philosophical ideas of the culture comparing them to and understanding philosophical reasoning of such philosophies as deism, naturalism, nihilism, existentialism, pantheism and major world religions. Each one is compared and contrasted by Biblical theism arriving at a Biblical critique and response. J.F. Baldwin illuminates this point, “One of the very best apologetics for Christianity is the fact that it differs radically from every other version of reality, and its differences match reality. In order to understand and articulate these differences, the Christian must understand his own worldview and the various worldviews.”¹¹

Dilemma

A dilemma becomes immediately apparent. How do you move Christians, with a secular sacred divide into a new way of thinking that affects their worldview resulting in a change of their beliefs, values, and behaviors? How do you teach and develop a Biblical worldview to a person who has professed faith for years, to in new believers, and to children raised by Christian parents? Will an understanding of apologetics, philosophy, and world religions truly impact the way one behaves and change their core values and beliefs? Will it develop a Biblical worldview? This dilemma is of paramount importance to the church in the twenty-first century. The questions raised by this dilemma and the answers and strategies implemented to resolve it may be among the most influential in regard to the future of the American church.

The process of discipleship and the development of a Biblical worldview must be rooted in God’s Word and in a reclaiming of theology in the process of discipleship and Christian education. Understanding the basic beliefs of Scripture and how those beliefs affect ones behavior and core values will be key in our understanding a Biblical worldview. In addition, a

¹¹ Baldwin, 31.

rediscovery of how the early church taught new believers and their strategies to develop a Biblical worldview in their pagan culture will give us insight into our day.

Theology and Spiritual Transformation

A rediscovery of theology in Christian education and discipleship is vital to the success of developing a Biblical worldview. If Christians are to see the world through the lens of Scripture, then it must be foundational in the spiritual formation and discipleship process. Basic beliefs on what one believes about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the church, man, salvation, good and evil, and etc. will form the core of the worldview held by the believer. These beliefs will affect how the person behaves and what he or she values. These are the topics of theology and are to be taught to new believers and old believers alike. Yet, the church has often insisted that theology is a topic that believers are not interested in or one that bores persons who have little interest in such things. Leaders state that theological topics are of little interest to the average believer and too difficult for persons to comprehend.

These assumptions have paralyzed the teaching of theology in the local church. They are critiques of more philosophical and academic approaches to theology. Basic beliefs articulated in a systematic way looking at the whole of Scripture concerning each area must be the foundation of a Biblical worldview curriculum. A Biblical worldview looks at all of life through the lens of the Bible and its comprehensive progressive revelation of God and truth. These truths are then reflected in the way persons behave and the things persons value.

Early Church

Education methods and content in the early church focused around the discipling of new believers in Scripture and theology. New believers were taken through a process called the Catechumenoi (Eng. – catechumens). This was the technical name for those being instructed

before baptism. The catechesis, from the Greek word *κατηγω*, was the content of what was taught. This word is used in the New Testament in Gal. 6:6 and Rm. 2:18 (ref. to Jewish education) It means, “to sound down into the ears, give oral instruction, to inform, to instruct, i.e. oral admonition that a physician gives to a patient.”¹² A catechumenate was instructed over a period of 2-3 years. Candidates were examined through a scrutiny and they were informed of the costs of the Christian life and asked to abandon old practices. The content of the discipling process can be seen in the extensive writing of the early church fathers. These works are often called the Ante-Nicene Fathers. They include the writings of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullien, Origen, and many others. Believers were taught to beware of false teachings and false teachers. False doctrine taught by the Gnostics and others was a real threat. Christians received instruction to live a disciplined moral life that reflected the person of Christ. They were taught on what Scripture taught about God, the person and work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, and on the teachings of last things. In the climate of persecution they often had to defend Christianity and be able to give a reasoned defense of their faith.¹³ Materials taught during the Catechumenate would include an Old Testament survey for Gentiles who had no Jewish background, teaching on the life of Christ, further instruction on a disciplined holy life, and finally instruction on doctrine. Extensive teaching was done in a systematic way regarding the major doctrines of Scripture. New believers were made aware of Christian beliefs so they would have the ability to distinguish between truth and error. Examples of the content of this instruction can be found in the writings of several of the church fathers during this period of

¹² Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Dictionary

¹³ Justin Martyr: *The First Apology*. The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985)

time, Tertullian: *On Repentance, On Baptism*; Ireneaus: *Against Heresies, Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*; Clement of Alexandria: *The Instructor*; and Theophilus: *Ad Autolyicum*.¹⁴

Strategy

New strategies to equip the saints with a Biblical worldview that transforms their beliefs and their behaviors must be implemented in the church. A Biblical worldview based in Scripture that gives believers a lens through which they can view their world should include helping Christians know what they believe and why. The foundation of a biblical belief system is Scripture and its basic teachings must be taught. This is the principle from Proverbs 2:6, “For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.” Paul is clear in 1 Timothy 4:6, “In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.” Practically this can be done through courses on doctrine and basic apologetics. Once receiving this foundation, believers in the church should set themselves to studying in a systematic way the books of the Bible. It is the content of Scripture that will bring about a true “biblical belief” in the lives of God’s people.

A Christian worldview should also change the way Christians behave. What they say they believe should be seen in their lives and how they act. It should impact their character. Yet Christians often do not know or even practice basic spiritual disciplines. They are not taught how to put off the old man, to be renewed in the mind, and how to put on the new man. Spiritual victories and battles go un-fought because of a lack of training regarding spiritual warfare and how to put off destructive behaviors. It is imperative that that the church teach these areas and many others to new believers.

¹⁴ The Ante-Nicene Fathers. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985)

Solution

The church needs a radical challenge to go beyond salvation – to understand biblical truth as an entire worldview. Truth is the ultimate reality and is the foundation upon which a Biblical worldview is built. An understanding of God’s revealed truth, truth that would be unknown if not revealed by God, is the factor that must be included in a work toward a Biblical worldview. The teaching of these truths through biblical doctrine is the factor that is vital to any solution. Revealed truth and its impact on by beliefs, values and behaviors is the process that spiritually transforms a person and shapes their Biblical worldview. Factor, [fac•tor (fktr) n.], is defined as, “One that actively contributes to an accomplishment, result, or process.”¹⁵ If truth is the factor, the factor that contributes in the cause of an accomplishment, then spiritual transformation is the result. Ultimately, we must build a worldview that affects how we see, believe, live and follow the truth.

A curriculum that would bring all of these elements together must be compiled in order to begin a basis for a Biblical worldview. This material could begin by discovering ultimate truth about God, Jesus, the Bible, and basic spiritual disciplines (abiding in Christ, living in God’s Word, praying in faith, witness to the world, fellowshiping with other believers, and active participation in ministry). This would be followed by a search for truth and understanding of salvation, sanctification, the Holy Spirit and being changed into God’s image. Believers would be taught to understand the Ephesians 4 process (Ephesians 4:17-24) and how God wants to transform their old nature and renew their mind in order for them to reflect the character of Christ. Further discipleship would give insight into what went wrong with the world and God’s plan to fix it. The doctrines of creation, good and evil, and redemption would be included at this

¹⁵ The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition, 2000.

point. Teaching on how to overcome old behaviors and learning to pray in faith as one lives the Christian life. Christians must learn to gain victory in their spiritual life through the weapons of spiritual warfare (truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God). Following these doctrines and practical teachings would be instruction to help Christians understand God's plan for the church, his second coming, and how to follow the truth as a servant leader through sharing your faith and discipling other believers. Finally, a curriculum with an emphasis on other world religions and cults could help the believer clarify his beliefs by comparing them to other belief systems and also prepare him or her to see error and not be deceived by false teachers. This process could last one or two years and be a foundation for every new believer to begin the journey of discipleship.

Conclusion

If we are to control the boundaries of the battle for a Biblical worldview, it will be done by a commitment to teaching revealed truth through doctrine and allowing Christian's beliefs, values, and behaviors to be transformed as they complete a life long journey of obedience to Christ. Christian educators must engage in the battle for Christians developing a Biblical worldview and lead the church in a return to doctrine in the discipling process of the church.¹⁶

¹⁶ Truth Factor: Biblical Worldview, 4 vols., <http://www.hephzibah.net/hbc/discipleship>

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