

Worldviews

Session 3





“People function on the basis of their worldview more consistently than even they themselves may realize.”

—Francis Schaeffer

What Are Worldviews?



Defining the Term



The term worldview refers to a person's **general concept of reality**.

A worldview is a set of beliefs by which a person acknowledges an ultimate **reality**, makes sense of their **experiences**, and **lives** in reaction to those beliefs.

Forming a worldview is **inevitable**;
living consistently with it is not.

Defining the Term



A fully formed worldview includes:

- **narrative** - the central story of reality and existence
- **belief** - the fundamental ideas about reality and existence
- **commitment** - the resulting life that comes about
- **community** - the communal identity that is shared

Framing the Discussion



The varying ways in which people answer **existential** questions results in differing worldviews.

In Romans 1, the Apostle Paul describes the development of humanity's beliefs as it moves further from God.



“Claiming to be wise, they became fools,
and exchanged the glory of
the immortal God for images
resembling mortal man and birds
and animals and creeping things.”

Romans 1:22-23

Framing the Discussion



Francis Schaeffer spoke often about a **secular / sacred** divide that people have imposed on the world and their lives.

Most worldviews may be categorized by a distinction between whether reality is ultimately **natural** or **spiritual**.

Framing the Discussion



Broadly speaking, we may frame our discussion about worldviews generalizing three groups:

- Naturalism: belief that reality is essentially and totally **natural**
- Pantheism: belief that reality is essentially and totally **spiritual**
- Theism: belief that a creator is sovereign over reality that is both natural and spiritual

	Theism	Naturalism	Pantheism
Reality	Spiritual/Physical	Physical	Spiritual
God	creator	creature	creation
World	redeemed creation	physical evolution	spiritual evolution
Humanity	like God but fallen	like animals but smarter	one with god but disillusioned
Body/Soul	soul with a body	body only	soul only
Immortality	resurrection	annihilation	reincarnation
Authority	revelation	reason	reincarnation
Truth	absolute	relative	personal
Evil	rebellion	ignorance	illusion
Salvation	redemption	education	meditation
Jesus Christ	Savior God	Great Moralist	Enlightened Teacher

How Do We Test Worldviews?



Q1: What replaces God?



Any worldview that does not acknowledge God as ultimate will at some point acknowledge a **replacement**.

This is why the Bible does not contrast belief in God with **atheism**; it contrasts belief in God with **idolatry**.

It could be argued that whatever a worldview makes ultimate ultimately points back to **humanity** as ultimate.

Q2: What reduces humanity?



Any replacement of God will be a reduction. Consequently, **humanity**—the image bearers of God—will be reduced.

Stephen Hawking once said, “I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail...There is no heaven or afterlife for broken down computers; that is a fair story for people afraid of the dark.”

People are more than their worldview often allows them to be.

Q3: What conflicts externally?



If a worldview fails to adequately explain ultimate reality, it will at some point **conflict** with what we know reality.

Christian apologist Greg Koukl refers to this a “**bumping** into reality.”

For example, one of the major philosophical problems we all face is why there is something rather than nothing.

Q3: What conflicts externally?



This is a problem for the naturalist, because given that worldview there seem to be only two options:

- The universe **necessarily** exists and **always** has existed.
- The natural universe came into existence by natural causes.

Both of these disagree with what basic **logic** and accepted **science** tell us about the universe.

Q4: What contradicts internally?



If a worldview fails to adequately explain ultimate reality, it will at some point **contradict** its own truth claims.



“The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is at bottom, no design, no purpose, no **evil** and no **good**, nothing but blind pitiless indifference.”

-Richard Dawkins

Q4: What contradicts internally?



However, Dawkins wrote and narrated a documentary titled *The Rood of All Evil?*, which became the basis for his bestselling book *The God Delusion*, in which he decries religion as "**divisive** and **dangerous**."

In an interview, Dawkins stated, "Faith is one of the world's great **evils**, comparable to the smallpox virus but harder to eradicate."

Q4: What contradicts internally?



He claims that there is no good or evil in the universe, but he also frequently claims religious belief is evil.

Q5: What Christianity offer?



A major issue with worldviews is that, while they offer a clear view of part of reality, they present a distorted view of the rest of reality.

- Naturalism greatly values **scientific** discovery and human rationality.
- Pantheism greatly values **spiritual** experience and human intuition.

Q5: What Christianity offer?



Both worldviews seem to neglect what the other emphasizes. They miss "both sides of the story."
Whereas Christianity tells both sides of every story.

Next Week:

Worldviews

