

LIVING  
WITH THE  
*Mind*  
OF  
JESUS  
*HOW BELIEFS SHAPE YOUR WORLDVIEW*

S. JOSEPH KIDDER  
& KATELYN CAMPBELL WEAKLEY

 **Pacific Press**<sup>®</sup>  
Publishing Association  
Nampa, Idaho | [www.pacificpress.com](http://www.pacificpress.com)

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## CHAPTER 1

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# THE ASSUMPTIONS THAT SHAPE OUR LIVES

*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world,  
but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know  
the things that have been freely given to us by God.*

—1 Corinthians 2:12

**O**nce, when I (Joseph), was pastoring, a woman who was in her early sixties from my church got sick. She ended up having to go to the hospital for several days. Unfortunately, I was out of town when she became ill and I was unaware of her sickness, but both my associate pastors visited with her every day. Numerous other people visited her as well: elders, deacons, and concerned church members. After a week, she was able to leave the hospital and go home.

When I returned to town, I heard through the grapevine that this woman was very upset with me. So I called her and asked her what was going on. “I heard you were upset with me. Is that true?”

She replied, “Yes, I was.”

I was a little taken aback. “Oh? Why?”

“Well,” she answered, “I was in the hospital for seven days and you did not visit me once!”

“I’m sorry, but I was out of town and didn’t know you were sick.” I thought a moment. “Did the associate pastors visit with you every day?”

“Yes, they did.”

“Did our deaconess Traci visit you?”

“Yes.”

“Did our head elder, Dave, come to visit you?”

“He did, yes.”

I mentioned ten other people, and she acknowledged they had all come to see her while she was in the hospital.

“I am so blessed,” she said. “I have a very loving church family.”

“When you went home,” I asked, “did people bring you food and help clean your house?”

“Yes, I never would have been able to make it without my church family!”

Finally, I scratched my head and asked her, “What’s the problem then?”

“It’s not the same!” She replied. “All those people are not the senior pastor! Their prayers are not the same as yours.”

To this woman, my prayers and my ministry were more important than the associate pastors’ and the many other people who visited her. Although she would likely have said that all believers are equal in the sight of God, the way she interpreted and engaged with the situation said otherwise. As a Seventh-day Adventist, she claimed belief in the priesthood of all believers. But in reality, she held a more hierarchical view of theological authority. This worldview—basic assumptions—manifests itself in many different ways in the church, giving its own answer to such questions as What is the role of the pastor? What is the role of the believers? And what is the role of the church?

\* \* \* \* \*

As a young girl, I (Katelyn), grew up hearing my mother say this phrase, “Assume good intentions.” This concept became an assumption for me as I saw my parents model behavior based out of this notion—that most people in the world are trying to do the best they can. As a result, I grew up believing the best of people. Rarely would I assume a deed was done with malicious intent, and with this presupposition serving as a building block for my worldview, I perceived people as genuinely good. While I admitted that people do bad things, I believed that, more often than not, people are kind and safe.

When I was in college, I realized that my outlook on the world was not a universal perspective. One day, a friend and I were walking down the street, and a truck roared past us, filled with several young men. “Hey!” they shouted and waved as they sped by us. “Hi!” I yelled back with a smile, reciprocating the wave. My friend turned and gave me a sharp look.

“Did you know them?”

## The Assumptions That Shape Our Lives

I shook my head. “No, I was just returning the friendliness.”

She stared at me in disbelief. “Why would you do that? What if they come back and want to do something bad to us now?”

I was equally shocked at her reaction. “Why would waving and saying hi make them do something like that?”

My friend and I operated out of different perceptions towards strangers, and this became evident based on our actions and reactions in this story. These differences in base assumptions affected how we engaged with the world around us as well as how we felt as we did so.

We can easily see that worldview affects all areas of life. There are many different religions based on different worldviews, and even within the same religion we see people who emphasize different beliefs. Politically, we can see worldview swaying citizens to identify as members of various political parties. Views on education, diet, careers, entertainment, and more are all based upon worldview. No part of life is untouched by it.

We all have a worldview, which influences our behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. There are two different sources for worldview: humanistic philosophy and the revelation of God as seen in Scripture. When we commit ourselves to a worldview whole heartedly, we truly begin to internalize it. Michael Palmer writes, “When people embrace a worldview, they commit themselves not just intellectually but also emotionally and spiritually.”<sup>1</sup> Some of our worldviews serve us well and some do not. If we are to truly follow Christ, then we should allow even our basic assumptions about the world and how it works to be influenced by Him.

### **WORLDVIEW DEFINED**

A person’s worldview<sup>2</sup> can be understood as the individual’s collection of beliefs about life and the world. Christian apologist James Sire defined worldview as “a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.”<sup>3</sup> These assumptions are what we use to navigate our understanding of the world, and while we may not even be aware of their presence in our lives, these assumptions influence how we engage with the world around us. Worldview is like a software that runs our minds, hearts, and lives. It is like a map that orients us.

Without it, we cannot interact with the world around us—we all operate out of a worldview.

Dr. Michael Palmer, a professor at Regent University, notes that “a worldview is a set of beliefs and practices that shape a person’s approach to the most important issues in life.”<sup>4</sup> Worldview answers life’s most important questions. Reformed Theological Seminary professor James Anderson says that “it reflects how you would answer all the ‘big questions’ of human existence, the fundamental questions we ask about life, the universe, and everything.”<sup>5</sup> And noted American evangelical pastor Francis Schaeffer wrote,

The Christian system (what is taught in the whole Bible) is a unity of thought. Christianity is not just a lot of bits and pieces—there is a beginning and an end, a whole system of truth, and this system is the only system that will stand up to all the questions that are presented to us as we face the reality of existence. Some of the other systems answer some of the questions, but leave others unanswered. I believe it is only Christianity that gives the answers to all the crucial questions.

What are those questions? The questions are those which are presented to us as we face the reality of existence.<sup>6</sup>

This includes questions of theology: who is God and what is He like? Questions of metaphysics: what is reality? Questions of epistemology: what is truth and how can I know anything at all? Questions of anthropology: who am I and why am I here? Questions of ethics: how should I live? Questions of evil: how did things get so bad? Questions of redemption: what is our hope for the problem of evil? Questions of afterlife: is there anything that lies beyond and if so, what? We find all of our answers to these questions—sometimes easily and sometimes with difficulty—through our personal worldviews. Theologian Abraham Kuyper described worldview, “As truly as every plant has a root, so truly does a principle hide under every manifestation of life. These principles are interconnected, and have their common root in a fundamental principle; and from the latter is developed logically and systematically the whole complex of ruling ideas and conceptions that go to make up our life and world-view.”<sup>7</sup> This system provides us with the answers we seek to navigate through life’s twists and turns as best we can.

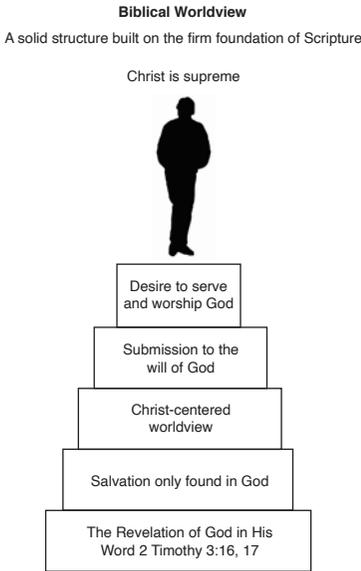
Most worldviews develop through the influence of culture: our upbringing, education, and environment.<sup>8</sup> German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (as paraphrased by James Sire) described worldview as “a set of mental categories arising from deeply lived experience which essentially determine how a person understands, feels and responds in action to what he or she perceives of the surrounding world and the riddles it presents.”<sup>9</sup> Essentially, worldview develops through our interactions with the world—how we behave toward our external environment and how it in turn behaves toward us. We are taught and impressed certain values and reactions. We are affirmed by those around us when we fit in with the way they dress, the way they speak, and the way they act. In a seminar presentation held at Andrews University in 2018, theologian and professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Kevin Vanhoozer stated, “The custodians of our culture are merchants of mind manipulation.”<sup>10</sup> This means that those who affect culture also affect the minds of those engaging with the culture. This is where most worldviews are crafted. Author Stephen Covey has also said, “We see the world, not as *it is*, but as *we are*—or, as we are conditioned to see it.”<sup>11</sup> What we allow ourselves to be influenced by ends up refocusing our outlook upon everything in the world.

Whether we acknowledge it or not, we are all affected by worldview. We need it, in fact, simply to navigate through life. It is a basic necessity, though sometimes our worldview may not serve us in the best way possible. There are many different worldviews in existence on planet Earth. However, we would like to propose that there is only one kind of worldview that holds all truth and provides us with the best life possible—a biblical worldview.

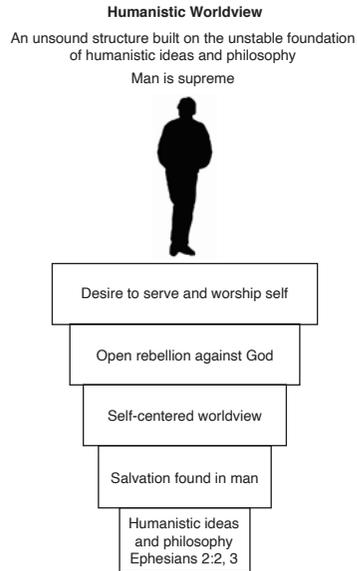
### **BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW**

We choose to define a biblical worldview as a way of thinking that identifies and explores the biblical paradigm, builds a biblical truth framework, develops a biblical philosophy of life, and evaluates any new input through the biblical worldview grid one has developed. Simply put, a biblical worldview is a Scripture-based outlook on life. James Sire notes that this type of worldview is necessarily rooted in who God is: “In the biblical worldview, in short, everything is first and foremost determined by the nature and character of God.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, knowing who God is directs our understanding of everything else.

A biblical worldview is based around a number of presuppositions about who God is. God is infinite and personal. God is triune and transcendent. God is imminent and omniscient. God is sovereign and good. God is holy, and God is love. These base principles concerning God’s character help form the basis by which the rest of the biblical worldview is developed.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 1—Biblical Worldview**



**Figure 2—Humanistic Worldview**

A biblical worldview is based on the Word of God, the Bible. By believing the Bible is true, we allow it to be the foundation of all we do and say. From this basic building block everything else can grow. This is a marked difference about a biblical worldview: it is based entirely on the external source of truth—God’s Word. While some worldviews may be based on what feels or seems right to the individual, a biblical worldview is based on what God says is right. “There is a way that seems right to a man,” quips Solomon, “but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12). However, as the psalmist writes, “[God’s] word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). Using God’s Word as the basis for worldview is the only wise decision. But what is it that makes a biblical worldview superior to others?

Let’s say that you are building a house. As you lay out your studs for the walls, you use the length of your arm to measure the distance between

them. On the other side of the house, someone else is doing the same thing except that they are measuring the distance by the length of their feet. It won't take long before you can see that the house is not turning out the way you imagined, and somehow you have gone through all the supplies you had and yet there is still much left unfinished. When building a house, you need an external reference point to help you measure so that what you *aim* to build is what you are *able* to build.

In life, we need an external reference point. Without such a reference point, chaos begins to reign in our lives. We can see this in both big and small ways in our lives today. In math and science, there are precise standards so that calculations done by one person can be mirrored by another. Governments create laws, external rules by which citizens must abide or they will face punishment—jails and prisons are full of people who did not adhere to standards. When you are pulled over for driving 58 miles per hour in a 45 miles per hour zone, you will likely receive a ticket for disobeying the external authority. In language, both written and verbal, there are rules that govern our communication to allow us to best understand one another. Even as you read this page, you can see that we have adhered to standard spelling practices so that you can comprehend what we write.

The book of Judges describes life without external standards when there was no authority to govern the Israelites. “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6). These were dark times for the nation of Israel, but their experience demonstrates for us our own need for an external authority. Therefore, our external authority must be found in Scripture. Ellen White wrote that “the Bible is to be presented as the word of the infinite God, as the end of all controversy and the foundation of all faith.”<sup>14</sup> This is the foundation of a biblical worldview.

Conversely, the humanistic worldview is based not upon an external authority but upon the self. As figure 2 (previous page) demonstrates, this serves as an unstable foundation that ultimately leads to self-worship. However, a worldview grounded in Scripture serves as a firm foundation that points us directly to God, our Source of salvation (see figure 1).

If we live by such a worldview, we will see life differently. Writer Don Closson describes the experience this way: “A healthy Christian worldview helps believers to avoid dividing the world into the sacred and secular; instead one learns to see all of life as part of God's creation and possessing

a sacred aspect. Our culture tends to separate facts and values; it claims that only science creates facts that are to be universally acknowledged while moral values are personal and limited in scope. A Christian worldview recognizes that biblical values are meant for all people everywhere and are not limited by culture or time.”<sup>15</sup>

There are many examples in Scripture of God inviting His people to change their perspective to adopt His own worldview. One such story can be found in Matthew 4:19, where Jesus calls His new disciples Peter and Andrew, “Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’” Jesus wanted to change the views of these fishermen from things of earth to things of heaven. Ultimately, this is what Jesus wants to do in all of our hearts and minds: He seeks to change our worldview to be more kingdom-oriented. He knows that such a shift would be for our own good. It was true for the disciples back then, and it is true for us today. With a biblical worldview, our lives really do begin to change.

#### **REASONS FOR HAVING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW**

Influencing our theology, lifestyle, and practice, everything in our lives is impacted by worldview. By allowing God to adjust your worldview to a biblical worldview, you will experience some positive changes. Barna Research has found that those who have a biblical worldview are five times less likely to use tobacco products, nine times more likely to avoid adult-only material online, and three times more likely to avoid a movie due to objectionable content. Likewise, people with a biblical worldview are, in a typical week, two-and-a-half times more likely to read the Bible, two times more likely to attend a church service, and two times more likely to volunteer time to help the needy. In addition, a person who holds a biblical worldview is 54 percent more likely to have an orthodox view of God.<sup>16</sup>

Using a biblical worldview also allows you to see the world more clearly. When the Israelites were surrounded by the Syrians, Elisha’s servant feared for their lives. But Elisha knew better than to fear because his worldview allowed him to trust in what he could not physically see. But to encourage his servant, “Elisha prayed, and said, ‘LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Kings 6:17). The world—including its history, the suffering of people, and individual purpose—looks a whole lot different when we use the lens of a biblical worldview.

In addition, taking on a biblical worldview means taking on the mind of Jesus. It means His hopes and dreams become your hopes and dreams; His vision for the world becomes your vision; and His love for people becomes your love. When you start living out of a biblical worldview, you are more likely to carry out God's commands and commissions, obeying His wishes and serving others. You are more likely to live as citizens of His kingdom, by living with godly character and clinging faithfully to Christ.

Along this topic, Ellen White writes in *Steps to Christ*, "Those who become new creatures in Christ Jesus will bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' Galatians 5:22, 23. They will no longer fashion themselves according to the former lusts, but by the faith of the Son of God they will follow in His steps, reflect His character, and purify themselves even as He is pure."<sup>17</sup> Essentially, when we take on a biblical worldview, we are better able to become reflectors and partakers of His character, becoming the people God desires us to be.

In Colossians 3, Paul writes about this transformative experience that results from taking on the mind of Christ (see Philipians 2:5). Colossians 3:1, 2 state, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." If you wish to follow Christ, you must set your mind in the same fashion as Christ. When you do this, action begins to follow. "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do" (verses 12, 13). This is what it looks like to have a biblical worldview. When the mind is patterned after Christ, the whole person follows suit.

When we truly begin engaging in and operating out of a biblical worldview, even our experience within Christianity begins opening up in new ways. Author David Naugle writes, "The notion of worldview has a mysterious way of opening up the parameters of the Bible so that believers might be delivered from a fishbowl-sized Christianity into an oceanic perspective on the faith."<sup>18</sup> This is the type of faith God desires us to have, one that is open to seeing and understanding Him as our Creator and Redeemer. This kind of faith, expanded by an

authentic biblical understanding, breathes life into doctrine, reveals the true gospel, and deepens our connection to God. It allows us to better interpret history, correctly comprehend the great controversy, and more fully understand our final destiny. This is the faith founded in a biblical worldview.

## **CONCLUSION**

We are all impacted and influenced by our worldviews—sometimes for the better, and sometimes for the worse. If we are not aware of our own natural assumptions and inclinations, we may end up making poor decisions or believing falsehoods. Paul warns in Colossians 2:8, “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ” (NIV).

Instead, we are called to pattern our minds after the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5), using Scripture as the basis for our perspectives. This is done, Ellen White tells us, through the leavening work of God.

The leaven hidden in the flour works invisibly to bring the whole mass under its leavening process; so the leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are roused to action in new lines. Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties he has are sanctified. The conscience is awakened. We are endowed with traits of character that enable us to do service for God.<sup>19</sup>

It is God’s desire that we surrender every part of ourselves—including our basic worldview perceptions—so that our lives may be molded to resemble Jesus Christ. From our rudimentary assumptions to our everyday actions, God sees all of it as significant and wishes to be the primary influencer in our lives. If we allow Jesus to be Lord of our worldview, which touches every part of our hearts, minds, and deeds, then we will find a true, new life in Him.

## The Assumptions That Shape Our Lives

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