



WORLDVIEW MADE PRACTICAL
Volume 17 Number 9
March 2, 2022

The Thread That Runs Through Every Aspect of Our Christian Life

By Freddy Davis

People who are amateurs, in whatever field, generally have a superficial knowledge of that discipline. But people who are true experts not only have a lot of knowledge, they also understand the various implications that exist related to the field. For instance:

- I can go into the kitchen and cook up a pretty decent meal – as long as I have a good recipe. But someone like Bobby Flay can knowledgeably imagine scores of ways to create and enhance a dish by combining various flavors and textures that would never even occur to me.
- I can go out on the golf course and play a round of golf – and sometimes even have a pretty good round. But someone like Bubba Watson can not only hit the ball well pretty much every time he swings the club, he can also imagine (and execute) multiple ways of accomplishing about any shot he wants to hit in ways that I would never even dream of.

Did you know that this same principle applies to our Christian lives? There are scores of people who are self-identified Christians, who go to church, and have a certain amount of knowledge about the Bible. But the truth is, most of those people, and I don't think I am being unfair by saying most, don't have the depth of understanding that allows them to see many of the deep implications of biblical truth as it applies to every situation in life. It is not that they are not capable of doing it, they have just never invested the time and effort required to make it a reality.

Today, I want to help you conceptualize that a little bit. Of course, grasping these concepts will not cause you to automatically become a deep, spiritually mature, Bible scholar. But it can give you a roadmap to take you much further down that road.

First, what we are dealing with here does not refer primarily to our theological beliefs – though that is an integral part of it. You see, person's theological beliefs rest on top of another set of beliefs that are even more basic. Theological beliefs are the identifiable beliefs that most people point to when asked what they believe. But, for a Christian, for instance, our belief in the God of the Bible does not represent the bottom-line foundation of our beliefs. In fact, belief in God doesn't even make sense if a person has an underlying belief that the natural universe is all that exists. For Christianity to make sense, there has to be an underlying belief that a God exists in a place that transcends the natural universe.

The implication here is, if we want to truly gain the depth of understanding that will take us to a deeper level of spiritual maturity, we need to understand not only our surface theological beliefs, but also those underlying concepts – our worldview beliefs. Yes, worldview beliefs are the thread that winds through every part of our faith life to tie it all together.

Defining the Thread

Definition

So just what is a worldview? A worldview is the assumptions people make about the nature of reality. Now while this may sound somewhat complicated, it is actually rather straightforward. To get at its meaning, there are two concepts within the definition that we need to tease out.

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The first is the word "assumptions." An assumption is simply a belief that seems so obvious that it is hard to imagine that someone would not believe it. We don't even question it. We just presume it to be true.

The second concept we need to grasp from the definition is the "nature of reality." The distinction we are making here has to do with distinguishing between what we consider to be real versus what we consider to be fantasy.

So to put it all together, a worldview is a set of beliefs that seem so obviously true, that we never even question it. If we consider a given worldview belief to be true, to us it is real. If we consider it to be false, it is fantasy.

Just to give one example: If you believe in God and someone tells you God does not exist, you will consider that person's statement to be fantasy – and may even wonder how they can believe such a thing. By the same token, if you were to tell an Atheist that you believe in God, they will consider your belief to be fantasy and even wonder how you can believe that.

Worldview Essentials

In order to get down to the nitty-gritty of any given set of worldview beliefs, it is necessary to answer what we refer to as the Three Essential Worldview Questions. We answer those questions based on the beliefs of that worldview. Doing that gives us the core beliefs of the worldview that cannot be violated and one still remain within that worldview category. The use of these three questions becomes the thread that holds an understanding of faith together.

So exactly what are these three questions? The questions are:

1. What is the nature of ultimate reality?
2. What is a human being?
3. What is the ultimate one can achieve in this life?

Every worldview has its own unique answers to those three questions. Answer any one differently and you have moved out of one worldview and into another. Let's take a look now to see how the use of these questions unifies the diversity that exists within our faith.

Where the Thread Winds:

With this background, it is now possible to see how an understanding of worldview fits into the totality of our Christian faith. It provides us with a unifying thread that binds all of the elements of our faith together.

Christian Worldview

First, if you want to get to the bottom line beliefs of the Christian faith, what you have to do is answer the three essential worldview questions the way the Bible answers them. So here's what that looks like.

1. What is the nature of ultimate reality? Ultimate reality in Christian Theism (biblical Christianity) is represented by the God of the Bible.

2. What is a human being?

The biblical view of humanity is that humans were created in the image of God, but are fallen.

3. What is the ultimate one can achieve in this life?

We refer to the Christian ultimate as salvation. This ultimate is to enter into a personal relationship with God by grace through faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

Witness

The next element the thread ties in has to do with the act of sharing our faith with people who don't know Christ. It has to do with the very core message of our witness.

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Contact Information

If you wish to contact us directly, you may do so by the following methods:

321 Anton Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312

E-mail:

info@marketfaith.org

Phone: 850-383-9756 (Tallahassee, Florida)

Fax: 850-514-4571

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So when we want to share our faith, what exactly is the message we are wanting to share? Well, it is the core beliefs of the Christian worldview. Thus, when you share a witness, all you are doing is sharing the answers to the three essential worldview questions according to how the Bible answers them.

Apologetics

The third place our unifying thread runs is in Apologetics. Apologetics is the art of defending our faith. When people oppose our faith, for whatever reason, it is incumbent upon us to respond with reasonable answers. Essentially, what we attempt to explain in our answers is why our (the Bible's) answers to the three essential questions are true and other answers are not.

Traditionally, Christian apologetics has been approached purely from a defensive posture (Non-believers ask the questions and we answer). And certainly, this is all well and good when the people asking the questions are willing to listen to our answers. However, increasingly that is not the situation we find ourselves in. In modern society, there are increasing attacks on our faith from people who hold different beliefs and are not interested in hearing the Christian answers at all.

In those cases, it becomes useful to approach apologetics from an offensive posture. The way we do that is to first recognize the beliefs of

the person doing the attacking. They have their own unique way of answering the questions that are different from, and contrary to, the biblical answers. Rather than just passively trying to answer their questions, it is possible to question their beliefs by pointing out the flaws in their answers to the three questions.

Understanding Other Faiths

There is another place that our thread runs, and this one is tied closely to the previous one. If we want to be able to take an offensive posture when dealing with people who hold antagonistic, unbiblical beliefs, we need to know what they believe. We get that information by asking the three worldview questions and answering them according to their beliefs. Once again it is the three questions that provide us with the means for this kind of understanding.

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Living out Our Faith in Daily Life

One final place the thread runs is in the life we live day-to-day out in the world. The Christian faith is not just about what we know, it is about who we become. The Bible expresses a particular set of morals and values that we are called upon to live by. The Bible is not merely a book of moral rules, it is God's revelation of Himself and His ways. As Christians, we are called by God to grow into His likeness. But to do that, it is necessary to know what that is. By recognizing the implications of the Bible's teachings about its answers to the three essential worldview questions, we gain an understanding of what that looks like.

Unity in diversity

There is, indeed, a certain amount of diversity within the bounds of our faith life. That diversity includes understanding our own beliefs, knowing how to effectively share our faith, knowing how to effectively defend our faith, how to knowledgeably interact with people who adhere to other faiths, and living out our faith in daily life. The thread that ties all of this together into a unified whole is our understanding of worldview concepts.