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A Worldview Perspective on Bible Study

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Bible study is a very common practice among Christians and there are a lot of different ways to go about it. Some of the more popular approaches include:

- Using a devotional resource
- Dedicated Bible study (Sunday School) material
- Guided reading plan - (One year plan, topical plan, ...)
- Meditative study
- Word study
- Topical study
- Character study
- Geographical study
- Book study

But there is another type that is possible, and one that is very needed in modern times because of the fact there are so many false beliefs these days competing with our biblical worldview beliefs. That other type is "Worldview Study."

Why Do We Need a Worldview Perspective?

Worldview beliefs are bedrock foundational beliefs that determine, for every person, how they evaluate what is real vs. what is fantasy. It is the most basic foundation for their religious beliefs.

By definition, a worldview is "the assumptions people make about the nature of reality." As an assumption, worldview beliefs are generally believed without analysis – they are just assumed to be true. This makes them a bit tricky for most people because they are pretty much unconscious. If you consider some belief to be fantasy, you won't even view it as a possibility to be believed.

But since people's worldview is mostly unconscious, it is also easy for other beliefs to sneak in and become part of their worldview system. That happens because people hear a certain belief being asserted, and if it seems to come from a credible source, or if enough people claim it is true, they will accept it without ever consciously considering whether or not it is actually true. Thus, many Christians end up adding beliefs to their worldview platform that are not actually biblical beliefs.

Most Christians are aware that there is such a thing as a biblical worldview, and know it is the belief set revealed in the Bible. At the same time, they don't know how to specifically identify the beliefs that can be labeled "Worldview Beliefs." That said, it is actually a fairly easy type of study to do, so let's consider how this works.

Worldview Perspective Vs. Traditional Perspective

At this point, you may be wondering how a worldview perspective is different from the approach to understanding Christian beliefs that has traditionally been used. Traditionally, Christian discipleship has dealt with this matter by first assuming that the Bible is true, and simply searching out all the doctrines in the Bible that make up the Christian faith.

Now don't get this wrong; there is nothing wrong with that approach. That kind of study is important to get an overall picture of Christian beliefs.

However, in our modern pluralistic society, we need to add to that. We live in a society that is permeated with many false beliefs from various sources. Because of that, not only do we need to have a big picture under-

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Worldview Resources

It is one of the primary purposes of **MarketFaith Ministries** to provide resources to help Christians understand the practical implications of worldview. You can find many free resources that will help you in your quest at <http://www.marketfaith.org>.

standing of Christian beliefs, we also need to be able to carefully distinguish biblical beliefs from false, non-biblical beliefs (many of which may even be reasonable sounding on the surface). So, instead of only studying Christian doctrine, we need to also become aware of what constitutes the essential beliefs of a worldview system in general, and focus in specifically on those beliefs.

Essentials Vs. Non-essentials

This brings us to one other distinction we need to make – essential vs. non-essential beliefs. The truth is, there are a lot of doctrines that are a part of the Christian faith that are not worldview essentials. This does NOT mean they are unimportant, they actually are. What it does mean is that they are not a part of the core set of doctrines that are essential to the faith. There are doctrines a person can get completely wrong and still be saved. Perhaps the place we can most easily see this dynamic is in the different churches and denominations that are still solidly Christian, but believe different things regarding matters not directly connected to a person's salvation.

So, What Are the Essentials?

In a nutshell, the essentials relate specifically to the doctrinal elements of a faith system that identify the outer lines around it. Any belief inside the lines are a part of it, and any that don't fit within it belong to some other faith system.

In generic terms, the line is drawn by finding the answer to three particular questions. Every faith system in existence can answer these three questions. This fact also gives us a means of comparing and contrasting the various ones. The questions are:

1. What is the nature of ultimate reality?

2. What is a human being?

3. What is the ultimate a person can gain from this life?

For the Christian faith, we can simplify these questions in a way that helps us as we consider how to study the Bible using a worldview paradigm.

1. Who is God?

2. What is man?

3. What is salvation and how do we achieve it?

As mentioned before, there are a lot of doctrines in the Christian faith other than the three listed here. Those others constitute the non-essentials – those that do not directly relate to our salvation.

How to Do Bible Study Using a Worldview Perspective

Using a worldview perspective to do Bible study is actually quite simple. All we do is read the Bible and, as we read, note how it answers the three essential worldview questions.

Obviously the text deals with a lot of other matters besides the topics of these three questions. This fact lets us know that not every verse is going to deal with these three questions. Those other topics become the focus of other types of studies, as was mentioned above. But in doing a worldview study, these three are all we are dealing with. These are the topics that get us to the essential core beliefs of a biblical worldview.

The primary designations used to do this kind of study include the following:

God (Ultimate Reality) = Something in the text relates to the nature of ultimate reality.

Man = Something in the text relates to the nature of a human being.

Salvation= Something in the text relates to the ultimate a person can experience in life.

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As we study in this way, in order to drill down as deeply as possible, we also need to note particular subcategories within each of the three designations.

God (Ultimate Reality)

In Scripture, God is spoken of in a number of different ways. In order to truly understand the fullness of what is taught, we must tease out those distinctions. Thus, when we read the Bible, we are specifically looking for the different ways God has revealed Himself. The various subcategories we find include:

- Generic use of the word God - There are many places where God is spoken of simply as "God" with no other designation.
- God/Father - There are various places where God is referred to as "Father."
- God/Son - There are various places where God is referred to as "Son."
- God/Holy Spirit - There are various places where God is referred to as "Holy Spirit."
- Transcendent Reality - One other category about ultimate reality is not specifically about God Himself, but about the spiritual reality that exists outside the material realm. This is also an element of ultimate reality, and noting this part of God's revelation helps us more fully understand Him.

Thus, when you read Scripture, note what it teaches about God using these categories. By doing that, you will zero in on a biblical worldview understanding of God.

Man

When it comes to man, we have the same type of dynamic we had with God. There is more than one aspect

to man's existence revealed in Scripture. Specifically, the Bible reveals that there are two important aspects of human existence we must grapple with.

Many people begin their religious beliefs with the concept that human beings are essentially good, and that sin only comes into the picture when they do bad things. The Bible has an entirely different view of man and reveals him as made in God's image, but fallen.

- Made in the image of God - Being made in the image of God does not mean human beings physically look like God. Rather, they were created with the personhood characteristics that make up God's personhood. There are various places in the Bible where these characteristics are spoken of.
- Fallen – Rather than being essentially good, human beings have a sin nature that inclines them to sin. This is an internal problem rather than an external one. There are various places in the Bible where human fallen nature is described and expressed.

Salvation

When it comes to salvation, many people think of it as simply a one time event where a person receives Christ into their life by uttering a prayer of repentance. But biblical salvation is not an event, it is a process that is explained by the words justification, sanctification, and glorification.

- Justification - Justification represents the point at which a person initially enters into a personal relationship with God, and He forgives their sin based on the atoning death and the resurrection of Christ. There are various places in the Bible where this element of the salvation process is spoken of.

- Sanctification - The sanctification element of salvation begins the moment a person receives Christ, and continues until the end of their mortal life. It is characterized by the spiritual growth that occurs as a person lives their life in relationship to Christ. There are various places in the Bible where this sanctification process is revealed.
- Glorification - Glorification occurs at physical death and represents a believers entry into eternity where the sin nature is removed and a person lives eternally in the very presence of Christ. There are various places in Scripture where this part of the salvation process is explained.

Worldview Bible Study

It should be clearly noted that ANY and EVERY kind of Bible study is good and important. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself and His ways to mankind. Every approach to study will provide unique insights as we seek to know God as fully as we possibly can.

Thus, using worldview concepts is not intended to replace any other study method. It is intended to be added to those already in use. That said, using a worldview approach is not one of the traditional methods taught to people desiring to do Bible study – and it should be. This approach will give insights into the essential core elements of biblical Christianity in ways that none of the others can. The knowledge gained from this kind of study gives us some of the clearest understanding possible about the essence of the Christian faith. It will be a valuable tool for you to add to your Bible study toolbox.

[Note: To date MarketFaith Ministries has written several Bible commentaries that use this worldview Bible study system. Anyone interested in these commentaries can find them at: <https://marketfaith-org.3dcartstores.com>]

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