

How Do You See Your World? [Slide 1]

He is still the most read scientific author in the world. He earned the Pulitzer Prize and was official adviser to NASA on the Mariner, Voyager, and Viking unmanned space missions. He was a handsome, brilliant, articulate speaker who was able to take complex scientific ideas and bring them down to a popular level. He was awarded the Peabody Award and an Emmy for his stunningly influential television series, *Cosmos*. His name was Carl Sagan and he died of a blood disorder in 1996.

He propagated the world view of naturalism which asserts that only what can be seen or observed in the material world actually exists. According to naturalism, nothing exists outside the material universe. As the show *Cosmos* begins Carl Sagan stands with crashing surf in the background and says, “The cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.” At that moment Carl Sagan was not speaking as a scientist, but as a philosopher. True science is incapable of making such an assertion. Since science can only investigate the natural world, it is incapable of saying one way or another whether a supernatural world exists. Carl Sagan viewed all of reality through the lens of naturalism and that naturalistic worldview influenced what he communicated to others.

[Slide 2] Consider the contrast between Carl Sagan and King David from the Bible. When King David looked up at the stars he said, “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?” When Carl Sagan looked up at the stars he concluded that the cosmos was all there is and was and will be. How did two people looking at the same evidence draw such different conclusions? Their conclusions were determined by the initial set of beliefs they held, by their world view. Carl Sagan held a naturalistic world view, King David a theistic world view.

Today we begin a ten week series on world views. Primarily we are going to investigate the Biblical world view and see how it views life, truth, and morality differently from other world views. All the children and youth Sunday School classes, the Adult Bible Fellowships, and the life groups will cover similar world view material.

[Slide 3] Let me define world view for you. A world view is a set of beliefs a person holds about reality, about truth, and morality that are often unproven and simply assumed to be true. We all have some kind of world view, the only question is: what is that world view?

You can think of a world view as being like a pair of sunglasses that color how you see everything. If you wear blue sunglasses you see everything in shades of blue. If you wear orange sunglasses, you see everything in shades of orange. Whatever your world view, it will determine how you perceive the world around you.

Darrell Johnson, drawing on James Sire’s book, *the Universe Next Door*, came up with a series of questions which he says every worldview is asking and trying to answer. I’ve listed those questions on your outline. What is reality? Who or what are we as a human being? Is there such a thing as morality and what is its basis? Is there any meaning to history? What is wrong with us? What is the solution to our problem? Is there a God and can he be known? What happens to us after death? Where are we in the flow of history? Your world view is determined by how you answer these questions.

[Slide 4] Why are we making such a concerted effort to teach this concept? It is because ideas have significant consequences. Your world view not only determines what you believe, it

influences how you behave and how you make decisions. It will determine whether you obey God or disobey him. You and your children are bombarded with false world views through TV, movies, music, entertainment, and education. A river of falsehood flows constantly around you and if you are not certain of the Biblical world view, you will be swept away into lies and falsehood. The more our culture buys into false world views the uglier and more ungodly life will become around us. You are already seeing ample evidence of that reality.

I want to provide you with four examples of how world views affect behavior and even the whole culture. Let's begin with the most personal example and the one that hits closest to home. George Barna conducted a survey back in 2003 in which he determined that only 9% of self-described born-again Christians had a biblical world view. He found that only 2% who attended mainline Protestant churches and less than 1/2 of 1% of Catholics had a biblical world view. Barna defined a biblical world view as believing that absolute moral truths exist, those truths are defined by the Bible, Jesus lived a sinless life, God is the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator, God still rules today, salvation is a gift that cannot be earned, Satan is real, a Christian has a responsibility to share their faith in Christ, and the Bible is accurate in its teachings. That was Barna's definition of a Biblical world view. Only 9% of all born again believers could agree with that whole list.

Now, you have heard all the horrible statistics about how Christians are no different from the world in their behavior. That is true until you compare Christians with a biblical world view with everyone else without a biblical world view. Then the contrast is striking. People with a biblical world view are 31 times less likely to accept cohabitation, 18 times less likely to endorse drunkenness, 15 times less likely to condone gay sex, 12 times less likely to accept profanity, and 11 times less likely to describe adultery as morally acceptable. Less than 1/2 of 1% of those with a Biblical world view endorsed abortion versus 46% of adults without a Biblical world view. Those who hold a Biblical world view are twice as likely to volunteer time to help needy people.

What does that evidence tell you? It tells you that what distinguishes believers from nonbelievers in their behavior is not a salvation experience or involvement in church, but whether they hold a biblical world view. It tells you that the vast majority of religious people, even truly born-again Christians do not have a biblical world view. It is why most people in the church do not look much different from people outside the church, because in what really matters, their world views, there is not that much difference between the two groups. Most Christians are conformed to the world's way of thinking. We have not been transformed in our minds by the Word of God and therefore by and large we act no differently from those who are not believers. That's why world view is so important and why we are making such a big deal about it.

Let me give you a second example of the influence of world view. World magazine published an article on our nation's opioid epidemic. Opioids are highly addictive, man-made morphine like pain relievers such as oxycodone, Percocet, and hydrocodone. At high dosages they depress the respiratory system and can cause death. Last year 46,000 Americans died from overdoses of opioids. About 5 million have become addicted through illegal abuse of prescription opioids.

A world view change precipitated this problem. I quote from World magazine the August 6 issue. Read. What is the basis for freedom of pain being a universal human right? Let me rephrase the question. Who determines what is a human right and what is not: God or man? At one point we used to believe that God was the one who endowed us with certain inalienable

rights as stated in our Declaration of Independence. That world view has changed. Now most Americans apparently believe that humans determine what is a human right, whether it be freedom from pain, the right to gay marriage, or the right to abortion. If you were to consult God as to whether he has actually granted those human rights by seeing what the Word of God says about them, you would come up with an entirely different perspective.

I will provide one last example of how world view changes behavior on a massive scale. We could spend all day discussing examples, but our time is limited. Marxism is a world view. Karl Marx addressed the issue of social justice noting the wide disparity in income between people. He believed the problem was due to those who controlled the economic resources and production of the nation rather than social injustice being a sin problem rooted in human hearts. His solution was to turn over the control of the production to the working people and to have everyone share in common by abolishing private property and having the State own everything.

Of course, those who already had the money would resist his plan, but that was no problem because Marx was an atheist. For him and for his intellectual offspring, the communists, there was no problem in either killing or forcibly taking what the wealthy had because there was no God to judge them or hold them accountable for their actions. After all, they were pursuing social justice weren't they? Thus was spawned communist Russia, China, Vietnam, Cambodia and other nations.

A funny thing happened on the way to social justice. The working people really never got ahead. The Communist Party leaders and officials ended up owning and using most of what they took from the wealthy because, you see, some people are more equal than others. Because the real problem of social injustice is rooted in the heart of all men rather than in society or in one class of people, the people ended up merely trading one oppressor for another. However, the cost in human lives and wasted potential has been enormous. The Russian, Chinese and Cambodian communists conducted genocide on their own people and atheistic Marxism has killed more people than any other worldview.

Ironically, what you continually here today from the elites in our country is that the great evil facing America comes from religious people, that we are somehow a threat to the well-being of the nation. The reality is that non-religious people have butchered far more people in the last century than any fundamentalists ever have, even if we include the Islamic fundamentalists of today. World views change the course of history and false world views wreak havoc and destruction on people.

Let's consider our responsibility according to the Bible to be champions of God's truth. Championing God's truth requires us to play both defense and offense in the arena of ideas.

[Slide 5] On defense we should critically examine beliefs before we accept them. Look at Colossians 2:8 on your sermon outline. Read. The first verb in that sentence is a present imperative. It is a command that needs to be continuously carried out. Keep on seeing to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception. Avoiding falsehood is a permanent task. It never ends because the Enemy never stops spewing out falsehood.

One of the common tactics Satan uses in his arsenal is to present his lies as intellectual and God's truth as backwards and out of date. He presents his philosophies as "Science" and Biblical ideas as myth. He presents his immorality as "tolerant" and "compassionate" and biblical morality as "intolerant and phobic." These are all ad-hominem attacks. They are directed at you as a person, rather than at your argument, because most people are incapable of carrying on a serious discussion of issues where they have to provide supporting evidence for their beliefs and construct logical arguments, so most people will quickly degenerate to name-calling and

attacking your character. They think that by merely calling someone a homophobe or a religious bigot that they have automatically won the argument. You should know that anyone who argues that way really doesn't have good arguments.

Don't be intimidated. When I get to the sermon on how do you know what you know is true, I will talk further about how you can respond.

Paul refers to philosophy and empty deception according to the traditions of men. The word philosophy comes from philos, "love of" and Sophia, "wisdom." Literally philosophy means love of wisdom and if it referred to God's wisdom that would be a very good thing, but historically philosophy has stood for man's wisdom. Philosophy has, as its source, human knowledge and reason. That is in contrast to godly wisdom that has, as its source, God's revelation. Human philosophy is limited and flawed because its source, the human mind, is limited and flawed by sin. Not everything human philosophy comes up with is inaccurate or morally wrong, but apart from God's revelation it inevitably goes astray.

Empty deception refers not just to something that is false but the Greek word for empty can mean vain or ineffectual. False world views simply do not work because they misdiagnose reality. Communism never worked as an economic system. It made Russia essentially a third world economic nation with a first class nuclear arsenal. Centralized planning was so inefficient and so corrupt that Russia could never economically keep up with the West. Communist China has added capitalistic ideas to their system to try to avoid the fate of their Russian counterparts.

Paul says that philosophy and empty deception is according to the elementary principles of the world. Most likely Paul is referring to the fundamental principles of the world system or what I have defined as world view. Those fundamental principles would be the answers to the nine questions I posed at the beginning of the sermon. Is truth absolute or relative like the world teaches? Does God exist or not? What is the source of man's problem? The world's answers to these questions contradict God's answers. The world does not look to Jesus or his word for their answers. They look to their own human reason. If you listen to them, you will be led away from Christ.

[Slide 6] God does not just call us to just play defense. He also calls us to play offense. We should challenge beliefs that undercut the truth. Look at 2 Cor. 10:3-5 on your outline. Let's read that. Read.

Paul uses the metaphor of warfare to describe how we challenge falsehood, but he is quick to clarify that he is not talking in fleshly terms. We don't physically fight, intimidate, or pressure those who hold opposing views. Our weapons are not of the flesh. We are armed with the truth and the Spirit of God. We speak the truth and trust the Spirit of God to convince. We rely on the fruit of the Spirit such as gentleness, kindness, goodness, self-control, love, peacefulness to speak the truth, but we don't blunt the truth. We don't hide the truth. We speak the truth and God's truth does its work of destroying speculations and all the lofty, prideful things raised against the knowledge of God. We are to take captive every thought to the obedience of Christ, not letting that thought out again unless it submits to Christ's truth.

Most of us don't do offense well at all. Read stats from Americans Don't Like Discussing Religion. So, if only 10 % of all evangelicals try to convince other people to change their mind about their beliefs, are we surprised that our culture is becoming more and more secularized and ungodly? Unchurched people like to trot out this mirage that Christians try to impose their beliefs upon others. Why, 90% of us won't even try to persuade people to our point of view much less try to impose our beliefs. Our culture is acting like crazy to impose their beliefs on us and then they make out that we are the intolerant ones!

[Slide 7] I'm going to close with some basic suggestions about how to navigate among opposing beliefs. I'll flesh out these suggestions in upcoming sermons and give examples to go with them. When you are confronted with what you suspect is a belief system different from yours, think through the full implications of that belief system. Here are some of the questions to ask: What are the consequences of this system if it were carried to its logical conclusion and can you live with those conclusions? For example, if materialists say we are just a machine and nothing more, would we really want to be treated like a machine? Would the materialist really want to be treated like a machine?

Another question to ask is whether a person can live consistently with their stated world view. For example, the atheist Richard Dawkins claims that the logical consequence of naturalism and Evolution is that there is no design, no purpose, no evil, no good; nothing but blind, pitiless indifference. But then he goes on to write books and articles in which he argues against the evils of religion and the need to promote accurate science education. Wait, he just said there is no such thing as evil if there is no God, so how can religion be evil? Why should we promote accurate science education when according to his view, the whole world is blindly ignorant? Why should we be any different? He doesn't live what he says he believes. That means he is either not a true believer, or his world view is unsustainable in real life.

Ask whether the belief system matches and explains objective reality. Ask whether the belief system is compatible with Scripture. These questions help you critically evaluate what you're hearing.

[Slide 8] Besides asking questions of the belief system, demand evidence. Ask the person what kind of evidence they have that their belief is true. Make sure this evidence can be substantiated by other people. People refer to scientific studies all the time, but if you don't know how the study was conducted, what kind of controls were used, how the data was collected, it could be junk science for all you know. Just because someone uses the word, "Science", doesn't prove a thing. Most people just parrot what they have heard others say. Ask them some of those questions about methodology to see if they even know how the experiment was conducted.

[Slide 9] We're going to equip you in the next ten weeks to think Biblically. If you have any questions, write them down on your connection card, and if I can work it into one of the sermons I will try to answer it. I would recommend that you attend both an ABF and a life group during this time if you can. The ABF's and life groups will not be covering identical material or questions, so you will learn from many different angles if you hear the sermon and are involved in one of those groups. All the ABF's will cover the same material. The life groups will cover different material than the ABF's but the same material in each life group, so it really does matter which group you attend. You can find a listing of life groups at the information counter on the left as you exit the sanctuary as well as a listing of the Adult Bible Fellowship locations.

The children, youth, and adults are all going through this material together at age appropriate levels so take advantage of the opportunity as a family to discuss some of these things. Let's pray.