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Worldview as Worship: The Dynamics of a Transformative Christian Education

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Worldviewing: What Is a Worldview?

The most important things . . . we can know about a man is what he takes for granted, and the most elemental and important facts about a society are those that are seldom debated and generally regarded as settled.

—Louis Wirth, Ideology and Utopia

It is a warm August morning, and like thousands of Christian schools throughout the country, the administration, faculty, and staff of Mt. Carmel Christian School gathers in the chapel to begin its annual faculty orientation sessions. Many of the teachers arrive early to help themselves to coffee, juice, and donuts and to take time to get reacquainted with colleagues they have not seen since the end of the previous school year. The five new faculty members, who were required to report to school two days earlier for New Faculty Orientation, huddle together feeling a bit anxious and out of place. For most of them, this is their first teaching job. Occasionally, a veteran member of the faculty or one of the administrators or staff they met earlier in the week greets them and welcomes them to the school. Most of the teachers know that introductions will be coming, so they wait until the group introduction to make personal acquaintance with the new members.

Mt. Carmel is an established Christian school of about six hundred students in grades kindergarten through twelve. The school has been in existence for just over twenty-five years, starting out as an extension of a local church and eventually growing into its own facilities, becoming an independent, nondenominational school about twenty years ago. Mt. Carmel is directed by Dr. Sage Solomon, who has served as superintendent for the last seven years, having started as a teacher in the early years of the school. The rest of the administrative team consists of Dr. Paul Paraclete, the high school principal, and the elementary school principal, Mr. Edward Edify. At last spring's annual Faculty-Board Dinner a number of the faculty received twenty- and twenty-five-year service awards, a testimony to the stability and reputation of the school. Mt. Carmel is known in the area for its excellent facilities, its high academic standards, and its diligence in teaching all subject areas in light of the Word of God. This year's five new teachers represent something of an anomaly. The school has not had this many new teachers in several years.
Faculty Orientation Week is fairly standard at Mt. Carmel. Veteran teachers who have experienced this week several times wonder why they must go through a review of policies and procedures each year, and sometimes they find their minds wandering to the more pressing concerns of getting their classrooms ready for the start of classes next week. There are lesson plans to write, boxes to unpack, bulletin boards to put up, and a myriad of other tasks that need to be done to get the school year off to a good start. Each year, however, the administration plans some type of in-service activity for orientation week. Dr. Solomon places a high priority on the professional development of his faculty. In the past he has arranged for experts to present training sessions on teaching methods, critical thinking, cooperative learning strategies, curriculum alignment, assessment, and other relevant topics in an attempt to enhance the expertise of the faculty. While not all the presenters have been dynamic or practical, for the most part, the faculty appreciates Solomon's efforts and have benefited from the in-service sessions.

After a time of praise and devotions, Solomon addresses the group: "Each year during our faculty orientation we try to address some aspect of school development in order to enhance the ministry of Mt. Carmel Christian School. Every spring, the administrators discuss the needs and vision of the school and consider how we can best prepare our students to receive the Lord's direction for their lives. This year, after much thought and prayer, we have decided to focus on the development of a Christian worldview in our students. In order to facilitate this we will be changing our normal in-service format this year. We will not only discuss the development of a Christian worldview during this week, but we will also meet several times throughout the year to evaluate our own understanding and ability to teach from a biblical perspective. I hope you are as excited as Mr. Edify, Dr. Paraclete, and I are about the possibilities that the Lord has for us.

Arnie Antiquity, secondary social studies teacher and twenty-year teaching veteran of the school, listens attentively. After earning his degree from a Christian liberal arts university, teaching for twenty years at Mt. Carmel, and attending annual Christian school teacher conventions, he knows that developing a Christian worldview in students is important and is continually presented as a goal of Christian school education. What else are they going to tell us? Arnie thinks. As far as his own teaching, Arnie is fairly confident that he already presents history to his students from a Christian perspective. Like all the teachers at Mt. Carmel, he uses textbooks and materials by Christian publishers and is careful to point out when historical figures have either embraced or violated biblical truth and what the historical and ongoing consequences are. He glances at many of his colleagues, making quick evaluations of their teaching abilities and commitment to Christian education, and is convinced that they also understand and present their content from a biblical perspective. Arnie wonders if the emphasis on worldview is a response to the unusual number of new teachers, thinking this may be a way to reaffirm the "Mt. Carmel way of doing things." In any case, Arnie then realizes that Solomon's comment about meeting "several times throughout the year" explains why the academic calendar has two in-service days planned for each semester.

Solomon continues: "In order to facilitate our discussions, we have asked Dr. Venerable Wise from Reformation Christian College to assist us this year. Many of you
know Dr. Wise from our teacher conventions, and some of you were students of Dr. Wise when you attended Reformation Christian. He teaches Philosophy of Education and some of the methods courses. I am sure his presentations will significantly assist us, and we will benefit from his instruction—Dr. Wise.

Wise walks to the front of the chapel and begins to address the faculty: “In order to get our discussion started this morning, I would like you to break into groups of three or four teachers. Please organize your small groups to include both elementary and secondary teachers as well as one of the new teachers. Your task is to answer the question, ‘What do we mean by a Christian worldview?’”

Arnie quickly looks around the chapel in an attempt to join some of his friends. There are a few minutes of confusion. He thinks Wise's direction to distribute the new faculty among the groups confirms his hypothesis about socializing them into the Mt. Carmel culture. The elementary teachers, because of common interests and the collegiality developed from sharing the same students and a common schedule, sit together. The secondary teachers begin to do the same. A few teachers approach the new faculty and invite them to join a group. The administrators move throughout the room helping pair up new faculty members with veterans and blending secondary and elementary teachers. Arnie pairs with his friend Byron Bunsen, the high school science teacher, and the two wait, knowing that one of the administrators will see them together and pair them with some of the elementary faculty. Sure enough, Edify brings Donna Dewey, one of the sixth grade teachers, and Rita Rookie, the new third grade teacher to join them. After about five minutes, the groups are formed and they begin to engage the task.

Being the veteran of the group, Arnie feels compelled to lead the discussion. “What does it mean to develop a Christian worldview in our students?” Arnie asks, not quite repeating Wise’s question verbatim. “I know I have always tried to do this in my classes,” he continues. “In presenting history as ‘His Story,’ I try to show how God works in the development of history to bring about his plan.”

Byron chimes in, “Teaching science is a natural, I think. I can focus on creation: how God made all things. I can contrast the biblical creation view of the origin of life in Genesis with the evolutionary model. I can also show that God is a God of order and that the universe has been created as an orderly system.”

“Having to teach all the subjects makes integrating a biblical worldview more difficult for me,” admits Donna. “In some areas I feel that I can teach a biblical worldview fairly easily. Obviously, in Bible this is easier, but in other areas, such as science or mathematics, I tend to struggle. Maybe it’s because, as an elementary teacher, I received little subject area training in some of the academic disciplines to feel confident of my ability to do integration. In other content areas I find it hard to make relevant and meaningful connections for my students. For example, in math class, apart from stating that ‘God is a God of logic and order’ or that ‘math is the language that God used in creating the universe,’ I find very few ways of applying the biblical worldview to the subject. Some of the examples given in the textbook seem contrived, and make little sense to my students. For example, when presenting measurement, the text suggests word problems to convert the value of 238 sparrows from farthings to cents using the farthing reference from the King James...
WORLDVIEW AS WORSHIP

Version in Matthew 10:29, or to convert pints of oil to its equivalent one-fourth hin from Exodus 29:40.

Rita has been quiet to this point, but feeling a bit more comfortable with her new colleagues and wanting to participate in the group, she eases into the dialogue. “I know that I am new, but I recall a discussion in college about this subject.” Her colleagues’ attentiveness makes Rita more assertive. “I remember one of my professors saying that the purpose of a Christian education should be to prepare people to become Christians that can take their faith and live in a world that is hostile to the idea of truth. It seems this would also be relevant to teaching from a biblical worldview.”

Byron piggy-backs on Rita’s comments, adding, “Last year we had several disciplinary problems with students. Nothing particularly serious occurred, but I recall in teachers’ meetings that a number of the faculty expressed disappointment that there seemed to be little difference between students at Mt. Carmel, who profess to be Christians and were receiving a Christian education, and typical students in the public schools. For many of our students, evidence of ‘fruit’ or spiritual development is lacking in their lives.”

Arnie remembers those discussions and assumes this apparent lack of spiritual development might have provided some of the impetus for the administration to focus on worldview development. He then adds, “Like you say, Byron, the behavior stuff was not serious, and, to some extent, it could be overlooked because kids are kids. But I agree that the attitudes and values of our students don’t seem to be much different from students who don’t attend Mt. Carmel. We are constantly having issues over appropriate dress, music, and language. However, what bothers me more than their behavior is that our students’ goals and aspirations are not much different from their public school counterparts. Most want to go to college to get a good job and have a comfortable lifestyle. They see the necessity of doing just enough to get a good grade and feel compelled to learn only what will be ‘on the test.’ When they are in church mode, they give all the right answers, but when you ask them to think biblically, they really struggle.”

“I recall reading that Christian schooling is like operating a greenhouse,” adds Donna. “Just like a greenhouse, the Christian school acts as a safe environment where students can engage in the study of the world, learn to discern what is right and wrong, embrace what is permissible or God-honoring, and choose to avoid those things that are not. Like young plants, our students need to be nurtured until they are strong enough to survive, and hopefully thrive, in an often hostile environment.”

“Well, I am a bit uncomfortable with the analogy of comparing our student to plants,” Arnie responds. “Still, I think you have addressed an important point. Maybe key to developing a biblical worldview in our students is defining what they need to thrive in the world. I also have read the greenhouse analogy, and those writers that use it are not unanimous in what it means. For some it is the avoidance of culture. For others the Christian school becomes the place for learning to discern right from wrong, biblical from unbiblical. Others use it to describe an environment for developing in students the ability to go out into a hostile, secular environment and make an impact on the culture for Christ.” Arnie pauses for a moment, his colleagues waiting for him to gather his thoughts. “Maybe developing a biblical worldview in our students will require us to identify what
specific beliefs and ideas a Christian must embrace to be able to think biblically and what it means for a Christian to thrive in the world."

Discussions such as these are common in circles where Christian educators, whether they are Christian school teachers, pastors, or youth ministry workers, are seeking to understand how their worldview influences not only their teaching but also the development of a biblical worldview in their students. Belief is foundational to all educational endeavors. Whether a teacher can articulate it or is conscious of it, these beliefs influence how teachers structure and practice their craft. These beliefs influence the planning of daily lessons, the development of goals and objectives, and the planning and implementing of instructional methods to meet these goals. Good teachers have beliefs about the importance of education and its ability to change and enhance the lives of their students. It can be argued that when teachers lose their belief in the ability of education to transform and enhance lives they also lose the power to influence students.

The purpose of education in general and the craft of teaching specifically require a vision of who students will be when they have completed their course of study. The process requires an evaluation of who the students are now, and who they should eventually become. This type of evaluation drives the educational process and often prompts calls for educational reform. It is a process that requires not only an assessment of the students specifically but also an evaluation of the society and the role students will eventually assume. Thus, education is predicated on a vision, one not only for the students but also for the entire society. In this sense, education provides the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to prepare students to be productive contributors to society. Understood this way, education is driven by a sense of the way things are and by a vision of the way things should be.

This foundational belief in the power of education to form the individual is not simply a belief among educators but one shared by society as a whole. The history of education in the United States reveals the utopian belief of those who developed American public schools that public education could be a tool to craft a more perfect society. As the "common school" movement in the United States approaches the end of its second century, the beliefs of the original architects of public schools—that schools could be used to help resolve many of the fundamental political, economic, and social issues facing the nation—are expressed with as much vigor today as they were nearly two hundred years ago. When Lyndon Johnson sought to achieve the "Great Society" in the 1960s, declaring war on poverty and the problems it produced, he said, "The answer to all our national problems comes down to a single word: education."¹ In the early twentieth century, social engineers sought to use schools as the institution to perfect the nation by "consciously directing the evolution of the society."²

More recent calls for educational reform share a similar belief. Whether these reforms are based in the Reagan administration's recommendations in A Nation at Risk, the first Bush and the Clinton administrations' Goals 2000 agenda,³ or more recently in George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind legislation or Barack Obama's Race to the Top ini-

1. Perkinson, Imperfect Panacea, i.
2. Tyack and Cuban, Tinkering toward Utopia, 2.
tiative, all are based on a belief that schools can be used as a mechanism for the nation to meet the fundamental challenges facing society. Foundational to the formulation of these reform proposals, both past and present, is an evaluation of the current state of schools and whether the nation's vision for the future is being accomplished. Key to any such assessment is an evaluation of how things are and a vision for the way things should be.

At the core of these calls for reform is the issue of worldview. When teachers assess student performance or potential, when they identify student strengths and weaknesses and interpret particular behaviors as acceptable or not, they do so from a set of assumptions that allows them to understand and evaluate the student. Implicit in their frame of reference is that certain types of potential and levels of performance, abilities or talents, and behaviors are of greater value than others. Those of greater value are to be encouraged and developed, while the marginal or less desirable ones are discouraged. Students are encouraged to develop behavioral patterns and, more importantly, ways of thinking that mirror the expectations and values of the society. The societal appraisal of these desired abilities and talents, expectations and values, as well as the definition of acceptable levels of performance, forms the basis of the curriculum. For example, each society must decide which academic disciplines will receive the limited instructional time, energy, and resources available and which will receive less attention or be ignored altogether. When political, social, and economic leaders decry the performance of students and teachers in public schools and advocate reform strategies that will allow schools to prepare students to become better contributors to society, they do so from assumptions about how schools should work and what skills, abilities, and behaviors students must possess to be contributing members of the society. At the core of a society’s collective ability to assess the relative worth of these factors is a worldview.

As James Olthuis writes, worldviews are “a vision ‘of’ life and the world [and] simultaneously a vision ‘for’ life and the world.” Worldviews provide a dual focus. They are descriptive in that they allow one to assess what the world is like. They are also normative, allowing the formulation of an idea of what things should look like and what actions might be taken to bring about the desired end. For example, when parents conclude that a child has done something wrong and must be disciplined, their actions will include

1. an assessment of the child’s inappropriate behavior (descriptive) based on a standard (normative);
2. an appraisal of what behaviors are acceptable and should be encouraged for the present and the future (normative);
3. what corrective actions are acceptable before God and society (descriptive) to bring about the desired behavior.

Underlying these evaluations are tacit assumptions about the child’s value as a human being, the way the world operates (both presently and in the future), the reasons for the misbehavior, and the effectiveness of various means of correction. All of these are determined by worldview.

Worldviewing: What Is a Worldview?

While a worldview allows people to make descriptive and normative judgments about the world, worldviews are not simply the possession of individuals. Brian Walsh and J. Richard Middleton contend that worldviews are a communal way of thinking about how the world is and how it should be, and it can be argued that true community is only possible when there is a shared vision of the world. The writer of Proverbs notes this idea of a corporate vision for life when he writes, “Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained” (Prov 29:18). It is this understanding of the corporate nature of worldview that causes Christians to struggle with being in the world but not of the world (John 17:13–16), and leads Paul to write that Christians need to be transformed by the renewing of their minds so that they can know and do the will of God (Rom 12:1–2). While Americans pride themselves on being individualists, believing that they are free to decide for themselves how they should think, people from other nations observe that Americans generally think like other Americans. In other words, the range of possible ways an individual comes to understand the way the world is and the way the world should be is framed by a particular set of assumptions that non-Americans can categorize as “American” thinking.

For Christian educators, and for the evangelical community as a whole, understanding the communal nature of a worldview underscores the frustration and difficulty that is often experienced when attempting to develop a biblical worldview in ourselves and in our students. By being in the world but not of the world, Christ tells us that while we are physically present in the world, we need to separate ourselves from the influences of perceiving and evaluating life characterized by the world. By urging believers to be transformed by the renewing of their minds, Paul assumes that the influences of the world have already affected us and that our ability to understand and do the will of God is compromised until we are able to free ourselves from the prevailing ways of thinking in the culture and to bring our own values, attitudes, and beliefs into conformity with biblical truth. In short, as Christians we must develop a way of viewing our culture from a scriptural perspective. In so doing, the church must also realize that developing a biblical worldview may well mean swimming upstream against the common or typical descriptive and normative visions of life that are accepted as normal.

Worldviews provide, for the majority of individuals in a society, not only a descriptive and normative vision of life, but also a framework for developing ways of operating in the world. Worldviews represent a “lens” for looking at life and a method for determining appropriate ways to function in the world. For example, all societies must develop institutions and social norms to address the realities of living in a communal context. The principles of how those institutions and social norms are developed can be based on a biblical understanding of those aspects of life or on some other vision for life, but a society cannot ignore these aspects of social reality. In similar fashion, all societies must develop norms and institutions for the education and development of the next generation. Failure on the part of society to prepare the next generation to be contributing members would constitute an overall threat to the society and to the coherence of the worldview on which the very definition of a contributing member is based. Whether a society chooses to address this reality

5. Walsh and Middleton, Transforming Vision, 32.
through a formal institution like school or through some other avenue will depend on the descriptive and normative understandings of the society, that is, on its worldview.

For evangelical Christianity to function as an appropriate expression of the biblical worldview, it must address the issue of educating young people simply because the character of communal life makes education a feature that cannot be ignored. In order for the biblical worldview to serve as a coherent vision for all of life, it must provide for a description of how the world is and normatively a vision for how the world should be. This description must then lead to a definition of what it means to be an educated citizen of the kingdom and an appropriate contributor to the society in which God has placed us. Failure to accomplish these tasks would represent a threat to the internal coherence of the biblical worldview (or at least how evangelicals formulate and practice it). This formulation must also provide Christian educators with the tools necessary to develop models of curriculum, means of instruction, and types and aspects of evaluation to assess the effectiveness of their teaching and their schools in light of the biblical worldview. In so doing, the biblical worldview serves the normative function of providing a vision and direction for what Christian schooling should be and should become.

In the process of developing a biblical approach to education, however, we must acknowledge and respect the tremendous power of the surrounding culture with its nonbiblical worldview. As believers who are still “in the world,” we must be aware of the impact that the values, attitudes, and practices of the surrounding culture have had on Christian schooling (i.e., organizational structure, curriculum considerations, teaching methodologies, etc.). As believers who are also called to be “not of this world,” we must be constantly mindful of the encroachment of nonbiblical values on our schools and consciously embrace and promote a curriculum and methodology consistent with a biblical vision for what a Christian education should be. To accomplish this, we must develop an understanding of the type of education that a Christian school should provide—one that prepares students to be active participants in a community of believers living as responsible citizens in the world, a community devoted to the development of a biblical perception and understanding of the world and committed to a biblical vision and practice in all areas of life.

This is a book on worldview and education, specifically the biblical worldview as it relates to biblical education and Christian schooling. While it will be important in our discussion of this relationship to adequately define the concept (the fundamental components of a worldview) and provide a brief statement about the biblical formulation of these components, it is not intended to be a full development of the biblical worldview. Rather, we will examine the role Christian schools specifically, and Christian education in general, can have in the overall communication of a biblical worldview to the society at large and in the development of a biblical worldview in students. As we shall see, the power of any worldview to adequately fulfill its descriptive and normative functions will depend, in part, on its internal coherence and its ability to address all aspects of human life and endeavor.
WHAT IS A WORLDVIEW AND HOW DID I GET ONE?

A worldview orients us to life. As such, a worldview is a given; it is not a luxury, but a necessity. In essence, to not have a worldview would result in a consistent disorientation to life. While animals behave from instinct, human beings must choose how they will live, and their behavior reflects the choices made that are the results of a particular vision of life or sense of perspective. For example, honey bees are born knowing the “dance” that communicates where the source of nectar can be found to the other bees of the hive without ever having to learn it. In contrast, to acquire the folk dances of a human culture a young person needs be formally taught the dances, which are reflections of the cultural development of that particular group.

The orientation to life that a worldview provides allows the members of a culture to see certain realities as significant, and to ignore or be oblivious to other ones. Worldviews serve as a means of placing the occurrences of life in perspective; they serve as a type of lens through which individuals view the world. Worldviews are also a type of filter, a mechanism for attaching significance to things deemed important and worthy of attention, while ignoring those things of little importance. In this sense a worldview provides a means of integrating all of life and provides a framework to interpret life or make sense of experiences. Worldviews also allow individuals to judge life according to an ideal of what life should be.

This dual purpose is reflected in the definitions of worldview by many Christian thinkers. Ronald Nash describes a worldview as “a conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality.” Nicholas Wolterstorff writes, “a people's world view is their way of thinking about life and the world, coupled with the values they set for themselves in the context of that way of thinking.” Richard Wright notes that worldviews serve as “a comprehensive framework of beliefs that helps us to interpret what we see and experience and also gives direction in the choices that we make as we live out our lives.”

Wolterstorff notes that in any specific academic discipline, the theories used that govern acceptable thinking and practice must correspond to two criteria. The first criterion, which Wolterstorff identifies as data beliefs, relates to the areas of knowledge acquisition: what will be permitted and used as acceptable knowledge or information. For example, in thinking about the resurrection of Christ there have been a number of theories that have tried to explain the resurrection as something other than God actually raising Christ from the dead (e.g., the theft theory). These theories are more acceptable to a person who does not believe in God or does not believe in miracles because prior experience and other data suggest that people who die are not resurrected. Thus, data suggesting the validity of someone stealing the body of Christ from the tomb is more acceptable than data supporting the conclusion of a bodily resurrection. To the Bible-believing Christian, however,

6. Ibid., 31.
data suggesting the literal bodily resurrection of Christ is more easily accepted because, as Wolterstorff notes, all data beliefs are subject or accountable to a second criterion, a larger body of theories or ways of looking at the world, which exists in the background called control beliefs. Wolterstorff continues by stating that control beliefs are dominated by faith-based assumptions, that they are taken for granted, rarely debated, and form the basis of people's values. Control beliefs are thus presuppositions or assumptions made beforehand that essentially cannot be proven or are taken to be true without having to be defended or supported. Returning to the example of the resurrection, a man who could be labeled a naturalist would have difficulty accepting data that supports a bodily resurrection of Christ because his control beliefs may deny the existence of God (and thus there cannot be a God to raise Christ from the dead); or he may deny the existence of miracles. Evangelical Christians, whose control beliefs include the existence of an omnipotent God who reserves the right to intervene in human history when he so chooses, have little difficulty accepting data that suggests Christ's bodily resurrection. It is through these control beliefs that Wolterstorff says humans interpret and make meaning of the world. It is also these control beliefs and the values derived from them that are reinforced by a particular communal group that help constitute a person's worldview.

The question then becomes, how do one's control beliefs come to be? Developmental psychologists have long understood that children, even at the earliest ages, are engaged in the process of attempting to make sense of the world around them. Jean Piaget viewed children as naturally curious about their world and in the process of trying to understand the world by actively seeking out information to help them make sense of it. For Piaget, their curiosity causes children to initiate actions or engage in personal experiments, wherein they manipulate things, observe, and interpret the effects. Because children were observed to engage in this process, Piaget used the analogy of children as "little scientists," orchestrating a process whereby they casually (and later purposefully) view things that occur, develop crude hypotheses, and then engage in further experimentation and variation to formulate a more complex understanding of their world. For Piaget, the development of a person's understanding of the world and, by extension, the development of that person's worldview is, for the most part, an individual and active process. W. Gary Phillips and William Brown note, "Worldviews are never passive; they are by their nature confrontational. My worldview is a confrontation of my presence in the world. I must orient myself to my world and make sense of it or lose the desire to exist as a human being." The Russian developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky tempers this highly individual or autonomous process of cognitive development by noting that complex mental processes, of which the development of worldview would qualify, begin as social activities, having their roots in social interactions. Vygotsky believed that the development of one's understanding of the world is mediated through interaction with people that are more knowledgeable and competent in the world. This process starts with the parents and

10. Wolterstorff, Reason within the Bounds of Religion, 63.
Worldviewing: What Is a Worldview?

the family and, over time, is extended to the members of the immediate community (e.g., other adults, teachers, peers, etc.) and then to the society at large. For example, newborns are ignorant of the meaning of things that they encounter in the world and are dependent upon their parents and others to help them understand the importance of things and incorporate these into their understanding. Through a process that Vygotsky called *internalization*, children take in knowledge from their social contexts (which would constitute a type of *data belief*), as well as the significance of that knowledge and the value of certain things (which would serve as a type of *control belief*), and these become part of their individual way of thinking about the world. Vygotsky notes:

In the buzzing confusion that surrounds the infant during the first few months of her life, parents assist her by pointing and carrying the child close to objects and place of adaptive significance (toys, refrigerator, cupboard, playpen), thus helping the child to ignore other relevant features of the environment (such adult objects as books, tools, and so on). This socially mediated attention develops into the child's more independent and voluntary attention, which she will come to use to classify her surroundings.  

For example, children may watch how their parents discuss beliefs (e.g., of politics, religion, or the relative merits of chocolate versus vanilla ice cream) and through this process not only learn how to argue for their beliefs, but also learn to value particular ways of arguing. That is, they may deem "good" arguments as those based in logic and substantiated by facts or those that are made with the most force, persuasion, or appeal to emotion. Vygotsky also noted that the types of tools that individuals use in a culture, how they use them, and for what purpose all provide a set of fundamental data that reflect the overall value system of the society. When children learn to text message, they not only learn how to send messages to friends, but they also become socialized into the fundamental values of speed and efficiency that are found in the culture that develops such a technology. The sense of priority and purpose that significant people around children attach to objects, time, ideas, and so on eventually become internalized and become their own way of viewing the world. As Vygotsky wrote, "every function in a child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level and later on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)."

This is not to say that everything human beings perceive or their entire understanding of the world is determined solely by or predicated solely on the culture into which they are born. The great debate among philosophers of knowledge in the eighteenth century was whether the mind was an instrument for understanding or using real world experiences (as expressed in the views of British empiricists like John Locke and David Hume) or an instrument designed to organize and discover reality (as proposed by the Continental rationalists such as René Descartes and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz).

The gestalt psychologists of the early twentieth century emphasized that human beings have certain inherent mental processes that predispose them to perceive and or-

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13. Ibid., 56.
ganize information in similar and predictable ways. Gestalt psychologists proposed that certain principles or patterns of perception are common to all human beings regardless of their cultural background. These patterns of perception allow human beings to organize their experiences, to create structured wholes that are greater than the sum of their parts. For example, a series of lights going off in a particular order in reality are single lights flashing at predetermined intervals. Looking at them, however, a person perceives a flow of light or motion, so it appears that the light is moving in a particular direction, say from left to right. From observations such as these, gestalt psychologists concluded that human beings, irrespective of their culture, are given to perceive things in ways that may not constitute what is truly there. Thus, gestalt theorists have noted that perception is often different from reality. What these perceptions provide are the basic units or building blocks from which people organize their understanding of the world.

Vygotsky’s theory indicates that cultures take these basic perceptions of the world and organize them in ways that allow them, as groups, to explain and develop cultural tools to interact with the world in particular ways. As such, the ways in which individuals interact with the world are highly tied to the culture in which they have been raised.

Both Piaget and Vygotsky emphasize the importance of social interaction in cognitive development, but from different perspectives. Piaget believed that interaction with the world (including others) created a sense of disequilibrium, a cognitive conflict that motivates individuals to change their understanding of the world in order to minimize or alleviate that conflict. This cognitive conflict, which Piaget labeled cognitive dissonance, is uncomfortable, creating the desire for resolution. For Piaget, the development of understanding is based on the processes used to reconcile the cognitive conflicts created by interaction with the world. A person’s current ways of understanding the world may be insufficient to adequately comprehend a new set of circumstances or ideas. The resolution of these conflicts results in cognitive changes that will serve to comprehend future events or ideas. To Piaget, cognitive development (and we will claim worldview development) has its source in the reconciliation of these conflicts.

Vygotsky, on the other hand, suggests that cognitive development is fostered by social interactions with people who are more capable or advanced in their thinking—for a child, people such as parents and teachers. For Vygotsky, the world and people in the world provide many of the situations or conflicts that must be resolved if individuals are to develop cognitively. Piaget would agree; however, Vygotsky goes further in noting that the ways that human beings resolve these situations, the tools they use to mediate or resolve these conflicts, are also provided and modeled by those they view as more competent than themselves, and thus they are assisted in their cognitive development though their social and culture relationships.

These tools to which Vygotsky refers—including ways of thinking, the language or speech and thought, value systems, etc.—form the basis from which individuals develop solutions to these conflicts. Because people from a similar background use similar cultural tools to develop their understanding of the world, they begin to develop a communal identity—whether it be national, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, etc.—which helps to account for why people of similar backgrounds tend to have similar ways of thinking.
and similar value systems. For example, Vygotsky and Alexander Luria noted that literate and nonliterate cultures tend to think about the world differently and that many of those differences are tied to language. When shown pictures of a hammer, hatchet, saw, and log, members of literate cultures tended to group hatchet, saw, and hammer together, noting that all were “tools.” Nonliterate cultures, often lacking the abstract concept “tools,” would group objects based on concrete or nonabstract factors, so “log” would be included with the hammer, hatchet, and saw since “tools” do not exist independent of their use on the log. For reasons such as these Vygotsky concluded that language plays a fundamental role in how people in a culture come to think about and perceive the world around them.14

For Vygotsky, because factors such as language and other cultural tools for interacting with the world are provided to people by their culture, the social mind has primacy over the individual mind in a unique way. Society is the bearer of a cultural heritage without which the development of the individual mind would not be possible. Peter Berger and Thomas Lickmann also note this relationship, stating that the reality of life is intersubjective, that it is shared with others.15 Berger and Lickmann believe that members of a culture assume that there is a common knowledge shared by others, so similar significance is attached to certain things.

When others do not possess this common knowledge, which may be true of those traveling to a foreign culture, a type of culture shock may well occur. For example, in an unfamiliar culture a tourist may experience an inability to communicate with others since they do not know the language. There can be other types of mental dissonance created from a lack of intersubjective knowledge. In some cultures two men walking down the street arm-in-arm would be viewed as perfectly normal; a member of their culture would probably take little note of it. For many Americans the same situation might appear unusual, causing them to take a keener interest (descriptive). Similarly, people of a particular culture tend to share similar beliefs regarding what constitutes the “good life” and what should be prioritized (or minimized) in terms of an orientation toward the future, the value of the individual, the characteristics of a “good person,” and so on (normative). The idea of a shared cultural heritage that underlies the development of the mind in Vygotsky’s theory or the development of an intersubjectivity of reality proposed by Berger and Lickmann underlies the communal or corporate nature of worldview thinking.

The purpose in referencing Piaget and Vygotsky, both developmental psychologists whose theories are rarely attached to the development of worldview, is to emphasize both the passive (or receptive) and the active, dynamic natures of worldview development. All people possess a worldview; its development begins at birth through our primarily receptive interaction with the social environment. While we are active agents that initiate interaction with the world (as indicated by Piaget), the resolutions of those interactions tend to be structured for us by the cultural context into which we are born (as emphasized by Vygotsky). These resolutions begin primarily with our parents and other family members and extend out to the community and the society at large as we grow older so that the

development of our worldview occurs in a particular cultural or psychosocial context. As a result, the internalization of a particular view of the world can become largely unquestioned yet provide the means for interpreting and judging the world.

As less competent individuals, infants, children, and often adolescents are not equal contributors to the social interactions in which they engage. Thus, society can influence their understanding of the world much more than they are able to change the predominant worldview of the culture. Consequently, as individuals come to define themselves (i.e., who they are and who they should be) they do so in terms of the values and priorities communicated to them by significant adults and the institutions of a society. They will also tend to reflect these values and priorities in their interactions with peers. Infants and young children are almost exclusively recipients of a worldview that is provided to them by the culture, while adolescents and adults may have more of an interactive relationship with the dominant worldview of the culture. As Olthuis describes a worldview, it acts as "the set of hinges on which all our everyday thinking and doing turns."

Theologically, the culture into which an individual is born and, because of the receptive nature of worldview, the initial way they come to understand themselves in the world are directed by the sovereign will of God. The predominant worldview of the culture will largely control what is considered normal in terms of dress, use of time and resources, mannerisms, appropriate foods, the treatment of and by others, what is believed to be the "good life," and the categories and ways of thinking about the world that Vygotsky or Berger and Lickmann suggest when they describe the relationship of society to the development of worldview.

On the other hand, the development of worldview is also a dynamic process as reflected in Paul’s admonishment in Romans 12:1–2. Many Christian writers also assert that our way of looking at the world can be changed, our worldview altered, by a critical appraisal of the adequacy of that worldview. This suggests that worldviews are dynamic entities and that they can be changed and brought more in line with a biblical perspective. The theories of Piaget and Vygotsky suggest that what prompts an alteration in worldview is some type of event or interaction with the world that the current worldview fails to adequately integrate or explain.

Piaget called this process disequilibration, and claimed that it was an inherent desire to avoid this state of cognitive dissonance for a state of equilibrium that motivates a change in a person’s understanding of the world. To achieve equilibrium individuals alter their understanding of the world, changing their perspective so that they have the cognitive ability, the cognitive tools, that will allow them to make better sense of the world. Piaget saw this altering of their understanding of the world as a qualitative growth, so that they do not simply know more (quantitative) but they come to know or understand the world differently; however, simply creating a sense of cognitive dissonance, which calls into question the adequacy of an existing worldview, is not sufficient to initiate change in a worldview. Resolution to cognitive dissonance can also be achieved through acceptance of the new event or interaction as an additional manifestation of the current understanding. In this scenario the existing worldview is strengthened quantitatively because it is

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now capable of explaining another aspect of the world that it was previously unable to explain, thus rendering the existing worldview more impervious to change. Finally, resolution of cognitive dissonance can also be achieved when an individual simply refuses to deal with it, cognitively ignoring the new information. In such a case, no qualitative or quantitative change in cognitive development occurs. In accepting the dissonant event for a broader view or rejecting it altogether, there is no qualitative change in cognition, which is characteristic of worldview transformation.

While Piaget notes the process that individuals engage in to resolve cognitive dissonance, another consideration is that the frames of reference or the mental categories on which individuals rely are not independent but are developed within a cultural context. That is, in the process of resolving dissonance, individuals rely on the judgment of the community, either directly or through the internalized cultural tools and the values and beliefs of the culture, to engage in and evaluate whether successful resolution has occurred. Thus the individual is not cognitively autonomous but remains, in large part, dependent upon the community, not only for the development of the initial worldview but also for worldview transformation to occur.

While all believers receive and are empowered by the Holy Spirit, whose ministry includes guiding the believer in all truth (John 16:13), The Holy Spirit’s ministry is most often exercised within the community context. For this reason Christians are commanded to “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1) and to remove false teachers from the community (1 Tim 3:5; 3 John 10). Righteousness is to be imitated (3 John 11); in fact, Paul often called for others to imitate him (1 Cor 4:16; 1 Tim 3:10). This imitation occurs within a social context. Older believers are to teach the younger (Titus 2:1–5), not just in doctrine but by modeling a godly lifestyle. Likewise, spiritual gifts are given for the edification and preparation of the community of believers (1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:12; 1 Pet 4:10), yet no one is given all of the gifts so that believers are dependent upon each other for their spiritual development. It is for this reason that they are told to “stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together” (Heb 10:24–25).

Thus, for transformation to occur, what is needed is not random events that stimulate the questioning of the existing worldview but the development of cultural tools (to borrow a phrase from Vygotsky) to resolve the conflict. It follows that the transformation to a biblical worldview requires a set of cultural tools, or ways of thinking, that will allow the believer to resolve cognitive conflicts. Insofar as the biblical worldview differs from the dominant secular worldview of the surrounding culture, resolution will also require a type of countercultural critique. A biblical transformation requires an evaluation of the values and cultural tools of the dominant society in light of the descriptive and normative aspects of worldview expressed in the Bible. While it is the individual who experiences and ultimately resolves the cognitive conflict, the community provides the cultural tools, expertise, and necessary support for the development of a biblical worldview. From this perspective a countercultural critique of the dominant secular culture is not enough. What may also be required is a type of countercultural community that has developed, and continues to develop, cultural responses based on a set of qualitatively different cog-
nitive tools (i.e., a different worldview) that provide a foundation for understanding and evaluating the world and a vision for what life should be.

As previously mentioned, many writers use the analogy of a lens to discuss worldview, a particular way to see the world. Applying the lens analogy gives insight regarding our perception of the world. Since the lenses that we possess are essentially given to us because we are members of a particular culture, a poor set of lenses would not necessarily be perceived as poor. Since we have viewed the world only through the poor lenses we tend to see this poor vision of the world as normal. As a result, we see little need, or have little incentive, to change our worldview. Cognitive psychologists call this status quo bias, it is the tendency of people to retain what they know or think they know even when gains could be made by selecting an alternative. By extending the lens analogy, the recognition of a need for change could occur when we take off the glasses and notice that they are scratched beyond repair or when our acuity has significantly changed so that the current glasses are useless and need to be replaced. The lens analogy also provides a means of understanding the necessity for worldview transformation. The idea of creating dissonance can help explain how challenging a person's initial, unconscious perspective (we give little attention to our glasses when they are clean and functioning properly) can serve as a catalyst to worldview transformation (my glasses no longer work well and I need new ones). Without the tools to correct our vision, however, we may become skeptical of everything we see (I know I can't trust what I see because my vision is faulty, but I have no alternative), or take solace in a set of arguments or creedal positions that do not significantly challenge one's vision, values, or behavior in light of the dominant culture.

The process of developing an alternative vision for life is predicated on coming to understand that the existing vision of life is faulty. Realizing that my lenses are poor may occur when I continually trip or walk into things, indicating that my glasses are not serving their designed function. Recognizing faulty lenses or initiating the process of worldview change is possible by enlightened unbelievers. Since God created the world to operate properly according to certain principles, when sinful people, in the process of developing culture, create cultural institutions that are contrary to those principles, those institutions will contain the seeds of their own demise. Thomas Kuhn's principle of paradigm shift resembles this process, where a new theory emerges and is accepted by the community as a better explanation for the world than previous theories. In time, the older explanation is discarded and the new theory becomes the accepted perspective through which experts view the world and also develop a new vision and set of questions to engage the world. The astute unbeliever can perceive this tension even if he or she fails to adequately perceive a proper alternative. In addition, the believer, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, can be directed to truth (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit prompts the believer to see the inadequacy of his descriptive vision and also assists in the development of understanding of a new normative vision. It is this dependency on the Holy Spirit that Paul suggests when referring to the transformation of the mind in Romans 12:1-2.

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While I do not offer these steps as a developmental model for changing worldview, the process of developing a new worldview may encompass aspects of each of these stages. Many teachers desire to develop in themselves and their students the highly systematized type of worldview that is characteristic of a mature biblical thinker; however, to do so may require allowing students to experience the struggles and possible skepticism that seem necessary to go from biblical worldview novices to mature biblical thinkers.

**BASIC QUESTIONS FOR ALL WORLDVIEWS**

To this point we have defined worldviews as a way of explaining not only what life is like but also what life should be like. These two aspects reflect the descriptive and normative functions of a worldview. Worldviews allow us to place things in perspective and to make value judgments about the world around us. In this sense, worldviews are foundational to our thinking. We have also seen that all people have a worldview—it is part of the essence of being human—and that the development of worldview is a socio-psychological process. The worldview we initially assume is largely determined for us by the dominant perspective of the culture into which we are born. As we interact with people who are more competent because of experience and greater socialization in the dominant worldview, we begin to assimilate the cultural tools (i.e., the values, attitudes, language, customs, etc.) that allow us to interact with the world and people in predictable and meaningful ways. This perspective suggests that there are people who have a more firmly and systematically developed sense of worldview. This is the more developed sense of worldview that we would expect of theologians, philosophers, and other experts in their particular fields of study. The lens analogy, however, points to the status quo bias tendency to regard our way of seeing the world as normal. This suggests that people whose worldview is less systematic or who may not be able to articulate the particulars of their worldview still possess one to which they hold with some degree of conviction. The existence, description, development, and power of these less developed types of worldviews will be discussed in chapter 2.

Worldviews provide a way of describing the world and formulating a vision for life. Consequently, how we parent our children, how and why we educate young people, how we treat the environment, how we set up our legal, political, and healthcare institutions, and how we treat others in social interactions are all derived from our worldview. Foundational to these issues of practice are certain assumptions, faith statements about reality, which form the basis of our cultural responses. Thus a worldview develops at two levels—the foundational beliefs that form the critical core of the worldview and the outward manifestations in the world we experience that emanate from this core. While not all the members of a society are able to articulate these core beliefs, as members our worldview thinking is highly influenced by these beliefs or faith statements. They constitute a large part of the set of cognitive tools that we use to make sense of the world. In any communal group, however, there are those members who have developed more highly systematized responses to the basic questions that all worldviews must answer to produce the outward cultural manifestations that make social life possible. In this section we will
examine these basic questions and begin to examine the biblical worldview responses to them.

We should note that the six foundational questions we are about to examine, and their answers, are not really separate questions. The answers provided to one question will have ramifications for many, if not all, of the other questions. As a result, the examination and articulation of the core beliefs of any worldview can be difficult, for in trying to reduce the complex interconnectedness of the responses to these basic questions, some of the richness of the whole is lost. What individuals believe to be an important or worthy goal in life (to answer the question of what is valuable) will directly affect how they behave (which is part of the answer to the question of the moral or ethical life) and also what they consider to be valid or appropriate ways of knowing about the world (which is a reflection of the question of the nature of knowledge). This means that the six basic worldview questions are not listed in any particular order of significance. Since all are foundational, one is no more important than the other. In order for us to develop a greater sense of the nature and scope of the core beliefs of any worldview, we need to examine these questions as separate entities while remaining aware of the potential hazards that isolating these questions can create.

Since all worldviews provide a vision for what life should be, questions of value or levels of worth or significance must be assigned to attitudes, values, ideas, behaviors, and so on. Certain aspects of life are deemed to be of greater value while others are regarded as of less. Thus, the first worldview question: What is important or of value? Theories of value are a part of virtually every philosophical system; they attempt to answer questions regarding what is good, important, beautiful, or ethical. Within this context a person considers and answers the question, What is the good life? When young children describe what they want to be when they grow up and get encouragement from a parent or teacher, they are attempting to develop their vision of the world within this framework of values. Such questions extend beyond issues of morality and ethics, but include areas such as what is beautiful (aesthetics), what are the highest priorities (both personal and societal), or the best means of resolving issues involving competing values.

In general, theories of value can be divided into two groups. The first major group includes those systems that consider value questions as objective, having absolute and knowable standards of beauty or truth. Objective theories of value often place these standards of value as independent of human experience. For example, Plato believed the physical world could be judged as beautiful based on an absolute or ideal state of beauty that could be known through the development of reason. The second group consists of those systems that consider questions of value as subjective, either having no absolute objective standard of value or, at least, not having one that can be known by human beings. In subjective systems, standards of value are dependent on human experience or, at times, personal taste. For example, the statement “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” essentially states that what one considers beautiful is a construct of personal attitudes and dispositions and that these can be radically different from one person to another yet still have equal validity.
I once was watching the astronomy series *Cosmos* on PBS. The series, narrated by astronomer Carl Sagan, opened each episode of the series with the statement, “The cosmos is all there ever is, ever was, and ever will be.” Sagan’s statement reflects the heart of the second foundational worldview question: What is ultimately real? This area of philosophy is called *metaphysics* and includes discussions of the fundamental nature of reality and being. It is the study of “ ultimates,” of first and last things. Is reality essentially spiritual (as Plato believed) or physical (as Aristotle maintained)? Is there a supernatural component to the universe so that miracles are possible, or is the universe mechanistic, a big machine that works solely according to natural law (making miracles technically impossible)? The statement by Sagan that begins each episode of *Cosmos* reflects an impersonal and mechanistic universe. It is a universe that, for him, operates according to the laws of time, energy, matter, and (possibly) probability or chance. This perspective, known as *naturalism* or *philosophical materialism*, allows its adherents to make statements regarding the origin of things according to natural processes. Further, there is a relationship between the question, what is real? and the question, what is of the highest value? From the perspective of naturalism, the good or valued is that which corresponds to natural law, or there may seem to be no real reason for the existence of values in the world since values are essentially personal and have no basis in reality in an impersonal universe. Whatever one believes to be good, therefore, may be valid.

The third foundational question to all worldviews is the nature of knowledge: How do I know what is true? This area, known to philosophers as *epistemology*, attempts to address how we evaluate beliefs, whether they are warranted or not, what we will consider as acceptable evidence to defend a belief, and whether something counts as knowledge or belongs to some other category (such as superstition). For example, if I said to you, “seeing is believing,” I would be making an implicit assumption about the nature of knowledge—that what is real and can be known is empirical or knowledge based on sense data. All worldviews must address questions regarding the importance and reliability of reason and logic, sense perceptions and intuition, and the best ways to obtain truth. Worldviews must address questions such as, Is the scientific method the only reliable means to truth (as it is to the philosophical materialist), or are there other sources of truth that need to be considered (e.g., biblical revelation)?

Similarly, this worldview question must address how conflicts between accepted sources of knowledge are resolved. In the previous example, a person could believe in knowledge obtained through the scientific method and from a revealed source of truth, like the Bible; however, what if these two sources of knowledge conflict? How will conflicts in knowledge sources be resolved? A worldview provides the means of determining the most credible sources of knowledge, the conditions of credibility, and the most reliable or valid sources of information. Any theory of knowledge must address these types of questions. The area of epistemology is complex, yet all people and cultures maintain a dominant epistemological belief as part of their worldview.

On a recent trip to the mall I passed a pet shop that had a T-shirt on display that said “Dogs are People Too!” (to avoid discrimination there was a comparable version for cats). This innocent caption gets at the heart of the fourth worldview question: What is the
nature of humanity? To philosophers this is the area known as *philosophical anthropology*, which attempts to answer such questions as, do human beings possess free will or are their choices the result of material or spiritual forces? Are human beings physical and temporal beings or essentially spiritual and possessing eternity? Others define humanity as simply having more of a specific characteristic, which would allow for the possibility that dogs and cats are people too. For example, if loyalty is a characteristic of humanity and a dog behaves in a manner that is viewed as more loyal than some people, could that dog be considered, in this regard, more "human," or do human beings possess some qualitatively different trait (like a soul or a spirit) that separates them from animals?

In a similar manner, worldviews must answer such questions as, Is there life after death, or is physical death the end of existence? When we advocate a pleasure principle of "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die," we are making assumptions about the nature of humanity (that human beings are essentially physical-material beings) and about the nature of reality (that there is nothing beyond this life). In such a belief system the value of anything could be reduced to what pleasure it can bring, and the value of anything, including education, reduced to its ability to satisfy certain desires such as to obtain wealth or gain more leisure time. A belief that human beings are essentially physical or material beings could also render the development of the mind or the soul as secondary or inconsequential compared to more temporal considerations.

As we have seen, a worldview provides a means for describing what the world is like and also for developing a vision of what the world should be. Since an inevitable gap exists between the real world and the envisioned ideal, worldviews must provide a means of answering another question: *What is wrong?* And its correlative: *What can be done to remedy the problem?* These constitute the fifth question that all worldviews must address. One evening while watching television, I observed a public-service announcement in which a celebrity delivered ten seconds of "sage wisdom" by telling me that if I applied a particular principle in my life, I could help eradicate some fundamental problems faced by individuals and society. The commercial ended with the little phrase "The More You Know." The worldview message of these spots is that the fundamental source of the problems of our society—racial prejudice, economic disparities, domestic difficulties, substance abuse, various injustices—is ignorance. The corollary is that the answers to human difficulties can be found in education.

In most Western societies, schools and education have been a fundamental part of the proposed solution to a number of the social, political, and economic ills that trouble society. It should be noted, however, that such a response to social problems is predicated on a belief that human beings, when they think and behave rationally, are essentially "good" (or at least disposed to do that which is right) or "neutral" (whereby they can be taught to be that which is right). It also reflects a belief that humans are essentially rational and, given proper knowledge, they will essentially make sound judgments. Further, it assumes that sound judgments are those that promote a view of harmony and tolerance between individuals (which also reflects a sense of what is valued). A view of human nature that would assert that humans are basically selfish, having the ability to choose to freely do things for their own benefit with little regard for the effects on others or that humans
might use their talents, abilities, and power of intelligence to justify the preferences of their own will would diminish the value of education as a primary vehicle for individual or social reform, or (at least) change what we believe a good education to be.

Finally, based on the answers provided to all of the previous questions, worldviews must ultimately answer this question: How should we live? This is the area of philosophy or theology normally addressed by morality or ethics. Most people are more aware of this area because it affects their lives directly and daily. We make moral judgments about ourselves, about others (both individuals and groups), and about situations past, present, and future. Ultimately, however, worldviews must address the source of the values from which these moral judgments can be made. As we saw in the question of what is of value, moral laws or ethical perspectives can come from a variety of sources. For example, is morality ultimately a personal choice, so that living according to my convictions, regardless of the consequences, constitutes an ethical life? This would be the position of existentialist thinkers. On the other hand, is that which is right ultimately a societal question, whereby if 51 percent of the people (or their chosen representatives) think something is right or good, it thereby becomes such? Determining right by societal preference might be the basic issue in some people's defense of a woman's legal right to an abortion and in defenses of Roe v. Wade (i.e., if a majority of Americans respond positively to a woman's right to choose). Likewise, this question seeks to answer questions regarding whether morality should be based on some universal moral imperative deduced from human reason. For example, should all people be treated as an end in themselves and never as a means to an end (as advocated by philosophers such as Immanuel Kant)? The question further attempts to answer whether or not there are absolute and universal moral standards that transcend human experience and time and to which all human beings, regardless of culture, are expected to conform. This would be the position of most religious systems and would include standards such as the Ten Commandments.

THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW: ANSWERS TO THE BASIC QUESTIONS

The six foundational questions that all worldviews must answer provide the basis from which all adherents of that worldview begin to address the fundamental questions of life. How a society or culture responds corporately and how individuals think and live individually in relation to issues of life are reflections of the predominant worldview of the culture. For example, issues of how government should work and what it should do and expectations on issues of the economy, education, health care, entertainment, and so on start with a basic understanding of what is real, what is valuable, what it means to be a human being, how we assess what is true, and what is the nature of the problems that are found in society. It can be argued that a worldview is not truly a worldview unless it provides adequate answers to these basic questions. A worldview that fails to provide adequate answers to these questions is inherently unstable and cannot continue without creating problems for and eventually the downfall of the individuals or cultures that insist on maintaining it.
As Christian educators, when we seek to teach students a biblical worldview, we implicitly or explicitly maintain that the Bible provides sufficient answers to the foundational questions that confront all worldviews. We also are acknowledging a belief that the Bible provides us with sufficient insight to address issues of government, education, economics, arts, entertainment, and all the other areas that are part of the dynamics of human beings living with each other under the authority of God. In essence, when Paul writes that “whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31), he indicates that there is no area of life, no matter how routine, that is not affected by our understanding of God as we come to know him through his Word. How the biblical worldview begins to address these more corporate concerns will be the focus of our attention in chapter 3. For now we will examine the biblical response to the foundational questions fundamental to all worldviews.

The first foundational question of worldview centers on the issue of what is important or of value? The Bible is clear that God is the absolute and only standard of value. The value of all other things is derived from and is relative to him; they are reflections of the ultimate value that is God. John Piper notes that God “must be for himself if he is to be for us. . . . If God should turn away from himself as the Source of infinite joy, he would cease to be God. He would deny the infinite worth of his own glory. He would imply that there is something more valuable outside himself. He would commit idolatry.”19 The desire to elevate humanity to the place of ultimate authority over life, to make humanity the arbiter of all things, is a characteristic that is deeply embedded in our sin nature. It is a desire to usurp God’s place of supremacy over our lives and to overtake his throne as it relates to our lives. While proper education will help develop the individual to his potential, that potential must always be defined in terms of how that individual, created in the image of God, reflects the only true and absolute value, which is God.

Because God is the absolute and only true value, everything that does not reflect God’s glory is to be devalued and relegated to a secondary position in our lives. Thus, a biblically based education is one that assists students to develop their full potential as reflections of God’s glory. This would be in contrast to a view of education, prominent in our society today, that defines the individual in terms of economic potential, where becoming a “good person” is secondary to or synonymous with becoming a good or productive worker. While goodness based on the absolute value of God will certainly make the person a good worker, this goodness will transcend the workplace and may even cause the individual to be an economic liability when reflecting the absolute character of God puts her in conflict with unbiblical interests. For example, a worker may be acting more ethically when calling attention to practices in the workplace that are unjust or violate principles of good stewardship. These behaviors, however, may force the worker to confront superiors or possibly to disclose the practices of the company to a larger audience. These “whistle-blowing” behaviors may not be viewed as conducive to the ethic of being a good worker, but they are more aligned with a standard of goodness, justice, or stewardship based in God.

By stating that the God of the Bible is the absolute and only value, we are also explicitly stating that values are real and that they are not constructed from human understanding. While human beings do engage in the process of trying to make sense of their world and while sin does negatively influence this process, human beings are not autonomous entities that create their own set of values based on individual or cultural criteria. They are dependent on God to understand what is good, what is right, what is beautiful. They are dependent on God to reveal himself to them, and from that revelation to construct and apply a theory of value to things in the world. As dependent creatures, human beings must rely on God in constructing their understanding of the world. Because human beings were created dependent, there is a reliance on God for their construction and understanding of the world that was a part of humanity's make-up even before the Fall.

Here the lens analogy for worldview breaks down or is in need of modification. When I go to the optometrist to have my eyes checked, an eye test is conducted during which a series of lenses is given to me; my doctor asks me to identify which lenses give me a clearer vision of the chart. Based on my assessment, my doctor adjusts the lenses, progressively moving me closer to normal vision. This process, however, is predicated both on my knowing what "normal" vision looks like and my ability to discern that which is normal from that which is blurred. Worldviews do indeed serve as a type of lens; however, from the biblical perspective we are all born finite (a condition that would have been true of Adam) with a sin nature (which has affected all humanity since Adam), so our ability to know what is normal or true is faulty and requires that we be shown the nature of truth. This makes us all, even Adam before the Fall, dependent on God for an understanding of what constitutes a normal vision. Essentially, we are unable, starting from ourselves, to develop a sense of normal or to be sure that any conceptualization of normal that we might develop is correct.

For example, aesthetically, the biblical perspective of God as the absolute and only value calls into question the more subjective idea that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Jonathan Edwards once wrote that his wife Sarah was the most beautiful person he ever knew (a view one might suspect to be motivated by a desire to maintain a good standing with his wife). Portraits of Sarah Edwards do not show her to have been a woman of particularly striking appearance, even judging by the standards of beauty of that time. Edwards though, defined his wife's beauty in terms of the holiness that characterized the way she lived her life. It was his view of holiness as a reflection of the absolute and most definitive characteristic of God that caused Edwards to use it as the basis for making his aesthetic judgment. Furthermore, his view of beauty did not originate in Edwards himself. It was a perspective of beauty based on the revealed character of God. While not all art or music needs to reflect explicit "God-themes," good art, music, literature, behavior, science, or any other area of human life may be viewed as having value from a biblical perspective if it seeks to put into practice Paul's admonition of Philippians 4:8-9: "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."
The second foundational question all worldviews must address is, *what is real or what is the nature of reality?* Biblically, we see that God, who preexisted in perfect freedom before all time and space, creates, sustains, judges, and redeems for his ultimate glory. Since God existed before all things, he has no imposed duties, nothing that compels him to do anything. No standards of conduct and no obligations exist outside of himself to which he must conform. God was not obligated to create the world, nor was he obligated to redeem humanity when they fell, but in all things he chooses to act in a way that gives him pleasure and leads to his glory (cf. Rom 11:33-36; 9:19-24). From the perspective of Scripture we biblically learn that God is perfectly sovereign and that he is free to do what pleases him.

That God preexists and that he creates for his own pleasure means that God exists independently of his creation. This places the biblical worldview apart from transcendental worldviews that see God as part of all things. In Ralph Waldo Emerson's declaration, "The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel with God," he reflects the view that there is no difference between the spiritual and the material, that all things are part of the same substance. By maintaining the preexistence of God and the reality of spiritual things, the biblical worldview stands in contrast to that of the naturalists or philosophical materialists who deny any reality beyond the physical or material world. Also, that God chose to create and that he calls this creation "good" means that the created world is valuable, an externalization of his perfect character, and not to be minimized or rejected as in some Eastern worldviews where the physical universe is merely illusion, and reality consists of spiritual nothingness. In an unfallen world we would see all created beings act out the perfect character of God. This suggests that the creation is valuable and worthy of our attention and study, to be valued, not despised, to be cared for as God has charged humanity (Gen 1:28; 2:15). In recognizing the value of the creation, however, we must not allow the created order to supersede the value of the Creator himself, a propensity Paul tells us is true of those who reject the reality of a transcendent God (Rom 1:25).

The biblical view of reality acts as a remedy for the propensity of the sin nature to make humanity the focal point of history. The biblical worldview communicates God in his proper place of significance. God's being the highest and greatest good makes the glorification of God, the extension of his honor and glory, the theme of all history. The process of the redemption and reconciliation of all creation, which God chooses as the means to bring the greatest honor and glory to himself, becomes the focal point of history (Rom 8:19-22; 1 Cor 15:24-28; Col 1:28). It is a focus in which humanity, created as the image-bearers of God, is an integral part but not the exclusive focus. Without this perspective, human beings are inclined to presume that the story of creation, fall, and redemption is the story of God's exclusive work for humanity. The biblical view of reality changes the near-sightedness of believing that God's redemptive history focuses wholly on humanity. It also acts as a cure for the arrogance of a secularized view of history that centers exclusively on the accomplishments of humanity in terms of building wealth, power, prestige, and self-glorification, a view that God illustrates as insanity (Dan 4:28-37). It should also

act as a means of reorienting human beings to conform to the biblical mandates of stewardship and reconciliation given to them in Scripture.

The Bible tells us that human beings are created in the image of God (Gen 1:26); this understanding forms the basis for the biblical worldview response to the third foundational worldview question: What is the nature of humanity? Created in the image of God, humanity bears the likeness of its Creator—a likeness we reflect before others so that we become the tangible or concrete representation of God. This aspect of our nature also separates human beings from the rest of creation, so that we stand in an authoritative position over creation (Gen 1:28; Ps 8:4–8). By stating that humanity is created in the image of God, the Bible teaches that I have an obligation to reflect God to others just as others have a biblical obligation to reflect God to me; however, being created in God's image does not simply refer to our positional standing before God and above the rest of creation. As beings created in God's image, the Bible teaches that our fundamental makeup is such that we are designed to have a qualitatively different relationship with God and with others created in that image than we are to have with the rest of creation. We are to live for God and for others in a way that places all other relationships with the creation as secondary (Matt 22:37–40). Stating that human beings are created in the image of God, however, then raises the question, How are we, as human beings, like God?

Cornelius Plantinga notes that human beings reflect the image of God in three ways. First, humans, like God, have "responsible dominion" over the created world.21 In Genesis 1:28 the cultural mandate to humanity is to increase in number, to subdue the earth, and to rule over every living creature. This charge to rule over the creation does not give humanity the right to exploit it in ways that allow us to simply please ourselves but includes the idea of stewardship—caring for that which belongs to another with the interest of the owner in mind. The idea of stewardship or responsible dominion stands in contrast to a more naturalistic or modernistic worldview that sees nature as something to be conquered, as exemplified in the American mythos of "taming the frontier." Ann Coulter once stated in a television interview, "God says, 'Earth is yours. Take it. Rape it. It's yours.'"22 Unfortunately, through an improper understanding of the teaching of responsible dominion or stewardship Christianity has, at times, contributed to the Western attitude that treats the environment in a destructive manner. This has led some critics, for example, historian Lynn White Jr., to conclude that Christianity bears a “huge burden of guilt” for the present ecological crisis.23

Second, we bear the image of God in our ability to live in loving communion with each other and with God. This aspect of the image of God refers to our social nature, to the fact that we are incomplete or cannot experience our full humanity apart from a relationship with God and with others. Just as God is triune in his nature and therefore can love, enjoy, communicate with, and experience the other members of the Godhead, so human beings, as his image-bearers, are designed to be able to experience these same

characteristics in their relationship with God and with others. For this reason we are told not to avoid or forsake assembling or fellowshipping with other believers (Heb 10:25). Paul writes that one of the distinguishing marks of the mature believer is the ability to demonstrate unity with other believers and to love them (Eph 4:13–16). Christ distinguishes this aspect of unity, or living in communion with others, as a characteristic of true believers. Because God is one, the Lord claims the characteristic of unity within the body of Christ as a criterion by which the world can judge the validity of Christ, the church, and the gospel message (John 17:21).

Finally, Plantinga notes that we bear the image of God by "conforming to Jesus Christ in suffering and death, the ultimate example of self-giving love."\(^{24}\) The image of God means that as human beings we have the capacity to give of ourselves, to place the needs of others before our own needs. We have the ability to demonstrate care and compassion to others, even when there is no foreseeable gain for us in doing so. Jesus notes this characteristic in humanity when he says, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). While the sin nature corrupts this aspect of the image of God in such a way that we now are prone to place our own desires above those of others, the sin nature mars the image of God in humanity but does not destroy it. Christ infers this in teaching the disciples about prayer, noting that even those who are evil still know how to give good gifts to their children (Luke 11:11–13). Because the image of God is not lost in sinful humanity, God can still hold humans accountable for obedience to the original mandate of responsible dominion or stewardship.

Being in the image of God does not equate human beings with God or imply that human beings are God. The image is not an exact reproduction; thus, as created beings we possess certain fundamental limitations that distinguish us from God. The greatest of these are the limitations imposed on humanity as a result of their finiteness. Just as finiteness causes us to depend on God for a proper understanding of the world, we are also dependent upon God to know how to bear his image to others and to the rest of creation. Finiteness preceded the Fall, meaning that even before the Fall, humans were cognitively dependent on God for their understanding. The cultural mandate to be stewards requires that humans not only commune with God so that we can know his will for the creation but also learn about the creation itself so that we can implement God's will. Our finite nature also makes us dependent on others. Unlike God, who can bring about all things through the power of his will (1 Chr 29:11; Dan 4:35), as limited creatures humans find that we often need to cooperate with others to achieve God's will. This, combined with our limited understanding, makes us dependent on others to learn about the creation and obliges those of us who are more knowledgeable to teach for the benefit of the individual and the welfare of others (Luke 12:48; Phil 2:3–4).

At this point it should be noted that we have not addressed the Christian response to the fundamental worldview questions in order. Specifically, in addressing the biblical response to the nature of humanity, we have skipped the biblical response to the question of the nature of truth and the way we can know it. That God exists and is the absolute and

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only real value means that there is an absolute truth that exists in the universe. That God created a physical world and created humanity in his image to have responsible dominion over that creation means that not only is there a spiritual dimension of reality but that the physical creation also has value as a reflection of the character of God. This does not constitute a type of pantheism, believing that everything that exists is an extension of God, but an understanding that creation, while separate from God, is a declaration of his power and majesty (Ps 19:1). Also, since human beings are created in the image of God, they are empowered with certain attributes that allow them to have fellowship with God and others.

The fact that we have been given the responsibility of managing the creation as stewards indicates that there is knowledge that can be gained from the creation that is real and can be objectively communicated. Our stewardship responsibility also suggests a dependence on God for gaining a greater perspective on truth and for using the knowledge that we gain to indeed manage the creation as stewards. Obviously, educators are in the "knowledge business," and questions regarding what is true and how we know that which is true are of vital importance. Combining these questions with the biblical doctrine of the image of God highlights important implications for the Christian educator—regarding the nature and scope of the curriculum and the type of teaching methodologies used. Being created in the image of God is fundamental to how human beings will live and work. As a result, the concept is either distorted or attacked by many theorists who wish to reject a biblical view of education or simply ignored by those insensitive to the ramifications on curriculum and instruction from such a high view of humanity.

As we have seen, worldviews provide both a means for explaining the world and a vision for determining how life should be lived. The result is an inevitable discrepancy between these two positions or functions. This leads to the fourth foundational worldview question: What is wrong? From the biblical perspective the answer to this worldview question is the entry and continued existence of sin, humanity's rebellion against God, into the world. Sin is any transgression of thought, attitude, or action that opposes the will of God and attempts to diminish or take from God the glory that is due him. Sin produces and sustains the existence of evil in the world, its effects going beyond the person who engages in the sin, rippling through all of creation so that all things are affected by human rebellion against God (Gen 3:14–24; Rom 8:19–21). Because of sin, humans become the enemies of God and the objects of his wrath, following our own desires in opposition to God's will (Rom 5:9–10; Eph 2:3–4).

What is it about sin that causes God to oppose it so vehemently? Why does God sacrifice his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as a remedy for the problem of sin (to answer the correlative question—what can be done to remedy the problem?)? Human rebellion is no threat to God; he remains totally omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. God's sovereignty is never in jeopardy, so there is no rebellion, whether by Satan and his followers or by human beings, that can succeed. What God resolves will be done, for there is no force in the universe that can oppose his will (Ps 115:3; Isa 46:9–10). God was not required by any mandate or principle to create. He is, and was, and always remains totally self-sufficient, living in harmony with himself since eternity past. Any motivation to cre-
ate is solely the result of his will. We are told, though, that our sin can grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Eph 4:30) and that the sin of all humanity can cause pain in the heart of God (Gen 9:6). Do I individually or do human beings collectively possess the ability to disrupt the contentment of God? If God does not do what I want, can I punish him like a spoiled child by sinning, thus causing him some pain, some pang of heart, some loss of joy—even if I cannot get my own way? If God and his glory are of ultimate value, does my sin constitute a threat to God’s glory by my ability to somehow disvalue God?

The simple answer to these questions is no—sin is no threat to God in any way. God’s sovereignty is not threatened by human rebellion. His glory is not diminished, nor is his happiness dependent on human conformity to his will. In contrast, however, Piper notes that our own happiness is totally dependent on the delight that God has in himself. According to Piper, “The very thing that can make us most happy is what God delights in with all his heart and with all his soul,” specifically himself (cf. Isa 43:6-7; Jer 32:40-43; Rom 8:28). Understanding that sin does not represent any real threat to God underscores the idea that a holy and loving God truly has in mind the best interests of human beings, as the recipients of his love, when he sets standards for holy and righteous living. Sin inhibits the display of God’s glory in human beings as the image-bearers of God—and creates conditions or effects that prevent the display of God’s image in others.

If we understand humanism to be the elevation of human beings to their highest state, to allow humans to be all they can possibly be, then biblical Christianity represents, according to theologian J. I. Packer, the only true form of humanism. Humanity was never more human than it was in the Garden before the Fall, and believers will experience true humanity again when they are ultimately sanctified, freed from their sin nature, at the return of Christ. Until that time, biblical Christianity maintains that human beings can become more complete image-bearers of God in Christ and that they can experience life more abundant in Christ (John 10:10). From this perspective the reason sin is so destructive is that it dehumanizes people, making them less than what God intends them to be. That God grieves and finds sin distressing is not because it causes him any discomfort or ruins God’s personal peace, but because God loves humanity and wants the best for them. Since God is the ultimate value in the universe, he grieves when people act in ways that are not in their best interest, when they sacrifice the best for themselves for something that can never truly give them what they ultimately desire or need. Understood this way, when God gives a command not to engage in a particular thought, attitude, or action, he does so because, as the Creator and having full knowledge of what is best for humanity, he understands that having these particular experiences will diminish their own peace and happiness, and make them less than what he intended. It in the end, sin is ultimately not in the best interest of human beings.

Understanding sin to be a dehumanizing process means that whenever a sin is committed, it has at least four effects. The first, and the one that traditionally comes to mind, is that sin separates humanity from God. Because of the holiness of God, human rebellion

25. Piper, Desiring God, 53.
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and moral impurity make it impossible to stand before God on the basis of personal merit. The sin nature desires to be autonomous from God, to seek its own way of determining what is right and wrong (Rom 3:10; Gen 3:5). To sin is to implicitly ally with Satan, whose goal is to overthrow God and place himself on God’s throne (Isa 14:12–15). As a result, the punishment of hell that was created for Satan and his angelic followers is extended to rebellious humanity. The Westminster Confession of Faith begins with the statement that “the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” Sin takes the glory and adoration that is due to God, which humans were created to give him, and tempts them to hoard that glory for themselves. In the process, no positive end is produced. Martin Luther wrote that sin “takes from God and from men what belongs to them and gives neither God nor men anything of that which it has, is, and is capable of.”

Taking from human beings that which belongs to them in God is the dehumanizing aspect of sin and is sin’s second effect. Sin robs sinners of their humanity, acting to erode the image of God in them. To say that sin dehumanizes is to assert that as humans engage in sin, they become less able to fulfill the created purposes that God has for them—loving God, loving others, and caring for and developing the creation for his glory. While sin is a transgression against God, it is also a transgression against humanity and against the creation as a whole. In this sense we can make a differentiation between sin and immoral behavior. Certainly immoral behavior is a sin; however, when individuals engage in immoral acts they engage in actions that use other people, either directly or indirectly, to meet their own desires. Their actions reduce the other people to objects, dehumanizing them in some way, so that the victims can be used as items or things to meet the desires of the sinner.

This tendency to diminish others to objects, reducing their uniqueness as image-bearers of God, is the essence of what Martin Buber called “I-It” relationships, where the sinner (“I”) reduces others to objects (“It”) to satisfy one’s own desires. Motivated from our sin nature, we tend to reduce others to objects, failing to see them as image-bearers of God; consequently, we tend to view them as things that may be used for our own benefit. Since immoral behavior dehumanizes another person, it constitutes a sin. Further, engaging in immoral actions is also detrimental to those who perform such actions since the process desensitizes them, making them more capable of engaging in similar actions against others in the future (1 Tim 4:2). These immoral actions violate the scriptural principle of placing or esteeming others as greater than ourselves (Phil 2:3), of placing the needs and development of others above our own, of treating each individual as an image-bearer of God, relations that Buber characterized as “I-Thou” relationships, where the former “It” is now viewed by the other person in all of his or her humanity as “Thou.”

The dehumanizing of those engaging in sin is the third effect of sin, the effect that renders sinners less capable of exhibiting the image of God in their own lives. This expands the concept of sin beyond that of simply immoral behavior. In immoral behavior there is

29. Ibid., 59. “When I confront a human being as my You and speak the basic word I-You to him, then he is no thing among things nor does he consist of things.”
always a victim, a person against whom the action is directed. In sin the perpetrator of the
sin, the sinner, is always a victim of dehumanization. In essence, to sin is to dehumanize
one's self. Since sin can be a thought or an attitude, in addition to an action, we can engage
in sin, and in so doing, will damage our reflection of the image of God. This will occur
whether or not we act on that thought or attitude and produce an action against another
that will constitute an immoral act. For this reason Christ said that not only is our act of
murder or adultery wrong, but to engage in the thought or attitude of hate or lust that
produces the moral wrong also makes us equally guilty before God (cf. Matt 5:21-30).

When human beings engage in sin, they attempt to meet God-given or God­
permitted desires in ways that are contrary to his will, and, in so doing, bring harm to
themselves and often to others. The need for rest can become sloth. The desire to meet
material needs can become greed. The God-given desire for food can become gluttony. In
each of these cases, the sin causes the person to become less an image-bearer of God, less
a reflection of him to others. For example, God has given the desire for sexual activity to
human beings, and because of this, sexuality is neither wrong nor detestable. However,
God gives guidelines on the proper context for the expression of sexual desire and pro­
vides parameters for engaging in sexual activity, attitudes, and thoughts. Human beings
who experience the desire for sexual activity can look at these parameters as restrictions
and conclude that God is some type of "celestial kill-joy" who does not desire for them
to be happy. For example, I might conclude that God is not looking out for my welfare
or interests and, because he is not, I need to do what I think is right or good for me. This
conclusion might lead me to engage in sexual activity in any context that seems "right
in my own eyes" (Judg 21:25). On the other hand, I might conclude that because God is
bigger and stronger than I am and has threatened me with hell if I disobey him, it is in
my best interest not to engage in sexual activities outside of these rules. Either conclusion
comes from the perspective of deciding for myself what is good or evil, usurping God's
authority in my own life by reserving for myself the right to decide what is right or wrong,
what is in my own best interest.

If, however, we ask the question, why has God given certain parameters for the ful­
fillment of sexual desire?—keeping in mind that God's desire for us is that we be all that
we are intended to be in him—we might come to an entirely different conclusion. In
focusing on the fulfillment of my sexual desires, those desires become the focus of my
thoughts, attitudes, and possible actions. Consequently, I am inclined to look at those that
can fulfill these desires as objects to satisfy me. Those people are no longer image-bearers
of God in my eyes, but they are reduced to objects that can be used to satisfy my desires.
While I may not engage in the act of adultery with another woman, if I entertain such
thoughts, I become disposed to looking at that woman as an object. Such thoughts also
create in me an attitude that will predispose me to look at other women as objects in the
future and to evaluate the relative worth of a woman by how well she satisfies some set of
objectified standards on what a woman should be—standards that may be based in my
desire to achieve sexual satisfaction. Conversely, understanding that God created humans
as sexual beings means that the purpose of biblical sexuality is to enhance the expression
of the image of God in the marriage relationship. For this reason Scripture uses the mar-
riage relationship to illustrate the unity within the Godhead and the relationship of Christ and the church (Gen 1:26-27; 2:23; Eph 5:22–33).

Finally, because human beings are given responsible dominion or stewardship over the creation, each act of sin produces a ripple effect, so that all of creation is affected by our sin. This is the fourth effect of sin—that it creates a separation between human beings and the creation that they are to nurture and develop for God’s glory. We are not dismissing or diminishing the fact that Adam’s sin immediately brought a cursing of nature by God as a consequence of his sin (Gen 3:17–19), but acknowledging that, as a result of sin we now desire to use the creation to meet our own desires, outside of the concerns of God. The creation, therefore, suffers from and reacts to the mismanagement by humanity. Problems of pollution, endangered species, waste management, resource depletion, and other environmental difficulties can often be attributed to poor stewardship. Because of this mismanagement, all of the creation also awaits the liberation from the bondage of sin imposed upon it, a condition that will occur when humanity is restored to its ultimate glory in Christ (Rom 8:20–21).

The dehumanizing effects of sin are not limited to the thoughts, attitudes, and actions of individuals, but they are also experienced at the corporate or communal level of society or culture. Just as sin hinders the expression of the image of God in individuals, sin in a society acts as a type of moral wrong, creating actions that victimize individuals (or groups of individuals) in the society and reducing them to a status that is less than God intends. As sinful individuals create society and social structures, they do so in a way that often allows them to fulfill their desires at the expense of others. Thus, individuals and groups can become oppressors, and others can be oppressed. Two examples are the advantage of whites over blacks in apartheid South Africa and the justification of abuse towards slaves by labeling them as property in the antebellum South. The oppression often creates the desire in the exploited groups to gain power to meet their own desires, which may result in greater social conflict and tension.

The final question of concern for all worldviews is the question of ethics: How should we live? The biblical response is that every action, attitude, rule, policy, thought, or project, whether done individually or corporately, is morally correct only if it is in accordance with God’s purpose to glorify himself. “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). Paul tells the Philippians that “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.” Paul goes on, however, to note that actions should follow such thoughts and attitudes: “The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil 4:8–9, emphasis added). To act in accordance with God’s will, which brings glory to God, is also to act in such a way as to experience true humanity. In this context, a biblical worldview means that every aspect and issue of life, including those of education, will need to be brought into alignment with the expressed will of God. As we engage in the study of the goals and objectives of education, we will need to engage in the process of evaluating contemporary educational practice, including the predominant practices of Christian schooling, from the perspec-
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tive of the biblical worldview. This will include evaluating whether these goals, objectives, and practices prepare teachers to develop the image of God in their students so that they can bring honor and glory to God by participating and practicing his will.

CONCLUSION
As we have seen, the development of worldview is a communal process. As we interact with others in the world, especially those more competent in the world than ourselves, we begin to develop ways of viewing the world that may not be conscious but that affect our ways of thinking and our value systems, even to the point of deciding what is normal and best. In this sense worldviews may seem to be more caught than actively taught. This reality does not mean that changing a worldview cannot be done through direct teaching, but it suggests that the changing of a worldview will be a process that requires an active and supportive community engaged in progressively developing and implementing a biblical worldview. Scripture tells us that the changing of our way of thinking is foundational to doing the will of God (Rom 12:1–2), but an understanding of the communal aspect of worldview helps illustrates why gifts are given to all believers to be used to spiritually develop or edify the church body (1 Cor 12:1–30) and why we are told not to forsake our own assembling together (Heb 10:25).

These passages, of course, apply to the church as a body of believers. While a Christian school is not a church, it does constitute a body of believers where the core questions of a worldview are addressed and where the answers to those core questions should be actively applied to understanding all areas of life. This may include aspects of the worldview not normally addressed by the church. The Christian school and university may currently be the best places to address issues of social concern, of the humanities, and of the natural and social sciences, and to develop leaders trained in the biblical application of worldview. These leaders, whether they be pastors, teachers, or other lay persons, would then be able to help educate and edify their congregations specifically and the body of Christ in general, in ways that would lead to personal and social transformation—which is the charge given to the church.