



Worldview

How do people believe?

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What is a belief?

A belief is the product of believing. That seems logical. However, since there are those who seem comfortable believing in nothing, the product of that choice is—nothing. In that respect investing in nothing produces something, which is nothing. When it comes to belief, nothing has value.

How do beliefs become a viewpoint?

People believe things about themselves like “Life is always going bad for me and always will.” or “Luck is just around the corner.” These attitudes about life are dispositions largely and they do shape how we approach living our lives. Nevertheless, these dispositions largely shape how we live our lives while saying little about how we believe life should be lived by others. “Life is all about luck, but I wouldn’t say all people depend upon luck.” There are also beliefs that we have about family, community, the weather and so on. “Families are all about conflict.” “Communities are about caring.” “Weather predictions are always off.” These views also shape who and what we are. Again, they have little to do with how we feel other lives ought to be lived. It’s merely a perspective on opinion, not principle. However, when we as a people are asked how we view life, those relationships that span beyond home, community and country, that’s a view of the world—a worldview. Principally, there would appear to be five principle viewpoints or worldview in addition to Christianity: Islam, Secular Humanism, Marxism, Cosmic Humanism, and Postmodernism¹. Which of these we choose to believe, in part or whole, affects how we view the world we live in and our foundational understanding of faith and obedience to the will of our God.

How does a biblical worldview get diluted?

We aren’t born with a view of the world. We build it over time. Parents, teachers, spiritual studies, and life experiences assist us. There was a time when building a worldview wasn’t the challenge it has become today. We live in a culture where a number of worldviews dominate our culture, unlike past eras when that wasn’t true. There were always those who believed something different in terms of what is true and what is not, but our culture was predominantly Christian. Right and wrong, good and bad, permissible and not permissible were fairly standard. Building a Christian worldview in today’s American culture is far different. There was a time when our culture was

¹ <https://old.worldviewweekend.com/worldview-times/print.php?&ArticleID=5324>

largely founded on Christian principles that permeated our social, economic and political ethic. Today our culture is more diluted than ever by more secular thinking. Christian Smith and Melinda Denton, in their book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, describe the current worldview of American teenagers, most of whom claim Christianity as their religion, as “moralistic therapeutic deism.”² What does that mean? Many of these young people believe that it’s good to do right; it’s God’s expectation, yet God does not influence it.

If Smith and Denton are correct, these youth aren’t basing their understanding of faith and belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They really have little clue as to what Christianity is other than terminology that might at times be useful but certainly no barometer of truth. They don’t “get” Jesus even though they “got” Jesus. Jesus is a great guy and he’s their friend. They may know what they believe in some cases, but they don’t know what Christianity is. Jesus is more than good, he’s perfect.

Much of this confusion isn’t new. Twentieth century Theologian Carl Barth preached a view of Scriptural truth that re-blazed a *conditional truth* pathway first blazed by pioneer reformed Christian theologians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He reinforced it for generations and it’s impact remains powerful today. Barth taught that all Scripture was inspired but, basically, tainted by those who wrote it since there wasn’t an author among them who was perfect. God’s inspiration was perfect but the writers could and did imperfectly transfer it from thought to pen. Much of Christendom has innocently bought into this. The problem is, if Scriptures are made imperfect by those who wrote them, they can’t be God’s Word; since God’s Word, by definition, must be perfect.

Small wonder that many of my generation and those younger have a diluted view of what it means to *be* Christian. On the one hand some “Christian teaching” has manifested this error. On the other, powerful “other” worldviews have become apparent in our culture. Whereas it was comparatively easier for my great grandparents to hold onto a largely untainted view of truth, this is no longer true of my generation, and certainly not easy for my children and grandchildren. Does it matter? If we believe in truth there is no other course than to find what that is and hold onto it. Otherwise life itself is of little matter or importance. Small wonder that suicide and despair are so common today.

Why does a biblical worldview matter?

² <https://www.allaboutworldview.org/building-a-christian-worldview.htm>

There's an old saying that "we can choose our own opinions, but we can't choose our own facts." Unfortunately we're all living in a culture that's so mired in wrong thinking that they are comfortable defying even the logic of this adage. "Facts are relative to what I believe them to be." I've actually heard people tell me this in earnest. When we embrace a relativistic way of living, why should facts matter? Our culture is so permeated with fantasy and digital unreality that *what is* has become a factor of the digital moment and not a living reality. Living in a fantasy world isn't sustainable. Reality always has a way of exposing illusion sooner or later. The problem is that even when the truth exposes fantasy, the consequences of believing the wrong thing remains. Minds and lives are tainted and relationships with God jeopardized. It's wise to consider carefully the ideas we build our lives on. Life is full of consequences. God excuses sin, but the consequences of sin remain. The wise choice, the choice that will determine eternal reality, is to pursue truth, embrace and know it, while boldly guarding against an empty worldview taking it from us.

So "what is truth," as Pontus Pilate so cynically asked Jesus? Truth makes its home where it's welcome and there can only be one home it inhabits with exclusivity, just as you and I can't be in two places at one time. If there are multiple viewpoints, all must be empty of the truth but one, and that is the truth we can't live without, today, tomorrow and beyond this existence.

What makes up a viewpoint?

Most people desire a worldview in order to believe in something. But, what compels people to select one viewpoint over another? According to Ravi Zacharias the reason is: "origin, meaning, morality and destiny."³ Universally we all want to have a better understanding of where we come from, why we're here and where we're going? What are the fundamental truths that dictate the answer to these questions? What are these worldviews and how do they address these questions? Let's take a look at each.

Christianity

What does the Bible has to say about where we come from, what is the meaning of life, what is moral and where are we going? The Bible teaches that God created you and me and the world around us. It teaches that the meaning of life, its purpose, is to live in faith, to worship the Triune God who made us; that goodness resides in Christ and is granted to us in grace by the Father who loves us and gave his Son to redeem us from sin, death and the devil; and we are ultimately

³ <https://rzim.org/just-a-thought-broadcasts/a-coherent-worldview/>

chosen by the Father to live with him in eternity, free from the bonds of pain, sorrow and death that hold us here on earth in bondage. A Christian begins and ends his day with thanks.

Islam

This worldview has some things in common with Christianity in its views of creation, immortality, heaven, hell, and judgment. It embraces Allah however, a god who is primarily a judge and not a loving father. Christ is a prophet but not divine. Life is about conflict, not a drawing close to Allah.. Life exists to carry on a worldwide and Allah inspired conflict of love and hate, good and evil, life and death. Someday it will mercifully end with the chance that Allah will embrace you for the efforts you made on earth. The path to where you're going is at best faint, yet perhaps as dark as night. A muslim must constantly wonder why is it worth the effort?

Secular Humanism

One of the dominant worldviews today, Secular Humanism, is atheistic. There's no room for a god since secular humanists believe in the efficacy of man to select what is good. Truth is relative to time and place. Life is about man, not a divine realm. Goodness abides in us, not in a god. It embraces civil righteousness, a goodness that naturally touches man and causes right actions. We come from nowhere having evolved due to chance from something without origin; our purpose is happiness while here; life has no meaning outside of death, and an eternal nothingness is our prize when we are finished here. These people are resolute about living and resigned to dying.

Marxism

Marxism is a militantly atheistic, materialistic worldview. It's a worldview that's advancing today under the banner of democratic socialism. It believes in forcing social and economic changes on all social classes, eventually leading to the end of Capitalism and a revolution of Socialism. Life's meaning is based on the value of community, not the individual. Humanity is evolving, at least in a punctuated way, and origin is chance not plan. Conflict is the path all society faces until only a classless society is achieved. After that there is no meaning to anything. Socialists don't care about where they are going as long as they have a powerful journey getting there.

Cosmic Humanism

Cosmic Humanism is really nothing more than New Age thought. It is the belief that humanity is the highest of all beings, and truth and knowledge thus rests in science and human reason. Another aspect of this worldview is its cosmic character. As with Secular Humanism, truth is relative. However, Cosmic Humanism often embraces occultism and/or satanism. This *spiritual* element is conclusively without eternal outcomes. Cosmic humanists believe that our origin is

primordial and our end is permanent. The meaning of life is at best a very dark experience. This viewpoint is selfish and indulgent. Hope rests in the here and now.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism is the philosophical proposal that reality isn't real. What society has deemed for centuries as reality is, according to postmodern thought, inaccessible by human investigation. Knowledge is a social construction, and truth claims are primarily political. The meaning of words is to be determined by readers not and not those who write them. In short, reality is what individuals or social groups decide it is. Truth is relative. Norms are conditional. Where we come from doesn't matter. Where we are going isn't important. Meaning is relative to what you want it to mean. Believers are bereft of belief other than a firm hold on depression.

Picking a worldview?

Not everyone chooses a worldview based on Zacharias's belief that most people desire a worldview in order to believe in something, and that something is based on "origin, meaning, morality and destiny." There are some who base their worldview on a less personal, less critical basis. Yet, when you give this even a modicum of thought, this approach to not believing in the substance of life is merely a nod to a relativist postmodernist worldview. I believe that everyone has a world viewpoint, even if that viewpoint is an empty one. Whether we realize it or not people can't live without a worldview. Worldviews shapes our understanding of the world in which we live. Unless you believe in an out-of-body existence, we are all blessed or burdened with a worldview.

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