

# Worldviews

## Apologetics - Defending and Declaring the Evidence for Biblical Christianity

*"15 ...if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it [Greek - "apologia"]. 16 But do this in a gentle and respectful way..." 1 Peter 3:15-16 NLT*

### Worldviews Are Everywhere! Subtly!

One of the most popular series of movies in the entertainment industry is Star Wars. Not only did it break box office records, but it set a new standard for special effects in movies. However, one aspect that most people don't know is that Star Wars subtly portrays a specific worldview. Most people never catch it. Do you?

**Q1. What worldview do you think is conveyed in Star Wars?**

The Star Wars concept of "the force" is based on the worldview of pantheism. Pantheism comes from two Greek words: "Pan" meaning *all* and "theism" meaning *God*. Pantheism is the belief that God is an impersonal force (an energy force) and is one essence with the universe. God (an energy force) occupies all things. The universe is God and God is the universe. That is, God is not separate from the universe but is within it. This worldview is an essential part of most Hindu, Buddhist, and New Age religions. Pantheism gained popularity in the sixties as Eastern religions were showcased by celebrities such as The Beatles and actress Shirley McClain. We are exposed and influenced by different worldviews every day and often we are unaware of it.

### Defining A Worldview

Author, James Sire's definition is "A world view is a set of presuppositions (or assumptions) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously) about the basic makeup of our world." James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1976). 17.

One theologian offers a simple explanation of a worldview when he wrote: "A worldview is like a contact lens: it's the way we view the world... we look through worldviews and interpret the world around us." Trevin K. Wax, *Christian Worldview Handbook* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2019) 4.

Theologian, Norman Geisler, in the foreword of the book, *Making Sense of Your World*, offered a simple explanation of a worldview. He wrote: "...a worldview is like colored glasses; it colors everything at which we look. It is a grid through which one views all of life. As such it helps form our thoughts, values, and decisions. The tragedy is that most people do not even know what their worldview is, how they got it, and how important it is in their lives." W. Gary Phillip, William E. Brown, and John Stonestreet, *Making Sense of Your World: A Biblical Worldview*, second edition (Sheffield Publishing Company, 2008), vii.

**Q2. In your own words, what is a worldview?**

### Defining A Christian Worldview

The *Apologetics Study Bible* defines a Christian worldview, "A Christian worldview is the sum total of all the things one believes, especially in regard to reality, truth, knowledge, and value. A Christian worldview is a biblically grounded set of

beliefs about all of life, from work, recreation, and finances to God, life after death, and morality." Ted Cabal, General Editor, *The Apologetics Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 1700.

In short, a Christian worldview is based on the teachings of the Bible and specifically of Jesus Christ. It is seeing the world and life through the eyes of Jesus.

**Q3. In your own words, what is a Christian worldview? How is different from other worldviews?**

Proverbs 9:10 NLT *"Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment."*

**Q4. According to Proverbs 9:10, what is essential to developing a Christian worldview?**

### Why Worldviews Matter

#### 1. You Have A Worldview! But Is It Biblical?

You may have never heard of the term "worldview," but everyone has one. You have one. The issue is—what kind of worldview do you have?

According to Douglas Groothuis, numerous different surveys reveal that most Christians do not have a Christian worldview. Only 12 percent knew what a worldview is and was able to give a partial meaning of it. In addition, the same polls revealed that most Christians are biblically illiterate. That is, they did not have a clear understanding of what the Bible teaches on many of the issues facing modern culture. Groothuis wrote, "Many Christians live in an intellectual ghost town..." Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2011).p. 77-78.

Groothuis added that the scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Bible, are the source and ultimate authority to a Christian worldview. "A Christian worldview takes the Bible to be God's written revelation to humanity... A Christian's beliefs ought, then, to comport with what is taught in the whole counsel of the Scriptures." Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 79.

#### 2. Worldviews Effect Our Evangelism Effort.

Author, Trevin Wax, confronts the attitude of the Christian who says he doesn't care or worry himself about worldviews, he just reads the Bible and seeks to live according to what it teaches. But Trevin Wax replied, "This line of thinking sounds humble and restrained, but it is far from the mentality of a missionary. If we are to be biblical Christians, we must read the Bible in order to read the culture.... We also read the Bible to know how to engage people around us with the gospel. To be good missionaries, we need to have our own minds formed by the Scriptures, and at the same time, we need to understand how people think—the people we've been called to reach. That's why we need to be familiar with

the big questions of life and the big debates in our world.”  
Trevin Wax, *Christian Worldview Handbook*, 4.

Q5. *Based on the comments of author Trevin Wax, why should we care about worldviews? How do they help us be more missional and evangelistic?*

### 3. Understanding Worldviews Help Us Evaluate and Compare World Religions and Belief Systems.

*The Apologetics Study Bible* points out that every religion in the world today is a worldview. Understanding this makes it easier to evaluate and judge the merits of the different world religions’ truth claims. “Helping people see the importance of their worldview and leading them to realize the coherence in the Christian worldview is one of the most important tasks of apologetics.” (923).

Q6. *Why is it important to understand worldviews when we talk to people with non-biblical beliefs or from different world religions? What are some key topics where there will likely be important differences?*

### 4. Understanding Worldviews Help People Understand Their Self-Identity and Behavior.

Apologet, Douglas Groothuis, explained, “Our worldview shapes who we are and what we do. We are driven by our deepest beliefs and interpret the world according to them, often almost automatically.” Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 75. James W. Sire, explains that it is important for each of us to discover our personal worldview. It is a step to self-awareness, self-knowledge, and self-understanding. James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 17.

Q7. *When was there a time when you struggled with the questions: Who am I, do I matter, why am I here, where am I going?*

### How Worldviews Are Formed

We are not born with our worldview. It is developed. It is learned. It can even change over time. Several influences shape our worldview. Some of the major influences are:

1. **Our Experiences.** Our view of life and the world can be shaped by joyful or pleasurable experiences, painful experiences, fascinating experiences, shocking or puzzling experiences.
2. **Our Reflection.** We view various situations in life and the world and think about them. We try to make sense of them. We evaluate them. We accept or reject them.
3. **Our Emotions.** Deep sorrow, pain, stress, disappointment, or pleasure, joy, peacefulness, can all shape our worldview.

Q8. *What is a pleasant or painful experience that has influenced your view of life the most?*

4. **Religious Beliefs.** A person’s worldview can deeply be affected by religious beliefs or skepticism. For example, the beliefs of a Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Jew, and those of other religions are all going to view life and the world in different ways. The same is true for those who claim to be an atheist or agnostic.

Q9. *How do you think Christians, Muslims, and Jews view life, relationships, and the world differently? What about the atheist or agnostic?*

5. **Our Relationships.** Some people hold to a worldview simply because it was passed down from their parents or other family members.
6. **Our Education.** What we learn in school, college, or graduate school, will have a significant influence on shaping our thinking, opinions, and worldview.

Q10. *Which of these six influences have shaped your thinking and opinions the most?*

### Basic Questions of All Worldviews

James Sire writes that a well-rounded worldview deals with five major questions:

- (1) **What is prime reality—the really real?** For example: Is the world only physical matter and energy or is there a spiritual dimension? Do we exist only in this life or is there life after this life?
- (2) **Who is mankind? Or, who am I?** For example: Are humans a higher form of life that evolved from apes? Or, are humans a personal eternal being created by God in his image? Or, are humans reincarnated and evolving into some higher level of existence?
- (3) **What happens to people at death? Or, where am I going?** For example: Do people cease to exist at death, or enter a spiritual realm of some type (heaven, hell, or somewhere or something else)?
- (4) **What is the basis of morality? Or, is there universal right and wrong?** For example: Is there a moral God that is the basis of absolute morality, or do people and their culture develop their own code of subjective morality?
- (5) **What is the meaning of human history?** For example: Is there an ultimate lesson, or ultimate existence (heaven, nirvana, becoming one with a universal spirit force), or a process of fading into non-existence? Why are we here?

James Sire wrote, “...these questions boggle the mind. Either the answers are obvious to us and we wonder why anyone would bother to ask such questions, or else we wonder how any of them can be answered with any certainty.” James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 19.

Q11. *Which of these five basic questions of all worldviews have you thought about the most? What is your conclusion at this point?*

Colossians 2:8 NLT *“Don’t let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.”*

Q12. *What warning does Paul give Christ-followers? How does this relate to forming a Christian worldview? What does it say to you?*