Worldview

• A “worldview” refers to a comprehensive conception of the world from a specific standpoint that affects every area of life, from money to morality, from politics to art.

• True Christianity is more than a set of ideas to use at church. Christianity as taught in the Bible is itself a worldview.

• The Bible never distinguishes between a “religious” and a “secular” life; the Christian life is the only life there is. Jesus proclaimed Himself “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6) and, in doing so, became our worldview.
Culture defined

• Culture is defined by Webster’s Dictionary as: “the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought typical of a population or community at a given time.”

• Most people are a part of more than one culture. However, Christians are not of this world, so their mindset should not be impacted by the culture, rather their behavior should impact culture (Acts 16:6).

• Culture is defined by four shared aspects of a group, society, organization:
  – Language
  – Behavior
  – Music
  – Beliefs

• Secularization has become the greatest enemy of modern Christendom. The problem is that most Christians are unaware that this has taken place.
Influence of Secular Culture

The danger for us as believers and for the church is that the influences of secular culture have so influenced us that we often begin to interpret the world through those lenses rather than through biblical ones. Rather than separation from the world (in spirit and lifestyle), too often we are allowing ourselves to be assimilated into the current secular worldview.

Acts 17:6 - And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;
Culture is the way we learn to look at the world and how we function in it. Our culture is taught to us by our families, friends and communities. From these people, we learn what foods to eat, what kinds of houses to build, how to communicate, and how to behave.
Worldview

- Formed sometimes unconsciously
- Shaped by experiences, knowledge, beliefs, education, upbringing and media
- It is the lens which alters the way you view life and how you perceive the world you live in
- Christianity is a worldview. It’s how we see things in light of scripture and our relationship with God
- **Hellenistic worldview** – based upon the culture of the Greeks
- One of the significant differences is the understanding of biblical words and principles from a Hebrew or Greek perspective
Hellenism

• Hellenistic philosophy recommended that the individual, in order to attain happiness, attempt to manage only what was for him personally manageable, his own character and thoughts. Man must become self-sufficient and not rely on anyone or anything outside himself for his well-being.

• We see it in many of the sayings today:
  • What God has for me, it is for me
  • Becoming a Better You

• Believes in Natural theology
  • Deals with attempts to prove the existence of God and other divine attributes purely philosophically, that is, without recourse to any special or supposedly supernatural revelation.”

Alexander the Great
Hellenism

- **Hellenistic Believers** - one who imitates the manners and customs or the worship of the Greeks, and use the Greek tongue

- **Influence of Greek Culture**: Pleasure principle (Failed culture)

- **Enemy of Christianity** – Persecuted the early church (Acts 9:29)
- **Focus on the individual and his personal welfare**
- **Linked to astrology and witchcraft**
- **Power over the mind (Stoicism)** - Positive (not faith) confessions
- **Interpret biblical prophecy to meet individual needs of wealth and power**
- **Replace doctrine with poetic sayings and extolled a false peace with mankind**
- **There was thus a powerful stimulus to mutual tolerance and concession which, supported as it was by the strong love of personal independence and the cultivation of individuality, led to the development of liberty and the recognition of the rights of man.**
Hellenism was spread by Alexander the Great (known as a homosexual) who used the theater, sports, and the temple to influence other cultures (like Hollywood, Sports stars, and Celebrity Christianity today)
Hellenists invaded Jewish and Christian culture (Acts 6)
- The Hellenists were those Jews who were more inclined to embrace Greek culture and were mostly from the Diaspora (all over the Roman Empire).

- For the most part, Hebrews tended to regard Hellenists as unspiritual compromisers with Greek culture, and Hellenists regarded Hebrews as holier-than-thou traditionalists. There was already a natural suspicion between the two groups, and Satan tried to take advantage of that standing suspicion. (Sounds Familiar?)

- Identified by moral laxity (Acts 9)

- Engaged the Apostle Paul in conflict over the gospel (Acts 9:29)

- They became embedded within the Christian faith causing division
It's All How You Interpret It

Western/Greek Influenced Worldview

- It was Gentile Christians, influenced by Greek philosophy, who both intellectualized and systematized Christian doctrine
- My will versus God’s Will
- Right thinking (Greek) versus Right Living (Hebrew)
- Knowledge over Behavior (practice)
- The Greek is no longer a state, but a culture; all it has influenced ended in moral and political decadence
- Greek is a request for technical information. The Hebrew is organic. We are God Breathed. His Word is manifested in us in accordance with Acts 17:28.
- Sometimes we spend too much time looking for technical truths of God's Word instead of allowing His Word to live in us.
  
  • I am more blessed by the Word I have lived and learned through experience than the Word I mentally know.
**Hebrew versus Greek View**

*Opposing Paradigms*

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<th>Greek</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
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How do we draw the line between the two cultures/viewpoints? Although many of the Greek viewpoints are fitting for our society, is it suitable for those who desire to live in a Christ–Centered culture?
Evolution of the church

“Christianity started in Palestine as a fellowship; it moved to Greece and became a philosophy; it moved to Italy and became an institution; it moved to Europe and became a culture; it came to America and became an enterprise.”

Rev. Sam Pascoe
Current Church Culture

Christ centered, Christ focused

Traditional

The Rugged Cross

Hellenistic

Secular Christianity
The Old Rugged Cross

- Why do we have rules, laws, norms, mores'?
- **Tradition – The Good and Bad**
  - Tradition and rituals does provide guidance and direction in dealing with church affairs
  - Man focused, not God-focused (Most cases)
  - Tradition (defined): To give into the hands of another; to give up to the authority of another
  - Matthew 15:6: So for the sake of your **tradition** (the rules handed down by your forefathers), you have set aside the Word of God [depriving it of force and authority and making it of no effect]

- Tradition chokes out the power and authority of God’s Word, rendering it ineffective in our lives
- **Tradition is a matter of choice**
The Old Rugged Cross

- **No Pain No Gain**
- **External observances does not reflect Internal Conviction**
  - *(Matthew 6:1)* Be not like the Hypocrites
- **Suffering = Spirituality**
  - Suffering by itself is not sanctifying. Many people who are suffering are not necessarily profiting from their suffering.
  - Does Suffering teach us a lesson?
  - Suffering can develop us
  - We are guaranteed that we will suffer persecution, trials, and testing, but if we are not growing because of it, what does it profits us?
  - Why do we suffer? At the hands of Self, God, world
- **Yoke of Bondage: Acts 15:10; Gal 5:1**
  - Religion can sometimes place requirements on people that they can’t keep. This leads to dependence on the rule giver.

- **God wants circumcised hearts, not regulated hands. Christianity is a religion of volunteers, not rules for conscripts.** (Portions from book by Dr. Skip Moen, "Spiritual Reformation." )
Secular Christianity

- **Christian consumerism:** Christians shopping around to find a message they can endure
- 2nd Tim 4:3: For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,
- Christians who reduce the message of Christ to a point that this is palatable for them
- Forsaking the truth of God’s world in order to obtain and maintain worldly pleasures
- God is no longer sovereign, but reduced to man’s assessment
- R.W. Shambach puts it best: “The world is getting churchy and the church is getting worldly!”
How did we get this way?

• Influence of the Greek Culture in our biblical interpretation (mid 1980’s)
• Forty years of consumerism and media influence has caused a shift in values: we live in a culture dominated by the secular view.
• Francis Schaeffer in “How Shall We Then Live?” suggests that the majority of people today have adopted two impoverished values:
  – Personal peace. To want to be left alone, not to be troubled by the troubles of other people, to live one's life with minimal possibilities of being personally disturbed.
  – Affluence. An overwhelming and ever-increasing prosperity -- a life made up of things, a success judged by an ever-higher level of material abundance.
• A Third Impoverished Value
  – If religion is such a big part of our lives, why hasn't it made more of an impact on our society? Since the mid-seventies a third impoverished value has evolved: cultural Christianity.
  – Cultural Christianity means to pursue the god we want instead of the God who is.
  – Cultural Christianity is Christianity made impotent. It is Christianity with little or no impact on the values and beliefs of our society.
  – A culture of compromise and complacency - Not willing to endure sound doctrine
Biblical Worldview

- A biblical worldview is based on the infallible Word of God. When you believe the Bible is entirely true, then you allow it to be the foundation of everything you say and do.

- A biblical worldview is an overarching view of the world based on God’s revealed truth, the Bible, which directs our life and governs our conduct in the world.

- Why is a Biblical Worldview Important? Our beliefs about God, Creation, Humanity, Moral Order, and Purpose shape our worldview:
Biblical Worldview

• A recent nationwide survey completed by the Barna Research Group determined that only 4 percent of Americans had a "biblical" worldview. When George Barna, who has researched cultural trends and the Christian Church since 1984, looked at the "born-again" believers in America, the results were a dismal 9 percent.

• In Western theology, we have sometimes abandoned the literal interpretation of Scripture in favor of allegorical interpretations. This too is very Greek. It opens the door to a myriad of "creative" expositions that leave the student of Scripture confused and disoriented.
Christianity Today

• **Two Kinds of Christians**
  – Biblical Christians: Those who seek to live by understanding and applying Biblical principles.
  – Cultural Christians.
    • **Defeated.** Those whose association with Christianity is a matter of conscience, but who have been drawn into the secular mold.
    • **Counterfeit.** Those whose association with Christianity is a matter of convenience rather than a matter of conscience.

• **Consumer Christianity (Bill Hull: Complete Book of Discipleship) - Emphasis**
  – Competence Before Prayer – Jesus modeled prayer as a priority
    • Belief that after a period of time in Christian walk, we can get by without prayer, solitude, and meditation which are those things that builds our dependence on God
  – Individualism instead of Congregation
  – Impatience Rather Than Endurance – Consumerism in Christianity
    • Looking for shortcuts and Spiritual Fast Food
    • Read the bible to gain an edge on others, get a handle on principles, fulfill selfish priorities
  – Celebrity Over Humility – demand for Christian speakers and entertainers who demand the same limos, dressing rooms, cuisine and preferential treatment as their secular counterparts.
    • Celebrate themselves over the Christian Cause
    • Worship becomes about us – our tastes, likes, dislikes
    • Humility removes self from the equation
Nouveau Christianity

The research discovered that people are reframing not just faith in general, but Christianity in particular. While slightly fewer adults and many fewer teens - are identifying themselves as Christians these days, the image of the Christian faith has taken a beating. This battered image is the result of a combination of factors:

- harsh media criticism
- "unchristian" behavior by church people,
- bad personal experiences with churches,
- ineffective Christian leadership amid social crises, and the like.

The result is that those who choose to remain Christian – however they define it - are also reformulating the popular notion of what "Christian" and the Christian life mean. Some of those changes are producing favorable outcomes, while others are less appealing.
Where We Are Today

Faith and Morality

"The consistent deterioration of the Bible as the source of moral truth has led to a nation where people have become independent judges of right and wrong, basing their choices on feelings and circumstances. It is not likely that America will return to a more traditional moral code until the nation experiences significant pain from its moral choices.”

(George Barna, Pollster, on his recent poll on American morality)

- Research by George Barna shows that fewer than 10% of churchgoing Christians make important life decisions based on God’s Word and seeking His will.
- Decisions are made based on their own intelligence, peer opinion, whim, or fancy
- Too many churches have been turned off by fanaticism and Christians going overboard on what may have started out as a legitimate spiritual move, that they stopped believing in the move of the Holy Spirit at all (Jim Cymbala : Fresh Faith)

Finding Truth Ministry, PLM, Inc.
The Media Affects our Worldview

The 23d Channel

“The TV is my shepherd; I shall not want. It maketh me to lie down on the sofa. It leadeth me away from the Scripture. It destroyeth my soul. It leadeth me in the paths of immorality, for the sponsor’s sake. Yea, though I walk in the shadow of my responsibilities, there will be no interruptions, for the TV is with me. Its cable and wireless controls, they comfort me.

It prepareth a commercial before me, in the presence of my carnality. It anointeth my head with humanism. My coveting runneth over. Surely laziness and ignorance shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the family room with my TV forever.”

Author Unknown
The Need for Spiritual Unity

Diversity of the Message: Isaiah 56:11

Personality-Driven Church

Prosperity as Theology

“Tamed” Christians

Worldly vs. Word Principles

The condition of the church today is due to a deviation from its God-Given Mission resulting from a distorted, earthly, message conveyed to a Hellenistic, Western church culture.

Raise Up the Judges

Judges 2:16

Finding Truth Ministry, PLM, Inc.
Why does it seem that religion is losing power in America?

- Those who claim to believe give it a bad name
  - The body of Christ is getting more like family. We are more critical of our family members than those on the outside
- African Americans are statistically likely to be religious, but their worldview is shaped by their race more than their faith
- Secularism, Materialism, and Media has deterred many from the faith
- Other cultic, philosophies, and activist groups (Gays, Abortionists, Wiccans have pushed their agenda in the face of apathetic Christians
- Christians are choosing tolerance over discipleship
- Too much information flow has led to private, self-centered interpretations of the Word of God.
- Too many ministries and churches are stuck in a rut of non-transformational religious activity, creating a group of consumer Christians who are nice, moral people but making little difference (Bill Hull: The Complete Book of Discipleship)
- People are forsaking Bible interpretation and doing what was right in their own eyes (Judges 17:6)
It’s Not All the Church Fault

2 Tim 4:3: For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

- "The more determined men become to despise the teachings of Christ, the more zealous should godly ministers be to assert it and the more strenuous their efforts to preserve it entire." (Calvin)

- There is a time coming to the Church when men will not hear the *practical* truths of the Gospel, when they will prefer speculative opinions, which either do no good to the soul, or corrupt and destroy it, to that wholesome doctrine of "deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow me," which Jesus Christ has left in his Church. (Adam Clarke Commentary)
Characteristics of a Christ Centered Culture

• A passionate, willful, and dedicated commitment to Christ and His Teachings
• Evangelistic
• Spiritually disciplined in prayer, study, worship, and meditation
• Family centered, community focused
• Prove things in accordance to the Word and Will of God
• Imitation and not Impersonation
• Reproduces its leaders through discipleship and mentoring
• Unity – One voice
• Evangelicals in America need to re-evaluate what it means to have a Judeo-Christian ethic in our culture. We need to figure out first of all how to live a life that is centered on God, and then how to live that life in a world interested in everything *except* God.
A Christian, therefore, is the highest character which any human being can bear upon earth

(Adam’s Commentary)
Survey: How Are You Thinking?

• I place a higher value on gaining knowledge to operate in society over God’s Word (T or F)
• I believe that if a person works hard and take care of himself is a better witness for God (T or F)
• How do you measure achievements?
• Who do you listen more to – your mind or your heart?
• Are you shaped more by your experiences and outward circumstances than your inner reflection?
• How often do you take time to listen to that inner voice within you?
• Are you struggling with your destiny or are you striving to bring about God’s purposes?
• How hard is it for you to admit your mistakes, genuinely ask for forgiveness and make apologies? (Yes or No) Why?
• I believe more in individual achievement than group effort. (T or F)
• I believe that all things in life must be properly balanced (T or F)
• I always want to be in control of myself, my emotions, and my destiny (T or F)
• I am always trying to improve myself (T or F)
• When I communicate, it is all about the win and not the gain (T or F)
Final Points

• **Learn how to be in the world, but not of it.** Don’t just assimilate into the broader culture by living a lifestyle that’s the same or similar to the way unbelievers live. Instead, live out your faith by following biblical principles in all areas of your life so people can clearly see that you, as a Christian, are distinctly different from unbelievers.

• **Trade comfort for sacrifice and service.** Realize that faith isn’t about seeking your own comfort, but about making sacrifices and serving others so you can grow into the person God wants you to become. Ask God to help you stop looking inward with self-absorption and start looking outward with compassion so you can embrace the rigors of discipleship and the joys of selfless service.

• **Engage the culture rather than withdrawing from it.** Meet the culture in the marketplace of ideas and present the Gospel message in relevant ways instead of isolating yourself in a Christian subculture. Understand that your faith isn’t meant to be private; it’s meant to be lived out in all situations.

• **People merely follow the particular culture into which they were born never carefully comparing it to the biblical model.** Instead of coming to the scriptures and allowing God’s Word to shape our spiritual thinking and values, we fall victim to the status quo.