

# What a Biblical Worldview Looks Like

*Sue Bohlin explores elements of a way of looking at life that provides a biblical world and life view.*

## What Is a Worldview?

A young Christian couple I know married with high hopes for the future. Within three years they were divorced; the husband handled his hatred for his job by snapping at his wife and retreating to online gaming, and the wife shut down her heart to him and opened it to someone else.

In her book [Total Truth](#), Nancy Pearcey tells of a Christian lawyer whose job was to find loopholes in the contracts with clients his law firm wanted to get rid of—that is, which enabled his company to break promises.[{1}](#) She tells another story of a Christian who worked at an abortion facility and never saw any conflict between the Bible she studied and its command not to murder.[{2}](#)



This disconnect between biblical teaching and the way it's lived out is not just an American problem. Many African Christians go to church on Sundays and pray to Jesus for healing or prosperity, but when He doesn't answer the way they wanted, they go to the village witch doctor.

All these people profess to be Christ-followers and agree that the Bible is the Word of God, yet they don't view reality or live out their lives as if Jesus were Lord and the Bible is true. They don't have a biblical worldview. They don't "think Christianly."

Nancy Pearcey writes, "'Thinking Christianly' means understanding that Christianity gives the truth about the

whole of reality, a perspective for interpreting every subject matter.”<sup>{3}</sup> It means we learn to interpret everything in light of its relationship to God. The title of Nancy’s book, *Total Truth*, reflects her premise: that Christianity is not just a collection of religious truths, it is *total* truth. Thinking Christianly—which equips us to then live out a biblical worldview—means we understand that natural and supernatural are seamlessly woven into one reality.

Our worldview is like an invisible pair of glasses through which we see reality and life. If we have the wrong prescription, the wrong beliefs and assumptions, what we see will be fuzzy and undependable. If we have the right prescription, we will see things as they are. The prescription of these glasses consists of our beliefs and the things we assume to be true. These beliefs and assumptions comprise the filter through which we experience and interpret life. And we *all* have a filter.

For example, let’s say you walk into a Walmart and discover you are their zillionth customer. Balloons drop, strobe lights go off, and you are handed a \$1000 gift card, a trip to Disneyworld, and the keys to a new car. Your worldview will determine how you interpret that event. If you believe in fate, you will think, “It’s my lucky day! The stars are shining on me!” If you believe in only this physical, material universe, you will think, “Nice, but it’s a totally random and meaningless occurrence.” If you believe that Jesus is Lord over everything, you will think, “I so do not deserve this gift of grace, but I thank You for it, Lord. How do You want me to be a good steward of this amazing blessing?”

Everyone has a worldview, even though most people aren’t aware of it. We believe a biblical worldview is the right prescription for both living and understanding life.

# Creation, Fall, and Redemption

My friend Dr. Jeff Myers of Summit Ministries says, “[A] person’s worldview is his default answers to life’s most pressing questions: Where did I come from? How should I live? What happens when I die?, and How do I know my answers to these questions are true?”[\[4\]](#)

We all buy into an overarching story that explains much of why things are the way they are. For example, people who believe in traditional folk religion (animism) believe there are spirits connected to every physical item and event and place, and this way of looking at life shapes their response to the things that happen in life. People who embrace pantheism—a view of life that sees everything connected as part of a divine but impersonal force with no personal God and no distinctions between good and evil—will respond differently.

If we draw our worldview from the story of God’s dealing with mankind from the Bible, a helpful way to structure it is terms of creation, fall, and redemption. They answer the big three universal questions: Where did we come from? Why are things so messed up? How can it be fixed? Everything that exists and everything that happens falls into one of these categories.

*Creation* answers the question, where did we come from? as well as a basic philosophical question, why is there something rather than nothing at all? God created us in His image for the purpose of having a relationship with us, and He created the universe and our world as well. This explains the exquisite design we see in the human body, right down to the molecular machines inside cells. Creation explains why the earth is so finely tuned for life—just the right distance from just the right kind of star and the right kind of moon, just the right temperature for liquid water, just the right kind of atmosphere for us to breathe.

The relational God, whose very being consists of Father, Son,

and Holy Spirit, created us in His image to draw us into the circle of divine mutual love and fellowship and delight. The reason we are here is so God could lavish love on us by sharing Himself with us and inviting us to participate in the divine life. That explains why we are so relational, and why we need and enjoy other people. It explains why we are hard-wired to be spiritual—because He made us for Himself, and He is spirit. He created the universe and our planet as an expression of His love and glory, and because physical people need a physical place to live. A beautiful God creating us in His image explains why we love beauty in the world, in art, in music, and in every other expression of human culture.

The *Fall* answers the question, what went wrong? Adam and Eve's rebellion against God brought sin into His marvelous creation, resulting in brokenness, blindness, and nothing working the way it did in the perfect, pre-fall world. The fall explains why death feels so unnatural, why there is suffering and sickness. It explains why there is moral evil like murder, rape and theft, and why there is natural evil like earthquakes and tsunamis and tornadoes. Many people are angry at God at these things. But they are all effects of the fall. He didn't create the world this way; we're the ones who messed it up. This fallen world breaks His heart far more than it breaks ours.

The good news is *Redemption*. God is working to set things right and restore His damaged, distorted creation. This explains why our souls long for justice, for the wicked to face the consequences of their evil choices, and for things to be fair and right. A just God will fulfill our longing for justice. He will make the wrongs right and the shattered whole. Good will triumph over evil once and for all. God's promise of restoration explains why we still long for the perfection of Eden, even while we live immersed in a world and relationships that are far from perfect: He's going to bring it back. The Lord Jesus Christ, who came to earth as fully God

and fully man, living as one of us and then dying in our place, rising again, and ascending back to the Father's right hand, promises He is making all things new (Rev. 21:5). God's got a plan and He's working it!

## **Living in Two Worlds**

One of my favorite things to do is go snorkeling in the crystal clear waters of the Caribbean. When I'm wearing a mask and a snorkel tube, I can float on the water's surface and enjoy the beautiful fish and corals that live in the underwater world. But I can also breathe air from the above-water world. When I'm snorkeling, I get to enjoy two worlds, two spheres of life, at the same time.

This is a picture of what it looks like to live out a biblical worldview. Paul exhorts us to focus "not [on] the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). We live in a physical world, but looking at life biblically also means living in awareness of the unseen, eternal spiritual reality that also surrounds us. Many believers make the mistake of living as if they were functional naturalists—as if the material, physical world were all there is.

Thinking biblically means staying aware and focused on the spiritual and eternal part of life, letting that guide our interpretation of physical and temporal events. That doesn't mean dismissing or denying the physical, living like some sort of ascetic who refuses to engage with the world; we just keep it in perspective.

I believe this is what the Lord Jesus intended when He said to "seek first the Kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33). The physical world is so in-your-face about its reality—especially when we get tired, hungry, thirsty every day—that we don't have any

trouble being aware of *this* sphere of life. But focusing on (or even just staying aware of) the unseen, eternal part of life, like donning snorkel gear and going face-down in the water, allows us to function in both worlds at the same time. Next time you're in a group where people share prayer requests, pay attention to how many of them are in the physical realm: health, finances, jobs, etc. These things are important, but according to Jesus' priorities, the Kingdom—the unseen realm where He is Lord—is *more* important. I wonder what would happen if our prayer requests started reflecting this priority?

The seventeenth century monk Brother Lawrence lived out an important spiritual discipline he called “practicing the presence of God.” When we do this, we are able to process the heartbreak of living in a fallen world and the apparent unfairness of what looks like evil winning. When we read what the prophet Habbakuk wrote, and what Asaph recorded in Psalm 73, we see what it looks like to remember that God is sovereign, and He is able to make all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). It helps us see all people as beloved image bearers for whom Christ died, even the jerks who cut us off in traffic. It helps us remember that what may feel like a bizarre random event may actually be the attack of spiritual warfare. It helps us balance our now-fallen feelings, which were impacted by the Fall like everything else, with the truth of God's word. For example, one Christian woman filed for divorce from her husband with no biblical grounds, claiming that it must be okay since she didn't *feel* “convicted by God.”

Thinking biblically means cultivating an awareness of the spiritual realm: the eternally important things, and the activity of God, angels, and demons. It's like going through life wearing snorkel gear!

# Refusing the Sacred/Secular Split

Have you ever heard someone saying something like, “Well, I personally oppose abortion, but I would never say that it’s wrong for anyone else because that’s a private issue.” Or, do you give ten percent of what you think of as *your* money to the Lord because that’s His portion? Do you think of your spiritual life as time spent reading the Bible and going to church, but the rest of the week is yours? One of the ways Christians fail to live out a biblical worldview is when we buy into the false division of the sacred and the secular.

Thinking biblically means not only believing that Jesus is Lord at the moment of our deaths, but He is also Lord over every aspect of our lives and every aspect of His creation. He created this world, He owns it, He entered it, and He redeemed it. He created us in His image, and then commanded us to take the salt and light of our image-bearing influence into every aspect of life: business, science, law, education, politics, and art, to name a few. The “Creation Mandate” is found in Genesis 1:2:

God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and *subdue it*; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (emphasis mine).

Let’s look at some examples:

- I’ve had a freelance [calligraphy business](#) for thirty years. Beyond showing honesty and integrity in my business dealings, there is also value in the beauty I bring into people’s lives through my hand lettering as a reflection of God’s beauty.
- All of my husband [Ray’s](#) education is in biology. He lives out his biblical worldview by seeking to explore and understand God’s creation through science, then explaining

it to others in a way that gives glory to God.

- Christian educators who express a biblical worldview are teaching about God's world and God's truths whether they mention Him or not. Whether it's the glorious patterns of mathematics or the themes of great literature, the Lordship of Christ ties it all together.
- My son's undergraduate education was in art, and we loved seeing how he wove his biblical worldview into his art pieces. He suggests that a Christian artist has the opportunity to express both the brokenness of life in a fallen world as well as the hope and redemption found in Christ.
- Christians in law can live out their biblical worldview by using their knowledge of the law to create protection for the weak and defenseless, to criminalize criminal behavior, and to codify making restitution, all of which are biblical values.

One element of living out a biblical worldview is refusing to compartmentalize life into our religious activities and then everything else, as if spiritual truth and concepts were unrelated to how we live our lives. One of my dear friends has lived in moral and emotional purity for three years after repenting of her lesbian relationship. The temptation can be strong some days, but she consistently chooses Jesus over her feelings. One day her supervisor, who goes to a large church, asked if she were gay. My friend replied that she used to claim a gay identity, but she's been emotionally and sexually sober for three years. Her supervisor asked why, and my friend said, "Because it's sin! It's not God's design or intention."

"Oh, it's not sin!" her supervisor cheerfully assured her. "God wants you to be happy! You just need to find the right girl and settle down." My friend is living out a biblical worldview; her Christian supervisor, who most definitely does



not, relegates the Bible to religious topics that don't intersect with where the rest of life is lived. (Not only that: the Enemy used the supervisor's lies and wrong beliefs to harass my friend as part of an all-out spiritual warfare attack.)

Jesus is Lord, and He loves and provides for His creation through people, whether we are delivering milk or delivering babies, serving in the military or the government, growing corn or managing hedge funds, raising our family or even serving in ministry. It's *all* God's work and we get to share in it (1 Cor. 3:9). Just as we can't divide colors into sacred and secular, we shouldn't do it with the rest of life either.

## Processing Life Through a Biblical Worldview

I said earlier that a worldview is like a pair of glasses that is comprised of our beliefs and assumptions through which we see and interpret life. My husband, Ray, and I got a chance to put our biblical worldview into practice a few years ago when someone ran a red light and slammed into his car. He sustained a concussion but, miraculously, no cuts or scratches or broken anything. It took almost a year for him to recover from both the impact on his body and the mental fuzziness of his concussion.

As we processed this accident and the difficulties that unfolded from it, we experienced the wisdom that comes from interpreting life according to the truth of God's word. Other [worldviews](#) would have interpreted this experience differently:

- *Naturalism*, the belief that the physical world is all there is, and there is no spiritual or supernatural component to life, would say, "Ray was in a car wreck, but there's no meaning to it. It was just another accident;

*everything* is an accident without purpose. Whether he survived or had been killed, ultimately that wouldn't make any difference anyway since all of life is a random, meaningless existence."

- *Pantheism*, the belief that all of life is a spiritual reality and the physical world is an illusion, would say, "Ray, his car, the other driver, and her car, are all part of 'the one,' the unifying essence of the universe. All of these particulars are an illusion, since there is only one reality where everything and everyone is divine." And since many pantheists also share many of Eastern mysticism's beliefs, we would hear, "Ray must have done something terrible in a previous life to have experienced this trauma in this life. He was working off his bad karma from an earlier existence."

- [Traditional folk religion \(Animism\)](#), the belief that the spirit world is constantly manipulating life in the physical world, because there is a spirit or spiritual force behind every event, might say, "Ray must have made some spirit angry with him. He needs to say some magic words or burn some incense or build an altar or do something to get the angry spirit to not be angry with him anymore."

Since we seek to make the truth of God's word the pair of glasses through which we view life, our filter includes the question, what does God say about this? Together, we practiced responding to this trauma according to our Christian worldview.

The most important truth was that God exists, and He has revealed Himself to be all-powerful and all-knowing. That means that getting "t-boned" was not a random accident that just happened. We reminded ourselves that He was still sovereign; a loving God was in control, even though He allowed Ray to get hit and his car totaled by a driver without insurance. God is all-powerful and could have prevented the

accident, but for some reason He didn't. We determined to trust Him even though He wasn't explaining Himself.

This was a very bad car wreck, and the witnesses couldn't believe he wasn't killed instantly. Instead, he was protected from serious injury. We have thanked God many times for His amazing protection that resulted in 100% recovery.

Ray experienced very real pain and suffering, but we know from the Bible where that comes from: the fall of man is responsible for most pain and all suffering. He was not troubled by the possibility that his suffering might be meaningless because there was no one "up there" or "out there" giving meaning to it, like the view of life that atheists and agnostics have to face.

Ray's car wreck had a special impact on me. At the time, I was dealing with my fear for my son's safety since he was about to enter the Air Force during a war. Because Ray's car wreck happened just three blocks from home, God impressed on me that His protection has nothing to do with geography. The best place to be, the safest place to be, is in God's hand, and He has promised that no one can snatch us from His hand (John 8:28-29). I sensed Him impressing me that I could trust Him with my son the same way He protected my husband from lasting damage.

I hope this article helps you grow in your ability to think biblically so you can see life as it really is—one reality comprised of both the physical and spiritual, God's world, God's life—that He invites you into.

## Notes

1. Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004), 31.
2. Ibid., 97-98.
3. Ibid., 34.

4. Email from Dr. Jeff Myers, April 19, 2011.

© 2011 Probe Ministries

---

## Darwinism and Religion

[Yesterday](#) I talked about the charge that intelligent design is not science but religion. Today I would like to look at the other part of the debate. Does Darwinian evolution function as a sort of secular religion?

Nancy Pearcey writes in her book *Total Truth* that “Darwinism functions as the scientific support for an overarching naturalistic worldview.” Today scientists usually assume that scientific investigation requires naturalism. But that was not always the case.

When the scientific revolution began (and for the next three hundred years), science and Christianity were considered to be compatible with one another. In fact, most scientists had some form of Christian faith, and they perceived the world of diversity and complexity through a theistic framework. Nancy Pearcey points out that Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Newton, and others sought to understand the world and use their gifts to honor God and serve humanity.

By the nineteenth century, secular trends began to change their perspective. This culminated with the publication of *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin. His theory of evolution provided the needed foundation for naturalism to explain the world without God. From that point on, social commentators began to talk about the “war between science and religion.”

By the twentieth century, G.K. Chesterton was warning that Darwinian evolution and naturalism was becoming the dominant

“creed” in education and the other public arenas of Western culture. He said it “began with Evolution and has ended in Eugenics.” Ultimately, it “is really our established Church.”

Secular evolutionists may not have church services, but it is easy to see that naturalism and Darwinism have become the main pillars of a secular view of the world. That may explain why most debates about origins quickly become so intense. Expect more and more controversy as scientists and commentators challenge the theory of evolution.

---

## Welcome to College: Great Worldview Gift for Graduates

The world is changing so quickly it’s hard to keep up. Christians who take the Scriptures seriously as a guide for life and knowing God usually agree that we’re sliding down a very slippery slope morally and spiritually. Non-biblical worldviews not only abound but gain star status. Christ-followers can easily feel overwhelmed, wondering how to make a difference. Nowhere is this cultural decay more manifest than on college campuses.

For years, my wife and I have seized the small window of opportunity of choosing a gift for a college-bound graduate. We realize this represents one good chance to help shape a still-moldable life and, by extension, potentially touch the culture for Christ. ‘Tis the season of graduation right now and I invite you to consider following suit.

Our habit is to give college-bound graduates J. Budiszewski’s excellent *How to Stay Christian in College: An Interactive Guide to Keeping the Faith*. I recently discovered a book by a

new graduate that I'm adding to our graduation gift bag. It's a helpful-older-brother styled "guide for the journey" by a young man who has obviously been trained by some of the sharpest minds in contemporary Christian worldview thinking and apologetics.

If Probe ever hired someone to write an organizational brochure, it might be Jonathan Morrow. His book, *Welcome to College: A Christ-Follower's Guide for the Journey*, contains one of the most succinct rationales for what we do—*Christian apologetics*, that is, a defense of the faith—of anything I've read. Morrow's gift for profound insight coupled with brevity is keen. He shows a sweeping knowledge, yet he includes just enough material for busy students. "I have tried to keep the chapters short and sweet since this won't be the only thing you'll be reading this semester," Morrow writes.

Morrow's experience as a recent college graduate and his unself-conscious approach should resonate with younger readers. I would have wanted to write this book when my street credibility with young readers was potentially higher, but I was nowhere near his level of maturity, awareness or comprehension in my 20s!

Of course, some would say Morrow's work is simply a *Cliff's Notes* version of all he's been taught at Biola University, Talbot School of Theology, and through apparent involvement with Campus Crusade for Christ. There is little or no truly original thinking here, perhaps. So be it.

Sure, this material is generally sprinkled throughout any well-read Christians' bookshelves, expounded profusely by the authors Morrow draws upon. But that's the genius of his book for today's graduate: a young yet well-schooled voice covering the gamut of worldview *and* personal life issues in brief, accessible terms.

The young man or woman being pummeled by secular

professors—many of whose worldviews and intentions are in direct opposition to their Christian faith—need help *now*. This book makes that possible.

*Welcome to College* isn't filled with abstractions about controversial Bible passages or archaeological discoveries, interesting as that might be. Again, one strength of *Welcome to College* is its scope. Mixed in with the basic faith-defending ammunition like the problem of evil and suffering, Christology, ethics and so on, students will find a broad collection of pragmatic topics: health, sex and dating, finances, Internet use, alcohol, even a chapter on dealing with the death of a loved one. This provides unique and much-needed help for navigating the head-spinning new freedoms of college life.

Not content to simply write a how-to-get-by manual, Morrow challenges students to consider the privilege of a college education and “spend it ‘Christianly’.” He discusses questions like:

- *How can you discover what you are supposed to do with your life?*
- *How do you share your faith in a hostile environment?*
- *How do you manage your time so that you can study and have fun?*
- *Is all truth relative?*
- *Are there good reasons to be a Christian?*
- *How should you think about dating and sex as a Christian?*[{1}](#)

Since the book offers in its beginning chapters a treatment of three major worldviews, I could have been reading one of our [Probe Student Mind Games](#) graduates. One of the first sessions in Probe's basic student curriculum contains a session on *theism*, *naturalism* (with a sub-section on *postmodernism*), and *pantheism*. Morrow uses a nearly identical breakdown of

worldviews: *scientific naturalism, postmodernism and Christian theism.*

As Morrow directly points out, these three systems of thought predominate at the root level for people of all cultures. You base your beliefs on one or more of these, knowingly or not. Great similarity between a new book and a worldview apologetics curriculum like Probe's may be unsurprising. How many variations on basic themes could there be? Yet it is striking as a compact manifesto for what Morrow, his alma mater, Probe, and a growing host of authors and organizations are seeking to do, which is to *help people think biblically.*

The fundamental importance of another theme appears, as it should, in the book's opening pages as well. College kids need to enter post-secondary classrooms with eyes wide open, being aware that the world at large (and academia in particular) scoffs at the idea of religion as possessing absolute, universal truth. Nancy Pearcey's treatment of what she calls the *fact / value split* in contemporary culture has become a go-to concept of culturally aware apologetics.[\[2\]](#) It also informs Morrow's book. This "two-realm theory of truth" places religious claims into an upper story of noncognitive, nonrational values. They supposedly offer the individual some personal meaning but hold no truth-telling power over anything or for anyone else. "True for you but not for me" is the slogan. This "upstairs" portion of life is just opinions—private, personal preferences not fit for the public sphere.

In contrast, the supposed lower story is made up of rational, verifiable, scientific claims that are binding on everyone. This is not opinion; it's truth by gosh. On this view, the only possible source of real knowledge is verifiable science. One professor in New York told his class that anyone who believed in the supernatural was "an idiot." That's why such war stories involving unwitting Christian students getting broadsided by scoffing professors abound. Academic authorities



simply pronounce knowledge unattainable outside of the scientific method.

But understanding the anatomy of this view and its faulty presuppositions equips believing students to challenge prevailing campus biases. Though Morrow offers only a passing understanding, any student interested in pursuing further help will find direction here.

One example of Morrow's agility with big, tough ideas is this statement rounding out his brief discussion of one major worldview: "Postmodernism is a fundamental redefinition of truth, language and reality." Elsewhere he writes:

*If the Christian worldview best answers the most profound of human questions (e.g., where we came from, who we are, how we should live, why the world is such a mess, and what our ultimate destiny is, to name a few) then it is true for more than just two hours on a Sunday morning.*[{3}](#)

That's just good writing!

Given its forty-two chapters, I only sampled the book. But that's in keeping with the reality of any busy, overwhelmed new (or not so new) college reader. Its usefulness lies partially in its accessibility as a reference. If questions arise in class or due to new life experiences, undergrads (others, too) can crack the book and get a quick, cogent, biblical viewpoint on it.

Chapter titles like "Ladies: Pursue the Real Beauty" may pull readers in before felt needs drive them there. Many others like "Discovering the Will of God," "Ethics in a Brave New World" or "Science Rules!" lend themselves to future thumbing on an as-needed basis. The *Big Ideas* chapter summations will serve as a useful preview, refresher, and set of talking points for young faith-defenders.

One surprising thought I had while reading the chapter entitled “Getting Theological: Knowing and Loving God” was its value as an evangelistic tool. If I met an average inquirer or skeptic who is unaware of the unified biblical *metanarrative* (big story) of Christianity—asking, *What is it you Christians really believe?*—I’d hand them *Welcome to College* bookmarked here. Morrow gives the doctrinal summary of the story, anyway. Here once again, clarity and brevity meets with completeness and orthodoxy.

Kudos to Morrow and his editors, not to mention all the fine teachers whose wisdom permeates the pages: Dallas Willard and William Lane Craig, Craig Hazen and Nancy Pearcey and many others. Simply refer to the endnotes and Further Reading sections at each chapters’ end for a collection of apologetics resources for the ages.

And don’t forget to consider adding this book to your gift list for graduates and students at all levels. You may help a young person to understand Morrow’s charge that:

*God has already defined reality; it is our job to respond thoughtfully and engage it appropriately. Don’t buy into the lie that you need to keep your Christian faith to yourself. It is personal, but not private. As a college student you have the opportunity to establish the biblical habit of living an integrated life for God’s glory. In other words, think Christianly!*[\[4\]](#)

## Notes

1. Jonathan Morrow, *Welcome to College: A Christ-Followers Guide for the Journey* (Kregel, Grand Rapids, MI, 2008), Amazon Kindle version locations 97-103.
2. Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth* (1995 Wheaton, IL: Crossway) p. 20ff.
3. Morrow, Amazon Kindle version locations 197-201.
4. Ibid, 222-226.

