

# Why Worldview?

*Don Closson writes that developing a Christian worldview impacts both how we think and how we act. It can provide a foundation for great confidence for the Christ-follower.*

Probe has called itself a worldview ministry since its birth in 1973. When my wife and I joined Probe in 1986, the term “worldview” meant little to our friends and family; they supported our work with Probe mainly because they knew that we were passionate about our faith and that the ministry involved defending Christianity on college campuses. Since then, the concept of a Christian worldview has become popular among evangelicals, resulting in numerous publications and worldview ministries.



My introduction to the idea of a Christian worldview was through the works of Francis Schaeffer. Although the specific term “worldview” was not used much by Schaeffer himself, he presented Christianity as an all-encompassing system. What attracted me to the Christian faith was Schaeffer’s worldview approach. Christianity was not just a series of propositions or church program, or even just a gospel message; it was about all of life. This idea had a great impact on many baby-boomers who lived through the turbulent 1960s and were searching for meaning and purpose.

The concept itself is simple. Think back to what it was like as you woke up this morning. As you opened your eyes you began to experience sights and sounds that your brain needed to interpret. This process of interpretation begins with a framework of beliefs that act as a lens to the world around you. This set of beliefs is your worldview. James Sire says in

his book *The Universe Next Door* that “A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions which we hold about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.” A worldview is made up of answers to the basic questions all humans face. Is there a God? What does it mean to be human? How do I know right from wrong? The way we answer these questions shapes our reality and provides context for our thoughts and actions.

For a Christian, a worldview involves more than just theological answers to these questions. Nancy Pearcey writes that “Genuine worldview thinking is far more than a mental strategy or a new spin on current events. At the core, it is a deepening of our spiritual character and the character of our lives. It begins with the submission of our minds to the Lord of the universe—a willingness to be taught by Him.”<sup>{1}</sup> Pearcey rightly notes that the foundation of any worldview is its assumptions about God. How we answer the God question affects how we answer all the other questions of life.

## The History of the Concept

In his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Samuel Huntington writes “In the post Cold-War world, the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural. Peoples and nations are attempting to answer the most basic question humans can face: Who are we?”<sup>{2}</sup> In other words, what is our worldview?

The idea of worldview in Western culture begins with Immanuel Kant’s introduction of the German word *weltanschauung* in a published work in 1790.<sup>{3}</sup> Kant only used the word once, referring to humanity’s intuitive understanding of the surrounding world. But others, especially German philosophers, took the idea and ran with it.

In his *Philosophical Letters*, Friedrich von Schelling wrote that “the chief business of all philosophy consists in solving the problem of the existence of the world.”<sup>{4}</sup> Heidegger later added that the basic question all of us face is, “Why is there anything at all? Why not nothing?”<sup>{5}</sup> A long list of philosophers, theologians, and poets eventually joined the discussion which peaked in the early 1900s.

At about the same time, the idea of worldview or *weltanschauung* entered the evangelical mind through the writings of James Orr. He used the term as a tool against dramatic changes that had occurred in Europe and America during the late 1800’s. Philosopher David Naugle writes that “During Orr’s life the West was undergoing its most catastrophic cultural transition, passing through what C. S. Lewis has referred to aptly as ‘the un-christening of Europe,’ leading to the loss of the ‘Old European’ or ‘Old Western Culture’ and to the advent of a ‘post Christian’ age.”<sup>{6}</sup> Orr understood that it had become necessary to present Christianity as a complete worldview over and against the worldview being developed by an increasingly naturalistic modern society. He presented his ideas at a lecture series at the United Presbyterian Theological College in Edinburgh in 1891, and later published them in *The Christian View of God and the World*.

Building upon the theological foundations of John Calvin, James Orr, along with the Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper, set in place a firm foundation upon which other well-known Christian thinkers added to. Gordon Clark, Carl Henry, Herman Dooyeweerd, and Francis Schaeffer all contributed to the argument that Christianity is best understood as complete vision of life. Their goal was the same as the apostle Paul’s when he wrote to the church at Corinth, to encourage believers that “whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”<sup>{7}</sup>

# Benefits of Worldview Thinking

What are some of the benefits of worldview thinking?

In his book *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, David Naugle argues that “Christianity is uniquely capable of satisfying the standard tests for truth that philosophers have devised and applied to any network of beliefs.”[\[8\]](#) Christianity is coherent and comprehensive, its parts fit together well, and it takes into account all of our experiences as human beings. It also performs well in what is called the correspondence test for truth. Christianity rings true when its claims about human nature and morality and its other worldview components are compared to the world around us; it corresponds well with our daily experiences in the world.

Naugle also argues that the “God-centered conception of a Christian worldview spares believers from a naïve fideism, a scandalous anti-intellectualism, and a cultural obscurantism.”[\[9\]](#) In other words, a comprehensive Christian worldview does not reject reason or science. Within this worldview all truth becomes God’s truth and Christians have nothing to fear in participating in the investigation of our world and universe with non-Christians. It also helps us to avoid an unnecessary separation from the culture that God places us into; in fact, the Bible sends us into the world and encourages us to be salt and light. A correct understanding of the Christian worldview should give believers a cognitive confidence, an apologetic strategy, a cultural relevance, and a sound, spiritual basis for life in the coherent picture of God’s larger story.

A healthy Christian worldview helps believers to avoid dividing the world into the sacred and secular; instead one learns to see all of life as part of God’s creation and possessing a sacred aspect. Our culture has a tendency to separate facts and values; it claims that only science creates facts that are to be universally acknowledged while moral

values are personal and limited in scope. A Christian worldview recognizes that biblical values are meant for all people everywhere and are not limited by culture or time.

As Naugle writes, “the notion of worldview has a mysterious way of opening up the parameters of the Bible so that believers might be delivered from a fishbowl-sized Christianity into an oceanic perspective on the faith.”[\[10\]](#) The concepts of creation, sin, and redemption take on a broader and more comprehensive meaning. Understanding the Christian worldview helps Christians to break free from their cultural constraints and to see their faith as world-sized rather than being bound by their church’s four walls.

## **Cautions and Temptations**

In the last fifty years the concept of worldview impacted evangelical thinkers Carl Henry and Francis Schaeffer, among others, and has become the focus for numerous ministries. Now that we’ve seen some of the benefits of this apologetic tool, we should turn to consider some cautions regarding its use.

The first danger is a philosophical one. The worldview concept sprang from a distinctly modern view of the world, a view that sees “nature itself as something to be known, represented, used, and discarded as needed.”[\[11\]](#) Thinking “worldview-ishly” is an attempt to analyze a particular way of seeing reality and, in the process of doing so, one is required to objectify the world to some degree. This is contrary to the historic Christian ideal of seeing the universe in relation to its creator. The church has always described the world in sacred rather than materialistic language. The danger in using this term is that Christians might be tempted to see the world more in a secular philosophical setting than within the proper model of biblical stewardship.

A number of theologians have voiced cautions about using any language that is not “biblical” in helping to better

understand our Christian faith. Martin Luther warned that “There is a danger in speaking of things of God in a different manner and in different terms than God himself employs.”[\[12\]](#) Karl Barth adds that “The true God and His activity can never be perceived within the framework of a general philosophy.”[\[13\]](#) He goes on to say that a worldview can never “substitute for genuine faith in the pure Word of God as the divine self-disclosure and exclusive source of an encounter with the living Lord.”[\[14\]](#) These cautions must be taken seriously. We need to be careful that we are not living by a foreign frame of reference and squeezing the Scriptures into a man-made mold.

Finally, there is a spiritual danger. Even with good intentions, we can end up mistaking the means for the end. C. S. Lewis once remarked, “There have been men before now who got so interested in proving the existence of God that they came to care nothing for God Himself.”[\[15\]](#)

We can become so enamored with our worldview system and the potential it has to change culture and point others to God that we become forgetful of the God we are called to worship. Just as systematic theologies should never replace the Bible itself, the worldview concept cannot be used as a replacement for the gospel. We are called to worship God and to have a relationship with Him, and not merely to believe in a list of propositions or ideas about God.

Even with these cautions, the worldview concept can be an effective instrument for broadening the faith of Christians and help them to share that faith with their neighbors.

## Summary

What role can worldview play in building the confidence of believers and in communicating the gospel to unbelievers?

The idea of worldviews helps to inoculate Christians against

the popular concept of religious pluralism in our culture. When one can see for oneself that the religions of the world have mutually exclusive answers to the basic worldview questions regarding ultimate reality, the world, human nature, and the question of good and evil, it is less tempting to think that somehow all religions are the same or that choosing a belief doesn't matter. Understanding other worldviews can help us to realize that every human perspective is built upon faith in a set of presuppositions, even scientific naturalism. This knowledge can help Christians to be more confident when they profess the uniqueness of Christ and the exclusive nature of the gospel.

Possessing a mature Christian worldview also provides a grid for analyzing the culture we live in. Everything from the education we receive to the entertainment we consume comes with a worldview perspective and often contains a not very subtle attempt to change the way we see the world. Knowing this should help Christians to filter out ideas that are not biblical and to be more resilient against emotionally manipulative works of art.

One of the most important aspects of worldview thinking is that it provides a language for cross cultural dialogue and evangelism. A Christian can inquire about another person's worldview in a way that doesn't cause defenses to rise in the same way that asking about someone's religion can. And although we know that the Bible is the Word of God by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, worldview language can help us to show that Christianity is true to others without having to first prove the authority of the Bible.

Finally, once the worldview framework is understood and adopted it can provide a structure for a lifetime of learning. Even though grade-schoolers can be taught the basics of the Christian worldview, graduate level material can be assembled to help fill in and give texture to the framework. The question of what the Bible teaches regarding human nature

alone can raise enough issues for many years of study, covering everything from free will to gender roles.

Christianity, conceived in terms of a worldview, can help give confidence to the believer and provide a language for entering into deep conversations with unbelievers that can lay the groundwork for sharing the gospel. The worldview concept is a tool that we can use to become a more effective ambassador for Christ.

## Notes

1. Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2004), 24.
2. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Simon & Schuster, 1996), 21.
3. David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Eerdmans, 2002), 59.
4. Ibid., 60.
5. Ibid., 61.
6. Ibid., 6.
7. 1 Corinthians 10:31b
8. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, 340.
9. Ibid., 341.
10. Ibid., 342.
11. Ibid., 332.
12. Ibid., 336.
13. Ibid., 335.
14. Ibid.



# The Clash of Two Worldviews

November 4, 2001

The image of a plane slamming into the World Trade Center is indelibly imprinted in our minds. It was more than just an evil act—it was a horribly accurate illustration of the crash of two worldviews.

America works because it was built on the foundation of the Christian worldview, and because we have been richly blessed by God. But for the Arab world, much of it living a seventh-century lifestyle, trying to enter the modern world hasn't worked. Importing the goodies of America's prosperity—things like jet planes, e-mail and McDonald's—is easy. Importing what it takes to produce these things isn't. America is blessed with things we take for granted—a free market, accountability in our political systems, and the rule of law. These things work because they are based on a Christian worldview.

The founding fathers embraced the Christian beliefs in both the intrinsic value of the individual as God's image-bearer and the sinfulness of fallen man living in a fallen world. So they wisely set up checks and balances that allowed self-expression and self-government to flourish while at the same time setting limits to restrain the sin nature. Our political system splits power between the executive, judicial and legislative branches. Our free market system results in the benefits of competition. America's political and economic systems work because they are based on a Christian worldview.

The Islamic worldview doesn't see man as fallen and sinful, just weak, misled and forgetful of God. There is no room for individual freedom or expression, and we see this in the lack of development of Islamic science or technology or creativity.

The rule of law is such a part of America that many of us don't know what it is. It means we are a nation of laws rather than men; we are governed by laws rather than by individuals. It means no man is above the law. This comes from a biblical worldview that teaches all men are fallen creatures who cannot be trusted to govern well unless they submit to a transcendent authority. In an Islamic worldview, where there is no concept of separation of church and state, political leaders can and do demand submission to themselves. They ARE the law.

Many Muslim leaders hate the West because the decadent pleasures of Western culture are luring the faithful away from Islam. Of course, many Christians share this abhorrence for the culture's indulgence in immorality, pornography, sexual perversion and divorce. But regardless of whether it's the positive strengths that are a result of our foundational Christian worldview, or the negative worldly pleasures that result from abandoning it, our current war on terrorism is the result of a clash of worldviews. Which is why it won't be solved easily or anytime soon, and we need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

©2001 Probe Ministries.

---

## The Muses

Picture yourself back at the university in a graduate comparative literature class.

Your humanities professor enters the room and announces, "You know, as we begin this course unit on 'ritual,' I believe we would do well to invoke the gods." He continues, "You may not be aware of this, but when we call upon the Muses, they really answer . . . *they come to us.*"

"All of our human rituals can be traced back to our evolutionary heritage and the mating dances of birds and mammals. It is part of nature's survival machinery. For example, the male bird who best performed the mating dance was obviously more likely to attract a mate to assure its own survival and pass on its genes to its progeny."

The professor elaborates, "All of what we call our aesthetic and religious aspirations can actually be traced to, and are deeply imbedded in, these biological imperatives of our ancestors. Through evolution they are part of the deep lexicon which we inherited from our first parents."

"And so," says the professor, "I would like first to invoke the goat-footed god named Pan, who assures us of fertility and thus, the perpetuation of our species, *homo-sapiens.*"

"Secondly, I would like to invoke the Islamic-Judaic-Christian God of Silence, who reminds us that He cannot be touched, but by invoking Him we confirm the reality of our own existence in the universe *as compared to His silence*" (italics mine).

"Let us read this poetry in a spirit of prayer," says the prof. He then reads the invocations, and the majority of the students smile their approval, seeming to enjoy the exercise.

In a later session of the same class, one of the students chose as a project the reenactment of a pagan Greek sacrificial rite, with the class participating on a voluntary basis. With a processional, songs, imaginary bull and meal offerings, the student "priest" clothed in some strange garments was able to create an atmosphere in that class that literally sent chills up and down my back!

Yes, these things actually occurred in one of my own graduate classes at a university right here in Dallas some time ago!

We call this "Higher Education."

These mystical, new age ideas that espouse the reality of some transcendent "something," like "The Force" in Star Wars, are capturing the hearts and minds of our children and grandchildren as we speak.

University student minds are increasingly inclined to believe that "Something" does exist out there beyond their own physical existence; and they also in increasing numbers believe it is personally beneficial to *make contact* with that "Something":

*to give them strength;*

*to show them right and wrong;*

*to help them solve their problems and make decisions.*

Those of us who are Christians know better. Some indefinable force is not what they need, but rather the Lord Jesus Christ, who claimed to be the Truth and gave us His Word so that we might understand and live that truth. He is the only God who can help these young men and women choose the right path as they stand at the threshold of their adult lives.

That is why I have now given forty years of my life to find ways to impact university students, to give them biblical perspectives on life and to strengthen their discernment in evaluating ideas. The corridors of "higher learning" are filled with many gullible, media-brainwashed youngsters who stand for nothing and fall for anything that sounds good to them.

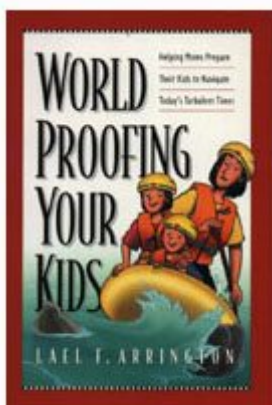
Frankly, there are easier places to minister. We often are met with hostility and contempt when we go to the campus to represent a reasoned, Christian point of view.

But we at Probe Ministries are compelled to persevere. And we continue to go there, because we know that the university world is as much a fountainhead for error as it is for truth. And it is definitely strategic as we look to the future. Abraham Lincoln perhaps captured this best when he said, “The philosophy of the classroom in one generation will become the philosophy of the government in the next.”

©2000 Probe Ministries.

---

## Worldproofing Our Kids



Lael Arrington has written a truly wonderful and exceptionally helpful book, *Worldproofing Your Kids*, [\[1\]](#) subtitled “Helping Moms Prepare Their Kids to Navigate Today’s Turbulent Times.” While she ostensibly wrote it for moms, any Christian parent who cares about helping his or her child develop a Christian worldview will enjoy it . . . and probably learn a thing or two (or three) in the process.

Lael has raised five questions that Christian parents would be wise to keep in mind, so we can relate them to what happens in our kids’ world and in the world at large. In teachable moments, we can help our kids to think through and then *own* their answers to these questions:

1. *Who makes the rules?*
2. *How do we know what is true?*
3. *Where did we come from?*
4. *What are we supposed to be doing here?*
5. *Where are we going?*

The first question truly is foundational, not just to the other questions but to a basic Christian worldview: Who makes the rules?

## Who Makes the Rules?

As a nation, we used to believe that God makes the rules, and through special revelation He told us what they are. But there has been a shift in the culture, and now there are a great many people who “do not believe that moral truth is universal and final. They do not believe in special revelation from God that lays down what is morally right and wrong for all people for all time. They believe that . . . ultimately, *man makes the rules.*”[\[2\]](#)

We need to talk with our children about the consequences of each answer. When man makes the rules, when “everyone does what is right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25), there are dreadful consequences. Sometimes the strong and powerful lord it over the weak and defenseless. Sometimes, when man makes the rules, everything breaks down into chaos. In *Worldproofing Your Kids*, Lael Arrington provides some wonderful activities to help develop the elements of a Christian worldview. For example, she suggests we watch a video of *Alice in Wonderland* with our kids, and she provides some excellent discussion questions to bring out the consequences of what happens when anybody and everybody can make the rules.

The bottom line to communicate to our kids is that much of the

pain and suffering in this life is the result of making our own rules and violating God's.

But when we agree that God has the right to make the rules, and we follow them, life works the way it was designed. That's because there are good reasons for the rules. We need to give our kids the "whys" behind God's commands. In his book *Right from Wrong*, [\[3\]](#) Josh McDowell explains that God's loving heart makes rules designed to do two things: *protect* and *provide* for us. Our kids need to talk with us about *why* God doesn't want us to have sex before marriage—because purity protects our hearts and bodies, and purity provides a better sexual relationship within marriage. We need to talk to our kids about *why* God tells us not to cheat and lie: because He is truth, and He knows that honesty and truth telling protects us from the pain of lies and provides for a peace filled life.

The goal is not just to teach our kids that God makes the rules, but to choose to submit to those rules because it's the right thing to do . . . and because it will make life work better.

## How Do We Know What Is True?

Truth has taken a beating.

The Christian view of truth is a belief in truth that is true for all people at all times: absolute truth. The western world used to believe that all truth was God's truth. After the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, which produced the byword "Man is the measure of all things," truth became secular. People believed that there is a body of real truth "out there" that can be discovered through our reason. God was no longer a part of it.

Now we've moved to the postmodern view of truth. There is no such thing as "true truth," nothing that is true for all people at all times. Truth is now what I make it. Truth is

whatever works for me. I create truth based on my feelings and experience.

So when we say things like “The only way to heaven is by trusting Jesus Christ,” we get responses like, “You narrow minded bigot!” and “That may be true for you, but it’s not true for me.” And the classic postmodern response to just about anything: “Whatever!”

How do we help our kids know what is true?

First, we start with the foundational truth of our lives: God’s Word. Remember, it’s not just a body of truth, it is *alive* and *active* (Heb. 4:12). We teach them the Bible’s strongest truth claims: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1); people are infinitely valuable (Isa. 43:4); we have a sin problem and we need a savior (Rom. 3:22-24); Jesus claims to be God (Mark 14:62, among others [{4}](#)). Our kids need to know the truth before they can spot a lie.

Second, we teach them not to be afraid of criticism from those who do not believe in truth. Those who trumpet a postmodern worldview don’t live by it, because it doesn’t match the real world we live in. People who sneer at Christians for insisting that there is such a thing as absolute truth still stop at red lights, and they expect everybody else to do the same. They may say they decide what is true for them, but they don’t try to pay for their groceries with a one-dollar bill and insist that, for them, it’s worth a hundred dollars.

Third, we can strengthen our kids’ confidence in the truth by teaching them logic. Begin with the simplest rule of logic: A does not equal non-A. Two opposite ideas cannot both be true. One can be true, they can both be false, but they can’t both be true. Teach them to recognize red herrings, ad hominem arguments, and begging the question. Get Philip Johnson’s terrific book, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*, [{5}](#) which



has a great chapter called ["Tuning Up Your Baloney Detector."](#) He covers several false arguments.

Make it a game: "Spot the lie." Help them identify songs, movies, TV shows, advertisements, and articles that contain errors in logic or which go against biblical truth. Encourage them to recognize when people make up private meaning for words. Postmodern people who believe they can create their own truth say things like "Well, that depends on what the meaning of the word *is* is."

Truth matters to God, because He is truth. We need to teach our kids that it should matter to us as well.

## **Where Did We Come From?**

I especially appreciated the way Arrington explained the importance of addressing the worldview question, "Where did we come from?" and the closely related question, "Who are we?" She points out that the way we answer these questions will also determine how we deal with the issues of animal rights, abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia.

The "Where did we come from?" question isn't about sex and the stork; it's about creation and evolution. There are really only two basic answers. Either God made us, or we are an accident of the universe, the unplanned product of matter plus chance plus time.

If God made us, then we are infinitely valuable and intrinsically significant because God personally called each of us into existence. And not only are we valuable and loved, but every other human on the planet is equally valuable and loved. If evolution is true—defining evolution as the mindless, impersonal chance process that produces the stuff of the universe—then there is no point to our existence. We have no value because there is no value giver. Honest evolutionists recognize this: Cornell professor William Provine has said,

"If evolution is true then there is no such thing as life after death, there is no ultimate foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning for life; there is no free will."[\[6\]](#)

We come hard wired from the factory with a longing for transcendence, desperately wanting to be a part of a larger story where we are beloved and pursued. We long to know that there is meaning to the world and to our lives. We come equipped with an innate sense of fairness and justice, concepts that have no meaning in a world without a God who is absolutely just and moral.

As parents, we need to tap into these basic longings to teach our children that only the creation story adequately explains our legitimate thirst for relationship and for significance, for fairness and for transcendence. Then we can explain how the creation story (and I define story as "the way things happened," not "wishful thinking") also helps us understand other issues. We can teach our kids that it is not murder to use the flesh of animals for food and the skin of animals for clothing because animals are not like humans; only human beings are made in the image of God. We need to be good stewards of the animals that God made, but not elevate them to the same level as mankind—or devalue man to the level of animals.

With an understanding that the creation story makes human life sacred and holy, we can teach our kids why it is wrong to kill babies before they are born (abortion), and after they are born (infanticide). We can teach them why it is equally wrong to kill the sick and the infirm when it is inconvenient for us (euthanasia).

Lael writes, "The common thread between evolution, abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia is the devaluing of human life and the way our culture has responded with options for disposal."[\[7\]](#)

# What Are We Supposed to be Doing Here?

This section of Lael Arrington's book is called "Work, Leisure, and the Richer Life: I'm tired of paddling! Are we there yet? I'm bored!"

If we were to get an honest answer to the questions, "What are you supposed to be doing here? What's your purpose in life?," many high school and college students would probably say, "To have as good a time as possible." Our culture has raised the expectation that everything is supposed to be fun and entertaining. When my mother managed the layaway department of a Wal-Mart a few years ago, she said it was frustrating to deal with the young employees. They came in feeling entitled to a paycheck but didn't want to work for it. Work wasn't "fun."

One of the greatest gifts we as parents can give our children is to cast a vision for their part in the larger story of life, one that involves a planning and purpose for their life, a calling from God to play their specially designed part. Our innate longing for transcendence means that we need to teach our children that they are a specially chosen part of the cosmic story of creation, fall, and redemption.

First, we need to teach by word and example that work has dignity and value. Work isn't part of the curse; it is part of God's perfect design for us. God gave Adam and Eve the responsibility of stewarding the garden before the Fall (Gen. 2). Part of our purpose in life is to be a difference maker, and work is part of how we do that. Whether one's work is to be a student, a fast food counter person, a house cleaner, a computer programmer, a mechanic, an administrator, or the really super important roles of mother or father, we are called to make a difference in the world and in God's kingdom.

Second, we can be a cheerleader for our children's God given gifts and talents. We need to be students of our children so

that we can understand and appreciate the unique package that God put together. It helps to explore the various personality styles to help our kids grow in understanding of themselves and others. John Trent has written a book for children using animal motifs called *The Treasure Tree*.[\[8\]](#) Tim LaHaye[\[9\]](#) and Ken Voges[\[10\]](#) have explored the temperaments in slightly different ways, but they're both very helpful.

As we discern how our children are gifted with natural talents and abilities, we need to acknowledge those gifts and encourage our kids to develop them. If our children have trusted Christ as Savior, they have received a whole new set of spiritual gifts for us to be on the alert for. Of course, we need to have a working knowledge of the gifts and learn how to spot them. God gives personality gifts, talent and ability gifts, and spiritual gifts to equip our children for whatever He has planned for their lives. What a privilege we have as parents to help them discover that they are called to a special place of service with a special set of equipment to do whatever it is God has called them to!

## Where Are We Going?

The last part of the book *Worldproofing Your Kids* deals with citizenship—especially our heavenly citizenship. Another way to inspire confidence that the Christian worldview is true is to celebrate the fact that the best part of life is still ahead.

If we want our kids to recognize the larger, cosmic story of creation, fall, and redemption, then we need to point them continually to their future (Lord willing) in heaven, where we will finally experience real life, real riches, and real intimacy with God. We need to remind them that their choices on earth, for good and for bad, are determining their future in heaven. This is an important part of our roles as parents, of course—to teach them the wisdom that comes from considering

both the long term and short term consequences of their choices.

Lael Arrington urges us to take our children to biblical passages and good books that give them a glimpse of where we are going. Help them catch the vision of what C. S. Lewis was describing:

“We are half-hearted creatures, fooling around with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea.”[{11}](#)

And speaking of C. S. Lewis, please do yourself and your children the favor of reading *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which is a series of books for children of all ages which will capture their hearts for the world to come and make them fall in love with the Lord Jesus.

Lael writes, “Perhaps we are now qualifying for what degree of power and authority we will be granted when we reign with Christ. The New Testament assures us that those who endure, those who serve now, will reign later (2 Tim. 2:12, Rev. 5:10, 22:5). We can challenge our [children], ‘Are we making daily decisions to serve, to develop our gifts and talents so we will be best prepared to reign with Christ?’”[{12}](#)

I love the story of the godly old woman who knew she was about to die. When discussing her funeral plans with her pastor she told him she wanted to be buried with her Bible in one hand and a fork in the other.

She explained, “At those really nice get-togethers, when the meal was almost finished, a server or maybe the hostess would come by to collect the dirty dishes. I can hear the words now. Sometimes, at the best ones, somebody would lean over my shoulder and whisper, ‘You can keep your fork.’ And do you know what that meant? Dessert was coming!

"It didn't mean a cup of Jell-O or pudding or even a dish of ice cream. You don't need a fork for that. It meant the good stuff, like chocolate cake or cherry pie! When they told me I could keep my fork, I knew the best was yet to come!

"That's exactly what I want people to talk about at my funeral. Oh, they can talk about all the good times we had together. That would be nice.

"But when they walk by my casket and look at my pretty blue dress, I want them to turn to one another and say, 'Why the fork?'

"That's what I want you to say. I want you to tell them that I kept my fork because the best is yet to come."[\[13\]](#)

*The author gratefully acknowledges the generous assistance of Lael Arrington in the preparation of this article.*

## Notes

1. Lael Arrington, *Worldproofing Your Kids* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997).
2. Ibid, 42.
3. Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, *Right From Wrong* (Nashville, TN: Word Books, 1994).
4. See also the Probe article "[Jesus' Claims to be God](#)" on the Probe Web site ([www.probe.org](http://www.probe.org)).
5. Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997).
6. William Provine and Philip Johnson, "Darwinism: Science or Naturalistic Philosophy?" (videotape of debate held at Stanford University, April 30, 1994). Available from Access Research Network ([www.arn.org](http://www.arn.org)).
7. Arrington, 179.
8. John Trent, *The Treasure Tree*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1998).
9. Tim LaHaye, *The Spirit-Controlled Temperament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993).

10. Ken Voges and Ron Braund (contributor), *Understanding How Others Misunderstand You* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995).
11. C. S. Lewis, *A Weight of Glory* (New York, Macmillan Co., 1949), 1-2.
12. Lael Arrington, personal correspondence with the author, February 26, 2000.
13. Jack Canfield, ed., *A 3rd Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul* (Edison, NJ: Health Communications, Inc., 1996).

© 2000 Probe Ministries.