

EBC 2015: YOUNG ADULTS BIBLE STUDY

“HOW SHALL WE LIVE? - SWIMMING UPSTREAM IN A DOWNSTREAM WORLD”

Sunday: Worldview – Developing a Christian/Biblical Worldview

What is a worldview? Essentially, it's what we believe about reality. Based on whatever our worldviews are, we interpret and assess what everything around us *means*.

We all have a worldview, even if we don't realize it. Is it accurate or deficient? Every idea has consequences.

Every worldview addresses at least four subjects: origin, purpose, morality, and destiny. The answers a worldview provides ought to be consistent with each other; and, those answers should also be consistent with the reality of what the world is actually like.

- a biblical worldview assesses reality accurately
- it provides consistent answers for understanding God, ourselves, good and evil, sin and righteousness
- enables us to live for God in a world drifting downstream
- will provide a sound outline of teaching that we can use (2 Timothy 1:13; 1 Peter 3:15-16), based on the historical Christian faith (Jude 1:3)

Origin:

- God is the Creator – a central Bible theme with enormous consequences for every other belief we have
- Colossians 1:16 – made for Him; Revelation 4:11 – made for His pleasure, for His will
- if God made us, this affects our view of others and our relationships with them (Acts 17:26)
- Romans 1:18-28 – those who knew God as Creator abandoned that relationship with Him, and this led to a substitution of God
- everyone *will* develop and adhere to some guiding principle or authority based on how we view God

Purpose:

- Romans 1:20 – the “things” God made (Romans 1:20) refer to His masterpiece (cp. Ephesians 2:10 in the new creation)
- God intended a relationship of fellowship with men and women (Genesis 3:8); sin ruined this.
- therefore we experience the search for satisfaction: John 4, woman at the well deeply desired living water; John 6, the crowd deeply desired life-giving bread from heaven
- the woman in John 4 knew about her family and cultural history, but her search didn't go back far enough for an origin! As an answer, Jesus described the desire of God Himself, as a Father, to have worshipers who would again enjoy a true relationship with Him.

Morality:

- On what basis can anyone make a moral judgement? The Christian worldview is that God is holy (1 Peter 1:17), and if that is God's character, this will frame our moral determinations.
- The Lord Jesus said that loving God with our entire being and also loving our neighbors as ourselves are the two guiding principles that support the entire Old Testament canon of the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:40).
- And without God, on what basis is there a moral code? If we simply evolved from lower organisms and have no purpose outside of ourselves, why would it matter so much how we behave?

Destiny:

- The logical result of a natural worldview (one that leaves God out) is that when you're dead, you're done.
- But the Christian worldview is that there is a coming time of assessment (Romans 2:5-11) conducted by God and based on our responses to Truth.

Living with a biblical worldview:

2 Timothy 3:10, 14 -- Paul said, "You know my teaching... so continue in what you have learned"

There is a continual renewal of what these biblical principles mean in the contemporary world.

- the "sure word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19) gives confidence
- the inerrancy of Scripture, its accuracy and authority, are essential
- God honors His word above His name, Psalm 138:2
- John 17, Christ's prayer for His disciples was that they would be kept and sanctified by the Word of God; "Your word is truth" (verse 17)

In contrast, Satan is a liar. He said death would not result from disobedience, but it did (Genesis 3:4; cp. Genesis 5). The world, as dominated by his ideas, acts in such a way as to pressure us to accept lies.

Daniel resolved to stay pure because he knew the word of God and also knew God Himself (chapters 1, 2, 6). He was immersed in Babylonian culture in many ways that were not sinful; but in the areas that would defile, he did not compromise.

Abraham had an altar, a relationship with God. Our fellowship is with the Father and the Son, 1 John 1:3. But he strayed from God in Egypt, where he built no altar; Lot, too, had no altar when he lived in Sodom.

- young, maturing believers were strong and overcame the wicked one by the Word of God (1 John 2:14)
- the Scriptures testify of Jesus (John 5:39, Luke 24:27)

Tuesday: From the beginning He made them male and female

If we have a biblical worldview, it affects the way we think of ourselves and our relationships. From the beginning God intentionally made both men and women. Biblical manhood and womanhood will grow out of our understanding of God's intentions.

What do mature men and women look like? To reveal this, consider Herod and Herodias in Mark 6:17-28.

- Herod made decisions based on pride, beauty, selfishness, and lustful desire. He knew John the Baptist was a holy man but did not have moral backbone to do what was right.
- Herodias was stubborn, angry, vengeful, conniving, manipulative. She ran the show.
- Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 21) exhibit similar characteristics.

These are our natural characteristics, our default settings. Why?

- sin has affected our attitudes, character, and relationships
- Genesis 3:16

Eve's desire would be for her husband—not the desire of attraction but to supplant him, to replace him
Adam's response would be to seek to dominate her rather than having a nurturing relationship
Whether married or single, we will have these improperly self-centered characteristics

In contrast, consider 1 Timothy chapter 3:1-13 (qualities of mature men) and chapter 5:5-13 (qualities of mature women). We should grow up into Christ so we are not tossed around by every wind of false teaching (Ephesians 4:15-16).

The verse in 1 Timothy 4:12 exhorts us to be examples. Then 2:8 reminds us (especially men) about prayer; without prayer and the Word we will be susceptible to conforming to culture. Here are other **principles for godliness** in this letter:

- 2:2 living out the principles
- 2:9-10 don't buy into the objectified view of women based on appearance
- 3:16 Christ's example, the mystery of godliness; God manifest in Christ's life
- 4:7-8 exercise; strong in training for godly living
- 6:3 teaching that is suited for godliness
- 6:6 a lifestyle of contentment
- 6:11 pursue godliness; "pursue" is an actively passionate word

Not only do we use the Scriptures to define personal maturity, but we also use them to evaluate relationships.

-as men and women, we benefit from reading biblical passages about each other because we can identify the qualities we seek in a mature, godly companion

-1 Timothy 5:2 we are brothers and sisters together, in any relationships

-don't fall into traps such as seeking to marry and convert an unbeliever or expecting a person with immature character to become mature after marriage

A relationship that grows close enough should lead to marriage, not to moving in and living together. The Lord went back to God's intention for that relationship: a man and woman joining in marriage (Mark 10:6-9). The norm today is to take an intimate relationship for a "test drive," but the origin of marriage shows God's authoritative design for a couple to make the commitment first and then face life together.

On one hand, don't rush marriage. On the other hand, if God has brought a couple together, it is better to marry than to burn with passion (1 Corinthians 7:9). In all situations, our personal development is "spirit, soul, and body" (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)—the spirit comes first.

Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man (Luke 2:52). There are five areas for developing our character.

Develop morally: Seek accurate moral decisions, discerning good and bad. Be honest; have integrity.

Develop financially: Learn to manage money. Learn to be generous. Learn to save and spend wisely.

Develop relationally: Be kind; learn to make conversation; show interest in other people and their needs.

Develop physically: Take care of your health; eat well; stay in good physical condition; stay active.

Develop spiritually: Learn the doctrines of the Bible and their relevance to daily life. Obey God's instructions.

Wednesday: God's gift of sexuality

In college, sometimes professors warn their students, "You won't be able to pass this class unless you buy the book." It is essential in matters of human sexuality to use the Book, the Word of God.

The origin and purpose of sexuality include reproduction (Genesis 1:26-28), unity/union (Genesis 2:18-25, affirmed in Mark 10:6-9), and pleasure (Genesis 18:12). It was all God's idea, and sex is not dirty or bad; we are created as sexual beings.

- sin ruined the origin of sexuality, too: those once unashamed now required a covering (Genesis 2:25, 3:7)
- there would be greater sorrow in childbirth (Genesis 3:16)
- yet the metaphor of being "fruitful" implies a great deal of delight and joy in the fruit (Genesis 1:27), and this was still God's assessment after all the evil that brought the Flood (Genesis 9:1,7)
- there is still pleasure and enjoyment in the sexuality of marriage, such as Proverbs 5:15-19 and much of the Song of Solomon

A sexual relationship is intended to cement the unity of a couple, and it always does what it is designed to do; even sex with a prostitute creates a certain kind of union emotionally and spiritually, not just physically (1 Corinthians 6:16). Thus it is a very powerful act. You can't carry fire without being burned (Proverbs 6:27).

- because of this, God has designed that the parameters of marriage are the safe zone for sexual expression
- Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 7:1-2; Proverbs 5:3-5; Song of Solomon 4 and 5, etc.
- the joyfulness and playfulness of a couple, Song of Solomon 1:15-2:2

Perversions of God's origin for sexual expression have developed. When we eliminate God's role as Creator, we are always led to something else as our guide. According to Romans 1:18-29, there was first idolatry, then illicit passions and debased thoughts.

The misuse of sexuality includes homosexual behavior, described in Romans 1. It is not new. It is always condemned in the Scriptures (also Jude 1:7; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Revelation 21:8; Genesis 18). But in Ezekiel 16:49-50, we find that Sodom's sin was not *primarily* homosexuality; it was pride and greed.

-It is said by some that a "loving, committed relationship" of homosexuality would be accepted by God; others point out that Jesus Himself never mentioned homosexuality. But what *did* Jesus say? "From the beginning God made them male and female," reserving sexual union for marriage (Mark 10:6).

Pornography is the exploitation of the body to circumvent the proper boundaries, as if sex is merely for excitement. Other distortions include adultery, transgender issues, or transvestite behavior ("effeminate," 1 Corinthians 6:9), all of which are declarations of discontentment for what God has established in our relationships and/or identity.

-In our fallen world, it may be that some do have predispositions toward homosexual temptations or struggle with gender identity. Most people face heterosexual temptations, which are the same category of sin! Rather than debating whether people were "born this way," the question is whether we are willing to accept God's authority over our sex drives, living a pure life in an impure world. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19).

-The world will continue to worsen in this regard, as the media continue to normalize homosexuality and other distortions of sexual relationships. Sexuality is presented as just another bodily function, but it's not (1 Corinthians 6:13).

-Those with homosexual tendencies can be redeemed; some of the Corinthian believers had this very experience (1 Corinthians 6:9-11); "but you are washed."

Sexual sin causes a spiritual downward slide. Solomon wrote many proverbs about purity and composed his masterpiece song about love; yet he fell away from the Lord through his relationships (1 Kings 11:2).

- Sexual sin is almost always mentioned in the Scriptures along with idolatry; it carries the same attitude.

-Sexual sin is different from other categories of sin; it is powerful and affects our own selves, not just our external circumstances (1 Corinthians 6:18); and if we continue to misuse it, resisting the bonds it is intended to create, we alter our own ability to form healthy relationships later.

-Christians may face ongoing struggles with sexual temptations, homosexual feelings, gender issues, pornography, etc. Don't let Satan beat you up about that. Bring it to the Lord on a daily, even momentary, basis. The *desire* to sin is not itself a sin, and the desire to overcome temptation is a sign of spiritual life.

When speaking to others about our sexual worldview, we must adhere to the biblical standard ourselves—and yet we might not refer to the Bible in our first statements of discussion, depending on our listener. Paul did not mention the Old Testament when preaching to Gentiles, because they did not give it any authority. He spoke of natural observations and historical truths. We can speak about natural sexual relations and the power of sexuality when we discuss homosexuality, pornography, cohabitation, and other distortions. Some of our hearers will close their ears if we mention the Bible in our first sentence—although we should certainly at some point affirm that God and His Word are the source of our reasoning.

We have no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3). We often have to flee sexual temptations; we can't fight against them. We may have to clean up our language so we don't impact the sacredness of sexuality with jokes about sex or with double entendres and suggestive conversation. We may need support for our Internet usage through filters such as Covenant Eyes (www.covenanteyes.com). Even those who are married must remain watchful to avoid these distortions and to avoid using sexuality as a weapon against the spouse.

But to the pure, all things are pure (Titus 1:15)! Enjoy the full satisfaction of sexuality in marriage, and treasure the gift God has given by making us sexual beings.

Thursday: Balanced living

God gives us richly all things to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17)—but He never gives us anything to replace Himself. In this session we find how the biblical worldview affects our view of God and everything else in relation to Him.

What does it mean to be balanced? Read Hebrews 11. Not one person seems balanced; in fact, they seem unstable because of their obedience. We don't *balance* our Christian lives with the rest of our lives.

The idea of a balance is usually connected with scales. Job 37:16 portrays the idea of natural equilibrium in the clouds. According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, the New Testament word for a "yoke" is also used to mean a balance, as in Revelation 6:5. It is something that "serves to couple two things together." This reminds us of staying balanced and stable while we are yoked with the Lord (Matthew 11:28-30).

Proverbs 16:11 says we need honest scales (balances), and all the weights in the bag are the Lord's. He is the standard for measuring everything.

- Proverbs 11:1 dishonest versus righteous
- Leviticus 19:36 using the balance in trade
- Job 31:6 using the balance in integrity, measured by God
- Job 6:2 using a balance in times of trouble

Sometimes we speak of making priorities, listing God first and other things second, third, etc. But really, we need to have God as the only preeminent presence in our lives. Here are some principles:

- Colossians 1:18 preeminent (not just prominent)
- 1 Peter 3:15 honor Christ as Lord
- Philippians 1:21 to live is Christ
- 1 Corinthians 10:31 do all to the glory of God
- Philippians 2:10-11 all will bow to Christ as Lord
- Matthew 6:33 seek first the kingdom of God
- Matthew 6:19 it's not about treasure on earth
- Philippians 3:8-9 that I may know Him
- Romans 15:1-2 please others for edification

We don't want to live a *segmented* life. All things are in balance when He is first. This is not boring or dull. Moses refused the pleasures of sin for a season—but was his life dull or uninteresting?

The claim that other things deserve a higher priority is the devil's way of trying to cheat us.

-Proverbs 20:23 speaks about using a different set of weights in different situations. We sometimes make different choices depending on what part of life is affected. We need to evaluate all of life consistently.

The passage in Colossians 3:1-4 describes a heavenly mindset, a focus on things above. Luke 14:26 shows that our heavenly position helps us to minimize our other cares ("hate" is used in comparison, not literally).

-It's significant that earthly things are not in themselves sinful, unless they overtake the Lord in importance (1 Corinthians 6:12, 10:23). We all use earthly things all the time, even to accomplish spiritual means. An important verse is 1 Corinthians 7:21, in which slaves were encouraged to use their freedom for the Lord if they could. We should use every earthly skill and advantage we can for a heavenly purpose. This keeps us heavenly minded while we are here on earth.

- 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 the time is short, so use earthly things without abusing them
- worldly things, in contrast, are the attitudes and desires that oppose or ignore God (1 John 2:15); these are always wrong; yet is our identity found in the program of the world

There is no distinction between the sacred and the secular in the life of the Christian. The writer A. W. Tozer in his book *The Pursuit of God* said this false distinction is how Satan makes us into useless Christians.

Colossians 3:17, 23--- Am I a different person in one place than in another? Verses 5-11 say, "Practice your position." Verses 12-16 say, "Put on Christ and have a purpose." Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus—*everything* deserves the level of excellence that is suited to His name. Do it with gusto! We are *all* in the Lord's work.

Friday: Making a difference

Having a Christian worldview does not imply merely resisting the current of the world. It is an active approach to life, making a difference.

This starts with Romans 12:1-2, not being conformed to the world (not adopting its schematic framework, its worldview) but being transformed through renewed minds.

- notice that all the doctrines of Romans 1-11 are significant before we come to this point

Other principles:

- 1 Peter 1:14, not conformed to our former desires
- 2 Corinthians 3:18, being transformed by focusing on the glory of Christ
- Exodus 18:11 shows this transformation: "now I know" God's greatness after learning what He has done
- Nebuchadnezzar was transformed by his experience with God's power and righteousness

Examples of those who made a difference in their world:

Ruth was determined to go with Naomi, and she ended up in the lineage of the Messiah

Gideon started his service by removing his family's idols

Rahab gave up her citizenship, so to speak, by harboring the spies and taking God's side

Paul changed from a persecutor to a preacher and was used to help many

Jael changed the course of the military campaign by leveraging what she had to defeat the enemy

John Mark departed from the work but returned and was useful; cp. Demas who departed for good

Joseph is an excellent example of making a difference. Everywhere he went, the Lord was with him (for example, Genesis 39). Daniel also changed the king's decree by his faithfulness (Daniel 1).

Two relevant statements:

-“I am not who I was.” The man in John 9 was born blind and now could see; this realization completely changed the style of his conversation, relationships, and purpose of life.

-“I am here for a reason.” In any given set of circumstances, I can do something for the Lord.

Acts 8, Philip was in Samaria, then in the desert, then Azotus; then later in Caesarea

Acts 13:15, “do you want to say anything?” and being ready to declare God's perspective

Acts 17:1, Paul waited for Timothy and Silas but was not passive; his observations opened his mouth

In contrast, Lot chose *for himself* the plains toward Sodom; Genesis 13:10, lust of eyes, of flesh, and the pride of life. He gradually drew closer and closer to the city until he was a resident there. We have to be vigilant, because many times it's not a dramatic change but a “slow fade” into spiritual disobedience and irrelevance.

Matthew 5:13-14, salt and light

-salt is supposed to have an effect on its environment; if it loses its potency, it has no flavor and no power against corruption

-to change the metaphor, we are useless branches if we do not abide in Christ the true vine

-light is useless if it's under a basket

-Christ's character is light; we are also lights, Philippians 2:15; light attracts others to God, Matthew 5:16

Ephesians 5, Christian character that makes a difference

-verse 20, being thankful; if you can learn to give thanks for difficult things in life, it's liberating”

-walking is a key term in Ephesians; walk in love, walk in light, walk in wisdom in this chapter

-not taking part with unrighteousness, verse 7; sometimes you have to leave the room

-not having fellowship and actively exposing darkness, verse 11; condemning wrong done by others

-not using language that supports coarse, ungodly ideas or unholy innuendo, verse 4

-not getting drunk, verse 18; and by application, not giving up our self-control, subject to the Spirit of God

None of this takes a special calling! Every Christian who develops a biblical worldview will live for God effectively and powerfully in daily life.