

WORLDVIEW

STUDENT
MANUAL

TRAINING



LIGHTBEARERS

A Summit Ministries Curriculum

Lightbearers Worldview Curriculum

3rd Edition, Revised 2008

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Preparation

A Summit Ministries Curriculum

The Purpose of This Curriculum

Have you ever put together a 1,000 piece puzzle? At first all the pieces spread out on the table look like a mass of confusion. So you begin looking for the straight-edge ones that go around the edge to frame the picture. Then, with lots of patience, you slowly begin to find where the other pieces go until finally you have the completed picture. But what guides you through the process? It's the picture on the box top. Without that picture, it would be almost impossible to make any sense out of all the individual pieces.

Your life can be like a puzzle without the box top. Often, the different parts of your life don't seem to fit together. You go to school but seldom think about how the things you are learning relate to what you do when you're with your friends. You watch a movie but never reflect on what it might be saying about how to live a better life. What you learn in church stays in church. You pray before a meal but don't think about God while you talk with your family over dinner. Everything seems disconnected. It's all a jumble of scattered pieces lying on the table.

The idea that life is like a puzzle was developed by the late Christian author, Francis Schaeffer. He had a lot of insight when he wrote that most Christians in America "have seen things in bits and pieces instead of totals."¹ What he means is that we have failed to step back to take a look at the total picture. We miss out on how the various parts fit into God's overall plan for our life. As a result, we are not experiencing all that God has in mind for us individually—a life of full of meaning and purpose. And we fail to have a positive influence on those living around us in society.

This Lightbearers curriculum is designed, first, to help you see the big picture. In these pages you will discover how every person on the planet tries to make sense out of life. That's because life comes at you fast and is often confusing. *Where did everything come from? Who am I? Why are we here? What's right and wrong, and who decides? What happens when we die?*

What you rely on to answer these and other questions are the ideas that give your life direction. And the answers fit together into a larger picture—what we call a "worldview," a way of understanding and making sense of our world. Your worldview determines (consciously or unconsciously) how you interpret and respond to everything in life. This is why it is so important to begin thinking about your worldview and the ideas you believe to be true.

A second purpose of this course is to show you how the Bible provides answers to all of life's most important questions. You will discover that God not only has communicated how to have a relationship with Him through Christ, but also has provided guidelines for shaping society for everyone's benefit. By understanding God's total plan, you will develop a worldview that influences everything you do.

A third goal of this curriculum is to open your eyes to the fact that ideas have consequences. Good ideas have positive consequences, and bad ideas have negative consequences. You will begin to see that there is an ongoing battle in our society over which ideas will dominate. As it turns out, there are other worldviews that do not start with biblical ideas and therefore arrive at different answers to the key questions of life. Throughout this course, you will have the opportunity to discover how and why the Bible has better answers for all life's important issues.

The main point is this: those who understand how to think well about life will have the opportunity to influence the ideas that rule the world. In fact, in the Bible we are told the story of one small tribe in Israel that was chosen to lead the nation because they "understood the times, and knew what Israel ought to do" (1 Chronicles 12:32, NIV). It is our hope that through this course you will also gain a better understanding of the times in which we live, so that you will know what God would have you do.

The Need for This Curriculum

The goals for this curriculum are twofold. The first goal is defensive: to keep you from being deceived by anti-Christian worldviews. The second goal is offensive: to train you to actively live out the truth of Christianity in a culture of relativism and confusion.

These two goals are summed up in a statement by James Dobson and Gary Bauer: "Nothing short of a great Civil War of Values rages today throughout North America. Two sides with vastly differing and incompatible worldviews are locked in a bitter conflict that permeates every level of society...the struggle

¹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1981), 17.



now is for the hearts and minds of the people. It is a war over ideas. And someday soon, I believe, a winner will emerge and the loser will fade from memory. For now, the outcome is very much in doubt.”²

What Dobson and Bauer describe is the current struggle among the worldviews vying for the hearts and minds of every person in our society. You are not immune to false ideas simply because you have been raised in a Christian environment. Because secular ideas permeate every part of our culture, from TV to movies to music to advertising, even students who have been raised in Christian homes, attend church regularly, and are enrolled in Christian schools are vulnerable to non-Christian ways of thinking.

A number of surveys indicate that large numbers of Christian youth are rejecting certain biblical truths or even turning away from Christianity altogether. Without proper worldview training, the trends outlined below will likely continue to increase:

CHRISTIAN TEENS REJECT TRUTH: A study conducted by well-known Christian speaker and author Josh McDowell found that 29% of Christian teens agreed with the following statement: “There is no such thing as absolute truth; people may define truth in contradictory ways and still be correct.” Another 28% were not sure, and less than half could say they disagreed.³ The problem with this is that a biblical worldview says that truth is not contradictory!

CHRISTIAN TEENS REJECT MORAL ABSOLUTES: The Bible teaches that morals are objective and absolute. Yet, according to the well-known Christian statistician George Barna, a mere 9% of Christian teenagers believe in moral absolutes.⁴

CHRISTIAN STUDENTS RENOUNCE THEIR FAITH IN COLLEGE: And even more staggering, according to a major survey of college students across the United States, the percentage of Christians who no longer claim to be “born again” by their senior year is as high as 59%!⁵

While these trends are alarming, we must remember that God’s truth is more powerful than the false ideas capturing the minds of so many students. For years, the Christian community has drawn a line between the *sacred* and the *secular*. Christians have been encouraged to focus only on “sacred” activities (like going to church, praying, or reading your Bible) and avoid “secular” activities (such as politics, film-making, science, or philosophy). The result is that Christians have withdrawn from the very institutions that have the most influence for shaping society. We have stepped into “holy huddles,” and refused to participate in the larger culture. The results have been predictable: without the salt and light of the Bible, society has grown tasteless and dark.

In reality, no such sacred/secular distinction exists. Through *Lightbearers*, we want you to see that every area of life is ultimately sacred, even politics and film-making. This curriculum operates on the premise that every generation must be prepared to undertake a pro-active Christianity—one that seeks to *redeem* culture as part of God’s creation, rather than *reject* it.

But What Is a Lightbearer?

Did you know that the Bible refers to you as a *Lightbearer*? You may be wondering what that means. To find out, you need to ask three questions:

² James C. Dobson and Gary L. Bauer, *Children at Risk: The Battle for the Hearts and Minds of Our Kids* (Dallas: Word, 1990), 19–20.

³ This study was done in 1994, with a total of 3,795 Christian youth from 13 different mainline denominations. See Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, *Right from Wrong* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1994), 251–253, 264–265.

⁴ <http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=106&Reference=C>

⁵ This study was originally done in 1989 by Gary Lyle Railsback, “An Exploratory Study of the Religiosity and Related Outcomes Among College Students,” Doctoral dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1994. Railsback did a follow up study in 2001 and found the percentages had increased. The greatest losses were at Catholic universities, reporting that 59% of Christian freshmen who had indicated being “born again” no longer claimed to be “born again” by their senior year. Many Protestant universities showed a 31% loss, with secular universities falling in-between these two extremes.

- What is the light that you bear?
- What is the source of the light?
- What should you do with the light?

First, what is the light that you bear? The “light” is not some vague emotion a Christian might feel. According to the Scriptures, the light that Christians carry is something very specific and extremely special. It is the “gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4, NIV), the good news that Jesus is the Savior of the world! Bearing this light means proclaiming the glory of Jesus as God’s only Son.

Second, what is the source of the light? The light you bear comes from your relationship with Jesus Christ. You could think of yourself as a reflector of His light. In John 8:12, Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (NKJV). Jesus is the source of your light, which is the light of life—both eternal life when you die, and a meaningful life here and now. “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6, NKJV). Think of it this way: the light of Jesus Christ that reveals the glory of God is shining in your heart!

And third, what should you do with the light? Shine it, of course. Jesus told His followers, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14–16, NKJV). You have a purpose in life. Part of that purpose is to be a witness for God, like a lighthouse on a dark, stormy night—shining light all around you for others to see. In this way, other people can see the glory of Jesus and learn how to follow Him too.

Have you ever been in a dark room when a door opened and light suddenly streamed in? If you have, then you know that light always displaces darkness. Darkness has no power in itself. Light, however, always conquers or overcomes darkness. According to the Bible, light symbolizes the life and testimony that you live before others. And with the light of Jesus Christ burning brightly in you, no worldly darkness of sinfulness or selfishness can overcome you. God wants you to allow the light of Jesus to shine forth so others can watch you and learn to walk in His ways. This brings Him glory.

A Lightbearer, then, is a follower of Christ who is allowing the light of God’s truth to shine through him or her to others. This means shining His light not in just a few areas of your life, but in every area.

It’s easy to have too small an idea of what it means to be a Christian. Living as Jesus wants you to live is not just something you do on Sundays, like going to church. It’s also not just being kind to people. Nor does it simply mean you will go to heaven when you die. Being a Christian means so much more. God’s plan for you is much broader and deeper—He wants you to understand His desires for you in every area of your life.









Lightbearers provides a constructive “rite of passage.” Through it, we want to pass the torch to you, the next generation, by explaining the mistakes of the past and endowing you with the responsibility for shaping the future of the world.



Using This Manual

Before beginning this curriculum, it will helpful to understand its structure and layout.

UNITS: There are 10 units to this curriculum, plus an Introduction and Conclusion section at the beginning and end. The following elements are found within each unit:

1. **Table of Contents:** At the beginning of each unit is a table of contents or section outline that lists the components and their corresponding page numbers.
2. **180-day syllabus:** At the beginning of each unit is 180-day syllabus outlining your daily classroom and homework assignments.
3. **Pre-Test:** At the beginning of the curriculum, there will be a comprehensive multiple-choice exam that will help to measure the consistency of your worldview. This test will be taken again at the end of the course to measure how your thinking has changed because of this course.
-  4. **Videos:** Each unit has corresponding video presentations and occasional outlines with fill-in-the-blank notes.
-  5. **Video Discussion Questions:** Each video has a set of discussion questions. These questions will be completed and discussed after watching each presentation.
-  6. **Readings:** Each unit has a primary reading assignment called *A World of Ideas*, as well assigned chapters from the book *How to be Your Own Selfish Pig*. A few additional readings are also assigned throughout the curriculum and are included in the student workbook.
-  7. **Reading Discussion Questions:** Each reading assignment has an accompanying set of discussion questions. These questions will be completed and discussed after each reading.
-  8. **Learn to Discern Quizzes:** These quizzes will test your understanding of the Christian worldview.
-  9. **Journal:** During this class, you'll have the opportunity to keep track of your spiritual, intellectual, and emotional growth using the *Journal* section in the back of your workbook. Use this to record your thoughts about anything, whether prayer requests, a Scripture passage you want to remember, important events in your life, etc.
-  10. **Paragraph Assignments:** Using a checklist as a guide, you will write a paragraph summarizing what you have learned about the Christian worldview in each discipline.
11. **Presentation Assignments:** Each unit will contain an assignment that will ask you to research various topics or participate in various activities. You will then write a half-page to one-page summary of your findings and/or experience and then present these findings to the class, as well as turn in your summary for a grade.
-  12. **Exercises:** Each unit contains exercises that reinforce the subject matter being taught in each unit. These will be explained fully by your teacher.
13. **Test Review:** Toward the end of each unit there is a day to review all the concepts covered in that unit before taking the test.



14. Unit Tests: At the end of each unit is a unit test. The questions for these tests may be matching, multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, or short answer. Each test is based on the textbook, video, and essay discussion questions.

15. Comprehensive Exam: At the end of the Conclusion Unit, there will be a comprehensive multiple-choice exam covering all the materials from the course. Questions for the comprehensive exam are taken from the video, textbook, and essay discussion questions throughout the entire course.

16. Post-Test: At the end of the curriculum, there will be a comprehensive multiple-choice exam that will help to measure the consistency of your worldview. This is the same test taken at the beginning of the course.

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS: For this curriculum, we have chosen to alternate between the New King James Version, the New International Version, and the Holman Christian Standard Bible. Others may be used as well, but will be noted.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

SUMMIT HOMEPAGE: Online hub for Summit's conferences, curriculum, and resources is www.summit.org.

SUMMIT'S TRUTH & CONSEQUENCES: A free monthly e-news article that reviews current issues from a worldview perspective. To sign up, visit www.summit.org/resources/.

THE SUMMIT JOURNAL: A free monthly review of the news and cultural events, edited by Dr. David Noebel. To sign up, visit www.summit.org/resources/.

SUMMIT'S WEBSTORE: For the most up-to-date selection of worldview-oriented books, videos, and CDs covering such topics as apologetics, Darwinism, relativism, pluralism, skepticism, and many others, visit www.summit.org/store/.

SUMMIT CONFERENCES: To learn more about our intensive educational conferences analyzing the major worldviews of our day and developing a Christian worldview, visit www.summit.org and click on conferences.



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Introduction

A Summit Ministries Curriculum

DAY	INTRODUCTION: syllabus & outline	SW	✓
1	Read Preparation Section Take Pre-Test	i ---	
2	Watch “ re:View: Numb ” Video..... Review “ re:View: Numb ” Video Discussion Questions..... Watch “ re:View: Culture TS ” Video..... Review “ re:View: Culture TS ” Video Discussion Questions.....	--- 3 --- 4	
3	Read A World of Ideas Reading.....	5	
4	Read A World of Ideas Reading..... Review A World of Ideas Reading Discussion Questions.....	DITTO 12	
5	Review A World of Ideas Reading Discussion Questions..... Assign The Evaluator [Assignment Due on Day 11].....	DITTO 13	
6	Watch “ re:View: Ultimate Questions ” Video..... Review “ re:View: Ultimate Questions ” Video Discussion Questions..... Watch “ re:View: Ultimate Questions TS ” Video..... Review “ re:View: Ultimate Questions TS ” Video Discussion Questions.....	--- 14 --- 15	
7	Read How to Be Your Own Selfish Pig Reading (Ch. 1).....	---	
8	Read How to Be Your Own Selfish Pig Reading (Ch. 2)..... Review How to Be Your Own Selfish Pig Reading Discussion Question (Ch. 1 & 2).....	--- 16	
9	Review How to Be Your Own Selfish Pig Reading Discussion Question (Ch. 1 & 2).....	DITTO	
10	Watch “ re:View: Worldviews ” Video..... Review “ re:View: Worldviews ” Video Discussion Questions..... Watch “ re:View: Worldviews TS ” Video..... Review “ re:View: Worldviews TS ” Video Discussion Questions.....	--- 18 --- 19	
11	Turn in & Share The Evaluator Presentation Assignment.....	---	
12	Complete Biblical Application Exercises..... Take Learn to Discern Quiz.....	20 ---	
13	Prepare Introduction Test.....	---	
14	Take Introduction Test.....	---	
15			





re:View: Numb

Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: Sometimes we glide through life and don't even notice what is around us. This film is a glimpse into the day of an average guy like that, with one exception—from the moment he gets up until the time he goes to bed, his life will subtly change with every wave of influence.

1. What is the film about?
2. How did the main character react to what was happening around him?
3. What are examples of things that changed as a result of the influences around him?
4. What do each of these examples represent in today's popular culture?
5. What do you think the TV analyst meant when he said, "The question then becomes: What are we going to do? Are we going to sit here and be numb, or are we going to do something about it?"



re:View: Culture TS Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: Whether we recognize it or not, our culture is the major influencing factor on our behavior, values, and beliefs. Our goal as wise believers is to knowledgeably critique culture's values, rather than uncritically absorb them. The first step in making life changes is to recognize how profoundly culture shapes us in ways we probably don't even realize.

1. **What did Dr. Brown mean when he mentioned the fish in the ocean?**
2. **Culture has a major influence on what three things?**
3. **What is popular culture?**
4. **Why is popular culture so influential?**
5. **How is "the right to choose" seen as the most important value in our culture?**

The film and Teaching Segment you just watched, as well as the discussion materials, are part of a curriculum project produced by Cedarville University and re:Films. This study is designed for either a 13-session series or an abbreviated 7-session study. Consisting of seven award-winning short films, video teaching segments, and a resource-packed website, this revolutionary series will cause students to evaluate their world, discerning and engaging culture with a defined purpose. Tell your Pastor and Youth Pastor about this curriculum and have them visit www.re-films.com for more information.





A World of Ideas: What is a Worldview?

KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING

Key Question: What is a worldview?

Key Idea: Everyone has a worldview

Key Terms: popular culture, worldview

Key Verses: Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 10:5

“Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2, HCSB).

“We demolish arguments and every high-minded thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5, HCSB).

Thinking about Thinking

Christine woke so suddenly she banged her head on the bookshelf. Rubbing her head groggily, she counted the sleeping bags scattered on the floor around her. Four. And they were all still asleep. No one was playing jokes on her or calling her names. It must have been a dream.

Christine sighed and leaned back on her elbows. Her girlfriends would never do that to her. They’d all sworn that “forever friend” pact back in first grade, and nobody had broken it since. Maybe it had been that late-night movie...on screen the nasty pranks were funny, but in the dream it had been her friends ganging up against her. That hurt, even though she knew they’d never do that in real life.

It started her thinking. Maybe there were some lessons they could learn from that movie, even if it was just a silly comedy. Wide-awake now, she crawled out of her sleeping bag and went to take a shower to clear her head.

Later, when everyone had gathered in the kitchen for pancakes, Christine told the girls about her dream.

“Don’t worry about it, Christine,” Lydia said, laughing. “Movie stuff never affects real life.”

“Yeah,” chimed in Michelle, “we like each other too much to let something like a movie or a dream mess up our friendship.”

“But don’t you think that movies sometimes teach us things?” Christine pressed. “I mean, in the dream I really felt picked on...and I didn’t like it.”

“Chrissy, you’re just reading too much into all this,” Kelly said. “It was just a movie...you know...entertainment?”

“That’s right,” said Ashley. “Movies are supposed to be mindless and fun. You just leave thinking for the rest of life. Right?”

Beliefs and the Common Cold

Thinking can be hard work. If you were to ask one of your friends about his or her philosophy of life, you would probably get a blank stare. But if you ask what he or she believes about something more specific, like how life appeared on earth, you would probably get some sort of answer, even if it’s not all that clear. If you go even further and ask your friends *why* they believe what they believe, then you will probably find out that they just don’t have good reasons for their beliefs.

Often people get their beliefs the same way they catch colds—by being around other people! And the more we are around other people, the more their beliefs influence us and become our own.

That’s the power of friends, family, and our larger society. It is primarily through these sources that we pick up our ideas about life. Increasingly, it is popular culture that has become the loudest voice that we hear. **Popular culture** describes the predominant ideas, values, and beliefs transmitted through movies, video games, music, television, books, magazines, radio, advertising, and the internet.

Popular culture offers us short “sound bites” that many people take for the truth. You might think of phrases like “you should be tolerant” or “that may be true for you, but not for me.” When repeated often enough, slogans like these generally become accepted as cultural truth, regardless of whether they are actually based in reality. We will evaluate common sayings like these later in this course, but for now the point is that we all tend to accept these without thinking about them.

“In Colossians 2, the Apostle Paul warns believers to not all false ideas to capture or take over your mind. This means that we must be on our guard, constantly evaluating what we hear, see, and think. Do our thoughts line up with God’s thoughts? Not only that, but we are told to understand ideas and the truth so that you can help others see where their ideas are wrong.”¹ This is what being a Lightbearer is all about.

Again, the Apostle Paul said: “We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5, *THE MESSAGE*).

Because so much of life today revolves around fast-paced music videos, action-packed movies, popular TV programs, and intriguing print media, you’ve learned to experience the world through your emotions, instead of processing the information with your mind. With images and sounds moving so quickly, it’s hard to take the time to think very deeply about the ideas that are coming at you. Even when you want to examine those ideas, you may not really know how. Sometimes you don’t even know the right questions to ask to get started!

That’s why Christians especially need to slow down the pace a little and spend time learning how to think about the big questions in life. More importantly, we need to make sure we’re developing consistent answers that match up with God’s ideas as expressed in the Bible. This means we need to “renew our minds” according to God’s truth (Romans 12:2), which leads to transforming our behavior. In this way God’s light shines more brightly in our hearts and minds. As the psalmist explains, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105, NIV).

Throughout this course, you will explore the Christian worldview—the ideas that come from the Bible—and examine how those ideas are better *in every way* than any you can pick up from popular

Popular Culture: A collection of values, themes, ideas, and behavior popularized mainly through media and technology. The most visible forms of popular culture are seen in television, movies, music, the internet, etc.

culture. Also, you will discover answers to the questions you may be asking about life in general, and learn how God’s answers will bring you the most fulfillment and joy. The more you study God’s answers, which are found in His perfect Word, the better you will become at being a Lightbearer—helping other people see His light and understand why God’s thoughts are higher and better than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9).

What is a Worldview?

If you are to be a Lightbearer, then you need to understand some things about why God made the world and how you fit into His plan. To do this, you need to broaden your understanding of what it means to live as Christ wants you to live. You need to step out of your limited human perspective and think about the bigger questions of life. This means learning to think in terms of a worldview.

What is a worldview? Simply put, it is the way you view the world. Your view of the world includes:

- Your most basic beliefs about life and the world
- Your answers to the big questions of life
- How you interpret what you encounter in life and the world
- The starting point for your decisions and actions



A **worldview** is the framework of our most basic beliefs that shapes our view of and for the world, and is the basis of our decisions and actions. The fact is everyone has a worldview, a way of making sense of the world. To help you understand how a worldview works, think about the following illustrations. First, a worldview is like a fruit tree. If you were to draw a fruit tree, you would probably draw a trunk and some fluffy branches bearing fruit at the end. But what part of the tree channels nutrients to the branches so that they can produce fruit? The roots. The roots are a vital part of the tree, and provide nourishment for producing the fruit. If there were no roots, there could be no fruit.

In a similar way, a worldview is an interconnected set of ideas. Jesus described the connection between what a person believes and how he or she behaves this way, “By their fruit you will recognize them” (Matthew 7:16, NIV).

Also like a tree, everyone’s worldview begins at the same place—with the roots. The roots represent your beliefs about God. These beliefs about God are the sap that travels up the trunk and out the branches to produce the fruit—the ideas—about all other areas of life.

The connection between root ideas about God and the resulting fruit can easily be seen in this way. Take, for example, the people who do not believe that God exist. When facing a moral dilemma, they cannot look to God for answers; they can only look within themselves or to others. Therefore the answers *will change* from person to person or culture to culture. On the other hand, if God exists, then our moral choices must be based in His *unchanging* character (which has been shown to us in the Bible). As you obey the commands found in the Bible, you have a reliable way to understand how you should live.

Another way to illustrate a worldview is to consider a pair of eyeglasses. Have you ever put on someone else’s glasses? If the prescription for the glasses is not the right one, what you see will be a distorted view of what is in front of you. In other words, without the right prescription, glasses will not help you see the world more clearly. Instead, they will keep you from seeing the world as it truly is.

It’s the same with a worldview. Just as eyeglasses can either help or hinder your sight, a worldview will either help or hinder your understanding of the world. For example, two people looking at a giraffe’s long neck may think about the complex arrangement of the giraffe’s heart, arteries in its neck, and the tissue surrounding its brain. They may both be aware that the giraffe doesn’t blow its brains out when it lowers its head to get a drink of water because of the pressure valves strategically placed along its neck. Yet one person, if he or she does not believe in God, may conclude the giraffe got its long neck as a result of a natural, evolutionary process over vast stretches of time. The other person, starting with the idea that God created each kind of animal, interprets the giraffe’s neck as clear evidence of God’s special design. So, like a set of prescription glasses, each person’s ideas act as a lens through which he or she interprets the world.

From these illustrations, you can learn two things about a worldview: first, that a worldview is like a fruit tree—what you believe about God is like the sap that nurtures how you think about everything else in life. Second, that a worldview is like a pair of eyeglasses—you need the right worldview to see and understand the world as it really is.

Asking the Right Questions

Do you remember when you were about four or five years old? If you were like most children at that age, you asked a lot of questions. As your awareness of your neighborhood, city, and world began to grow, so did your curiosity. You wanted to know why and how things work or came to be, so you asked questions like *Why is the sky blue?* *Will my dog go to heaven?* and *What is God like?* You learned about the larger world around you by asking questions.



Worldview: Our most basic beliefs that shape our view of and for the world, and are the basis of our decisions and actions.



A worldview is like a pair of eyeglasses—you need the right worldview to see and understand the world as it really is.

As it turns out, people have been asking certain kinds of questions from the dawn of recorded history. They wanted to know how they fit into the story of their world, culture, and family. So they asked questions like *How did life get here? What is wrong with the world?* and *Can we make the world better?*

Christians have thought about these questions too and have looked to the Bible for answers. What is found there is the unfolding story of God, His continued involvement with everything that He made, and His control over human history. This story is laid out for us in God's word, and can be understood in three main themes: Creation, Fall, and Redemption.

The Bible begins with the beginning of everything—everything, that is, except God. He was already in the beginning, since He has always existed, and He brought all things into existence. Thus, all things (and all people) are utterly dependent on God. This is the first theme: the Creation.

To really understand who we are and what our place is in God's creation, we must understand that God has placed every human being in four primary relationships. Every person is in these relationships whether they realize they are or not. First, you are in a relationship with God, your Creator. This is the most important relationship anyone has, since our very existence is dependent on Him and since He is the absolute Ruler of the universe in which we live. God desires a relationship of authentic obedience and love from each and every one of the people He made.

Second, we are in a relationship with ourselves. That may sound strange, but this is one of the things that make humans so different than animals. Humans and animals both exist, but humans know they exist—we wonder why we exist, and we try to make sense of our own lives. According to the Bible, God gave humans their identity when He created us in His image. This means that no matter what you hear from others about yourself or what you feel about yourself, you have purpose and value as a special creation of God.

Third, each and every one of us finds ourselves in relationships with others who also bear God's image. We have family, friends, teachers, bosses, and acquaintances. Even more than that, however, the relationships between humans are the key pieces of our (or any) society. For example, human relationships are the key ingredients of families, churches, and governments (the three primary social institutions).

Finally, every human is in a relationship with the rest of creation. This means we need to ask questions like *Do we have a responsibility for the animals? If so, what is that responsibility? What about the environment? How should we treat it? What can we use for our benefit? What needs to be protected?* In Creation, God placed His image bearers in charge of everything else He had made. We were told to care for God's creation and be productive with it.

The Bible tells us that God created all things as “very good” (see Genesis 1). In other words, God's creation was a brilliant design! At that time, each of the four relationships were functioning together in harmony. However, this ideal situation did not last.

When our first human parents chose to disobey God, death came into the world as the consequence of their sin. In other words, something has gone very wrong with God's very good creation. This is known as the Fall, and it has impacted each of the four relationships that God established. First, humans fell from full fellowship with a holy God through their sin (Genesis 3). Rather than obeying and loving God as we ought, there is a separation between mankind and God due to our sin. Second, humans fell in their ability to fully reflect God's image. Third, our relationships with other image bearers has fallen also. There is often conflict in our homes, churches, or governments. In fact, sometimes these conflicts even turn violent. For example, immediately after the Bible talks of the Fall (Genesis 3), it records a family murder (Genesis 4). Finally, humans fell in their ability to take care of and rule over the rest of the creation. Droughts, earthquakes, and other disasters often occur. Weeds grow instead of plants, and our best plans sometimes just don't work out right. Our ability to be responsible for the creation has been frustrated by the effect of sin.

But God did not leave mankind or His world in this fallen condition. He devised a plan to bring humanity back into a special relationship with Himself and restore the relationships humanity has with others and the creation. He did this by having His own son, Jesus, pay the penalty for mankind's sin. When the time was right, Jesus came to earth to die in our place, paying the price for our sin and removing our separation from God. This part of God's plan is called Redemption, meaning that God paid



in full for our sins so we can experience fellowship with Him once more (Genesis 3:15, 21; John 3:16–21; Acts 17:24–31). When we are in a right relationship with God, we can fully understand who we are and how to relate to others personally and socially, and we can seek to be agents of His kingdom here on earth. Further, the Bible speaks of a time when, through Christ, all wrongs will be made right.

This three-step progression—creation, fall, redemption—shows us why the world is the way it is. And if this story is the story of the world, it is also your story. Have you really embraced this story? Through Jesus’ death on the cross, the door is now open for you to return to the ideal relationship with God that He intended in the beginning. But first you need to believe that Jesus’ death was personal, for you and your sins, and accept His gift of salvation.

It is your relationship with God that has the most impact on how you live each day, so it is the first relationship that needs to be developed once you believe in Jesus as your savior. And once your relationship with God is restored through Jesus Christ, you can have renewed relationships with yourself (recognizing that you are created in His image and that your task is to glorify Him in everything that you do), with others (treating everyone around you as people who also bear the image of God and need to hear the message of salvation and grow stronger in their relationship with God), and even with the earth (wisely caring for the earth as a steward, responsible to God).

In this course, you will study these foundational questions and relationships, as well as other life issues, by asking key questions related to specific areas of life. You will discover that the biblical answers to these key questions form a *consistent* and *comprehensive* view of life.

People form a worldview based on their answers to the following questions:

- What about God? – *Theology*
- What is true and how do we know? – *Philosophy*
- How should we behave? – *Ethics*
- What is the origin of life? – *Biology*
- What is human nature? – *Psychology*
- What makes a healthy society? – *Sociology*
- What is the basis for law? – *Law*
- What is the purpose of government? – *Politics*
- How should we use our resources? – *Economics*
- What is the meaning of history? – *History*

The answers you choose for these questions are interconnected and come together to form an overall system of beliefs—a worldview. Your worldview does not simply determine what you think the world *is* like; it determines what you think the world *should* be like. Therefore your worldview will dictate your actions and responses to every aspect of life.

This curriculum focuses on each of these ten key questions, one at a time. In this way, you will learn that the answers to these questions reveal how God wants you to live in His world. But God hasn’t left you without help in finding out the answers to these questions. He gave you His written Word as a guide to the truth. Only by searching the Bible for His answers will you be able to understand His overall plan for the world and His purpose for how you should live.

Developing Your Worldview

But how can you develop your worldview when there is so much “truth” available today? We live in an era where confusion is commonplace, and any solid statements about truth are often frowned upon or swept away as mere opinion. What should you believe about God? What is truth? What is good? There are so many answers to these questions that it can make your head spin! How in the world are you supposed to get things straight, given the many beliefs that our culture throws at you? In this world of conflicting ideas, how can you develop a Christian worldview instead of just going along with the crowd?

Developing your worldview will take some time and effort. As you work your way through this course, you will find out where your ideas may be unclear or mistaken and you will have the opportunity to develop clear, solid ideas from the source of all truth, the Bible.

A Biblical Christian Worldview

As you learn more about the biblical answers related to our key questions, you will begin to see just how the Christian worldview is relevant to *all* of life. It makes sense that Christianity would be relevant to all of life—it’s the one worldview entirely based on how God designed and created the universe. True truth

exists, and it has its sole foundation in the unchanging character of God. Once you know and understand God's truth, you can live as a Lightbearer in the midst of a very confused culture.

Today, however, many Christians have turned away from a biblical foundation and have forgotten how to think and how to carefully analyze competing ideas. As a result, their light, which is supposed to shine brightly throughout society, has grown dim.

Francis Schaeffer, a Christian philosopher, blamed the Christian community for America's shift away from God. Schaeffer saw that Christians had forgotten that following Jesus impacts every aspect of life—that Christianity is a comprehensive world and life view. Instead, they turned their attention to a few “bits and pieces”² of life's key questions. By focusing only on their private relationship with Jesus, Christians have lost sight of the importance of shining the light of Jesus Christ into philosophy, ethics, politics, economics, the mass media, the sciences, entertainment, and other areas.

Schaeffer went on to explain that Christians have very gradually “become disturbed over permissiveness, pornography, the public schools, the breakdown of the family, and finally abortion. But they have not seen this as a totality—each thing being a part, a symptom of a much larger problem. They have failed to see that all of this has come about due to a shift in worldview—that is, through a fundamental change in the overall way people think and view the world and life as a whole.”³

But many of Schaeffer's warnings came too late. Because Christians in the past few decades have been content to remain isolated and not become involved in the larger culture, many people have turned away from a Christian worldview and embraced other non-Christian worldviews instead. As a result, Christians today have an uphill battle in trying to regain a positive influence for good in our society.

The Consequences of Ideas

It has been said that ideas have consequences⁴ and bad ideas have bad consequences. Ideas affect more than just our minds—people will help or harm others based on what they believe is good and right. And if a whole society begins to believe wrong ideas, it will probably move in the wrong direction.

Take for example the nation of Germany. Before World War II, the Germans had for the most part built their society on a Biblical Christian worldview. But when Hitler took control of the country in the 1930s, he began propagating hatred for Jews. Because he was powerful, the German people failed to take a strong stand for God's truth that everyone is created in God's image. Many remained silent and allowed Hitler to influence the entire nation, leading it into a holocaust against the Jews and plunging most of the world into a global war as other nations fought to stop him.

When Christians do not speak up and participate in society, their light becomes dim and darkness fills the void, often with tragic consequences.

Without a comprehensive and consistent worldview, Christians are as likely as anyone to adopt the beliefs and practices of those around them. We see evidence of this happening today throughout a number of former Christian-centered nations. Recent surveys show that an increasing number of people who claim to be Christians deny that there are binding moral standards of behavior or absolute truth. But that doesn't make sense. How can someone claim to believe in Jesus and His teachings, but also claim that everyone can decide for himself or herself what is right or wrong or true? This makes Jesus' teachings irrelevant to everyday life. In the end, many people simply do what is right in their own eyes, falling into the same trap as the ancient Israelites (Judges 17:6; 21:25).

If you are serious about developing a Biblical Christian worldview, then you need to pay close attention to how the Bible applies to every idea that comes into your mind. Jesus claimed that He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6, NKJV). To become a true follower of Jesus, you will need to think and act in each situation just as He would act. That is no trivial matter.

The Bible demonstrates a comprehensive faith and worldview. When your Christian worldview is well developed, you will know how you should act, just like the men of Issachar, a small tribe of ancient Israel. We read in 1 Chronicles 12:32 how these men “understood the times, and knew what Israel ought to do” (NIV). Even though they were the smallest tribe among their brothers, they provided leadership for the entire nation because they understood the ideas of their culture and how God wanted them to respond. It was as if they had a newspaper in one hand and the Bible in the other—they read the events of the day through the “glasses” of God's truth. This biblical worldview knowledge qualified them for leadership.

Christians can do the same today. If you understand and are confident in the truth of the Christian worldview, you can provide today's Christians with the wisdom necessary to lead our nation and spread "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3, NKJV).

This is what it means to be a Lightbearer. Are you ready to let your light shine into a darkened world? Your friends, neighbors, and nation desperately need to see God's light shining through you. Maybe God is preparing you to understand the times in which we live so that you will know what to do.

Endnotes

¹Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989), 11.

²Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1981), 17.

³Ibid.

⁴See Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984).



A World of Ideas

Reading Discussion Questions

1. What point did the story about Christine's sleep-over make?
2. How do most people get their beliefs? Is this bad?
3. What is a worldview? What two illustrations can help you see the effect a worldview can have on your life?
4. How is a worldview both a view *of* and *for* life?
5. What three-step progression describes the big picture of the Bible?
6. What four major relationships do Christians experience?
7. What did Francis Schaeffer see as the main problem with this culture?
8. **Reflection Question:** How do the different people you turn to in your life (parents, friends, neighbors, pastors, cultural icons, etc.) answer some of life's most important questions?
9. **Reflection Question:** What does the phrase "ideas have consequences" mean?



The Evaluator Presentation Assignment

Pick a favorite TV show, movie, song, game, website, book, or magazine that you were recently exposed to and evaluate it to see what key worldview concepts it is based on. The purpose of this assignment is to help you take a step back and objectively evaluate a form of entertainment that appeals to you. Take your time and think about the questions being asked. You may be surprised at some of your answers.

1. What TV show, movie, song, game, website, or reading material are you evaluating?
2. What is it about this form of entertainment that attracts you? Why do you like this particular style, genre, or show more than others? (If it is because your friends do, why do they listen to or watch it?)
3. How does this kind of entertainment make you feel?
4. What are the major messages being sent through this entertainment? Do you agree or disagree with them? What subtle messages are put forth in this entertainment?
5. Do the themes of this entertainment reflect reality? Do they gloss over evil?
6. How do the messages compare with your personal values, what you know to be right and wrong?
7. Do you think these messages have any effect on how close you feel to your family, friends, or God? Why or why not?
8. What might happen if someone took these messages literally? What might happen if you imitated the lifestyles and choices of the characters portrayed in this entertainment?
9. How does it make you feel to know that by supporting this entertainment you are supporting the ideas it is promoting?
10. Would you feel comfortable if Jesus listened or watched this with you? What do you think He would say about it? Does the Bible say anything about entertainment like this? If so, what?



re:View: Ultimate Questions Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: Taking tests—no one enjoys it. But what if you didn't know what the test was about or why you were there? What if you couldn't leave or find a way out? Sitting in a high school gymnasium with endless rows of desks, Nick discovers that there are some questions that everyone has to answer.

1. **Where did Nick try to go? Did he succeed? Why or why not?**
2. **What were the four questions on the test?**
3. **Why didn't the other students help him answer the questions?**
4. **Why was it important that he come back and sign his name on the test booklet?**
5. **What are some of the big questions we ask in life?**



re:View: Ultimate Questions TS

Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: Everybody answers the ultimate questions from the test of life. While the questions do not always occupy our minds, they are inescapable. How you answer them determines the foundation for your life.

1. What are the four ultimate questions?
2. What makes these questions ultimate?
3. What is popular culture?
4. Why is it wrong to think it doesn't matter what the answers to the ultimate questions are?



How to Be Your Own Selfish Pig

Reading Discussion Questions

Chapter 1: Don't Ask Questions

1. What is the big question Sally and Matthew are asking?
2. What does the title of this chapter mean?
3. What are the elements of a person's philosophy of life?
4. Why do so few people engage in thinking?
5. What incident caused Susan to clarify her faith?
6. When Susan started questioning, what was her father's reaction?
7. When Francis Schaeffer encouraged his daughter to seek answers, what did she realize?
8. What further explanation did Francis Schaeffer give to Susan about questions?
9. Francis Schaeffer said, "No man can live without a _____, therefore, there is no man that is not a philosopher."
10. To what does Susan compare a worldview?
11. According to Dorothy Sayers (page 19), when do we usually begin to question our faith?
12. Why was this book written?
13. **Reflection Question:** What are your roots? What is it you hang onto to keep yourself going day after day?
14. **Reflection Question:** Do you believe the things your parents tell you? Why or why not? What about the things you pick up from television or your friends? Are your reasons for believing what you believe good ones?
15. **Reflection Question:** Do you know what is really true? Do you want to know the truth? What will it take for you to look for answers?

Chapter 2: As Long as You're Sincere

16. What popular view do Mr. and Mrs. Briggs hold?
17. What does the title of this chapter mean?
18. Why is this thinking an error?
19. Susan points out two important facts about beliefs. What are they?
20. What do your beliefs affect?
21. What does the story about the keys have to do with the purpose of this book?
22. The box at the end of this chapter talks about flying in the dark. How does a pilot's trip over the Alps in the dark compare to how you live your life?
23. **Reflection Question:** Do you think there is a key to reality? Is it the same for everyone, or are there many keys that could work?
24. **Reflection Question:** Do you believe that some things are true and others are false, that some things are right and some are wrong? Why?
25. **Reflection Question:** What if there were no such thing as truth? How would that affect your life? How would you be able to make a decision about anything?



re:View: Worldviews Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: When a bank is robbed in a small town, it is Chief Detective Howard's job to investigate the case. When police arrive at the scene, they find surveillance lines cut and no clues left behind. Will statements from the witnesses solve the case? One robbery. Six witnesses. Two robbers. Or maybe it was three?

1. **Could the detective determine what had happened from the testimonies of the witnesses? Why or why not?**
2. **Did the detective ask everyone the same questions? Did the answers match?**
3. **How is it possible for everyone to answer differently?**
4. **From their answers, what information can you determine about each of the witnesses?**



re:View: Worldviews TS

Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: A worldview is a category of consistent answers to the four ultimate questions. There are three main answers (worldviews): Naturalism, Transcendentalism, and Theism. Every person has a worldview, whether he or she recognizes it or not.

1. Who has a worldview?
2. What are the two roles of a worldview?
3. How did Dr. Brown define the two roles?
4. Someone once said, “Find a worldview that fits you and then live it passionately.” What is wrong with this statement?
5. What’s the difference between the role of an artist and an architect?



Biblical Application Exercise

Often we are told to “apply” biblical truth to our lives. But what is biblical application? Well, it is practicing the truths that you have learned through God’s Word; it is *doing something about what you read*. How do you translate what you read into daily practice? The following three steps will help you make biblical application a reality in your life.

First, read the Scripture passage in its larger context. It’s always best to read a whole passage at a time, not just a verse or two. This is because if you just focus on one or two verses you are more likely to miss the overall point of the passage. You need to *understand the author’s words within the larger context* of what he is saying. This means grasping the bigger picture of what you are reading.

Second, read for understanding, not just recall. In other words, *ask questions as you read*. What style of literature is this (history, poetry, direct teaching, prophecy, etc.)? Who is doing the talking? Who is the author talking to? What event is taking place? What happened before and after this event that might have a bearing on why this event is important? Be sure to look up the definition of words you don’t understand. Also, think about whether there are general principles or timeless truths that can be derived from this passage. What principle can you apply to your own life?

Finally, you should plan a strategy to change your behavior. This means seeking out ways to actually *put God’s truth into practice*. It means planning how to be obedient. As result of what you have learned, what will you do differently today, this week, or as a new pattern for your life into the future? Is it a change in attitude? Or maybe a more godly way of treating other people? How about, through the power of the Holy Spirit, changing a bad habit that you know is not pleasing to God?

To simplify this process a little, remember that: first, you read; second, you understand; and third, you say, “Now what? How will I be different because I know this? What will I do about what I know?”

It is this step of applying the Bible to your life by making changes to your behavior that sets you apart as a Lightbearer. James give us clear direction when he wrote:

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does (James 1:22–25, NIV).

Applying God’s truth to life is the dividing line between those who read the Bible but stay the same and those who read the Bible and live differently. Someone once asked, “If you were put on trial for being a follower of Christ, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” What about you? Have people ever wondered why you were kind to them even when they were unkind to you? Has anyone ever asked about your moral choices because your standards are different? This “fruit” of your salvation can only grow from a heart changed by the Bible and the Holy Spirit.

One of the application skills you should develop is the ability to paraphrase or summarize the Scripture verses that you read. By putting them into your own words, you can wrestle with them long enough to know that you fully understand what God is saying. Let’s work through the process step-by-step, using Philippians 2:5–11 as an example.

1. **Paraphrase**—If you were to paraphrase this passage, it might look something like this:

In your relationships with one another, have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human being, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (TODAY'S NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION)

2. **Bridge**—Now you need to bridge this truth into our world of today. They are not just dusty words written to people who are long dead. The words of the Bible are living and active for your life today. So what is God telling His people that He wants them to do? It might look like this:

The humility Jesus demonstrated needs to become a vital part of my life. Just as He took on the role of a servant, so I should look for ways that I can serve others and obey God's commands. My ultimate goal should be to bring as much glory to God as possible.

3. **Strategy**—Now you need to work out your strategy, a specific, concrete plan that you can follow so that the passage of Scripture will actually *change the way you think and the way you behave*. For example, you can:

- Make a list of practical ways you are demonstrating humility and a servant's heart right now.
- Pray and ask God to show you how you can express humility to your family, friends, and peers.
- Make a list of things you are “grasping”—needlessly struggling to hold on to or control—and ask God to give you the trust to put these things in His hands.
- Praise God for the ways He is gaining glory in the world.
- Memorize these verses as a reminder of the kind of person God wants you to be.

When you pursue God like this, you are allowing Him to remake your character and He is glorified! At the end of every day, take an account of your successes and failures. When you fail, ask for God's forgiveness. Begin each day with new enthusiasm and commitment. As a result, you will sense a growing awareness of walking with God and greater ability to respond to life's challenges in a way that is honoring to Him.

Exercise #1

Here is an opportunity to practice the steps for biblical application that we've just outlined. Imagine that while you are doing your personal devotions, you come across James 3:13–18. As you are reading this passage, you recall a recent encounter with a friend where you got angry and said some unkind things.

Work on applying what you learn from this passage by using the following suggestions:

- 1) Paraphrase: First, pray, asking the Holy Spirit to help you understand God's Word as you read James 3:13–18 several times. Then paraphrase the verses by putting them in your own words.
- 2) Bridge: Write out how the main idea of this passage applies in today's world.
- 3) Strategy: Write out a practical strategy. Remember, your strategy needs to be something to help change your mindset or behavior. It needs to be so specific that you can say, "Yes, I did this" or "No, I haven't done that yet." For example, from this passage, you may decide to search the Scriptures to compare godly wisdom with worldly wisdom. Then, take a daily account of how well you are doing in accomplishing your strategy. Ask God to forgive your failures, and give Him the glory if you succeed.

Here is space for completing this exercise:

Paraphrase:

Bridge:

Strategy: I will . . .

Exercise #2

Here is another opportunity to practice applying Scripture for life change, using a passage from Ephesians 4:1–16:

Paraphrase:

Bridge:

Strategy: I will . . .

WORLDVIEW

STUDENT
MANUAL

TRAINING



LIGHTBEARERS

Unit One

A Summit Ministries Curriculum

DAY	UNIT 01: syllabus & outline	SW	✓
1	Read <i>A World of Ideas</i> Reading.....	25	
2	Read <i>A World of Ideas</i> Reading.....	DITTO	
3	Review <i>A World of Ideas</i> Reading Discussion Questions.....	33	
4	Review <i>A World of Ideas</i> Reading Discussion Questions..... Assign Theology Paragraph [Rough Draft Due on Day 8].....	DITTO 34	
5	Watch “re:View: Check” Video..... Review “re:View: Check” Video Discussion Questions..... Watch “re:View: Naturalism TS” Video Review “re:View: Naturalism TS” Video Discussion Questions.....	--- 35 --- 36	
6	Complete Attributes of God Exercise #1..... Complete Attributes of God Exercise #2..... Complete Jesus Exercise..... Assign Theology in Movies [Assignment Due on Day 11].....	37 38 40 41	
7	Watch “re:View: Reset” Video..... Review “re:View: Reset” Video Discussion Questions..... Watch “re:View: Transcendentalism TS” Video..... Review “re:View: Transcendentalism TS” Video Discussion Questions.....	--- 42 --- 43	
8	Turn in Theology Paragraph Rough Draft [Assignment Due on Day 13]..... Read <i>How to Be Your Own Selfish Pig</i> Reading (Ch. 5).....	--- ---	
9	Review <i>How to Be Your Own Selfish Pig</i> Reading Discussion Questions (Ch. 5).....	44	
10	Watch “re:View: Help” Video..... Review “re:View: Help” Video Discussion Questions..... Watch “re:View: Theism TS” Video..... Review “re:View: Theism TS” Video Discussion Questions.....	--- 45 --- 46	
11	Turn in & Share Theology in Movies Presentation Assignment.....	---	
12	Complete The Trinity Exercise.....	47	
13	Turn in Theology Paragraph Assignment..... Take Learn to Discern Quiz..... Prepare Unit 01 Test.....	--- --- ---	
14	Take Unit 01 Test.....	---	
15			



A World of Ideas: What About God?

KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING

Key Question: What about God? (Does God exist and what is God like?)
Key Ideas: God has revealed Himself in the created universe and His revealed words, the Bible.
Key Terms: theology, atheism, theism, pantheism, general revelation, causal argument, design argument, mind argument, moral argument, special revelation, trinitarianism, monotheism, deism
Key Verse: Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1, NIV).

A Close Encounter of the God Kind

Making sense of the world is a pretty big task. Sometimes you may feel confused when trying to understand why people act in certain ways and why things happen the way they do. Having a well-thought-out worldview helps you make sense of the world and your experiences in it.

The Introduction described worldviews using the illustration of a fruit tree. Just like a tree draws nourishment from its roots, the root system of everyone’s worldview begins by answering the question *What about God?* When you ask that question, you are dealing with the subject of *theology*. It sounds like a big word, but it comes from two Greek words—*theos*, meaning God, and *logos*, meaning knowledge. So **theology** is simply the study of what we can know about God. Or, to put it another way, theology answers the key questions *Is there a God?* and *What is God like?*

Theology: The study of what we can know about God.

In this chapter you will look into both questions. In the process, you will:

- ... experience what it’s like to have pizza with an atheist
- ... make the connection between watches, minds, morals, and God
- ... learn that God has a special message for you
- ... discover how God has personalized that communication in the person of Jesus Christ

To start finding out more about the roots of the Christian worldview, read on!

Lunch with an Atheist

One Saturday, you’re out for pizza with a group of friends and discover that one of the gang has brought along someone you don’t know. Being the charming, outgoing person you are, you strike up a conversation with the new guy, Skip.

As you’re munching your pepperoni pizza with extra cheese, Skip tells you that his parents sued the last school he attended because the coach said a prayer before each football game. He also shows you his membership card to a national atheist association. You take a bite of pepperoni and weakly mumble that you lead your football team in prayer before each game.

Skip then asks you a question that makes you choke on your crust and leaves a string of mozzarella cheese dangling from your mouth. “So, you’re a Christian. Tell me, how do you know there is a god?” At that precise moment, the entire restaurant grows strangely silent and every person in the room turns and looks at you!

Now . . . what do you do? You may wish you could drop to your knees and pray that God would answer Skip with a booming voice from heaven. Or that you could at least whip out your cell phone, call

your youth leader, and let him talk to Skip. But Skip’s question is a great starting point for leading you—and him—to some real answers about God.

What he’s really asking is *How do you know that God is real?* And, believe it or not, there are some very convincing answers to that question.

Does God Exist?

People have always wondered about God. Over the centuries, mankind has come up with different answers to the question of whether God exists. One answer is that God does not exist, which is the answer of **atheism**. On the other hand, the vast majority of people throughout history have answered that God does exist. If you believe God exists, you believe in **theism**.

But if you say that God exists, you need to answer another question: *what is God like?* There is basically two ways to answer this question. One answer is that God is in everything. In other words, He is not separate from the world of nature. This is the answer of **pantheism**, which includes many of the Eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism.

As it turns out, the Christian worldview provides answers to both of these theological questions. Christianity claims that God exists and has chosen two primary ways for revealing Himself to us. The first is through what He has created. As you consider the universe, our solar system, the planet on which we live, life itself, and the uniqueness of humanity, it is natural to conclude that such a complex arrangement of matter can only have come from a supernatural source—God.

The second way God reveals Himself to us is through the Bible. In the Bible we find out not just that He exists, but also details about the character and personality of the Creator of the universe. We learn, for instance, that God desires a relationship with His highest creation—mankind.

The content of Christian theology, then, rests on two foundations: *general revelation* and *special revelation*. General revelation is God’s communication, through nature and conscience, regarding His existence. Special revelation is God’s more specific communication, through the Bible and Jesus Christ,

Atheism: The belief that God does not exist.

Theism: The belief that God does exist.

Pantheism: The belief that God is and is in everything.

about salvation and His nature. One theologian had this to say about these two forms of revelation:

On the one hand, general revelation is God’s communication of Himself to all persons at all times and in all places. Special revelation, on the other hand, involves God’s particular communications and manifestations which are available now only by consultation of certain sacred writings [i.e., the Bible].¹

General Revelation

General revelation is God’s communication to humanity through nature, conscience, and rational thought. For example, the immensity of the universe demonstrates that God is very powerful, the complexity of the human body shows that God is a masterful Designer, and the fact that humans alone have the ability to reason reveals the existence of an ultimate Mind.

Psalm 19 confirms that the universe shows certain characteristics of the Creator:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.
Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.
Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world (Psalm 19:1–4, NKJV).

Every person on Earth can hear and understand what nature is saying. In a loud voice, creation screams “God Is!” People like Skip (in our story above) may not care to admit it, but the universe itself provides strong evidence there is a God.

In Romans 1:20, the Apostle Paul said that because nature speaks so plainly, there is no excuse for anyone not to believe in God. “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (NIV).

General Revelation: God’s communication with mankind, through nature and conscience.

This is why throughout history we find cultures that believe in a Supreme Being. Nature compels them to believe that God exists. So, using Romans 1:20, answer the following questions:

- How long has God been known?
- What has He made known?
- In what ways do you think the universe displays God’s “eternal power”?
- In what ways is God’s “divine nature” shown?

More Reasons to Believe in God

In addition to the general revelation found in nature, there is another way to discern that God exists. That way is by using your mind to make sense of what you see around you. Over the centuries, Christian theologians and philosophers have come up with several logical arguments for believing in God’s existence. These include: 1) the fact that the universe came into existence, 2) the designed features found in living things, 3) the fact that our minds are made for thinking, and 4) the existence of a universal moral law.

ARGUMENT #1: THERE’S SOMETHING RATHER THAN NOTHING

The **Causal argument** considers how the cosmos (i.e., the universe) came to be. This argument simply contends that anything that begins to exist must have been caused to exist by something else. Therefore, the existence of the universe must have been caused to exist by something else. Just like a ten-story building cannot pop into existence without someone building it, the universe cannot pop into existence without something (or someone) creating it.

But what would be powerful enough to cause the universe? Some people believe that *nothing* caused the universe. But how could *nothing* cause *something* to do *anything*? That is just not reasonable. Therefore, there must be a better answer.

Other people suggest that the universe has always existed. What’s wrong with that answer? Very simply, it contradicts scientific evidence. For example, scientists tell us that the universe has a limited amount of usable energy. Yet, if the universe had always existed—if it had existed for an *unlimited* amount of time—then its *limited* energy would have been used up by now.

For example, the average car can only go about 300 miles on a tank of gas. If we were driving down the highway and you asked me how long we had been driving and I said “forever,” wouldn’t you wonder why we hadn’t run out of gas yet? Similarly, since all of the limited energy in the universe hasn’t been used up yet, then the universe must have come into existence at some point in time. That means we are back to needing a cause for the universe.

So what can you conclude from this line of thinking? If the universe has not always existed, and if it is unreasonable to think that *nothing* caused it to exist, then we are left with the idea that something outside of the natural universe—something *supernatural*—must exist. This *supernatural* something, as the only thing not limited by the laws of the universe, must also be the cause of the universe. This something would need to be more powerful than all the energy in the entire universe; in fact, it must be supremely powerful. Only the all-powerful God of the Bible fits this list.

Causal Argument: Anything that begins to exist must have been caused to exist by something else.

ARGUMENT #2: THERE’S DESIGN INSTEAD OF CHAOS

But there is another compelling reason to believe in God. It is called the **design argument**, also known as the “teleological argument.” (You already know that *logos* means knowledge; the root *teleos* means something perfect or complete.)

The design argument makes the case that if something exists that is clearly designed, then it must have a designer. For example, if you stumble across a watch in the woods, you wouldn't think it just popped fully formed into existence or arose by accident from a combination of random natural forces, such as wind, lightening, or gravity. You would think a watchmaker designed it and that someone probably lost it while walking in the woods.

If it is not possible for a watch to come into existence through the process of simple natural laws, then something like the human body, which is immensely intricate and complex, has much less chance of coming into existence through purely natural processes. If a watch designer is required for a watch to exist, then doesn't the watchmaker (indeed, all humanity) also need a designer? If you wouldn't believe that watches could exist without watchmakers, then how could you believe that humans can exist without a "human-maker"? Again, this human-maker must be something supernatural, outside of the natural

universe, and immensely powerful, i.e., someone like God.

These observations from design suggest that the universe was created by a super-intelligent Designer. This provides additional reasons to believe that an Intelligent Designer (i.e., God) must exist.²

Design Argument: If something exists that is designed, then it has a designer.

ARGUMENT #3: THERE'S MIND NOT JUST MATTER

Not only did God place clues to His existence in nature, but He also gave mankind a mind made in the image of His so that we could reason, something no animal on earth can do. Christian author C.S. Lewis gave radio broadcasts and wrote books defending why it is reasonable to believe in God. One of his reasons involved the **mind argument**. "Suppose," contends Lewis, "that there is no intelligence behind the universe. In that case, nobody designed our brain for the purpose of thinking. Thought is merely the random by-product of atoms within our skull. But if so, how can I trust my own thinking to be true?" asks Lewis.³

Lewis has a good point. Think about "thinking" for a moment. The very fact that you are *thinking* raises an important question: *Where do your thoughts come from?*

Check the answer you think best completes this sentence: "My thoughts are the result of..."

- electrical impulses between the synapses of the cells in my brain."
- the Force, the same energy that permeates all living things."
- myself—my soul—initiating the thought that animates my brain."
- I try not to think—it gives me a headache."

Why does Lewis insist that we could not trust our own thoughts if they are the by-products of random processes found in nature? To better grasp Lewis' point, think again about a computer program. What if a monkey typed away on a keyboard in an effort to create a computer program? Do you think the program would work? Obviously not! That's because an monkey would be hitting random keys, not having an end purpose in mind. The same is true when it comes to your mind. It seems to be *programmed* to think. A thinking mind could not possibly come about by a random process of molecules bumping into each other.

Your mind is more than just the chemical processes of the "gray matter" in your brain. If a surgeon

Mind Argument: If there is no intelligence behind the universe, then our thoughts are only by-products of matter and we have no reason to trust them.

opened your skull and searched everywhere throughout your brain, he would never find a thought, idea, or feeling. That is because there is more to your mind than just your physical brain—there is a part that goes beyond simple matter. The Bible refers to this immaterial part of you as your "soul." And since the end result (your thinking mind) needs a sufficient cause, there must be an intelligent God who created your ability to think. Therefore, the existence of thinking minds implies the existence of a Divine Intelligence.

ARGUMENT #4: THERE'S RIGHT AND WRONG

In addition to your mind, consider the concepts of right and wrong. The **moral argument** for God rests on the fact that moral laws exist and are known by human beings.

To illustrate the logic behind the moral argument, think about this scenario. Suppose you find a fenced-off piece of land in the forest. If the owner of the land didn't put up a "No Trespassing" sign there, then it is fine for you to cross the fence and keep walking, right? It is legal to walk wherever you want. If, however, the owner *did* put up a "No Trespassing" sign so that you would not walk on his land, then it is not legal for you to walk wherever you want, because he has the authority to make this demand.

Well, the same thing is true of moral laws and God: if God is not the creator of moral laws, or if He does not care if you follow them, then it is okay for you to do whatever you want. But if God has created moral laws and cares if we follow them, then it is not okay for you to do whatever you want.

This question of right vs. wrong is not new. People in every place and time have known deep down that certain things are right and certain things are wrong.

- Torturing innocent children for fun...wrong
- Helping a child who is lost...right
- Stealing bread from the hungry...wrong
- Warning someone that their house is on fire...right
- Intentionally infecting someone with a deadly disease...wrong
- Claiming to be the emperor of the universe...wrong
- Screaming fire in a crowded movie theater...wrong
- Helping an elderly person cross a street...right

But where do these ideas of right and wrong originate? There are only two possibilities: either they come from nature or they come from God. Does it make sense to say that morals originated from a bunch of molecules? No! This is just as silly as saying that a clock can pop into existence out of thin air.

If this is not the case, then God—the Moral Lawgiver—must be the originator of moral laws, and He must care whether or not we follow His rules. This, in fact, is what the Apostle Paul explained to the believers in Rome when he wrote that “the requirements of the [moral] law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them” (Romans 2:15, NIV). Because of the existence of moral laws, the only logical conclusion is that they exist because of a Lawgiver.

Moral Argument: Since moral law exists, there must be a moral law-giver.

Special Revelation

According to the Bible, the destiny of human beings involves either salvation or condemnation (John 3:16–21). While general revelation demonstrates that God exists and reveals certain broad aspects of God's nature, it is through special revelation that the question *what is God like?* is answered. The Bible reveals both God's character and the good news of salvation in detail (Romans 10:14).

Special revelation is expressed through such events as miracles, dreams, and visions (Hebrews 2:4), as well as through words given to prophets and apostles (Hebrews 1:1). Many of these revelations have been recorded in the Bible, God's inspired word (2 Timothy 3:16). In addition, the ultimate special revelation is Jesus Christ Himself. If you really want to know what God is like, all you need to do is look at the person of Jesus.

God, who...spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:1–3, NKJV).

Special Revelation: God's communication of Himself and His will to particular people through His word and Jesus Christ.

The teachings and actions of Jesus have been recorded in the Bible so that we can know about God (John 20:30–31), as well as how we should live as followers of Jesus (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Thus, Christians should not treat the Bible like any other book, for it is not like any other book. Rather, the Bible is the Word of God given to human beings, not merely the words of human beings.

What is God Like?

Even those who agree that God does exist (including Muslims, Jews, Mormons, and Christians) often disagree about what God is actually like. The Bible informs us that God is the creator of the universe, life, and morality. But more than that, we find that He is personal, He is three-in-one, He is involved in the world, He is a judge, and He is a redeemer. Let's explore each of these characteristics of God.

CHARACTERISTIC #1: GOD IS PERSONAL

Some transcendentalists believe that everything and everyone is in reality god (or at least a part of god). This belief, as mentioned earlier, is known as pantheism. However, other transcendentalists believe that god is an impersonal force, something like electricity. (This idea is presented in the *Star Wars* films.)

In contrast, Christians affirm that God is not an impersonal force, but a personal being. Personal beings possess qualities such as self-awareness, the ability to make choices, and the ability to experience feelings like happiness, loneliness, or anger.

In the Bible, God's personhood is revealed in the fact that He is self-aware (Exodus 3:14), that He speaks (Hebrews 1:1–3), that He has a will to choose (Matthew 6:10), and that He feels emotions such as love (John 3:16). This list could be multiplied to include additional attributes and actions of God, each of which would combine to reveal His magnificent personality.

God does not have a physical body, but that does not make Him any less of a person. Personal traits are not tied to bodies. If a person lost a foot or a hand, it would diminish his or her body, but it would not make him or her any less of a person. And because we are created in God's image, we share such traits of personhood. This means that you can have a personal relationship with the Creator of the universe, but you cannot have a relationship with a thing, like a rock, a tree, or electricity.

CHARACTERISTIC #2: GOD IS TRIUNE

One distinctive feature of the Christian worldview is the belief that God is three persons in one being,

Trinitarianism: The biblical teaching that there is one God who exists as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

known as **Trinitarianism**. This idea is summarized in an ancient Christian statement of faith, the Athanasian Creed: "That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Substance."⁴ Since this statement is a little hard to understand, let's break it down into its parts.

The first key element of this creed is that there is only one God. This is called **monotheism**, the belief that only one God exists (*mono* means one, and *theos*, as you already learned, means God). The second



key element is that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct persons. This means that they can communicate with each other. This also means that they are not just one person pretending to be three persons, or one person simply appearing throughout history in different forms. Neither of these explanations are complete.

In order to explain the idea of the Trinity, ancient Christians constructed a triangular diagram. As you can see from the diagram, only the center circle is labeled "God." This is because there is only one God (Isaiah 44:6–8). Yet the diagram illustrates that the Father is God (Matthew 6:9), the Son is God (John 1:1), and the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3–4).

The diagram avoids confusing the persons of the Trinity by showing that the Father is not the Son (Matthew 3:16–17), the Son is not the Spirit (John 16:13), and the Spirit is not the Father (John 14:16).

Some people object to the idea of the Trinity because the word itself does not occur in the Bible. This is true; but the word *Bible* does not appear in the Bible either. Ultimately, where the term came

from is irrelevant to whether the idea is true or not. What is important is not the word that is used, but the teaching. Through reason, Christians have concluded that the Bible teaches there is one God who has revealed Himself as three persons. *Trinity* is simply a useful word we employ to summarize this concept.

Others object that God cannot be Three-in-One because it is hard to understand. How can someone be three and yet one at the same time? Actually, Christians do not say that God is one person and three persons at the same time. That would be a logical contradiction. The doctrine of the Trinity states that God is three *persons* in one *essence*. Of course, that idea is still hard to understand. But frankly, there are many things in life that are difficult to understand. If we cannot fully understand the creation around us, or even why other people do what they do, we should not panic if we cannot fully understand the Creator, who is so far beyond our abilities in strength, power, holiness, and thought. It comes down to the fact that this is how God has chosen to reveal Himself, and we can take His word on that.

In summary, Christians believe that there is only one God who exists as three persons (one *what* and three *who's*). This idea is summed up by the Apostle Paul. As he finished his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote this closing comment, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14, NKJV).

Monotheism: The belief that only one God exists.

CHARACTERISTIC #3: GOD IS INVOLVED

Another idea people consider is whether God cares about what we do. Maybe God is the Creator in the sense that He wound up the universe like a clock and then left everything, including human life, to run under its own power.

Deism is the belief that although God exists, He is not involved in the universe or human history. Thus, there are no miracles (events where God supernaturally intervenes in the natural course of history) and there is no special revelation (so Jesus is not God and the Bible did not come from God).

The biblical description of God stands in contrast to this perspective. Not only is He the Creator (Genesis 1:1), but He also hears when we pray (1 John 5:14), and even entered frail human life so that He might redeem His people from their sins (Philippians 2:6–8). One of God’s great promises to His people is that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Hebrews 13:5). Instead of thinking about God as an impersonal force or a removed deity, we should realize that God loves us so much that although He is bigger than the universe, He is still with us at all times.

Deism: The belief that God created the universe, but that He is no longer with His creation.

CHARACTERISTIC #4: GOD IS JUDGE

The judgment of God is not a popular subject, even among Christians. While many people enjoy thinking about the love of God, they don’t like the idea that God is also a God of wrath (Romans 1:18). However, you cannot read far in the Bible before seeing that God’s holiness involves both love and judgment.

Because God is by nature holy, He cannot tolerate sin. In fact, His holiness is the exact opposite of sin. After Adam and Eve violated God’s command and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God judged their disobedience by expelling them from His presence in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:23–24). Other demonstrations of God’s judgment are recorded in the Bible, including the Flood (Genesis 6:17–7:24), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19), the striking down of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1–7), the fall of the Canaanites (Leviticus 18–20), and the eventual fall of both Israel (2 Kings 17) and Judah (2 Chronicles 36). In each case, God was motivated by His holy nature and steadfast word to judge sin.

Though God is a Judge, He is always fair and righteous. He is not a big bully just waiting for any opportunity to squelch your fun. God is truly interested in seeing good prevail over evil. Yet God does not take pleasure in the judgment of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). Although His holiness must be fulfilled, God also wants to show mercy.

The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty... (Exodus 34:6–7, NKJV).

CHARACTERISTIC #5: GOD IS REDEEMER

There is only one thing that can protect humans from the holy wrath of God on the final Day of Judgment—God’s mercy. In the most awesome display of His mercy, God provided an advocate for us, someone who, though without sin, became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). The central theme of redemption is the love of God: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, NKJV).

Indeed, God’s love for sinners is demonstrated by Jesus Christ’s death (Romans 5:8). God’s love knows no social, racial, or gender boundaries. God loves the rich and poor, old and young, males and females of all nationalities and races. Jesus was not sent to earth simply to be a good teacher or example, but to redeem people from their sins. All who receive Jesus Christ (John 1:12) and believe in Him (John 3:16) will escape from God’s wrath and have eternal life, because the penalty for their sins has been paid in full. Those who believe in Jesus will not be condemned (Romans 3:24) and are no longer controlled by sin (Romans 6:11).

Conclusion

The Christian worldview holds that God has revealed Himself in three ways: 1) through the created order, 2) through His inspired word, the Bible, and 3) through the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ. From the Christian perspective, the foundation for everything in life is the opening phrase of the Bible, “In the beginning God...” (Genesis 1:1). Christian theology teaches that God is an intelligent, powerful, loving, just, and holy Being. Not only that, but God exists as a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (i.e., three persons, but one Divine essence). Christianity further proclaims that God took upon Himself human form in the person of Jesus Christ and died for our sins.

As Christians, we worship a God who is both Mind and Heart, who with intelligence and power created the world, yet also loves mankind so much that He sent His son to die so people can reconnect with Him. But this holy and righteous God stands in judgment of our actions as well, most importantly whether we have chosen to accept Jesus’ death as payment for our sins. Christian theism declares that God exists, is triune, is personal, is holy yet merciful, created the universe, and loved us enough to send His son to die for us. And to top it off, God is a communicating God who speaks through the general revelation of creation and the special revelation of the Bible and Jesus Christ.

Now that you have all this information about God, the question you need to ask yourself is *are you listening?* When you examine a cell in biology, when you walk through the park, when you study the Bible, when you care for someone in need, are you looking for evidence of God’s existence and seeking to glorify Him by your actions? Samuel’s response to God makes for a great heartfelt prayer: “Speak, for Your servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3:8–10, HCSB).

Endnotes

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, three volumes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1983), 1:153.

² We will go into more detail on “intelligent design” in the chapter on Biology.

³ C.S. Lewis, *Broadcast Talks* (London, UK: B. Bles, 1944), 37–8.

⁴ As provided in Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 1170.



A World of Ideas

Reading Discussion Questions

1. What is theology? What questions does theology seek to answer? What is the key idea of Christian theology?
2. What are the three primary ways that people answer the question *Does God exist?*
3. In what three ways has God revealed Himself to us?
4. What are four rational or logical arguments for God's existence?
5. What are some of the characteristics we learn about God from Scripture?



Theology Paragraph Assignment

*As you continue your study, write your own paragraph titled **My Christian Worldview of Theology**. You will be able to correct it, add to it, put it into your *Lightbearers Journal*, and memorize it. Below is a checklist to help you with this assignment.*

- The paragraph states that you believe that God exists.
- It stresses the importance of both special and general revelation as the only reliable ways to clarify your knowledge of God, since He is the God of the Bible and creation.
- It includes the various ways to show why it is reasonable that God exists.
- It includes some of the characteristics of God that we learn from the Bible.
- It includes the importance of a personal relationship and trust in Jesus Christ.
- It emphasizes the importance of personal application of Scripture for continued spiritual growth.



re:View: Check Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: Scott lives life for the moment—at least while he can. Take a peek inside his head as he discovers that his relationship with Julie isn't what it used to be. He had painted the perfect relationship—why couldn't she just live within the boundaries? Can the world really revolve around one person?

1. What is Scott struggling with?
2. How does he eventually resolve the struggle?
3. How would you describe Scott's relationship with Julie? With others in the world?
4. What are some things Scott says that reveal his view of life in the world?
5. What do you think Scott represents? What does Julie represent?



re:View: Naturalism TS

Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: The first of the three worldviews we'll study is Naturalism, which teaches that there is no God and that I am in control of my life. There are no ultimate consequences nor any accountability for my choices, but there is also no ultimate meaning or purpose in life.

1. What are some of the specific forms that Naturalism takes?
2. Why is Naturalism called “the world as we see it”?
3. If Naturalism is true and there is no God or life after death, then what difference would it make in my life?
4. If Naturalism is true, then how should I live?



The Attributes of God

Exercise #1

As a class, define the following attributes of God.

1. **Eternal**
2. **Faithfulness**
3. **Goodness**
4. **Grace**
5. **Holiness**
6. **Immutability**
7. **Independence**
8. **Patience**
9. **Love**
10. **Mercy**
11. **Omnipotent/Sovereign**
12. **Omnipresent**
13. **Omniscient**
14. **Righteousness/Justice**
15. **Wisdom**



The Attributes of God

Exercise #2

Using the words just defined, match the following verses with the word that best defines the attribute being described or referred to. All verses are from the New International Version.

1. **“For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26).**
2. **“I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.” (Malachi 3:6).
“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17)**
3. **“Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” (Psalms 90:2). “But you remain the same, and your years will never end” (Psalms 102:27).**
4. **“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, [a] you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.” (Psalms 139:7–10). “Am I only a God nearby,” declares the LORD, “and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?” declares the LORD. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 23:23–24)**
5. **“He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” (John 21:17b). “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:13).**
6. **“How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.” (Psalms 104:24). “Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning” (Daniel 2:20, 21b).**
7. **“You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you” (Psalms 86:5).
“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his loves endures forever” (Psalms 118:29).**

8. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8).**

9. **“But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them,” (Nehemiah 9:17b). “And are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24).**

10. **“Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.” (Romans 9:18). “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4–5).**

11. **“The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation” (Numbers 14:18). “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance?” (Romans 2:4).**

12. **“Who among the gods is like you, O LORD Who is like you— majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders??” (Exodus 15:11). “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3b).**

13. **“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne” (Psalms 89:14). “The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made” (Psalms 145:17). “Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear” (1 Peter 1:17).**



Jesus Exercise

Today there is a lot of confusion about who Jesus Christ is. Some say that He is just a good man, or just a prophet (but not God). Some even say that He is savior, but that He is only one of many saviors. So who is this Jesus?

This is one of the most important questions that you will ever answer, because it affects your view of God's love for His people (how He views us), God's revelation to His people (how He has communicated to us), and God's expectations for His people (how we are to live). It affects how we view ourselves, how we view others, how we view nature, how we view the future, and how we view the meaning of life.

Sounds serious, doesn't it? This is because it is. Discovering the true answer to this question is one of the main purposes of this class. Hopefully by the end of it you will have a greater understanding of Jesus Christ, so that you will be better equipped to explore this question for yourself and able to give an answer to those who ask you this same question.

For this exercise, your assignment is to look at the following verses and write down what they say about Jesus. There is one very important thing to remember, however, as you are reading: *read the verses in context*. This simply means that when you read a verse or a few verses, make sure that you consider the larger passage, chapter, book, etc. Make sure that you do not read it by itself. This is a very important principle to keep in mind for all Bible study, not just this class.

To give you an example of what this looks like, consider Matthew 7:1. This verse, "Judge not, that you be not judged," is commonly taken out of context. In other words, it is separated from the rest of what Jesus was saying in Matthew 5–7. In Matthew 7, Jesus is talking about how terrible it is to be a hypocrite. In Matthew 7:1, the idea that Jesus is conveying is that we must be very careful when we judge someone else, because if we are guilty of the same thing, then we are acting wickedly. He is not saying that we should never judge someone's actions to be right or wrong. He is saying that we should never be hypocritical enough to judge someone else's actions when we are doing the same thing they are.

If we remove a verse from the context in which it is found, then we can distort the meaning that God was intending to convey. This is why it is important to handle God's Word carefully.

Now that you have a better understanding of how to approach Scripture, look up the following references and write down what they say about our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. **Isaiah 53**
2. **Colossians 1:13–19**
3. **Philippians 2:5–11**
4. **Revelation 1:4–8**



Theology in Movies Presentation Assignment

*This assignment will give you practice discerning the various kinds of worldview messages you encounter every day in popular culture. Specifically, you will learn to spot how movies answer the question **What about God?***

You will be assigned to a group for watching a movie together. Watch the film with the purpose of looking for how the question of God is developed throughout the story. As you watch, have a pen and paper to record the scenes, what action is taking place, and what you learn about God through direct statements, implied comments, or actions by the characters. After watching the film, your group should discuss each person's observations. Finally, your group will prepare a short paper (1/2 page) giving a summary of your findings. This paper will be presented to the entire class by one member of your group. The following questions will guide you as you view and think about the movie.

- 1. What was your impression the very first time you saw this movie?**
- 2. When you first saw the movie, did you recognize the theological content, or did you simply focus on the action scenes or overall story of the main character(s)?**
- 3. How does the description of God in this movie compare with what we know about God from the Bible?**



re:View: Reset

Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: When Sonya is woken by a thud from the apartment next door, she decides to investigate. To her horror, she walks in on something she wishes she had never seen—pictures, videotapes, and newspaper clippings, all about her. Each decision leads to another ending, as the scenario keeps resetting.

1. What is the film “Reset” about?
2. Why did the scenario keep restarting?
3. What happens at the end?
4. What if you had the ability to go back and “do over”? Would you want to?



re:View: Transcendentalism TS Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: The second of the three worldviews is Transcendentalism, which is the natural bent of the human mind. We are not sinful, we are God! Transcendentalism has all the privileges of spirituality without any of the responsibility.

1. What are some of the specific forms that Transcendentalism takes?
2. What are some common American versions of Transcendentalism?
3. Why is Transcendentalism such a popular worldview?
4. Why do you think so many celebrities are attracted to transcendental religions?



How to Be Your Own Selfish Pig

Reading Discussion Questions

Chapter 5: You've Gotta Experience It Yourself

1. Sally wants to know God, to understand what He is like. What is the first thing Susan suggests?
2. What other source of information do we have about God?
3. How did Barbara encounter God once she asked Him to reveal Himself?
4. What about John's experience? Did it really exhibit aspects of God's nature?
5. Why does experience alone not tell you truth about God?
6. Experiences are important when they _____ what God has revealed to us about Himself and His character.
7. What helps you interpret experiences concerning God?
8. C.S. Lewis said: "_____ by itself proves nothing."
9. **Reflection Question:** Have you had an experience that you felt revealed something about God?
10. **Reflection Question:** Do you agree that it is important to interpret your experiences based on your knowledge of God and the Bible? Why or why not?



re:View: Help

Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: Katie is a five-year-old on a mission to create the perfect peanut butter and jelly sandwich. All of the essential materials are present: a plate, knife, bread, peanut butter, jelly, and a glass of juice. All is well until Katie realizes that making a sandwich might be something easier said than done.

1. What was Katie trying to accomplish?
2. Was Katie ever in any danger? If so, give examples. Did she know she was in danger?
3. Was Katie asked if she needed help? Was help available all along? Did she eventually ask for help? Why?
4. What do you think Katie represents? What do you think the mom represents? The juice?



re:View: Theism TS Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: There is a powerful God who created the universe and us. He gives meaning, determines morality, and promises a specific destiny.

1. What are the five things that Theism explains?
2. Why do so many people not want to believe in God?
3. Why do many people think that believing in God restricts life?
4. What more could God do if He wanted more people to believe in Him?



The Trinity

Exercise

The Triune Nature of God

The Biblical Christian view of God is trinitarian. The word trinity is not found in the Bible. It was first coined by Tertullian as the best word to describe the nature and attributes of God in terms of three personalities existing in one God. To say that God is three Persons yet one God means that the Godhead (Acts 17:29) has revealed Himself as one God existing in three Persons: the Father (Romans 1:7), the Son (Hebrews 1:8), and the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3–4).

The triune nature of God involves three persons, who are neither three gods nor three parts or modes of God. Each person of the Godhead is distinguishable in function and characteristics. Yet at the same time each is co-equally, co-eternally, and co-existently God. The doctrine of the Trinity does not support the idea of polytheism (meaning many gods) or tri-theism (meaning three gods in one). It also does not support the unitarian teaching that God is only one and not three Persons. Rather, it defines God as one God (monotheism) expressing Himself in a plurality of three Persons (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4; 1 Timothy 2:5).

The persons of the Godhead have been described in various terms, including “three distinct centers of consciousness,” “three personalities,” a “threefold manifestation,” and “three divine essences, each constituting a Person.”

The Relationships of the Trinity

The biblical view of the Trinity provides great insights into the nature of God. The inter-dynamics among the persons of the Godhead reveal that God Himself is a social being who is interactive, not static. In fact, this very dimension of God is reflected in the created order of people who, like God, are societal beings existing in various relationships. The eternal relationship of love, interaction, and communication that the Godhead exhibits is to be exhibited by people on earth.

Augustine has suggested that without the Trinity we could not experience fellowship or love in God, who has exhibited eternally a perfect, harmonious relationship among the members of the Godhead.

Scriptural Support for the Trinity

Though the word trinity is never used in Scripture, the indications of a triune God are found throughout its many pages. In the beginning, God and the Spirit of God were actively involved in the creation. The Hebrew word for God is Elohim, denoting a plurality of persons involved in the creation of the cosmos (Genesis 1:1–2; 1:26–27). At the baptism of Jesus, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all present (Matthew 3:16–17). We are to carry out the Great Commission in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). The apostolic benediction includes the grace of the Son, the love of the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14). Other Scripture references attest to the truth of the Trinity (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3–6; 1 Peter 1:2; Jude 20–21; Revelation 1:4–5).

The Work of Each Person of the Trinity

Though coequal in every respect, the persons of the Trinity fulfill unique roles. Regarding salvation, God the Father is the initiator of our redemption (John 3:16), because He sent the Son. God the Son is the accomplisher of the work of redemption by becoming God in the flesh and dwelling among humans on earth. God the Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin and applies the work of redemption to individuals. In essence, our salvation is the work of the Trinity (Titus 3:4–6).

Regarding revelation of truth, God the Father speaks His Word (Hebrews 1:1). God the Holy Spirit inspires and illuminates the Father’s Word (John 16:7–8; 2 Peter 1:21). God the Son becomes the Word incarnate (John 1:1–2, 14) and is Himself the Truth (John 14:6).

The Mystery of the Trinity

A complete comprehension of the Trinity is essentially impossible. There is no parallel in human existence by which a comparison can be made. Ultimately, belief in the Triune nature of God, or in other doctrines we cannot fully understand, must rest on our faith in God and in the trustworthiness of His revealed Word.*

Read the following verses and answer the accompanying questions. As you work through this exercise, notice the connections, such as the fact that God the Father is called Lord and God, God the Son is called Lord and God too, etc. All verses are taken from the New International Version.

Our Lord God

1. Who is the Lord?

“Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other” (Deuteronomy 4:39).

“There is no one like you, LORD, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears” (1 Chronicles 17:20).

2. Who is our God?

“Do any of the worthless idols of the nations bring rain? Do the skies themselves send down showers? No, it is you, LORD our God. Therefore our hope is in you, for you are the one who does all this” (Jeremiah 14:22).

3. Who is God?

“Blessed is the people of whom this is true; blessed is the people whose God is the LORD” (Psalm 144:15).

God the Father

4. How do we become God’s children?

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him” (1 John 3:1).

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, [a] nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1:11–13).

5. Who is the Father

“[Y]et for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live . . .” (1 Corinthians 8:6).

“Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand” (Isaiah 64:8).

“Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?” (Deuteronomy 32:6).

* John Hay, *Building on the Rock*, Teacher Manual (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Press. 2006).

6. Who is our Father

“Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us?” (Malachi 2:10).

God the Son

7. Who is Jesus?

“‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ which means, ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:23).

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, . . .” (Isaiah 9:6).

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

“No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known” (John 1:18).

“And there is only one Lord—Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 8:6).

8. Who is Jesus like? With whom is Jesus equal? Who will everyone say Jesus is?

“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:6–11).

9. Where is Jesus now?

“...who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him” (1 Peter 3:22)

10. Where is Jesus seated?

“But about the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom’ (Hebrews 1:8).

11. Who is Jesus Christ?

“ . . . from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised!” (Romans 9:5).

God the Spirit

12. Who is the Lord?

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

13. What does God give?

“Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 4:8).

14. Where does God’s Holy Spirit Live?

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

15. How do you know the Spirit is a person?

“So, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did’” (Hebrews 3:7–9)

God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

16. What is asked of the Trinity in this verse?

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Summary of Divine Attributes

Father, Son, and Spirit possess the same divine attributes. The Father is eternal (Genesis 21:33; 1 Timothy 1:17), the Son is eternal (John 1:1; 8:58; 17:5, 24; Hebrews 7:3; Revelation 22:13), and the Spirit is eternal (Hebrews 9:14). The Father is omnipresent (Jeremiah 23:24; Acts 17:27), the Son is omnipresent (Matthew 28:20), and the Spirit is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7–10). The Father is holy (Leviticus 11:45; John 17:11, the Son is holy (John 6:69; Acts 4:27), and the Spirit is holy (Romans 1:4; Ephesians 4:30). The Father is love (Psalm 136:1-26; Jeremiah 31:3; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8,16), the Son is love (John 15:9, 13; 1 John 3:16), the Spirit is love (Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22; Colossians 1:8). The Father is omnipotent (Mark 14:36; Luke 1:37), the Son is omnipotent (Matthew 9:6; Luke 8:25; John 10:18), and the Spirit is omnipotent (Luke 1:35; Acts 1:8; 2:2–4, 17–21; 4:31–33).**

How They Work Together

God the Father sent God the Son to die for our sins. He sent the Holy Spirit to make us new and fill our lives with love, joy, and peace. Read the questions below. Then read the Scriptures that answer each question. If you have never received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you may wish to do so now.

WHAT IS MY PROBLEM?

“But your iniquities (evil) have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).

WHAT DID GOD THE FATHER DO FOR ME?

“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son [a] into the world that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9, 14).

WHAT DID GOD THE SON DO FOR ME?

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

**Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1996), 273.

WHAT DID GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT DO FOR ME?

“[H]e saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5–7).

WHAT MUST I DO?

“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. . . God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, [a] through faith in his blood” (Romans 3:22, 25).

“And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Acts 2:21).

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . .” (Acts 16:31).

HAVE YOU?



WORLDVIEW

STUDENT
MANUAL

TRAINING



LIGHTBEARERS

Unit Two

A Summit Ministries Curriculum

DAY	UNIT 02: syllabus & outline	SW	✓
1	Read <i>A World of Ideas</i> Reading.....	55	
2	Read <i>A World of Ideas</i> Reading.....	DITTO	
3	Review <i>A World of Ideas</i> Reading Discussion Questions.....	64	
4	Review <i>A World of Ideas</i> Reading Discussion Questions..... Assign Philosophy Paragraph [Rough Draft Due on Day 8].....	DITTO 65	
5	Complete Wisdom Exercise..... Watch “re:View: Seen” Video..... Review “re:View: Seen” Video Discussion Questions..... Assign The Christian Influence on Science [Assignment Due on Day 11 or 12].....	66 --- 68 69	
6	Watch “re:View: Response to Culture A” Video..... Review “re:View: Response to Culture A” Video Discussion Questions..... Watch “re:View: Response to Culture B” Video..... Review “re:View: Response to Culture B” Video Discussion Questions	--- 70 --- 71	
7	Research Christian Scientists Presentation Assignment.....	---	
8	Read <i>Oh, Those Amazing Feats</i> Reading..... Review <i>Oh, Those Amazing Feats</i> Reading Discussion Questions..... Read <i>The Trouble with the Elephant</i> Reading..... Review <i>The Trouble with the Elephant</i> Reading Discussion Questions..... Turn in Philosophy Paragraph Rough Draft [Assignment Due on Day 13].....	72 73 74 77 ---	
9	Read <i>How to Be Your Own Selfish Pig</i> Reading (Ch. 3).....	---	
10	Review <i>How to Be Your Own Selfish Pig</i> Reading Discussion Questions (Ch. 3).....	78	
11	Turn in & Share Christian Scientists Presentation Assignment.....	---	
12	Turn in & Share Christian Scientists Presentation Assignment.....	---	
13	Turn in Philosophy Paragraph Assignment..... Take Learn to Discern Quiz..... Prepare Unit 02 Test.....	--- --- ---	
14	Take Unit 02 Test.....	---	
15			



A World of Ideas: What about Truth and Reality?

KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING

Key Questions: What is true and how do we know?

Key Idea: The nature of reality is foundational to every worldview.

Key Terms: philosophy, truth, epistemology, science, empiricism, metaphysics, materialism, spiritualism, supernaturalism, miracle.

Key Verses: 2 Corinthians 10:5 and Colossians 2:8

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV).

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ” (Colossians 2:8, NIV).

The Matrix and the Real World

“Have you learned anything in school about philosophy?” asked Uncle Joel.

Charlie looked up, surprised. What kind of a question was that? This weekend was supposed to be fun...just him and Uncle Joel playing video games and kicking the soccer ball around. Why would he want to spoil the mood with that kind of conversation?

“Are you kidding?” Charlie asked, his mouth full of Uncle Joel’s famous slow-grilled bratwurst, smothered with mustard and sauerkraut. “Nobody’s interested in that stuff!”

“I bet you’re more interested than you think,” Joel said, unfazed. He carefully drizzled mustard on his brat, ladled on the raw onions, and took a bite. “Umm,” he said, sighing. “Nothing finer.”

“But seriously, Charlie, philosophy is pretty exciting.”

Charlie turned to grab a sip of his soda, careful not to let his uncle see his eyes rolling. Maybe all that time studying for his Ph.D. was turning Uncle Joel into a boring adult. “I thought we agreed to just have fun while you’re here.”

“Okay,” Uncle Joel said. “Let’s talk about movies then. Have you seen *The Matrix*?”

“Oh, yeah,” Charlie said, scooting to the edge of his chair. “That’s one of my favorites! Neo was stuck in a computer program that looked like real life.”

“How did Neo learn about what the real world was like?”

“Well,” Charlie said, putting his brat down on the plate and licking mustard off his fingers, “Neo was kidnapped by agents, but Morpheus and his friends helped Neo escape. Then Morpheus gave him a choice between two pills—red and blue—and told him that if he chose the red one, he would know the truth. But if he chose the blue one, he would go back to his old life.”

“Which pill would you have chosen, Charlie?”

“The red one, of course!”

“So you’re interested in what’s real and what’s not?”

“You bet!” Charlie picked up his brat again and took a big bite.

“Well, that’s all philosophy is—finding out the truth about what is real and what isn’t.”

Charlie thought about that while he chewed. “Yeah, but that’s just a movie. People aren’t really stuck in pods of goo, being batteries for evil machines.”

“That’s true,” Uncle Joel said. “Okay, think about this. What if your little brother came to you and said that he’d just seen a leprechaun. What would you do?”

Charlie laughed. “I’d tell him he’s crazy...or was just imagining it.”

“Why?”

“I wouldn’t want my friends to find out that my kid brother believes in leprechauns!”

Uncle Joel chuckled. “Why not?”

“Because leprechauns aren’t real!”

“Exactly! Now it may be cute for an eight year old to think he sees little men, but imagine what would happen if he still thought leprechauns were real when he’s thirty!”

“Ha! Then I’d know he’s crazy!”

“Right. Since leprechauns aren’t real, if he still believed in them, he’d be out of touch with...”

“Reality!” finished Charlie triumphantly.

“You got it,” said Uncle Joel, smiling.

“So, even if we aren’t hooked up to machines living in some fantasy world, we still need to find out what’s real and what isn’t,” Charlie noted.

“Yep,” Uncle Joel said. “And that’s what philosophy is all about.”

Charlie reached for his soda and started to smile. Maybe this weekend wouldn’t be dull after all.

Thinking about Thinking

Want to see your friends’ eyes roll back in their heads? Ask them this question: “What is the meaning of life?” Many people start rolling their eyes when they are asked to think very deeply about life. Maybe you’ve even thought that such discussions are impractical. And yet, thinking about your life cannot be avoided. That’s because you always live out what you think is real. The ideas that you believe to be true affect how you think about yourself and eventually how you act toward others. In other words, the way you behave begins with the way you think about life—your worldview!

However, if you’re like most people, you haven’t spent a lot of time considering the foundational ideas about life. This chapter takes you on the second step of your journey into developing a biblical worldview—understanding the difference between what is real and what is not. You’ll also explore what we mean by “truth” and then see how these ideas relate to your everyday decisions.

Loving Wisdom

In the last chapter you learned that everyone’s worldview begins by answering the theological question *What about God?* In this chapter you’ll discuss two other important questions:

What is truth? (instead of what is just someone’s opinion)

and

What is reality? (instead of what is purely imaginary)

Whether you recognize it or not, the answers to these questions affect every area of your life. Seeking answers to these questions involves the study of philosophy. **Philosophy** comes from two Greek words—*philo* meaning “love of” and *sophia* meaning “wisdom.” It’s important to get the correct answers to these questions since the results of not knowing what is true and what is real can be disastrous.

For example, what if you came into your kitchen after playing soccer for several hours and saw a glass of clear liquid on the counter. You start to take a big gulp just as your mom comes in and screams to stop. She explains that what’s in the glass is chlorine, not water! You thought the liquid would quench your thirst, but this was not true. In reality, it would have made you very sick. Even this simple example illustrates the importance of knowing the difference between what is real and what is not real.

If you know the right answers to the questions of truth and reality, you will enjoy life with greater confidence. It’s really awesome to build your life on well-thought-out answers to these big questions. Are

Philosophy: The study of truth, knowledge, and the nature of ultimate reality.

you ready to love learning about wisdom? If so, this chapter will point your thinking in the right direction.

Should Christians Use Their Minds?

Some people contend that things like science and reason are opposed to religion—that philosophy and religion are enemies. Unfortunately, even some Christians think this way. For example, some read Colossians, where the Apostle Paul writes, “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy” (Colossians 2:8, NIV), and they conclude that God does not want us to meddle in something as vain and deceitful as the study of philosophy.

However, people who point to this passage as a warning against studying philosophy overlook the rest of the verse. Paul describes the kind of philosophy he is warning against: philosophy that depends on “*human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*” Here Paul is warning us not to be duped by bad “humanistic” philosophy. Rather, Paul wants us to build our philosophy upon the worldview foundation of Christ.

Throughout the Bible Christians are told to use our God-given ability to reason. For example, Isaiah quotes God as pleading with His people, “Come now, let us reason together...” (Isaiah 1:18, NIV). In the New Testament, Peter urges Christians to “[A]lways be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15, NIV). In fact, God designed our minds to think by using the rules of logic. Jesus is even called “the Word of God” (John 1:1, NIV). The term *Word* is translated from a Greek term, *logos*, meaning “logic” or “reason.” So John is telling us that God is expressing Himself to us in a reasonable way through the person of Jesus. Jesus was the best way God could deliver His message of salvation to us!

God does not bypass our minds when it comes to knowing Him. In fact, many people have become Christians by using their minds. A number of years ago, a man by the name of C.E.M. Joad (pronounced “Joe-ad”), who had spent most of his life convinced that God didn’t exist, appeared on British radio with a famous atheist philosopher, Bertrand Russell. The two of them attacked Christianity, trying to show that it was unreasonable, that belief in God made no sense. Later in his life, however, he began to reason differently, saying, “It is because...the religious view of the universe seems to me to cover more of the facts of experience than any other that I have been gradually led to embrace it.” He concluded his long journey toward Christ by admitting, “I now believe that the balance of reasonable considerations tells heavily in favor of the religious, even of the Christian view of the world.”¹ Joad finally determined that Christianity made the most sense of the world, and this reasoning led him to accept Christ as his Savior.

For another example of an atheist-turned-theist, consider Anthony Flew. Flew, like Joad, is a British philosopher who defended atheism for most of his life. When he reached his eighties, though, he had a change of mind. In an interview in 2005, Flew described his personal odyssey from atheism to theism and the central place the design argument had in his journey. Flew currently believes “...the most impressive arguments for God’s existence are those that are supported by recent scientific discoveries.” He came to this conclusion because “the findings of more than fifty years of DNA research have provided materials for a new and enormously powerful argument to design.”²

While Flew hastens to add that his spiritual belief is not in the God of the Bible, but in an impersonal deity (similar to the Deistic conception of God discussed in the previous unit), the fact remains that another world-class philosopher has re-visited the argument from design and found it compelling.

In this chapter, you will look for biblical answers to the two major questions of philosophy: *What is true?* and *How do we know?* Along the way, you’ll find answers to other interesting questions, such as...

1. What is the relationship between Christianity and science?
2. Is the study of philosophy practical?
3. What happens when I die?
4. Are miracles possible?

What is Truth?

The first question of philosophy is *What is true?* Most people agree there is a difference between truth and falsehood—between an accurate belief and one that is in error. So when we use the word **truth**, we are referring to a thought, belief, or statement that *correctly reflects the way the world as it really is.*

For example, if you believe that your wallet contains \$40 when, in reality, it contains \$4, then your belief does not correspond with reality (and you are in for a rude awakening when you try to buy that \$35 shirt!). Whenever a belief does not correspond with reality, it is called *false*. On the other hand, if there is \$40 in your wallet, then your belief lines up with reality and is *true*.

This same principal goes for all of your beliefs. Consider this cheesy example: what if someone believed that the moon is made of green cheese? Well, astronauts have traveled to the moon and found it to be made of dust and rocks, not cheese. Therefore it is correct to say, “The belief that the moon is made of green cheese is not true.”

Misunderstanding Truth

Now that we’ve defined what we mean by “true” and given a couple of examples, we need to clear up two misconceptions. The first misconception is that believing something makes it so. A lot of people fall for this one!

Think again about the idea that the moon is made of green cheese. Does believing the moon is made of green cheese somehow magically change the composition of the moon? Obviously not. Remember, “truth” is defined as something that accurately reflects the way things really are. So no matter how sincerely or how firmly you believe something, believing it *simply cannot make it true*.

Here is another example. Have you ever answered a math problem incorrectly? Your teacher told you that it was okay, because “it’s your truth,” right? Not likely. But why not? Simply put, what is incorrect is not true. It doesn’t matter how sincere or passionate you are. If you sincerely think that $2 + 2 = 3$, then you are sincerely wrong. Such a belief, *because it does not match reality*, is false.

These examples help illustrate that believing something does not automatically make it true. You need something more than just a belief—you need to find out if that belief matches up with reality.

There is a second common misconception about truth. Maybe you’ve heard someone say, “That’s just your truth.” This is commonly applied to subjects like religion or ethics. However, to say that something is true for one person and false for another is to actually misuse the words *truth* and *opinion*. That’s because truth is not just what you personally believe (or prefer). For example, if you were to say to your friend, “Look out, a bus is speeding straight toward you,” your friend would never respond, “That’s just your truth.” Everyone knows that in the real world either a bus is coming down the road or a bus is not coming down the road. And if a bus is coming, a statement to that effect is true for everyone, not just for some people!

When someone says, “That’s just your truth,” he or she may mean, “That’s just your *opinion*.” People have different opinions, and all opinions are not equally true. Therefore, you shouldn’t say, “That’s just your truth.” According to our definition, truth is a statement, belief, or idea that correctly reflects the real world. If a particular statement, belief, or idea is true, then it is true for everybody, not just the person making the statement or holding the belief or idea.

So what does all this mean for you? The bottom line is that truth is universal. If a statement is true, then it’s true for everyone, no matter who they are, where they live, or even when they lived. Thus, either

Truth: A thought, statement, or belief that correctly reflects the real world.

Jesus rose from the dead or He didn’t; either reality is merely matter or it is not; either Buddhism is the path to enlightenment or it isn’t. As you can see, understanding the idea of truth has significant implications for your life and everyone else’s, too.

How Do We Know?

Now that you have a definition of truth, let’s explore the idea of how we *know* what we know (the ten dollar word for this pursuit is **epistemology**). There are many methods for knowing what is true in addition to revelation. For example, you can appeal to *authority*. None of us saw Abraham Lincoln assassinated, yet we are confident this happened because we have it on good authority that this event occurred, mostly from eyewitness accounts and other historical sources.

Another way of gaining knowledge is through our *intuition*. Somehow every human being who has ever lived has known that it is wrong to kill the innocent. For example, Cain knew it was wrong to kill his

brother, Abel, even though he lived before God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. Our God-given human conscience, which is part of us created in God’s image, provides this innate understanding about right and wrong.

We can also know truth through *reason*. For instance, Can a man be a married bachelor? Of course we know this is not logical. Common sense tells us that one thing and its opposite cannot both be true at the same time and in the same way.

Another way of knowing things is through *personal experience*. Have you ever tried to put a square peg in a round hole? If you have, then you know through practical experience something about how shapes fit together. This way of knowing is importance for science to work.

Epistemology: The study of how we know what we know.

Christianity and Science

The scientific method involves observation, experimentation, and, of course, the use of our five senses (what you hear, see, feel, touch, or smell) to learn what the physical world is really like. For instance, science tells us that “what goes up must come down.” Through observation (i.e., seeing) and experimentation (i.e., testing), we have figured out something about our world—we call it “gravity.” Simply put, **science** is a means of investigating the world through empirical observation, experimentation, and hypothesizing. Science can and does deliver knowledge when it comes to understanding our physical/material universe, but it is not the only means for learning about the totality of reality, i.e., the supernatural realm.

However, in recent years a false idea about science and knowledge has become increasingly popular. **Empiricism** is the belief that science is the *only* reliable method for gaining knowledge. This belief claims that science and Christianity don’t mix—that science is actually opposed to Christianity because science is based on *fact* gained from the five senses, while religion is based only on *belief* (defined as a subjective conviction not based on any evidence). This is why public schools today refuse to teach about the Creator in biology classes, claiming that God is a religious concept but that evolution is based on science. (We’ll explore this idea more in the Unit 04.)

What should be your answer to this belief? First of all, in contrast to the current trend separating religion and science, Christians have every reason to be engaged in scientific study. After all, only those who believe in God expect the world to be the way it is. Christians reason that if the Creator of the world is intelligent and we are created in His image, then we can use our minds to know more about Him and how He made the universe.

In addition, Christians believe that God designed our senses, and that they are reliable for telling us what is really there. For example, if we see a tree, there is really a tree before us, not just an illusion made up by our imaginations. Therefore, we can have confidence that our observations of nature are true. Even though we may not completely comprehend everything we observe (e.g., seeing a magic trick but not knowing how it’s done) or though our senses may sometimes be misled (e.g., a desert mirage), we can generally trust our observations to give us accurate knowledge about the world.

Science: A means of investigating the world through empirical observation, experimentation, and hypothesizing.

In contrast, someone who does not believe in God must assume there is no plan or purpose to the universe because there is no one to do the planning. Further, this person assumes that the universe came about through a random process. For the atheist, studying the world is no different than studying the accidental shapes that clouds make.

How would you respond to someone who believes this way? You may recall from the last chapter our discussion about the “mind argument.” This argument demonstrated why it makes good sense to believe in God. We can use this line of reasoning to show why atheistic beliefs do not stand up to reason or experience, and cannot account for the scientific method.

To revisit the argument from mind one more time, imagine for a moment that everything came about by chance, without God (i.e., an Intelligent Designer) and without any purpose or ultimate reason for it to exist. This means that your mind exists purely because of blind accidental processes in the natural universe.

Empiricism: The belief that science is the only reliable method for gaining knowledge.

In that case, how can you trust your thoughts? Suppose, for example, that while playing Scrabble, your tiles spelled out the words “Call Mom.” Would you assume that this random occurrence was actually a message? Would you grab your phone and call your mother? Probably not, but why? Because, this random arrangement of letters was merely accidental. It was a mindless, random event with no real purpose behind it.

Similarly, if only matter exists and if we are just the accidental occurrence of random collision of atoms, then why would we assume that anything we think is true? Of course, on the other hand, if there is a God, then the universe is more than merely matter, and we have reason to believe in our ability to know what is true and what is false. In this case, it seems perfectly reasonable to trust our thoughts.

The Foundation of Modern Science

There’s another difficulty with the atheist’s view, though. The fact is that the scientific method has revealed an abundance of orderly processes at work throughout the universe. We even refer to the discovery of this order in terms of physical laws, such as the “law of gravity.” But how would a universe of molecules randomly bumping into each other arrange themselves into consistent laws?

If the universe displays orderly, law-like activity, and laws don’t come about by themselves, then there must be something more than the material universe of molecules in motion. This leads us to infer that a Super-Intelligent Being must exist who created the law-like behavior of the cosmos—the logical source of all the orderly processes we see. Therefore, to make sense of the laws of nature, we must assume that God is real. And this is the starting place for scientific research.

Not only does our mind tell us that the existence of God is necessary to make sense of our world, the story of the development of modern science demonstrates how the modern scientific enterprise actually grew out of ideas found in the Christian religion. And here you see how practical a Christian worldview can be.

A study of the history of science shows that the Christian worldview provided the foundation for modern science. The pioneers of modern science were all working from the foundation of a Christian worldview. Take, for example, Roger Bacon, who pioneered the experimental method, or Johannes Kepler, who discovered the laws of planetary motion, or Sir Isaac Newton, co-inventor of calculus and discoverer of the law of gravity and the three laws of motion. Because of their belief in a Creator, these scientists expected nature to be understandable, orderly, and predictable. In addition, they believed that humans could understand nature and discover its order.

C.S. Lewis explains that humans became scientific because they expected to find laws in nature, and “they expected Law in Nature because they believed in a Legislator”³—that is, an Intelligent Lawgiver. The first modern scientists understood the connection between what they believed about God and how they thought about the natural universe. For instance, Newton wrote, “This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent Being.”⁴

All of this makes perfect sense from the perspective of a Christian worldview. Francis Schaeffer writes, “Since the world had been created by a reasonable God, [scientists] were not surprised to find a correlation between themselves as observers and the thing observed... Without this foundation, modern Western science would not have been born.”⁵

Think again about that last statement. What would it mean for your life today if modern science had never been born? You would not have cars, air conditioned houses, or MP3 players. No computers, lights, or even refrigerators. All of these things, and so much more, are the direct result of the technology that developed as a result of modern Western science. So if you like the high-tech society in which you live, you have Christianity to thank for it.

Contrary to what you hear through the media and in much of public education today, history reveals that mankind’s greatest minds—scholars, mathematicians, doctors, lawyers, historians, and, yes, scientists and inventors—have been and continue to be Christians. There is no conflict between the Christian worldview and the study of science.

“The most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent Being.”

— Sir Isaac Newton

But how does all of this tie together? First, early scientists had the idea that God exists and that He is a rational Being. They also believed that God created the universe to behave

in certain ways. Furthermore, they believed that man is made in God’s image and can use reason to understand things about God’s creation. As a result of these beliefs, it made sense to use their five senses and their rational minds to investigate the natural world and find out what God was thinking when He put it all together. In essence, Christianity was “the mother of modern science.”⁶ Therefore, you cannot separate the religious ideas found in Christianity and our modern understanding of science. It is ultimately futile to try.

Now that you have a better understanding of what we mean by truth and how to know it, it’s time to move on to what we mean by “reality.”

What Is Reality?

The study of what is really real is called **metaphysics**. Metaphysics seeks to answer the question *What is real?* There are three main ways to answer this question.

Those people who do not believe in God answer this question by saying that reality is composed *only* of the material or physical universe. This is called **materialism**. If nature is all there is, then what we consider supernatural—God, angels, or the spirit realm—is simply an overactive imagination at work. God is not real, merely a man-made invention.

Metaphysics: The study of the nature of reality.

Others, who are convinced that God is an impersonal force, believe reality is composed *only* of the spiritual. This is called **spiritualism**, the belief that ultimate reality is completely spiritual or immaterial and that what seems like physical stuff is actually just an illusion.

Christians (and Muslims) propose a third alternative between these two extremes.⁷ **Supernaturalism** is the belief that reality is composed of the physical universe *and* a supernatural realm. In other words, the physical universe, which is known through our five senses, is only part of what exists. Reality also includes God, a non-physical being, who created the universe and who continues to interact with it, sometimes in miraculous ways.

Materialism: The belief that reality is composed of only the material or physical.

Also, supernaturalism holds that human beings are more than just physical beings, and yet are also more than mere spiritual beings with no physical parts. It is the belief that a human being is a wonderfully designed combination of spiritual and physical reality (Genesis 1:27 and Psalm 139:14). This important aspect of what makes us human will be explored further in unit five.

Spiritualism: The belief that reality is completely spiritual or immaterial.

Supernaturalism: The belief that reality is composed of both the physical and non-physical.

Miracles

Another aspect related to reality is the issue of whether miracles are possible. Some people say that miracles are not possible because they go against science. Yet we find many examples of miracles in the Bible. How should we explain this? Exactly what is a miracle and what are some objections to believing in miracles?

Simply put, a **miracle** occurs when God *supernaturally* intervenes in the natural course of history. In other words, if things were left to carry on as they normally would, given the laws of nature, then no miracles would occur. Yet when God decides to accomplish something particular in the midst of our world, He intervenes, causing nature to act in a way it normally would not have.

There are many examples of miracles in the Bible. Some of the more prominent miracles of the Bible have to do with creation, judgment, and redemption. For example, in the beginning God created the universe from nothing (Genesis 1), the first man from dust (Genesis 2:7), and the first woman from the rib of the first man (Genesis 2:21–23). None of these would have occurred naturally.

In judgment God brought the great flood (Genesis 6:17), confused human language at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:7), destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with burning sulfur from heaven (Genesis 19:24), and brought ten stunning plagues upon the Egyptians so they would know that the Lord is God and there is no other (Exodus 7:5; 8:10; 9:14).

In deliverance and redemption God brought the Hebrews through the parted waters of the Red Sea and destroyed the Egyptian army in the very same waters (Exodus 14:21–28). The ultimate act of redemption took place when Jesus died on the cross for our sins and conquered death through His resurrection (1 Corinthians 12:22–23, 57). All of these events could not have happened according to the natural laws of the universe. They all require miraculous (i.e., supernatural) intervention.

As you might have guessed, not everyone is impressed with the biblical accounts of such miracles. There are a few common objections to miracles. Some people claim that miracles cannot happen since a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature, which cannot be broken. But this is usually based on the *assumption* that God does not exist. If you simply assume that God does not exist, then of course you will conclude that miracles are not possible.

However, if God does exist and created the natural world, who is to say that God could not intervene in the natural course of events? For someone to successfully argue that miracles cannot occur, he or she would need to successfully argue that God does not exist. However, we have already seen in the last chapter that we have solid reasons to believe God does exist. Therefore, God *can* intervene in His world in whatever miraculous ways He chooses.

Other people say that since human beings have a tendency to believe in the fabulous and fantastic, we cannot trust stories about miracles. However, though it is true that some humans are gullible and others may tell tall tales, it does not follow that miracles cannot or have not occurred. All this objection can claim is that you should not believe everything you hear, and that you should examine the evidence on a case-by-case basis.

Still others have argued that since miracles occur in all different religions and these religions argue against each other, then we have no reason to believe that one religion is true and the others false. But this objection assumes that all the miracle stories are equally true. The Bible tells us, though, that even false teachers can perform miraculous signs. Again this raises the issue of carefully examining each instance of a reported miracle to determine if it is true before believing it. Therefore, this objection does not stand.

But there is one miracle that distinguishes Christianity from all other religions: the resurrection

Miracle: God's supernatural intervention in the natural course of history.

of Jesus. Not only is this the crowning miracle of our faith, it is also essential to our understanding of what it means to be a Christian. If the miracle of the resurrection is true, then it means that Jesus is who He claimed to be, the Son of God and the Forgiver of sins.

What Happens When I Die?

While exploring the topic of what is real, there is another question that everybody is interested in—*What happens when I die?* Worldviews that deny the existence of God, such as materialism, also deny that humans live beyond the grave. On the other hand, a predominant feature of Christian supernaturalism is the reality of life after death.

Many of the reasons that Christians believe in life after death are found in the authority of the Bible. First, Jesus promised the thief on the cross that he would be in paradise with Jesus on the day of his death (Luke 23:43). Paul also noted that, for a Christian, to be apart from the body (a way of describing death) is to be with Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23–24). John not only described the souls of the slain calling out to God, but also the reassuring answer given to them by God (Revelation 6:9–11). John also spoke of the dead as those who are blessed (Revelation 14:13), which means they must still exist in some way in order to be blessed. Added to these illustrations of life after death is the account of the transfiguration of Jesus, where both Moses and Elijah appeared and talked to Him (Matthew 17:3).

But the major reason Christians believe in an afterlife is the physical resurrection of Jesus. While some people deny that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, the historical evidence supporting this incredible event is very convincing. (There will be much more on this subject in unit ten of this study.)

In addition to the reasons for believing that Jesus' resurrection is true historically and biblically, the Bible explains the theological significance of His rising from the dead. Without the resurrection of Jesus, no one could be saved from his or her sins (Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 15:1–7). As the Apostle Paul states, "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not

been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead...If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:13–20, NIV).

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter you have seen that the Bible teaches that reality is made up of both the physical and spiritual aspects of the universe. This philosophy is called supernaturalism. Christians believe that there is a physical universe and that non-physical entities exist, such as God, angels, demons, thoughts, and souls.

Christianity also affirms that truth is what conforms to reality as it really is. This means that truth is not simply someone’s opinion or belief, as though you could create reality by merely wishing that something is true. Christianity holds that reality is consistent, tangible, and designed by God so that it can be scientifically investigated and understood.

Christians note that it is reasonable, even necessary, for there to be a distinction between our brains (which are physical) and our minds (which are spiritual). Thus our thoughts are not simply physical events (the result of chemical reactions in our brains), but mental events (dependent on our supernatural soul to be initiated). Moreover, our thoughts, ideas, and the things we say are either true or false depending on how they fit with reality—the way things actually are.

Endnotes

¹ C.E.M. Joad, *Recovery of Belief* (London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1955), 16, 22.

² Taken from an interview at <http://www.biola.edu/antonyflew/>.

³ C. S. Lewis, as quoted in *A Mind Awake*, ed. Clyde S. Kilby (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 234.

⁴ *Principia*, Book III; cited in *Newton’s Philosophy of Nature: Selections from his writings*, ed. H.S. Thayer (New York, NY: Hafner Library of Classics, 1953), 42.

⁵ Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming J. Revell, 1976), 134–133.

⁶ C. S. Lewis, *Broadcast Talks* (London, UK: 1946), 37–38.

⁷ Although Jews and Muslims also believe in aspects of supernaturalism, we won’t discuss them in this text. See “The Compact Guide to World Religions,” edited by Dean Halverson, for more information.



A World of Ideas

Reading Discussion Questions

1. What is philosophy? What key questions does philosophy seek to answer? What is the key idea of Christian philosophy?
2. Should Christians use their minds? Why or why not?
3. Define “truth,” and explain the two misconceptions people often have concerning truth.
4. How do we “know” what is real?
5. What is science? Is it the only way to learn about reality?
6. Are science and Christianity opposed to each other? Why or why not?
7. How did Christian beliefs lead to the development and flourishing of Western science?
8. What is a miracle? What are three common objections to miracles and how do they fail?
9. How would you define the following terms: epistemology, empiricism, metaphysics, materialism, spiritualism, and supernaturalism?



Philosophy Paragraph Assignment

*As you continue your study, write your own paragraph titled **My Christian Worldview of Philosophy**. You will be able to correct it, add to it, put it into your *Lightbearers Journal*, and memorize it. Below is a checklist to help you with this assignment.*

- The paragraph begins with a definition of philosophy.
- It includes why we should use our minds.
- It includes how to know what is true.
- It includes the nature of reality.
- It includes why miracles are possible.
- It includes what happens after we die.



Wisdom Exercise

The wonderful philosophy books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes in our scriptures are the foundational study of philosophy. Work through the first six chapters of Proverbs in class. The section on Ecclesiastes will be optional extra credit.

Proverbs Chapter 1

1. What is the main theme of this chapter?
2. How is this to be understood and applied in today's world?
3. What will I do with what I have learned from this chapter of Proverbs?

Chapter 2

4. What is the main theme of this chapter?
5. How is this to be understood and applied in today's world?
6. What will I do with what I have learned from this chapter of Proverbs?

Chapter 3

7. What is the main theme of this chapter?
8. How is this to be understood and applied in today's world?
9. What will I do with what I have learned from this chapter of Proverbs?

Chapter 4

10. What is the main theme of this chapter?
11. How is this to be understood and applied in today's world?
12. What will I do with what I have learned from this chapter of Proverbs?

Chapter 5

13. What is the main theme of this chapter?
14. How is this to be understood and applied in today's world?
15. What will I do with what I have learned from this chapter of Proverbs?

Chapter 6

16. What is the main theme of this chapter?
17. How is this to be understood and applied in today's world?
18. What will I do with what I have learned from this chapter of Proverbs?

Ecclesiastes

19. What things did Solomon pursue to try to find meaning in life?
20. What is the value of knowing this now in my life?
21. What is Solomon's final conclusion about the truly meaningful earthly life?



re:View: Seen

Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: The grand curtain opens, and a wonderful story begins to play out before a packed house. Laughter, anger, sadness, and joy are felt by all—except the person whose life it is about. As the play continues, Darren realizes he is seeing his own life and, unfortunately, everyone is watching.

1. **When does Darren realize it is his life on stage? What about Deborah?**
2. **How do the people in the audience respond throughout the play?**
3. **What is the pivotal point of the play? What caused it? How was it resolved? How did the audience respond?**
4. **If you had a similar opportunity to change something about your life, what would it be? How would this change affect those who are watching?**
5. **What do you think the guy at the end of the play meant when he said, “Will you be the changed or the change?”**



The Christian Influence on Science

Presentation Assignment

In this assignment, you will have the opportunity to research an influential scientist who was also a Christian. The class as a whole will create a bulletin board displaying the various fields of study developed by these Christian scientists. Write one paragraph on your assigned scientist (or one of your own choosing, with the teacher's approval) from the list below, showing his or her contribution to a particular area of the development of modern science.

In addition, bring one or two typed sentences summarizing the scientific field and contribution your scientist made, suitable for pinning on the bulletin board, and a picture (if available). Give these to the group in charge of putting up the display.

Be prepared to discuss the benefits that have resulted from applying a biblical worldview of reality to our human condition. How have the research and discoveries of these men and women contributed to the betterment of mankind?

1. Robert Grosseteste
2. Roger Bacon
3. Leonardo da Vinci
4. Sir Francis Bacon
5. Johannes Kepler
6. Galileo Galilei
7. William Harvey
8. Blaise Pascal
9. Robert Boyle
10. Sir Isaac Newton
11. Antony van Leeuwenhoek
12. Carolus Linnaeus
13. William Herschel
14. John Herschel
15. Samuel F. B. Morse
16. Michael Faraday
17. Charles Babbage
18. James Prescott Joule
19. Lord Kelvin
20. James Clerk Maxwell
21. Gregor Mendel
22. Louis Pasteur
23. Joseph Lister
24. Henrietta Swan Leavitt
25. George Washington Carver
26. Wernher von Braun



re:View: Response to Culture A Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: We can isolate ourselves from culture, be assimilated by it, or engage it with the heart and mind of Jesus Christ. What would the latter look like in our day?

1. What are the three responses we can have to culture?
2. What are the three actions these responses lead to?
3. Why do many Christians choose to withdraw from culture?
4. Why do many Christians choose to assimilate into culture?
5. What are some ways we can become aware of what's going on in culture without becoming a part of it?
6. Nine Inch Nails (Trent Reznor) sings, "Your God is dead and no one cares / If there's a hell, I'll see you there." Give an example of how Christians could respond to this by being offended, by assimilating, and by engaging the culture.



re:View: Response to Culture B

Video Discussion Questions

Synopsis: Paul “makes himself a slave” to everyone in order that he may win them. The passages that follow describe how he tries to get into the heart and mind of people so he can build a bridge to Jesus Christ for them. How can we do this on a practical level?



Oh, Those Amazing Feats Reading

Experiences are tricky things. They come without interpretations—we supply those ourselves, or we allow others to supply them for us. *Why did that happen? What does it mean?* These questions show our desire for immediate understanding and significant meaning in life. If we are not careful, we can be deceived by false interpretations.

The popular human potential speaker Anthony (Tony) Robbins says you have a special mental power. He even claims that you can awaken this “giant within” through such amazing acts as walking barefoot across a bed of hot coals. So, at his conferences, the conferees line-up to try their hands—or rather their feet, as the case may be—at fire-walking. Tony claims that if you focus your inherent mental powers, you will be enabled to trek the bed of hot coals without burn or blister.

And what could be more wondrous? Well, perhaps a lesson in physics.

Imagine. The scene is set. The temperature gauge rises to blistering-hot temperatures. The conferees are focusing their mental energies intently. Some are nevertheless nervous; others are quietly confident. But...off they go, traversing the bed of hot coals in their bare feet. In a flash it's all over. They did it! Look Ma, no burns, no blisters...and no wonder.

Certainly, the coals are very hot indeed, there is no debating that. But the questions begin to arise when we find out that coals don't conduct heat very quickly. What I mean is that a bed of hot coals may be blisteringly hot (according to the temperature gauge), but unlike other substances that could be just as hot, coals don't immediately transfer their heat. So if you hurriedly scoot your feet across those coals (no standing around, of course), you won't get burned. No wonder.

Now, think about your oven. Let's say you want to bake some cookies. You pre-heat the oven to around 375°. After the oven is pre-heated, you can stick your hand into the oven for a few moments. But the air in that oven is about 375°! So, why don't you get burned? Simply because air (like coals) is not a good conductor of heat. But, what if you were to touch the preheated rack? Maybe you know what would happen. Maybe you have touched it before, by accident. Without a hot-pad, we are at the mercy of searing hot metal. Wow, what a burn!

Where is all this leading us? Patience, patience, we'll get to the punch line soon enough. Just focus your mental energies a little longer.

So, I claim that hot coals are not as dangerous as one might think at first blush. I have also claimed that when compared to a 375° oven rack, hot coals are not so hot (at least not at first touch, and especially not if they have a layer of ash on top of them and your feet are sweaty). So, where's my proof? I have no statistics. No pictures. No video. But I do recommend that you *not* try this at home!

All I ask is this. For those who think that fire-walking is such an awesome exercise, line up a row of skillets set to about 375°, and scoot those amazing tootsies across as fast as you can. But remember...the skillets better have a non-stick surface! But, then again, don't forget my previous plea: *Please don't try this at home!*

Spiritual powers? Supernatural phenomena? Certainly they exist. But the common feat of fire-walking is not in that category. Rather, those who claim that fire-walking is the result of their spiritual powers are peddling the merely mysterious, or basic physics, as being magnificently wondrous. These people are simply deceivers (and they make a lot of money at it).

The power of the mind indeed...to see what we believe. Or, rather, to be deceived by what we believe.

Until next time, don't be taken captive through fine sounding arguments and empty deceit (Colossians 2:8). And may our great and gracious heavenly Father richly bless you as you seek to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ Jesus our Lord (2 Corinthians 10:5).*

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Oh, Those Amazing Feats

Reading Discussion Questions

1. Why must we be careful when interpreting our experiences?
2. According to Anthony Robbins, we must awaken the “giant within.” What is this giant and what is a way it can be awakened?
3. Why is the act of walking across hot coals not quite as amazing as we may first think?
4. Why do you not get burned when you reach into a 375° oven?
5. What experiment could you conduct to prove the author’s point? Is it recommended?
6. What are those who promote fire-walking relying upon?



The Trouble with the Elephant Reading

The ancient fable of the blind men and the elephant is often used to illustrate the fact that every faith represents just one part of the larger truth about God. However, the attempt is doomed before it gets started. Here's why.

In the children's book *The Blind Men and the Elephant*, Lillian Quigley retells the ancient fable of six blind men who visit the palace of the Rajah and encounter an elephant for the first time. As each touches the animal with his hands, he announces his discoveries.

The first blind man put out his hand and touched the side of the elephant. "How smooth! An elephant is like a wall." The second blind man put out his hand and touched the trunk of the elephant. "How round! An elephant is like a snake." The third blind man put out his hand and touched the tusk of the elephant. "How sharp! An elephant is like a spear." The fourth blind man put out his hand and touched the leg of the elephant. "How tall! An elephant is like a tree." The fifth blind man reached out his hand and touched the ear of the elephant. "How wide! An elephant is like a fan." The sixth blind man put out his hand and touched the tail of the elephant. "How thin! An elephant is like a rope."¹ An argument ensued, each blind man thinking his own perception of the elephant was the correct one. The Rajah, awakened by the commotion, called out from the balcony. "The elephant is a big animal," he said. "Each man touched only one part. You must put all the parts together to find out what an elephant is like." Enlightened by the Rajah's wisdom, the blind men reached agreement. "Each one of us knows only a part. To find out the whole truth we must put all the parts together."

This fable is often used to illustrate one of two points. The religious application holds that every faith represents just one part of a larger truth about God. Each has only a piece of the truth, ultimately leading to God by different routes. Advocates of Eastern religions are fond of using the parable in this way.

The second application is used by skeptics who hold that cultural biases have so seriously blinded us that we can never know the true nature of things. This view, *de rigueur* in the university, is called post-modernism.

This skepticism holds for all areas of truth, including the rational, the religious, and the moral. In *Folkways*, a classic presentation of cultural relativism, anthropologist William Graham Sumner argues that morality is not objective in any sense. "Every attempt to win an outside standpoint from which to reduce the whole to an absolute philosophy of truth and right, based on an unalterable principle, is delusion," he states.²

Sumner is making a very strong assertion about knowledge. He says that all claims to know objective truth are false because each of us is imprisoned in his or her own culture, incapable of seeing beyond the limits of personal bias. Sumner concludes, therefore, that truth is relative to culture and that no objective standard exists. There are three serious problems with the elephant, but first a procedural concern.

Pictures Don't Prove

There is a difference between an assertion and an argument. An assertion is just a point of view, an opinion. An argument is a point of view supported by reasons that demonstrate the view is a good one.

The parable of the blind men and the elephant is a clear and powerful illustration, but an illustration is a mere point of view in more vivid terms. It is not an argument, but a well-articulated assertion. It doesn't prove anything in itself. It doesn't make the point *valid*—it only makes it *clear*.

Proving the point is another matter. It requires evidence and justification. Given the illustration of the blind men and the elephant, why should anyone believe this parable actually describes the way things really are?

Here are three reasons why the illustration fails at what it attempts.

PROBLEM #1: EXTERNAL INFORMATION

The first serious limitation is that even though the men are blind, the elephant isn't necessarily mute. This is a factor the illustration doesn't allow for. *What if the elephant speaks?*

The claim of Christianity is that man doesn't learn about God by groping around in the dark. Instead, discovery is through God's own self-disclosure. He is not passive and silent, leaving us to guess about His nature. God tells us what He is like and what He wants.

If God speaks, this changes everything. All contrary opinions are silenced, all conjectures are put to rest. God has made Himself known, giving us a standard by which to measure all other religious claims. The parable of the blind men does not take this possibility into account. Yet three of the world's great religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—make this claim.

PROBLEM #2: DEDUCTIVE, NOT INDUCTIVE

There is a second problem with the parable. It presumes that Christians reject pluralism because they lack exposure to other beliefs, much as the blind men erred because each explored only a part of the elephant. Had they searched more completely, they would have seen their error. Christians are just uninformed.

This is not the case, though. Christians reject pluralism, in part, because defining elements of different religions contradict each other. It's not an inductive problem of discovery; it's a problem of coherence.

Judaism teaches that Jesus is not the Messiah. Christianity teaches that He is. Jesus is either the Messiah or He's not. Both groups can't be right. The notion that Christianity and Judaism are somehow equally true is contradictory, like square circles.

What if the elephant in the parable was a miniature, so small the blind man could close his hand and completely encompass the elephant? If another then claimed, "The elephant is bigger than a house," the first would be correct to disagree. Why? Because an elephant can't be small enough to fit into one's hand and also be as big as a house at the same time.

No possible future discovery is going to change the fact that religious claims cannot be harmonized. Rather, exploration complicates the issue. The more someone knows about the core beliefs of various faiths, the more complex the problem of harmonizing becomes.

Appealing to the ubiquity of something like the "golden rule" is no help. It is a moral action guide that says almost nothing about any religion's fundamental understanding of the shape of the world. Profound contradictions between foundational beliefs are not removed by pointing out shared moral proverbs.

Contradictory claims can't be simultaneously true. This has nothing to do with further discovery. Religious pluralism is false on deductive grounds, not inductive.

PROBLEM #3: CONTRADICTING FOUNDATION

The third objection is the most serious. The application of this parable to issues of truth is doomed before it gets started. The view commits suicide; it is self-refuting. Here's how.

There's only one way to know that our cultural or religious biases blind us to the larger truth that all religions lead to God—someone who sees clearly without bias must tell us so. This parable, though, teaches that such objectivity is impossible.

For example, in order for William Graham Sumner to conclude that all moral claims are an illusion, he must first escape the illusion himself. He must have a full and accurate view of the entire picture—just as the king had of the blind men and the elephant from his balcony. The Rajah was in a position of privileged access to the truth. Because he could see clearly, he was able to correct those who were blind.

Such a privileged view, though, is precisely what advocates of both religious pluralism and the radical skepticism of post-modernism deny. Completely objective assessments are illusions, they claim. The truth lies in some combination of opinions, or, for the more skeptical, is out of reach for any of us. However, this is precisely the kind of thing the parable does not allow you to say.

The skeptical view itself is a claim meant to be understood as an objective and true assessment of the world. It's as if someone said, "Each of us is blind," and then added, "but I'll tell you what the world really looks like." This is a clear contradiction.

The problem becomes obvious by offering this challenge. Ask the person offering the parable, “Where would *you* be in the illustration? When you apply this parable to the issue of truth, are you like one of the blind men, or are you like the king?”

This dilemma is unsolvable. If the story-teller is like one of the six who can’t see—if he is one of the blind men groping around—how does he know everyone else is blind and has only a portion of the truth? On the other hand, if he fancies himself in the position of the king, how is it that he alone escapes the illusion that blinds the rest of us? The postmodernist finds himself in the position of offering the insight of the Rajah while simultaneously claiming he is one of the blind men.

At best, this parable—if it were accurate—might justify agnosticism, not religious pluralism. All we could really say is that it *may* be the case we’re all groping about with no one in full possession of the truth—but this can’t be known for sure.

The King Sees

If everyone truly is blind, then no one can know if he or anyone else is mistaken. Only someone who knows the whole truth can identify another on the fringes of it. In this story, only the king can do that—no one else.

The most ironic turn of all is that the parable of the six blind men and the elephant, to a great degree, is an accurate picture of reality. It’s just been misapplied.

We are like blind men, fumbling around in the world searching for answers to life’s deepest questions. From time to time, we seem to stumble upon some things that are true, but we’re often confused and mistaken, just as the blind men were.

How do I know this? Because the King has spoken. He is above, instructing us, advising us of our mistakes, and correcting our error. The real question is: *Will we listen?**

Endnotes

¹Lillian Quigley, *The Blind Men and the Elephant* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1959). Possible original sources of the story are the *Jataka Tales*, a collection of Buddhist birth stories, and the *Pancatantra Stories*, Hindu religious instruction fables.

²William Graham Sumner, *Folkways* (Chicago: Ginn and Company, 1906), excerpted in Louis B. Pojman, ed., *Ethical Theory—Classical and Contemporary Readings* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1995), 27.

* This excerpt was used with the permission of Gregory Koukl and was taken from “The Trouble with the Elephant,” *Clear Thinking* Vol. 3 (No. 1), 7–10.



The Trouble with the Elephant

Reading Discussion Questions

1. What two applications are taken from this fable?
2. Is the fable an assertion or an argument? Why?
3. What three reasons prove that this illustration of the elephant fails?



How to be Your Own Selfish Pig

Reading Discussion Questions

Chapter 3: Let's All Meditate on Our Navels

1. Name some of the beliefs Joe had.
2. Does the claim that people do not have separate selves match reality?
3. What human needs contradicted Joe's belief that the physical world is an illusion?
4. Does the claim that religious truth lies beyond common sense match reality?
5. Why were Joe's beliefs false?
6. How does real truth deal with the world around you?
7. What major issue of truth does the story about the Hindu and the teakettle illustrate?
8. **Reflection Question:** Since real truth is practical and sensible, what is your view and can you live that way? Does your worldview make sense with what you observe of the world?
9. **Reflection Question:** Did you use a certain logical "process" to reach your view of reality and truth? How do you know you can trust that process?
10. **Reflection Question:** Does having faith mean you have to choose between what you believe and what you observe? Why or why not?