

Foundations Theological Training Course

Week 3 - Christianity, Biblical
Worldview, and World Religion

1) What is a worldview and why is it important?

Worldview is the lens through which we see and understand the world. A worldview is a philosophical system that attempts to explain how the facts of reality relate and fit together. A worldview can also be thought of as an intellectual lens through which we view the world. Hence, our worldview will make the essential difference in how we live our lives.

Worldviews tell us:

- Who we are
- How we got here
- Why we're here

2) What is Biblical worldview?

Biblical worldview is recognizing the authority of the Bible and living accordingly.

"I urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." Jude 1:3

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always 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

3) How many worldviews are there and what are the main differences?

Classically, there are seven different worldviews: Atheism, Pantheism, Theism, Panentheism, Deism, Polytheism, and Finite Godism.

Since the most prominent worldviews are the first three, we will list their major tenets below:

Atheism is the worldview that rejects the idea of God as being an essential component of its worldview. Atheists believe that God does not exist beyond the universe or in it. The universe or cosmos is all there is or ever will be; it is self-sustaining. Some of the more famous atheists were Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Jean-Paul Sartre, their writings have had a tremendous influence upon the world. These men expressed their views in different ways, but all of them held to the basic belief that God does not exist. Some of the main tenets of atheism are as follows:

Atheism (continued)

GOD DOES NOT EXIST – ONLY THE UNIVERSE EXISTS

UNIVERSE – ETERNAL UNIVERSE, OR CAME TO BE OUT OF NOTHING

HUMANITY (ORIGIN) – EVOLVED, MADE OF MOLECULES, NOT IMMORTAL

HUMANITY (DESTINY) – NO ETERNAL DESTINY, ANNIHILATION

EVIL (ORIGIN) – AFFIRMS REALITY, CAUSED BY HUMAN IGNORANCE

EVIL (DESTINY) – CAN BE DEFEATED BY MAN

ETHICS (BASIS) – CREATED BY, AND GROUNDED IN, MAN

ETHICS (NATURE) – RELATIVE, DETERMINED BY THE SITUATION

Pantheism believes that God is the universe. This view is called pantheism, manifest in popular form as the New Age movement. For a pantheist there is no creator beyond the universe. Creator and creation are two different ways of viewing the same reality. God is the universe and the universe is God. Ultimately only one reality exists, not many different ones. God pervades all things and is found within all things. Nothing exists apart from God: God is the world and the world is God. People believe in different kinds of pantheism, which are represented by certain forms of Hinduism, Zen Buddhism, and the New Age movement. Their views may differ in how God and the world are to be identified, but they all believe that God and the world are one. Some of the main tenets of pantheism are as follows:

GOD – ONE, INFINITE, IMPERSONAL, GOD IS THE UNIVERSE

UNIVERSE – ILLUSION, MANIFESTATION OF GOD (GOD ALONE IS REAL)

HUMANITY (ORIGIN) – HIS TRUE SELF (ATMAN) IS GOD (BRAHMAN)

HUMANITY (DESTINY) – DETERMINED BY KARMA, CYCLES OF LIFE

EVIL (ORIGIN) – AN ILLUSION CAUSED BY ERRORS OF THE MIND

EVIL (DESTINY) – WILL BE REABSORBED BY GOD

ETHICS (BASIS) – GROUNDED IN LOWER MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD

ETHICS (NATURE) – RELATIVE, TRANSCEND ILLUSION OF GOOD AND EVIL

Theism is the worldview that holds to the belief that the world is more than just the physical universe. However, theists do not accept the idea that God is the world. They believe in the existence of God and see his existence as the essential component of the theistic worldview. Theists are convinced that the universe had a supernatural first cause, which is infinitely powerful and intelligent. An infinite God is both beyond and manifests Himself in the universe. This God is a personal God, separate from the world, who created the universe and sustains it. Theists believe that God can act within the universe in a supernatural way. The traditional religions of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, represent theism. Some of the main tenets of theism are as follows:

GOD—ONE, PERSONAL, INFINITE IN ALL HIS ATTRIBUTES

REALITY—FINITE UNIVERSE, CREATED BY AN INFINITE GOD

HUMANITY (ORIGIN)—IMMORTAL, CREATED AND SUSTAINED BY GOD

HUMANITY (DESTINY)—ETERNALLY WITH, OR SEPARATED FROM GOD BY CHOICE

EVIL (ORIGIN)—PRIVATION OR IMPERFECTION CAUSED BY CHOICE

EVIL (DESTINY)—WILL BE ULTIMATELY DEFEATED BY GOD

ETHICS (BASIS)—GROUNDED IN THE NATURE OF GOD

ETHICS (NATURE)—ABSOLUTE, OBJECTIVE AND PRESCRIPTIVE

Panentheism says that God is part of or in creation so that, in a way, creation is like God's body. Thus God made himself and is going and evolving.

Deism is the belief that a 'god' exists, but is not active in the world. He made the world but then left us alone and has no dealing with it at all. The world just runs by natural laws, and therefore miracles are impossible

Polytheism is the belief that there are many gods. Breaking the word down, "poly" comes from the Greek word for "many," and "theism" from the Greek word for "God."

Finite Godism says that God exists, but is limited in knowledge and power.

4) What major questions do all religions seek to answer?

1. Origin – where did I come from?
2. Meaning – why am I here?
3. Morality – why is man the way he is?
4. Destiny – where do I go when I die?

5) What are the major world religions and how do they differ?

- Biblical Christianity
- Jehovah's Witness
- Mormonism
- Seventh-day Adventism
- Unification Church
- Christian Science
- Unity School Of Christianity
- New Age
- Wicca
- Scientology
- Islam
- Nation of Islam
- Baha'i Faith
- Judaism
- Kabbalah Centre
- Hinduism
- Hare Krishna
- Transcendental Meditation
- Sikhism
- Buddhism
- Soka Gakkai International

6) What is a cult and the occult?

Cult is a religious system that differs from biblical Christianity.

Occult is a religious system dealing with secret knowledge and secret powers from the devil.

7) How do cults differ from Christianity?

See handout "*Who Do You Say Jesus Is?*"

8) As Bible-believing Christians, how should we respond to people of other faiths, including those who are members of cults?

Discover what my friend believes about Jesus, Salvation, and Truth.

See handout "*Friends of Other Faiths, Do's and Don'ts*".

As a mature Christ-centered disciple I should desire to ***make a difference*** not make a point.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is a worldview?
2. What is a Biblical worldview?
3. Why is it important to understand a person world view?
4. How should a Christian interact with people who have a worldview that isn't biblical?
5. Who do you know that has a "unbiblical" worldview?
6. How will you pray and interact with this person this week?

Key References

1. Geisler, N. & Bocchino, N. *Unshakeable Foundations*. Bethany House, Minn., MN. 2001
2. Geisler, N.L. *Systematic Theology in One Volume*. Bethany House, Minn., MN. 2011.
3. *Christianity Cults and Religions*, 7th Edition. Rose Publishing. Torrance, CA. 2010.