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Christ and Culture

Week 2: Worldview

“Christianity is not a series of truths in the plural, but rather truth spelled with a capital ‘T.’ Truth about total reality, not just about religious things. Biblical Christianity is Truth concerning total reality – and the intellectual holding of that total Truth, and then living in the light of that Truth.”

Francis Schaeffer

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

*John 18:36-38 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." ³⁷ "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. **In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.**" ³⁸ "What is truth?" Pilate asked.*

Key References: Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (2004); James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*

I. The Gospel in a Cage

“The gospel is a caged lion. It does not need to be defended, it just needs to be let out of its cage.” Charles Spurgeon

A. The Cultural Captivity of American Christianity

1. The dominance of SECULARIZATION in our national worldview... the split of the world into two realms—Sacred and Secular

Fundamental to the worldview of the West is Secularization... that religion has no right to intrude into the physical realm of daily life – of politics, of

business, of law, of science, of medicine, of education, of entertainment, of sports, of commerce, of literature, of the arts; all of these realms can and must operate completely free from any reference to any religion at all

2. Tragically, most American Christians have meekly accepted that premise, glad for society's willingness to allow us to believe what we want in private... as though that freedom was theirs to give in the first place
3. But the public sphere in America vaunts very dominant on this matter, threatening to come after your private space if you should ever bring your religion into the public space
4. Nancy Pearcey, in her book *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (2004) argues that Christians must not accept this secularization, but should fight to establish the truth claims of Christianity in every area of life
5. The gospel must be set free from its assigned cage, set free to roam powerfully
6. Christians should be delighted to apply biblical truth to their work and their public lives in all these areas: politics, business, law, science, medicine, education, entertainment, sports, commerce, literature, the arts... without fear or shame
7. Christians must learn to present a superior worldview in all these areas than that presented by the secularists

B. Politics is Not Enough

1. In recent years, Christians have settled for winning some small victories by getting the "right" candidates elected who will establish Christian morals in a few key areas
2. But Pearcey argues that politics tends to reflect culture, not culture following politics
3. The old statement "You can't legislate morality" could be recast in this arena—"You can't legislate culture." Rather legislators tend to follow public culture by the policies they establish
4. So Christians have been basically barking up the wrong tree, simplistically thinking politics would be enough; it isn't
5. In order to effect lasting change, we need to develop a Christian worldview, and implement that worldview in our daily lives, especially our professions

C. Losing Our Children

1. Not only have we lost the culture, we are also losing our own children
2. Because many people in the prior generations of Christians have not been able to develop and articulate a consistent Christian worldview that addresses all the issues raised by unbelievers, young folks growing up in this present age are getting swept along by cultural forces they do not have the strength to resist

Illustration: "At a Christian high school, a theology teacher strode to the front of the classroom, where he drew a heart on one side of the blackboard and a brain on the other. The two are as divided as the two sides of the blackboard, he told the class: The heart is what we use for religion, while the brain is what we use for science." [Pearcey, 19]

3. Christian parents, pastors, teachers, youth group leaders need to see our youth being pulled along by a constant undertow of powerful cultural trends... we need to give them more than a "heart" religion that cannot refute the ideas of our cultural day

D. Heart vs. Brain... Private Sphere vs Public Sphere... Religious Sentiment vs Verifiable Fact

1. The basis of secularization is this division of the world into two spheres... pictured as upper vs. lower

PRIVATE SPHERE
 Personal Preferences, Values
 Nonrational, Noncognitive
 Subjective, Relative to Particular Groups
 "Truth for me," "Truth for you"

PUBLIC SPHERE
 Scientific Knowledge
 Rational, Verifiable
 Facts, Binding on Everyone, Objective
 Universally Valid

2. Religion has no place at the table

Christopher Reeve, paralyzed actor, addressing the debate over embryonic stem cell research: "When matters of public policy are debated, no religions should have a seat at the table."

We Christians have to push back on this... and the best way to do it is to develop a comprehensive, consistent, biblical Christian worldview that is clear and compelling.

II. What Is a “Worldview?”

A. The Way Human Beings Make Sense of the World

B. Like a “Mental Map”... the Asking and Answering of Fundamental Questions About the World and Everything in It

C. Philip Johnson

“A worldview is a collection of prejudices” [from his Foreword to Pearcey’s book]

“If so, the prejudices are necessary, because we can’t start from a blank slate and investigate everything from scratch by ourselves.”

“When someone tells me that he receives guidance from God in prayer, or that science is our only way of knowing anything for sure, or that there is no objective difference between good and evil, I need to have some verifiable frame of reference to tell me at once whether he is merely deluded or is saying something that is sufficiently sensible to merit serious consideration.”

Philip Johnson, Professor of Law at Berkeley, has written many books criticizing the theory of evolution. Until recently, such critiques would get most scholars blackballed at any secular institution of higher learning. More and more such reasoned questioning is gaining acceptance... because people like Johnson, Michael Behe, and most recently Eric Metaxas (as we’ll see later in this course) have shown a cogent worldview in which scientific evidence for belief in God is central, Christians are winning that worldview battle

D. Worldview Governs Our Thinking About Everything... Even When We Are Unaware of It

The old question, “Does a fish know it’s wet?” So we don’t really understand how our culture is affecting us... or what our worldview is about that if we’re not self-consciously trying to study it

E. Some Bad Examples

The Marxist claims that human behavior is ultimately shaped by economic circumstances

The Freudian attributes everything to repressed sexual instincts

The scientific materialist believes matter is all there ever has been, is, or will be and reduces everything to scientific laws and random chance

The behavioral psychologist regards humans as stimulus-response mechanisms

The hedonist seeks sensory pleasures however they can be obtained

F. Worldview Training

Every philosophy or ideology has to answer the same fundamental questions

- 1. Creation: How did it all begin? Where did we come from?**
- 2. Fall: What went wrong? What is the source of evil and suffering?**
- 3. Redemption: What can we do about it? How can the world be set right again?**

Connected with that are questions of individual morality, purpose, and destiny

- How can I know right from wrong?
- Why am I alive?
- What is my purpose in life?
- Where am I headed? What will happen to me when I die?

G. An Overview of Nancy Pearcey's Book

1. Part 1: Understanding the Sacred/Secular Dichotomy that cages in Christianity; understanding and developing a worldview that can be applied to all aspects of our life, especially our work in this world; by understanding the grid of all worldviews, we can evaluate unbiblical worldviews and analyze where they go wrong; strongly advocating the Kuyper adage,

Abraham Kuyper: "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!"

And the "cultural mandate"

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

This is central to Pearcey's project... getting Christians to integrate everything they do around the Truth of Christianity... not to compartmentalize their faith from their practical daily life, especially their professions

She wants us to "fill the earth and subdue it" with our Christian worldview

2. Part 2: Creation; challenging the reigning creation myth—Darwinian evolution; we must critique it and expose its scientific claims and its worldview implications, how aggressively Darwinism has extended far beyond the bounds of science; to refute all this, digging into Intelligent Design... strong scientific evidence of a wise, powerful Creator
3. Part 3: History, why evangelicals do not have a strong worldview tradition; why we have so meekly accepted the secularism foisted on us by our culture
4. Part 4: Personal and practical application of worldview thinking, submitting everything to the Lordship of Christ, being conformed to Christ's thinking in all things, union with Christ in his death and his life, extending that to every area of our lives

III. James W. Sire's Eight Basic Questions a Worldview Seeks to Answer

- A. What is prime reality... the "really real"?
- B. What is the nature of external reality...the world around us?
- C. What is a human being?
- D. What happens to a person at death?
- E. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
- F. How do we know what is right and wrong?
- G. What is the meaning of human history?
- H. What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview?

IV. Breaking Out of the Sacred/Secular Grid

- A. Case Study: Sarah, "Good Lutheran," working at Planned Parenthood
 1. Sarah was a practicing Christian who went to church every week... at an evangelical Lutheran church
 2. She also worked at Planned Parenthood, counseling women who were considering abortion

3. The clinic where she worked was in the Bible Belt, and almost all the women who worked there were regular churchgoers
4. During their breaks, they would discuss their Bible study groups or their children's Sunday School programs
5. She grew up in a solidly evangelical home and had had a crisis of faith as a teenager that had resulted in her strongly committing herself to her faith
6. BUT when Sarah went to college, she was immersed in the liberal relativism taught on most campuses today
7. She took courses on sociology, anthropology, and philosophy where it was assumed that truth is culturally relative—ideas and beliefs are all shaped historically by cultural forces, and are not true or false in any absolute way
8. Christianity was treated as IRRELEVANT to the world of scholarship; professors simply ignored it as though it were so irrational that it didn't even merit being considered
9. Sarah was completely unprepared to handle this assault on her faith; her church enabled her to have assurance of personal salvation, but gave her no intellectual resources to challenge the ideologies taught in her classes
10. The church's teaching assumed a SHARP DIVIDE between the sacred and secular realms
11. So... Sarah just absorbed the secular mindset—her mental world was split, and her religion was locked up within the boundaries it had been assigned, dealing only with worship, personal salvation, personal morality. It had nothing to say about every other aspect of life
12. Western culture was all based this compartmentalization: secular/sacred, fact/value, public/ private
13. Her faith was sincere, but it was reduced to the realm of a purely private experience; her public life was defined by secular materialism
14. So, she had no problem working at Planned Parenthood and trying to do some good there for the women who were coming
15. Sarah's Christianity was a collection of truths (deity of Christ, virgin birth, miracles, resurrection from the dead... she believed in each one of them), but she lacked any sense of how Christianity was Truth overreaching every area of life—social issues, history, politics, anthropology
16. Sarah's divided world came crashing down when Congress held hearings on partial birth abortion, and she was aghast; she started to evaluate her secular

mindset and take it apart plank by plank; she knew she couldn't reject partial birth abortion but accept all other abortions

B. Divided Minds

1. Many Christians have this same fact/value, public/private dichotomy
2. Christians don't have "the mind of Christ" when it comes to their professions, or their politics, or their engagement with the surrounding world
3. The internalization and privatization of our Christian faith is a terrible blow to our effect on the world
4. We don't know how to integrate what we delight in on Sunday morning with what we do for a living the rest of the week
5. Most Christians think "the ministry" and "Christian work" is only for pastors and missionaries; the rest of Christians at best just try to be moral at work, not lie or cheat, be nice people; but they have no idea how to integrate their faith with what they actually do

C. Biblical Toolbox

1. Comprehensive truth claim

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

John 18:36-38 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." ³⁷ "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." ³⁸ "What is truth?" Pilate asked.

Colossians 2:3 in [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Christ is not just the source of *spiritual* wisdom and knowledge, but ALL wisdom and knowledge

Or again, this:

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Certainly that centers on spiritual truth, but it extends to every area of life.
Consider this passage:

1 Kings 4:30-34 Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹ He was wiser than any other man, including Ethan the Ezrahite-- wiser than Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. ³² He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. ³³ He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. ³⁴ Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

So... not just spiritual/religious knowledge, but ALL areas of knowledge were given Solomon by God.

2. God is the starting point for all wisdom and knowledge, since he alone is the only self-existent reality in the universe; everything in the universe came from him and goes back to him

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴ "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" ³⁵ "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen

That doesn't sound like Paul is compartmentalizing God!

Everything in the universe comes from God and goes back to God, and all things can and should glorify God.

Including all aspects of culture: rocket science, literature, economics, medical research, tax accounting, civil engineering, home construction, sculpture, genetic research... everything!!

3. Creation... Fall... Redemption is the basic worldview toolbox

D. Creation

1. The Christian message should not begin with "You are a sinner; accept Christ as your Savior"
2. It should begin with this:

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

3. As Paul did with the pagan philosophers in Athens:

Acts 17:24 “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth...”

4. The Bible teaches that God created everything, alone, from nothing, for his own pleasure and glory, and that he sustains it every moment
5. Thus his word, his laws, give the universe its structure and ongoing purpose
6. God is the source of the laws of physical nature
7. So also God is the source of the laws of human nature: morality (ethics), justice, politics, economics, the arts, even of clear thinking—logic.

Psalm 119:91 Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you.

8. There is no philosophically neutral subject matter

E. Fall

1. The universality of creation is tragically matched by the universality of the Fall
2. All parts of creation, including our minds, are drawn up into the rebellion against God the Creator and Ruler of all things
3. Our willful disobedience makes us blind and deaf to God

2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

4. The darkening of human minds through sin is complete and pervasive

Ephesians 4:17-19 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

5. Creation itself was cursed by human sin

Genesis 3:17-19 “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

Romans 8:20-21 the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be

liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

6. Unbelievers still function in God's world and are upheld by common grace in the pattern of God's original creation gifts (being in the image of God)
7. Non-Christians are still capable of uncovering amazing truths embedded in God's creation, and we Christians can and should benefit from that
8. "All truth is God's truth" and we should "Plunder the Egyptians"... taking the best of secular scholarship, but all the while showing how it best fits into a biblical worldview
9. While non-Christians may lead the way in details of knowledge, only Christians can weave all that knowledge into a cohesive, wise whole system of truth
10. Therefore, Christians' approach to all sciences and fields of knowledge should be constructive AND critical at the same time
11. We have to be aware of BOTH creation AND fall as we evaluate what the world of human thinkers is coming up with

F. Redemption

1. Redemption is as comprehensive as Creation and Fall
2. God does not only save our souls, but leave our minds to function on their own
3. He gives us "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16) in every area of life
4. Conversion gives us a new direction for our thoughts, emotions, wills, habits... for everything

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

5. The scripture enables us to be totally transformed, beginning with the mind

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.

6. This passage should not be seen merely in our religious/spiritual life, but in everything we do for the Lord in this world!

G. The Cultural Mandate Revisited

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

AND... just as important:

Habakkuk 2:13-14 Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing? ¹⁴ For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

1. Pearcey's call is to destroy the sacred/secular split by claiming every moment and everything we do for God
2. It is to learn to think Christianly about everything we do

V. EXTRA: Aspects of American Cultural Worldview

- A. Personal Freedom: People should be free to define their life direction at every moment, without any societal hindrances, as long as their expression of freedom doesn't hinder someone else's freedoms.
- B. Individualism: America delights in the maverick, the lone ranger, the self-sufficient mountain man who bucks all conventions and finds his own path to success. America delights in the rebel who stands up and questions the norm and wins by finding his own best path.
- C. Abundance of Choices: Every American should have as wide a range of choices as possible; the more personal choices the better. No one should hinder someone else's range of choices.
- D. Upward Mobility: Every generation can be more prosperous than the last one. Every individual can rise as high as his ability and determination can take him... "From the log cabin to the White House."
- E. All Men (People) Are Created Equal: Society should be based on personal attributes and achievements, not bequeathed by ancestry.
- F. America is the Welcoming Hope of the Poor All Over the World: As the Statue of Liberty proclaims, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"
- G. Equity/Opportunity: If society is healthy, everyone can be basically equally prosperous. There must be equal opportunity for everyone.

- H. Limitless Human Potential: You can be anything you want to be if you work hard enough at it. You can do anything you set your mind to do. Anyone can be anything they really want to be.
- I. The Underdog is the Darling: America loves the underdog that overcomes all obstacles to achieve something great... the “David and Goliath” story.
- J. Progress: Things in every area of life can and should be made constantly better.
- K. Materialism: “Your life does in fact consist in the abundance of your possessions and achievements in the physical world.”
- L. Secularism: The public square should as much as possible be kept free from all religions. The realm of spirituality is separate from the realm of physical life.
- M. Scientific Truth is Absolute: Truths discovered by science are foundational to every aspect of our physical lives; science is real, and scientific evidence should be sought for everything.
- N. Spirituality: All religions are equally valid, and the world is essentially spiritual. Spirituality is real and important. Americans are generally a very spiritual people.
- O. Celebration of Diversity: People of diverse backgrounds and opinions should be delighted in, not crushed, shamed, or silenced.
- P. Hedonism: People should do whatever most pleases them, whatever makes them happy or feel good... as long as it doesn't hurt others.
- Q. Checks and Balances: Since power corrupts, all power—especially governmental power—should be checked and balanced, and constantly held accountable.
- R. Question Authority: People should not merely follow authority but should constantly question it.
- S. The Strong Should Protect the Weak: Power should never be used to oppress weaker people but instead to protect them. We hate the aggressive bully... whether an abusive husband or father or a classroom bully. We use our military might to protect weaker countries from dominating/invading countries.
- T. Elected Officials Should Be Public Servants: That is what they are called... “public servants” and that is the verb used, “I was elected to serve the people.”
- U. Education is the Answer: The more educated our people will be, the better human beings they will be. Most societal problems come from ignorance.