

The Biblical Worldview

“He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”
Colossians 1:17

The Learner Will:

1. Understand how a person’s worldview guides his or her life.
2. Contrast the biblical worldview with other worldviews.
3. Recognize the various ways that people dispose of unwanted children, including the preborn.
4. Identify the ways in which a biblical worldview must be applied to preborn children.

Key Points

- Everyone has a worldview: a set of beliefs and values from which we view reality and make sense of the world.
- A person’s worldview is the basis for making decisions in life, including the decision to abort or to carry a child to term.
- Three major categories of worldview are the biblical worldview, spiritism, and secularism/atheism.
- Abortion is one of several ways—along with abandonment, exposure, and infanticide—by which unwanted children are disposed of.
- The Christian worldview affirms the value of all human life and the full personhood of the preborn child.

Scripture References

Colossians 1:17, Proverbs 14:12, Exodus 2:1–10, Genesis 2:7, Psalm 127:3–5, Job 10:8–12, Jeremiah 1:5, Matthew 1:18

TRAINING HELPS

Recommended time for this session: 90 minutes

Before providing participants with a definition of *worldview*, give them an opportunity to define it themselves.

TRAINING HELPS

Complete exercise 1 (see appendix at the end of this chapter).

A worldview is the framework from which we view reality and make sense of the world. We all have a worldview that deeply influences how we see things, how we think, how we behave, and how we live. One's worldview is the basis for understanding reality and for making daily decisions and is therefore extremely important.

Your worldview is like looking at the world through a pair of tinted sunglasses. Everything you see becomes shaded with the color of the lenses. If you put on a pair of red glasses, everything you see would be red. If you wore yellow glasses, everything would be yellow. And if you had lived your entire life wearing these yellow glasses, it would be difficult to imagine the world not-yellow! That's what your worldview does: it "colors" your view of the world according to the type of lenses that are in your "sunglasses."

What is critical for you to keep in mind is that every single person is wearing these worldview lenses—whether they know it or not. Your heritage, your family, your culture, and your belief system all shape your worldview. Your worldview, in turn, guides how you live your life. What is your position on homeless people within your community? *Your answer is guided by your worldview.* How do you think the elderly should be treated within your family unit? *Your answer is guided by your worldview.* Do you believe that children are born into sin, or do you believe that they are born inherently good and corrupted by the influence of the world? *Your answer is guided by your worldview.*

Remember that those tinted lenses are coloring everything you see, and by understanding that you *have* a worldview you can then at least consider what the world looks like through the lenses of another person's worldview. You can also adjust your own worldview: change it, adapt it, reinforce it, or maybe even put on a whole new one! That is, after all, what happens when we are adopted into the family of God: we replace our godless worldview with a Christ-centered one, in which the Bible—God's Word—becomes the new lenses through which we now see the world.

The Biblical Worldview and Why We Need It

A biblical worldview is a comprehensive view of the world from a perspective that is illuminated and guided by the Word of God. It affects every area of life, from money to morality, from politics to art. For Christians the Bible should influence every decision we make, every thought we have, and every value we embrace.

We need a biblical worldview because we need to see life and the world from God's perspective. If we perceive reality differently than God does—if we are wearing different lenses—we will not see things as they really are. "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death" (Proverbs 14:12). A biblical worldview leads us to believe in moral absolutes, miracles, human dignity, and the possibility of redemption.

Remember, however, that even while we hold a biblical worldview, "we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12a). Our view of the world will *never* be entirely clear during our lives on Earth. Not until we are in heaven will we see with complete clarity.

NOTES

Unbiblical Worldviews

The biblical worldview competes with several other worldviews that do not use the Bible as their foundation. The errors of these worldviews become apparent when they are directly compared with the biblical worldview.

Unbiblical worldviews may feature the dominant belief that everything has a spirit or a soul— trees, rocks, animals, humans, sun, moon, sky, stars, and so on. This viewpoint leads to the worship of spirits in the natural world, rather than to the worship of the one true God. People often live in fear of the spirits and try to gain power and control through offerings and sacrifices, charms, or magic. An alternative unbiblical worldview may be a viewpoint that strongly opposes belief in anything supernatural, and instead exalts human beings as simply the highest evolution of nature so far. According to this worldview, man is the ultimate authority on all matters, including when another’s life should end.

The *biblical worldview* is a view of the world and life from the standpoint of the personal and supernatural God who reveals himself to us through the Creation, the Bible, and Jesus Christ. For Christians God is the central focus of life, and the truth of Scripture is the basis for how we live. All of life for the Christian believer is a response of worship to God.

TRAINING HELPS

Complete exercise 2 (see appendix at the end of this chapter).

These opposing worldviews represent frequently incompatible perspectives on critical principles such as God, the world, human life, right and wrong, strength and weakness, and the treatment of unwanted children. Our worldview informs our answers to many important questions: *When does human life begin? How does human life begin? Who decides when human life begins and when it ends?* The Bible—and the worldview that it shapes—instructs us that God is integrally involved in all matters of human life, and it is *only God* who rightfully determines the beginning and end of each life. For those who do not adhere to this worldview, they often believe that they have the right to make the decision to end a life based on factors such as reputation, well-being, or cultural practices and values.

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The Disposal of Unwanted Babies

The response to a newly conceived child can vary widely depending on the parents' expectations and desires for that child: *I want a child. I don't want a child. I'm excited to be a parent. I can't afford to care for a child. I'm not married and my family will reject me if they find out. I've been waiting for a child for years. I'm too young to be a mother. I can't imagine bearing this child who will remind me of my rape.*

Fear caused by the conception of an unwanted child will often dominate the emotions of parents at this time. Fear can often drive pregnant women to take drastic action to rid themselves of the child. Fear can also motivate the fathers of these unwanted children (sometimes along with the extended families of the pregnant women) to pressure, coerce, or force pregnant women to dispose of these children, sometimes even against their own will. Because many worldviews devalue children, including preborn and newborn babies, these children are often at great risk because they are completely defenseless. There are four primary ways that people dispose of unwanted children.

1. **Abortion.** Anytime the life of a child is deliberately ended prior to being born, this act is called abortion. Some early forms of abortion are performed before the woman knows she is even pregnant. Some later forms of abortion are performed on preborn children who could live outside of the womb.
2. **Abandonment.** Sometimes when an unwanted baby is born, he or she is abandoned. Boxes, toilets, and trash bins are some of the places where unwanted babies have been found, sometimes living and sometimes dead. Sometimes mothers will abandon their children with the hope or expectation of rescue, such as when babies are left on the doorsteps of hospitals or orphanages. In the Old Testament, Moses was set adrift in a basket on the Nile River by his mother because all male Hebrew children had been ordered killed by Egypt's Pharaoh. Moses' mother expected that he would be killed if he remained with her, so she abandoned him (sending her older daughter, Miriam, to follow the floating basket) with the hope that he would be found and that he would survive (Exodus 2:1-10).
3. **Infanticide.** The killing of a newborn child, through active or passive means. This killing may take one of many forms, such as suffocation, drowning, or strangulation.
4. **Exposure.** Exposure is a form of child abandonment, and a passive form of infanticide, in which the baby is left exposed to the elements and usually expected to perish. Although an exposed baby may be rescued, exposure would be considered infanticide if the child dies.

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The outcomes of abortion, abandonment, infanticide, and exposure are the same: the unwanted child is gone. And while the preborn child and the newborn baby are equally innocent and defenseless, the killing of preborn children through abortion ends the life of human beings before they have even drawn their first breath. Mother Teresa said this about abortion: “If we can accept that a mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another?” In a world where it is becoming more and more acceptable for mothers to kill their children in the womb, human life at all stages will continue to be devalued and all people will be at risk.

Seeing Preborn Children From a Biblical Worldview

As we apply our Christian worldview to every aspect of our life, we will learn to see the preborn person from God’s perspective, which will affect how we think about abortion. There are four primary views of preborn children:

1. **The preborn child is not a person.** Therefore abortion is morally permissible at all times.
2. **The preborn child becomes a person** at some point in pregnancy. Therefore abortion is morally permissible only under certain circumstances, and until a particular point during gestation.
3. **Whether or not a preborn child is a person is irrelevant.** A woman has a right to determine if she will or won’t carry a pregnancy to term.
4. **The preborn child is fully human** from the first instant of fertilization and is made in the image of God. No abortion is ever permissible.

A biblical worldview supports the fourth view that affirms the humanity and full personhood of the preborn child. The Bible views the preborn person as a life that is a gift from God (Genesis 2:7; Psalm 127:3–5). Thus, we can speak of the personhood of the preborn child, which begins in the womb upon conception, or fertilization (Job 10:8–12; Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 1:18).

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How Human Are the Preborn?

Preborn persons—wanted or unwanted—are created in the image and likeness of God. They are thought of by God and are created by God for a purpose. The preborn are fully human.

Author Stephen Schwarz in his book *The Moral Question of Abortion*¹ developed a test that shows four ways that the preborn child differs from a newly born child. This test demonstrates that these differences have no bearing on a person's dignity or worth, nor should they serve as a basis for deciding whether that person should live or die.

The four features of difference are:

Size—A preborn child is nearly always smaller than a newborn, but that doesn't mean that they have any less value. A full-grown man is much larger than a toddler, but that doesn't make him any more valuable as a person. Even within a particular culture that teaches that a grown man *is* more valuable than a toddler, it would not be acceptable to *kill* the toddler.

Level of development—A preborn child is less developed than a newborn. But so is the newborn less developed than a toddler. A toddler is less developed than an adolescent, and an adolescent is less developed than an adult. We should not kill the preborn child only because he or she is less developed than a newborn child. And we should not kill the newborn child because he or she is less developed than an older child.

Environment—The preborn is hidden in the womb, so some people think that because they cannot be seen, they are not fully human. But location has nothing at all to do with the value of the preborn as human beings. Where we live—whether geographical location (a particular nation or region) or relative location (in or out of the womb)—should not determine our worth.

Degree of dependence—The preborn is dependent on its mother for life, but our degree of dependence on certain people for our well-being may change through different stages of life. A disabled person may be dependent on others just to assist them in routine daily functions. The elderly are sometimes dependent on family members or other caretakers for support. The degree of dependence has nothing to do with the humanity of the preborn.

If we are going to think from the perspective of a biblical worldview, we must think of human life as valuable from conception until natural death. Humans anywhere along that range of life have the same value as other humans, and that value isn't affected by a person's size, level of development, environment, or degree of dependency.

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Conclusion

Abortion may very well be the greatest moral evil of our day. A biblical worldview allows us to see abortion for what it is: murder and an attack on God Himself. Women who have abortions, as well as physicians and others who perform abortions, are often deceived and morally blind to the sin they are committing against God. They deserve our compassionate prayer that their eyes will be opened. Through the grace of God and their trust in Christ they can recognize the value of every human life, including the life of the preborn child.

A biblical worldview is necessary if you intend to live according to God's moral will by the power of the Holy Spirit. Everybody *has* a worldview; not everybody's worldview is biblical. Even Christians can have values or beliefs in their view of life and the world that are not correct according to a right interpretation of Scripture. We need to adjust our viewpoint so it aligns with God's view of life and reality.

TRAINING HELPS

Ask of the participants: "Why do you think we took the time for group work instead of my simply explaining this topic to you? What do you see as the benefit to this type of learning?"

Allow time for discussion, during which you can remind participants that they are being equipped to replicate this training. Encourage them to pay attention not only to the *content* being presented, but *how* it is being presented, to equip them to replicate it during future trainings.

Review Questions

1. What is a specific example of a way in which your worldview differs from another person's worldview?
2. Which of the three major worldviews dominates the culture in which you live?
3. In what ways do people in your nation dispose of unwanted children?
4. How does a biblical worldview help us understand and respond to women who want to have an abortion?

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Appendix: The Biblical Worldview

Exercise 1 (5-10 minutes)

Note: Depending on time constraints, you can use one or both of the following two options.

Option One: (Sunglasses)

1. Come prepared with at least two pairs of colored sunglasses (you could also colored cellophane, plastic sheets, or any transparent colored item that you could look through).
2. Ask: “When you hear the word ‘worldview’ what comes to your mind? How would you describe ‘worldview’?” *Acknowledge responses but do not yet provide a definition of worldview.*
3. Put on a pair of the colored sunglasses (or look through the colored plastic). Ask “What will the room look like to me while I am wearing these sunglasses?”
4. Ask someone else to wear the other pair of colored sunglasses. Ask: “How will the room look to this person?”
5. Ask: “Explain to me *why* the two of us are seeing things differently.”
6. Ask: “How is looking at the room through colored sunglasses similar to the way we live out a worldview?” or “How is the contrast between the way we are seeing the *room* similar to the way a Christian and a non-Christian see the *world*?”

Option Two (Story)

1. Tell a story (preferably one from personal experience) that illustrates how two people can be looking at the exact same thing but see it differently. *See example below.*
2. Ask appropriate, open-ended questions to help establish the understanding of worldview, such as:
 - “Why did the people in my story see the same thing so differently?”
 - “What caused them to form such different perspectives?”
 - “How is it similar when I, as a Christian, see something so differently compared to someone who is not a Christian?”

Story Example:

A married couple was travelling through the U.S. state of Oregon, a region of lush green landscapes, tree-covered mountains, and beautiful blue lakes and rivers. As they drove the husband mentioned several times how vivid and colorful the landscape was, but his wife’s response was unenthusiastic: “Yeah, it’s nice, but it all seems kind of dry and dull.” He was confused by her response. After traveling for many hours, he finally realized that she was wearing brown-tinted sunglasses while his own sunglasses were blue, giving them totally different perspectives of the same scene.

Exercise 2 (45 minutes)

1. Using the blank worldview chart template (see below), replicate a *blank* large-format chart to be filled in after the small group work. Use whatever media is available to you: paper, whiteboard, poster-sized paper, PowerPoint etc.
2. Ask: “How would you describe *your* worldview?” Allow listeners to answer from their Christian/biblical perspective as pastors and church leaders.
3. Ask: “What other major worldviews are present in your nation?” You can also ask about other major religions or the university/intellectual/scientific environment. After some brief discussion explain that anything that is not a biblical worldview must be categorized as an “Unbiblical Worldview.”

Small Group Work

4. Divide the large group into either two or four groups (5-10 people per group), and hand out copies of the *blank* worldview chart you see below. Note that you should not list “abortion” on the chart yet.
5. Instruct half of the small groups to fill out only the “Biblical Worldview” column by responding to the corresponding questions in the left column. The other half of the small groups should fill in only the “Unbiblical Worldview” column. Groups should only take about two minutes per item in the chart (10 minutes total). To motivate them to move through each item quickly you may want to announce when each two-minute mark has passed.

Collective Group Work

6. After ten minutes has passed, call the groups together again. Ask the groups who were assigned the biblical worldview: “According to the Bible, who is God? What did your groups write down?” Record listener responses. Continue across the chart, recording responses for the unbiblical worldview.
7. Once the first row is complete, say, “Our view of God will affect how we think about the world.” Continue completing the chart as in step 5.
8. Complete the chart, using the same format following the row headers. Example questions are given to help generate dialogue among participants (These are also on the handout)::
 - Human Life (What is the origin of human life? When does life start? What is the value of human life compared to other parts of the creation?)
 - Right vs. Wrong (How does each worldview determine what is right and wrong?)
 - Strength vs. Weakness (What does the Bible teach us about the relationship between those who are strong and the weak (orphans, widows, etc.)? What is the perspective of the animist and humanist about those who are strong versus those who are weak?)
 - At this point add “Abortion” to the last row. This will only be done together, not in small groups. (If the biblical worldview teaches we are to protect the weak what is the biblical worldview of the preborn? Understanding the animistic and humanistic worldview of the strong and weak, how would they view abortion?)
9. Finally, summarize the chart in this way:
 - How we view God will determine how we understand creation.
 - Our understanding of creation then directly impacts our view of human life.
 - Our worldview of human life will influence how we know right from wrong.
 - Our source for what is right and wrong will dictate our view of the relationship between the strong and the weak in society.

- How we view the relationship between the strong and the weak will then lead us to our perspective on abortion.
 - If our worldview of God is unbiblical then ultimately it becomes very easy to come to the conclusion that we have the right to determine who has value and who does not instead of leaving the decision to the Creator of that life.
10. Once the discussion has been completed you can pass out the completed handouts.

NOTES

¹Stephen D. Schwarz, *The Moral Question of Abortion* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1990), 17ff.

Opposing Worldviews	Biblical Worldview	Unbiblical Worldview
<p>God Who or what is God?</p>		
<p>The World/Creation How was the world created? Who has control?</p>		
<p>Human Life Where did life come from? When does life start?</p> <p>What is the value of life compared to the rest of creation?</p>		
<p>Right vs. Wrong How does each worldview determine what is right and what is wrong?</p> <p>Who decides what is right?</p>		
<p>The Strong vs. The Weak What is each worldview's understanding of the relationship between the strong and the weak?</p>		

Opposing Worldviews	Biblical Worldview	Unbiblical Worldview A	Unbiblical Worldview B
<p>God Who or what is God?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has always existed. • Three persons in one God. • We can know God. • Creator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many Gods. • Distant. • Many lesser gods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no god. • Science dictates all. • No way to know if there is a god. • “I am god.”
<p>The World/Creation How was the world created? Who has control?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our source of understanding the world is based on the Bible. • There are seen and unseen aspects of the world. • The world was created by God. • Everything belongs to God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world is inhabited by spirits. • Everything is filled with spiritual power. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What we know is only what we can see. • Created by a cosmic explosion. • All life on earth has evolved by chance.
<p>Human Life Where did life come from? When does life start? What is the value of life compared to the rest of creation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created in the image of God. • Human life begins at conception, when sperm and egg join. • Humans have a spirit. • God loves, died for, and has a plan for every person from conception to death. • Human life is set apart from all creation. • Humans are to steward God’s creation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humans are physical and spiritual beings. • Human life begins at conception. • Many regard the fetus as a living spirit. • Life is lived one day at a time. • Fate: people accept things the way they are. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humans evolved by chance/accident. • Humans are only physical, no spirit. • Humans have the same value as plants and animals. • When human life begins is speculative. • A fetus is not a person and does not have value.
<p>Right vs. Wrong How does each worldview determine what is right and what is wrong? Who decides what is right?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God has clearly defined the absolutes. • The Bible defines what is right and wrong. • It is God who decides what is right. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right and wrong is based on experience. • Right and wrong determined by how an act affects the group to which the person belongs. • Can be determined by how it might disrupt the spirits or gods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It’s relative, no absolute truth. • The situation or consequences of actions determine what is right or wrong. • Whoever is most powerful decides what is right.
<p>The Strong vs. The Weak What is each worldview’s understanding of the relationship between the strong and the weak?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strong and weak have the same value to God. • The strong are commanded to help the weak. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strong dominate the weak. • Spirits can interfere with or help both the strong and the weak. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strongest survive. • The weak are dispensable. • Humans determine who has value and who does not.
<p>Abortion How does the worldview of the strong and the weak determine how someone views abortion?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abortion is the deliberate ending of another human life (murder). • It is sin. • Abortion has negative consequences. • All sins, including abortion, are forgivable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abortion may be considered wrong but it’s acceptable if the group permits it. • If abortion is permitted family members may still be responsible to care for that spirit. • Abortion disrupts relationships in both the physical world and the spiritual world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abortion is reasonable and compassionate depending on the situation. • Abortion is a human right. • Humans can determine that a fetus does not have value and make the decision to end that life.