

Why Worldview Matters

What we think about God and the world sets the tone for everything else in our lives—even if we deny that we think about these abstract concepts at all.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7).

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9:10).



The book of Proverbs—indeed, all the Bible—starts with the concept of “the fear of the Lord.” This fear is not a trembling terror at the prospect of getting blasted by God, but a positive reverence, respect, and admiration for God, an awe that lifts us up and enables us to appreciate the order in His creation. Until we grasp what it means to “fear the Lord,” we will always fall short of the discernment we need to live our lives well.

This principle hints at a deeper truth that explains so much of the human behavior we see around us: *Whatever* we think about God, whether good, bad, or indifferent, sets the parameters for how we live our lives. We act out of the deepest convictions of our heart.

Philosophers call this underlying mode of thought a *worldview*. A worldview is defined as “a collection of beliefs and ideas about the central issues of life. It is the lens through which we ‘see’ all of reality” (Chad Meister, *Building Belief*, p. 39). For his purposes, Meister (following the lead of philosopher Ronald Nash), organizes

all worldviews into three categories: theism, atheism, and pantheism. That’s a useful scheme, but many people don’t fit neatly into any of these categories of belief. Start talking about worldview with these folks, and they will simply shrug it off. They are too busy dealing with work, relationships, recreation, and household drama to bother with all this esoteric mumbo-jumbo. Try to talk to them about their worldview, and you’ll get a blank stare in return. They have no worldview.

Except they *do* have a worldview—they just don’t realize it. By focusing all their attention on the mundane details of this life, they display a worldview of *self-centeredness*. Everything in their lives is measured against the paramount question, “How does this benefit ME?” If it doesn’t serve, soothe, or entertain ME, then it doesn’t exist. All this extra philosophy talk is just wasted brain cells.

But that way of looking at worldview.... *fits the definition of a worldview*. And it’s a worldview that is doomed to fail. The world in which we live operates according to a complex and irrevocable system of cause-and-effect relationships. These built-in connections govern not only the physical realm but the moral as well. The wise life is one in which we recognize these transcendent principles and strive to align our decisions with their demands. That’s why we do not stick our hand in a fire, or jump off a cliff without a parachute, or haul off and punch someone unprovoked, or steal our neighbor’s horse, or a thousand other destructive actions. Some behaviors are just plain dumb—or as Solomon says, “foolish.”

In some cases, however, the consequences are too subtle to recognize at first. That brings us back to “the fear of the Lord” as the foundation of knowledge and wisdom. We do not have to figure this out on our own. God has given us His Word as a source of guidance on how we should behave, speak, and even think. It’s a complex book, yes; but we are complex creatures, and the path to wisdom is long and arduous, requiring a lifetime of study and practice. The payoff is worth the effort, if we’re willing to accept the challenge and take God’s lead in our decisions.

It all starts with “the fear of the Lord.” Until we recognize God as the central focus of our existence, our alternate worldview will lead us into brick walls and dead ends again and again.

What is *your* worldview? And how is it working out for you?

— David King