

Joni Eareckson Tada

Suffering and Having a Christian World View

Joni Eareckson Tada seeks to glorify God every day as she suffers. What motivates her in this incredible goal? It is above others things a Christian world view she has developed from being a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Joni Eareckson Tada has learnt from wise teachers of the Bible and her own study that developing and possessing a strong Christian world view helps to strengthen her faith and give her hope when the suffer gets even tougher.

Do you have a Christian World view that sustains and comforts you in those dark hours of suffering? Here are some of the ingredients you to can come to know and possess to give you a mindset that's in God centred and inline with His Gospel.

Getting started:

The term 'worldview' may not be immediately recognisable to you, so you need to start with the idea, which will be most recognisable.

"The ultimate questions of life lie deep within the heart of everyone. Who am I? Where am I going? What's it all about? Is there a god? How can I live and die happily? And everyone answers such questions, if only partially or implicitly. The answer you give to these queries about the human condition may be called your worldview or vision of life."

James H. Olthius, On Worldviews

"What you regard as real, true, good and beautiful shapes the world around us. Our life decisions, priorities, relationships, values and goals are determined by our worldview."

Peter Heslam Wanted: A Contemporary Christian Worldview

1. HOW MIGHT YOU DEFINE 'WORLDVIEW'?

A worldview is a set of assumptions which you hold about the basic makeup of our world. These assumptions (or bias) influence how you look at our world (things and relationships) and what you see or expect to see. Our assumptions or bias may be true, partially true or entirely false, and may be held consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently.

James Sire The Universe Next Door

2. WHO HAS A WORLDVIEW?

Everyone has a worldview, even though they may not be aware of it or be able to articulate it logically, because it is necessary if you are to think about or evaluate anything.

Worldviews cannot be dismissed as the plaything of academic. They are not just 'intellectual ideas' but have intensely practical consequences, determining how you live and act in both the 'big' and 'little' aspects of everyday life. In fact, they are an essential ingredient in the life of every person and in every society because they give context, meaning and purpose to our lives individually and as a society.

3. HOW DO YOU 'MEET' DIFFERENT WORLDVIEWS IN EVERYDAY LIFE?

As you observe and think about events and relationships on a daily basis, you express our own worldview. As you speak to others you intersect with their worldview.

Exercise: Explain the following

[1] The occurrence of rain and drought.

[2] Why that child was severely maimed in that car accident.

[3] The evil you see reported in the news daily.

[4] Why culling Kangaroos is different from Hitler 'culling' the Jews

Two people might observe the same event in the physical world or in relationships between people, but explain it in entirely different ways. Their explanation will, in large part, reflect their worldview.

4. WHAT ARE THE 'BASIC BELIEFS' THAT FORM A WORLDVIEW?

1. **What is really real?** [God, the gods, the physical cosmos]
2. **What is the nature of the world around us?** [Created or autonomous; chaotic or orderly; matter or spirit; do you have subjective personal relationship to the world or is it objectively apart from us]
3. **What is a person?** [A complex machine, a sleeping god; just another animal; made in the image of God]
4. **What happens to a person at death?** [Extinction; reincarnation; a shadowy 'existence' somewhere else; transformation to a higher state]
5. **Is it possible to know anything with certainty?** [How do you know what you know; Is truth relative; What is the standard of truth; Can you know certainly about God; Does God make known things to his world]
6. **How do you know what is right and wrong?** [is this a personal choice based on feeling; is it a cultural imposition; is there an absolute ethic to which every person should conform]
7. **What is the meaning of human history?** [is it heading somewhere specific; is it cyclical or circular; is it God's story; what are the implications of all the above in terms of governance; how should society be formed and ordered and controlled]

EXERCISE:

Identify the worldviews contained in the following three poems. How does each writer view life and his experience of it?

A man said to the universe:
"Sir, I exist."
"However," replied the universe,
"The fact has not created in me
A sense of obligation."

Stephen Crane, from War is kind and other lines, 1899

"Behold, you know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last – far off – at last, to all
And every winter change to
spring.
So runs my dream, but what am
I?
An infant crying in the night;
An infant crying for light;
And with no language but a cry."

Alfred Lord Tennyson, In Memoriam,
1850, poem 51 (Written after the

Psalm 8

1 O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all
the earth!
You have set your glory
above the heavens.

2 From the lips of children and infants

A worldview is built according to how you answer the ultimate questions of life. Many questions may be built into give a more and more complex worldview, but you started with the four questions basic to any and every worldview.

1. Where am I?

- a. Is there a God? Are there many gods?
- b. Is there a spiritual side to life or does the universe consist of only what I can see, hear, taste, touch and smell?
- c. Where did everything come from? Why is everything here?
- d. Is history going somewhere or does it just go around in circles?

2. Who am I?

- a. Is there purpose in living? What is the purpose of living?
What is 'basic human nature'?

3. What's wrong in this world?

- a. Why is life more painful than it is pleasurable?

4. What's the remedy?

- a. How do I have a happy and fulfilled life?
- b. How do I cope when life becomes unbearable?
- c. What's going to happen when I die? Does heaven exist? Does Hell exist?
- d. How can I know what's true and false?

Every person who lives and thinks at any level has a worldview, a set of assumptions which they hold about the basic makeup of our world. It may be true or not true or partially true. They may be aware of their worldview or they may not realize it drives their daily living.

Most likely, in large part, it was originally inherited and has become their 'faith' because they believe it gives the true picture of reality. It explains the universe and our existence in it. It explains history as a whole and our life history in particular. It explains the cause of problems in our world and reveals the way to salvation and healing.

But for most people, their worldview is not static. It is consistently being examined and refined as you interact with other people and as you respond to life experiences, in order to make our worldview actually work in our daily living. Whatever worldview you have, it will always be seen in what you do and say.

Towards a Biblical World View

Several Bible passages used to formulate a basic Christian worldview (a Christian response to the four basic questions of life).

Colossians 2:8 clearly states there are two broad 'philosophies' or 'worldviews' – Christian (centered on Christ) and non-Christian (centered on ourselves as the point of reference).

Towards a Christian World View

You will consider how this works out in our world today in terms of the four major worldview categories. This will help us see how you need to refine our Christian worldview, and also help us see the similarities and differences so that you may be more confident in our Christian worldview.

THE FOUR MAJOR WORLDVIEW CATEGORIES

PAGAN SPIRITUALITY	HUMANIST	CHRISTIAN	BLENDED (Synthesis)
Defined by the question of truth and knowledge: How do you know what you know? Can you know for certain that anything is true? What is the standard of truth? Is there an objective truth beyond ourselves (capital T truth)			
1. No objective truth outside ourselves 2. Truth is within us waiting to be discovered. 3. Revived as 'New Age' movement in all its expressions	1. No objective truth outside ourselves 2. Truth is the product of rational (scientific) thought, is sourced in the senses, and is discovered by human endeavour.	1. There is objective truth, found in the mind of God, and true in every generation and for all people. 2. God has revealed (spoken) truth to his world in 66 units, called the Bible. 3. God's propositions (truth statements) are verifiable in history and in	1. There is objective truth for some things. 2. But in many matters God has not spoken. In such situations truth is in subjective feeling or experience based.

		Christ. 4. Scientific method is a useful way of knowing truth, but not the only way of knowing truth.	
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1. Who am I?			
PAGAN SPIRITUALITY	HUMANIST	CHRISTIAN	BLENDED (Synthesis)
<p>1. I am a spiritual being, part of our spiritual universe, both the world you see and other spiritual realities beyond our universe.</p> <p>2. I am on a quest for greater spiritual awareness and this need for spiritual fulfillment is paramount</p>	<p>1. I am an animal like the other animals in the world.</p> <p>2. I am simply the sum of my visible material substance.</p> <p>3. I am a rational being in control of my own destiny and with no limits to my achievements.</p> <p>4. I am not responsible to any 'god' or external law.</p>	<p>1. I am created by God (personal, infinite, loving, holy and in three persons) in his image. This sets me apart from all the other animals in creation.</p> <p>2. As his image-bearer, I am called to serve as his steward with charge over the rest of creation.</p> <p>3. I am born in a state of rebellion against God, and I am accountable to God for that and everything else I do.</p> <p>4. Ultimately I have a destiny in the 'afterlife' and can become a 'son' of God.</p>	<p>1. I am a spiritual soul who has an awareness of and desire to 'find god'.</p> <p>2. But I am also a natural mortal body like other animals apart from evolutionary chance.</p> <p>3. Ultimately I am seeking spiritual self-fulfillment in heaven.</p>

2. Where am I?			
PAGAN SPIRITUALITY	HUMANIST	CHRISTIAN	BLENDED (Synthesis)
<p>1. I am in a spiritual universe, with the divine in every part of the natural world.</p> <p>2. All around me is spiritual power and spiritual powers that may be controlled and utilized by rituals and worship.</p>	<p>1. I am a very small part of a very large and complex machine, governed by natural forces.</p> <p>2. There is no 'spiritual' dimension in our universe, and no God (s) in control. The world is controlled by scientific technique and naturally evolved forces.</p>	<p>1. The universe is God's precise creation. There are supernatural explanations for things you see, and experiences you have that are not explained by scientific evidence.</p> <p>2. It is sustained by God daily, through laws he has established and maintains.</p> <p>3. Our world is the home of all living things. There are no parallel universes.</p>	<p>1. The universe is, in part, the product of God's creation, and, in part, the product of chance and evolution of natural forces operating apart from God.</p> <p>2. The universe is best understood as parallel and interdependent rational and spiritual dimensions.</p>

3. What's wrong in the world?			
PAGAN SPIRITUALITY	HUMANIST	CHRISTIAN	BLENDED (Synthesis)
<p>1. You have lost touch with spiritual reality and spiritual wholeness that comes with being one with nature.</p>	<p>1. You have given in to irrational beliefs, whether expressed through religion or other superstitious beliefs.</p>	<p>1. You have rebelled against God, rejecting his direction for our lives, and therefore, rejecting the 'good' or satisfying life.</p>	<p>1. You have forgotten to nurture our spiritual side, wrongly focusing on our natural side only.</p> <p>2. You have become</p>

<p>2. This is the result of 'scientific' views of the world that denies the spirituality of everything.</p> <p>3. Therefore you are out of synch with our true spiritual selves and lost and hurting.</p>	<p>2. These things are human constructs and are responsible for the evils in our world because they stop people from living according to rational decisions.</p>	<p>2. Evil and sin entered the world through our rebellion and is expressed in our determination to find the 'good' or satisfying life apart from God and through our own efforts, and without regard to the cost on others.</p>	<p>unbalanced because you have totally rejected all religion and spirituality.</p>
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4. What is the remedy (what is salvation)?			
PAGAN SPIRITUALITY	HUMANIST	CHRISTIAN	BLENDED (Synthesis)
<p>1. You need to cultivate a new sense of at-onement with nature and the spiritual realm.</p> <p>2. You must recognize our divine potential, discover it within ourselves through a new spiritual worship of our choice, and so come into harmony with the spiritual forces that harmonize the world.</p>	<p>1. You must save us, since there is no other avenue of hope or appeal.</p> <p>2. You need to apply education, science and technology to the problems of our world and people.</p> <p>3. Good science and rational behaviour will constantly take us closer and closer to the 'good' life, in a sustainable environment.</p>	<p>1. God must judge our rebellion, but in the meanwhile calls people everywhere to obey his external standard of right and wrong.</p> <p>2. Death is not 'natural' for image-bearers, and is a reminder of the reality of sin and judgment.</p> <p>3. God wants to forgive. You need God to radically change us from the inside out. He does this in grace through Christ, at great cost to himself.</p> <p>4. The changing power of the gospel will have a renewing effect on our universe, as Christians live as 'renewed image-bearers. But ultimately God will act to remove all evidence of sin and renew the heavens and earth.</p>	<p>1. You need to repent and be saved.</p> <p>2. As more and more people are convinced to do good things in this world, rather than bad, these moral standards will help restore our world.</p> <p>3. Ultimately you will only have the 'good' life when you die and go to heaven, having lived through 'hell on earth'.</p>

To think about:

1. Why, as Christians, do you need to be precise and detailed in our worldview statements? For example: It is not enough to say "You believe in God".
2. What is the dominant worldview in your country? Why has the traditional Christian worldview largely been rejected?
3. How does each worldview category 'stack up'? That is, how does each explain reality (relationships and life experiences individually and at a 'global village' level)?
4. Examine the "World View" of John Calvin. Why is it so profound and what attitude does it reflect? Put it into your own words.

“Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid Wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other. For, in the first place, no man can survey himself without forthwith turning his thoughts towards the God in whom he lives and moves; because it is perfectly obvious, that the endowments which you possess cannot possibly be from ourselves; nay, that our very being is nothing else than subsistence in God alone.

In the second place, those blessings which unceasingly distil to us from heaven are like streams conducting us to the fountain. Here, again, the infinitude of good which resides in God becomes more apparent from our poverty. In particular, the miserable ruin into which the revolt of the first man has plunged us, compels us to turn our eyes upwards; not only that while hungry and famishing you may thence ask what you want, but being aroused by fear may learn humility.

For as there exists in man something like a world of misery, and ever since you you're strip of the divine attire our naked shame discloses an immense series of disgraceful properties every man, being stung by the consciousness of his own unhappiness, in this way necessarily obtains at least some knowledge of God. Thus, our feeling of ignorance, vanity, want, weakness, in short, depravity and corruption, reminds us (see Calvin on John 4:10), that in the Lord, and none but He, does the true light of wisdom, solid virtue, exuberant goodness. You are accordingly urged by our own evil things to consider the good things of God; and, indeed, you cannot aspire to Him in earnest until you have begun to be displeased with ourselves. For what man is not disposed to rest in himself? Who, in fact, does not thus rest, as long as he is unknown to himself; that is, as long as he is contented with his own endowments, and unconscious or unmindful of his misery? Every person, therefore, on coming to the knowledge of himself, is not only urged to seek God, but is also led as by the hand to find him.” John Calvin