

What is a Worldview?

Everyone has a worldview. However, most people don't think much about it, because it usually runs in the background of the mind, at the subconscious level. Richard Wright, former professor at Gordon College, defined it as, "A comprehensive framework of beliefs that helps us to interpret what we see and experience and also gives us direction in the choices that we make as we live out our days."

The word "worldview," or *Weltanschauung*, was first coined by Immanuel Kant, who combined two German words into one: *Welt*, which means "world," and *Anschauung*, which means, "conception," "idea," "opinion," or "view."

Because a person's worldview makes up his or her concept of what is "really real," it naturally serves as a kind of internal "GPS," by which a person makes sense of what is seen, felt and heard. We all lean on our worldview to make decisions, whether consciously or subconsciously.

Many worldviews are dramatically different, with concepts of "reality" that are often incompatible. Christianity is a worldview, and so is Hinduism, and Humanism. Other worldviews include Islam, Judaism, Animism, Marxism, Naturalism, and Buddhism—to name some of the more common, often conflicting views of "what is really real."

If we take a close look at any worldview, we will find that it consists of underlying beliefs (or assumptions) in five key areas that together make up one's "Big Picture of Reality." It is relatively easy to grasp someone's worldview (including your own) by considering answers to questions in the following five areas:

- 1. God:** Deals with question like, Is there an Ultimate Power or Final Authority? Is this a personal entity? An impersonal force?
- 2. Creation:** Deals with questions like, How did the universe get here? What sustains it all? Is there a spiritual part of reality, or is it all physical/material? etc.
- 3. Humanity:** Deals with questions like, Who are we? What gives us any unique value? How do we know anything, particularly what is true? etc.
- 4. Moral Order:** Deals with questions like Who makes the rules? Do some rules apply to everyone? etc.
- 5. Purpose:** Deals with questions like, Why do we exist? Is there a reason for the world we live in? etc.

One way of thinking about the Biblical "worldview" is to see it as four Chapters of "God's Big Story." These four Chapters have been advocated by such worldview teachers as Francis Schaeffer, Abraham Kuyper and Charles Colson:

Chapter 1 **Creation:** *Where did I come from?*

Chapter 2 **Fall:** *What's wrong with the world?*

Chapter 3 **Redemption:** *Is there a solution?*

Chapter 4 **Restoration:** *What is my role in this solution?*

The Christian worldview, as shaped by the Bible, provides unique answers to the questions given above. These answers, in turn, provide a foundation for actions that have shaped history in transformational ways like no other worldview can. This is why the Biblical worldview *matters*.