

# Genesis & A Biblical Worldview

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, April 29, 2012

Introduction

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God

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Creation

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Man

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Sin

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Grace

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Culture

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Purpose

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## ‘The Whole Truth’ of The Whole Truth

In the first lesson of this study, we introduced the concept of “worldview”. And in the second part of our introduction, we argued that one’s worldview is, in a practical sense, a matter of choice based on the predisposition of the heart.

This morning, we will take up one more introductory matter. It has to do with the way we defend the Biblical/Theistic worldview to others. Simply put, we need to make sure that we understand what it is that our worldview teaches about those who don’t hold to it; and that the way we defend our worldview must be consistent with what that worldview itself affirms. We can expand this into four biblical propositions:

- I. **OUR UNBELIEVING FRIENDS ARE MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD, IMMEASURABLY VALUABLE, AND ALWAYS WORTHY OF DIGNITY.**
  - A. As we get into our study of the Book of Genesis, one of the first things that we will learn is that God places a great deal of value on human beings. As the crowning act of creation--on the sixth day--we find, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26-27). Genesis 2:7 tells us that God made man in a way that was unique from the way that He made all other living creatures: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” This wonderful dignity of mankind --made in the image of God with His own hands, brought to life by God’s very breath, and entrusted with dominion over all else that was made--was not lost to mankind because of the fall. In Genesis 9:6--after the story of the flood--God said, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.”
  - B. In defending our worldview to unbelieving people, we must do so in a way that’s true to what that worldview says about them. We must speak to them kindly and respectfully--never abusing, mocking, or despising them; and never seeking to coerce them unjustly to our view. We must never seek to manipulate them, or trick them by appealing to their emotions in contradiction to their reason and their will. We must remember that God values them so much that He sought their redemption.
  
- II. **THE FALL IN ADAM HAS IMPACTED THE UNDERSTANDING OF OUR UNBELIEVING FRIENDS, MAKING THEM BIASED AGAINST TRUTH.**
  - A. Some theologians refer to this as the “noetic effects of sin” (“noetic” coming from the Greek word *noetikos*; which means “intelligence”). We see it the moment sin entered the world. Adam disobeyed God’s clear command; but he immediately sought to pass the blame onto God. The famous mathematician and unbeliever Bertrand Russell was once asked what he would say if he died and found himself confronted by God; and his reply was, “Not enough evidence, God, not enough evidence.” And yet, the first chapter of Romans makes it clear that this defense will not stand: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in

unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse . . .” (Romans 1:18-20). It points to the real problem when it adds, “because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (v. 21). Verse 28 says that “they did not like to retain God in their knowledge”. The noetic effects of the fall are expressed clearly in Ephesians 4:17-19; where Paul writes, “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles [that is “unbelievers”] walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Ephesians 4:17-19).

- B. When talking to our unbelieving friends, then, we need to respect the fact that they appeal to ‘reason’. But we also need to remember that--for all of us--the ability to reason rightly has been damaged by the fall; and has been twisted by a bias against truth from out of a spirit of rebellion against our Creator. We need to remember that a receptivity to truth isn’t just a matter of mind alone, but of the heart and of the will. Our unbelieving friends cannot merely be “argued” into a reverence toward God and belief in truth.

### **III. GOD HAS PLACED A TESTIMONY OF HIMSELF IN THE HUMAN HEART THAT OUR UNBELIEVING FRIENDS CANNOT IGNORE.**

- A. Because people are made in God’s image, He has graciously ‘wired’ their inner-most being in such a way that they cannot help knowing that He is there--even though they are in rebellion against Him because of sin. Ecclesiastes--one of the most searching works of philosophy ever written--affirms that “He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11). His testimony is, of course, clearly declared in creation (see Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:19-20). But it’s also within our very being; “for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them” (Romans 2:14-15).
- B. This means that the primary way--not the only way, but the primary way--that we try to establish a common-ground in talking to our unbelieving friends about our worldview is by appealing our common identity as creatures made in the image of God who are fallen and in need of grace. We *do*, of course, point to the evidences God has made of Himself in this world; and show the consistency of our worldview in understanding and interpreting that evidence. But we make our appeal most of all to the need for repentance--and trust the work of the Holy Spirit to open the heart through the declaration of God’s truth (see 2 Corinthians 5:14-21).

### **IV. A WORK OF GRACE IS REQUIRED BEFORE OUR UNBELIEVING FRIENDS CAN KNOW AND RESPOND TO GOD’S TRUTH.**

- A. In 1 Corinthians 2:14, Paul says that “the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” But more than that; in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, he wrote, “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who

do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” This was even true of Paul’s Jewish kinsmen. In Chapter 3, Paul wrote, “But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart” (vv. 14-15). But thankfully, he goes on to say, “Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (vv. 16-17). No one who is “dead in trespasses and sins” can be alive to God’s truth unless God first makes them “alive” (see Ephesians 2:1-5). But it’s by grace we are saved!

- B. One of the most important things we can do in defending our worldview to our unbelieving friends then--and in complete consistency with it--is to pray for them and ask God to give them repentance and faith, and to open their hearts to the truth! As Paul wrote, “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

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<sup>1</sup>All Scripture readings are taken from *the Holy Bible, New King James Version*;  
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