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What You Need to Know about Sharing a Witness: Worldview Background
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In order to effectively share a Christian witness, there are certain things you need to know. It is pretty obvious that you cannot share what you don't know. But that essential knowledge does not fit into only one category. The traditional way of training for witness is just to learn a gospel presentation and start sharing it with people. Well, to be sure, you can't share Christ without doing that. But what if the person you are sharing with doesn't understand your message? What if they don't believe in God or believe in many gods or believe in a different god? What do you do if you go to share Christ and they misinterpret everything you are saying because they do not understand the religious concepts of the gospel message?

Increasingly, this is the kind of problem Christians are running into. There are more and more people who have been raised in a non-Christian environment and simply do not grasp the basic concepts that will allow them to understand our message and receive Christ.

The solution to this is to understand the topic of worldview so you can know what starting point you need to have for your gospel presentation. Without this, you might as well be speaking in a language the person you are talking to doesn't understand.

What Do We Need to Know?

An understanding of worldview is critical to effective witness in our current post-Christian world. It is a grasp of this topic which puts you in a position to speak in terms other people can understand.

Let's take a few moments and explore what parts of worldview understanding are critical to the witnessing process.

Definition

First, it is important to understand the definition. The word "worldview" is one of those words that seems like it ought to be easy to understand, but the reality is quite different. Since it is made up of the words "world" and "view," most people tend to think it is simply the way a person views the world. Well, yes and no. It certainly does relate to how people look at the world, but at a very deep level – not the shallow tier most people think.

The shallow level might relate to things like religious beliefs, cultural perspective and the like. While those things certainly do color people's view of life, they do not get at their worldview. In fact, a worldview is so foundational to an individual's understanding of life, that it is actually unconscious to most.

The reason it is unconscious to most people is because it relates to their very perception of reality. People simply do not take seriously things they consider to be fantasy. That makes their current belief about what is real the only possibility. Things they perceive as unreal don't even have to be considered as a part of their belief system.

By way of definition, a worldview is a person's assumptions about the nature of reality. An assumption is, of course, something that seems so obvious it is not even questioned. The nature of reality relates to what actually exists, in both the material and transcendent arenas. So, a worldview is a set of beliefs which

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seems so obvious that a person simply can't imagine that others could possibly believe something different.

But the truth is, other people do believe other things about how reality is structured. And they believe what they believe to the same degree you believe what you believe. This is why it is so difficult to deal with people who come from other worldviews – particularly when it comes to things like faith and morality. Why should a person consider believing something they conceive of as a fantasy. And why should they consider living by a set of moral beliefs which are based on what they consider not real.

This is why it is so important to truly understand the definition of worldview. If we don't understand what it is all about, it becomes difficult to take seriously what other people believe. It also makes it hard to interact with them in ways which allow us to share the gospel message and promote biblical morality.

Essentials

To more fully understand the concept of worldview, we need to look at essential beliefs. Essentials are a set of beliefs which define the various worldview categories. There are three questions which can be asked of every worldview, and every one answers these three questions in its own unique and exclusive way. Additionally, because of the exclusiveness of the answers, every worldview literally contradicts every other worldview. So, the answers a worldview gives to these questions defines its outer limits. Any answer which is contrary to how a given worldview would answer any one of the questions takes you out of that worldview and into a different one.

The three essential questions are:

1. What is the nature of ultimate reality? (What/who is God?)
2. What is a human being?
3. What is the ultimate a person can get out of life? (What is salvation?)

Categories

As we look at the variety of worldviews, we can see that there are four primary categories – Naturalism, Animism, Far Eastern Thought, and Theism. There is one other category, hybrids, which is not specifically a worldview, but we need to be aware of it because there are numerous hybrid belief systems.

Naturalism is the belief that the material universe is all that exists. In this worldview, there is no God or, indeed, any transcendent reality. Everything can be accounted for based on the natural laws of the universe.

Animism is the belief that there is a single universe which is divided into material and spiritual parts. This belief affirms that there are many spirit beings in the spirit world which interact symbiotically with humans in the material world. It is up to every being, in both parts of reality, to do their responsibilities in order to maintain the natural order and balance of the whole.

Far Eastern Thought is the belief that ultimate reality is an impersonal life force. This belief asserts that the material universe is made up of pieces of that life force which have spun off and are far enough away so that they have taken on a form (material and personal) which does not express its true nature. Also, based on karma and reincarnation, these spun off pieces of the life force are working their way back to ultimately reconnect with the main body.

Theism is the belief that a transcendent creator God exists who created the material universe for his own purposes. People who hold this worldview typically understand God to have re-

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vealed himself and his ways to mankind.

Hybrids are an attempt to take elements from more than one worldview and combine them into a single belief system. This can never work, however, as every worldview literally contradicts every other worldview. Every worldview represents an entirely different way of conceiving of the structure of reality. As such, the attempt of hybrids to combine worldview beliefs from different systems always creates irreconcilable internal contradictions.

Weaknesses of Non-Christian Worldviews

There is one other thing that is important to know concerning worldview that is connected to sharing a witness. The teachings of the Bible represent the actual truth about the structure of reality. That means, the beliefs of every other belief system in existence are not true. That being the case, there will always be logical, historical or experiential problems associated with every other one. Let's look briefly at how this plays out.

1. Naturalism depends on human reason to account for everything in existence, yet it has no way to explain that which does not have an empirical foundation. And there are many things which fit into that category, such as the origin of the stuff that makes up the natural universe, the origin of life, an explanation of how the variety of life forms in the world came to be, and the origin of consciousness.

2. Animism depends on tradition to back up its beliefs. The problem is, different animistic belief systems have contradictory traditions and there no way to justify one over another.

3. Far Eastern Thought must depend on human experience to justify its

beliefs. With this, we run into the same problem we had before with Animism – this time with experience rather than tradition. Different belief systems have different kinds of experiences and there is no way to arbitrate between the various ones.

4. Non-Christian Theism depends on revelation to justify the truth of its claims. When you begin looking, though, at the various belief systems in this worldview category, you will see that every one, without exception, will have some kind of historical and/or logical problem associated with it. That cannot help but be the case because none of them represent actual truth.

5. When it comes to hybrids, every one of them can be dismissed out of hand. Since they all attempt to draw beliefs from more than one worldview category, they have built in contradictory beliefs.

It is an understanding of worldview that allows us to analyze the various worldviews and the belief systems which come from them in a way that lets us see these problems. As such, this kind of knowledge is critical to help us get at how to share a witness to believers who come from other worldviews.

Sharing a Witness

Sometimes I like to ask people what they find easy to do. Most people come up with some specific thing that applies to them individually. There is a generic answer, though, that applies to everyone in existence. What is easy is what you know how to do.

Sharing a witness for Christ is not that difficult – if you know how to do it. And if you want to know how to do it, there are certain things you need to learn. One of those is a basic understanding of worldview. This knowledge gives you a foundation for not only understanding the gospel

message itself, but also the beliefs of those with whom you wish to share a witness. This is important because it is the key to effective communication of the message. When you master this, not only will you know what to say, but will also have the confidence to share the message with anyone you come in contact with.

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