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How Worldview Beliefs Affect People's Decisions

by Freddy Davis

People believe what they believe, and they live out those beliefs in daily life without ever even questioning whether they are right or wrong. Put another way, people live out their worldview beliefs actually believing that they are right. In fact, their very understanding of morality is driven by those beliefs.

Why is that? The answer is actually rather simple. Worldview notions, for most people, are not intentionally thought out beliefs. They are unconscious assumptions. And unless those assumptions are somehow made conscious and challenged, there is never any reason for people to question them.

That said, the worldview beliefs of most people in the world are simply wrong. It is impossible for that to not be the case. Every worldview literally contradicts every other one, and there is no single worldview system that is followed by a majority of people in the world. So based on simple math, a majority of people in the world live by an understanding of reality that is wrong. There is no more profound reason why we, as Christians, need to be active in sharing our faith – both in our homeland and around the world.

So, if we want to get people to believe what we believe, what, exactly, do we need to do? In a general sense, we need to learn how to express the truth of the gospel in ways which will touch non-believers where they are. So as we consider the people we need to reach, we find that they fall into three basic categories.

1) Those who already believe the Bible but have never accepted Christ.

The first group are people who typically grew up in a Christian worldview environment. Their parents self-identified as Christians, they probably went to church when they were young, and were maybe even baptized themselves. As such, their identity growing up was that they were Christians.

But since becoming a believer in Christ is an intentional personal act, none of the things just mentioned actually make a person a Christian. People in this category simply view reality in Christian worldview terms. In cases like this, the individual already holds a Christian worldview. The missing element, then, is for them is to take next step and actually personally invite Christ into their lives.

As Christian witnesses, our part of the process is to help them understand that their own worldview belief about God is actually objectively true. At that point, we simply need to urge them to invite Christ into their lives.

This situation was my own experience. I grew up in a Christian home and our family attended church regularly. I believed, intellectually, in the God of the Bible. But there came a time when I had to actually make it personal. At age 16, I personally responded to God's knocking on the door of my life and invited Christ in.

2. Those who don't believe their own worldview, but don't know other possibilities.

There is another group of people whose allegiance to the worldview they grew up under is very loose. These people typically self-identify as a believer of the faith they grew up under, but don't believe it at a deep

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personal level. For the most part, people in this category really don't think deeply about their beliefs at all, and just live life based on their own personal desires.

When interacting with people in this category, we need to share with them an alternative - belief in Jesus Christ. But we need to do it in a broader context. In category number one above, those we might talk to are already inclined to believe our faith. In this case, though, that inclination is not there. These people are inclined in the direction of the beliefs they grew up under.

So, when we want to share Christ with people in this category, we need to begin by helping them see that the belief they grew up under is not true. But we must be careful here. It is not enough just to tell them it is not true, we need to help them understand why. People don't typically change worldview beliefs without this deeper level of understanding. (As a quick aside, it is also important to recognize that there are many self-identified Christians who also fall into this category. Many of these are subject to falling away from the Christian faith. This is often what happens with people who grew up in category one above.)

When I lived in Japan, one of my language teachers was a very fine Christian man. I still remember his testimony about how he came to Christ. As it turns out, he was a typical Japanese person who was a nominal adherent of the Shinto and Buddhist religions. He participated in the religious observances, but didn't really believe in them. One day, a friend shared Christ with him, and on this first hearing he believe it and became a Christian. Frankly, this is quite an unusual testimony. Most Japanese who come to be believers in Christ take several

years to work through the process. But this case gives us some indication that there are those in other groups who are ready to come to Christ if only they can be led to understand.

3. Those who strongly believe their own worldview.

There is one other possibility. There is that group of people who are true believers. While some of those in this group actually do understand why they believe what they believe, most actually don't. But that is totally beside the point. The fact is, they do believe – and they believe to the point they are willing to speak out about it.

When we want to share our faith with people in this category, it is not enough to simply know what we believe and why we believe it. But there is another step, as well. We must also know what they believe and why their belief is not the truth.

Most people simply don't understand that there is more than one actual way to conceive of reality. In dealing with true believers, it becomes necessary to share with them the other possibilities and convince them that their own belief does not represent reality.

Not too long back, I was having an e-mail conversation with Dave the Atheist. This conversation actually went on for several weeks. While his beliefs are not factually true, Dave was totally convinced that Naturalism has been demonstrated by science to be objectively true. He even put forth a set of scientific experiments that he said proved his point. Unfortunately for him, those experiments actually did not prove what he was saying, and I pointed this out to him over and over again as he continued to assert that point. It did not matter that I repeatedly shot down his belief, he could not imagine in his own mind that what I was saying was true. Finally, he just quit writing. This is often the response I get when people finally come to real-

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ize that what they are saying is not true and that their worldview beliefs do not hold up. On the other hand, for him to ever consider another possibility, he has to come to a place where he understands that his Naturalism is not true. I can only pray that he one day turns to Christ.

The Influence of Beliefs

So, what have we discovered?

First, people believe what they believe – even if not true. People who don't question "why" they believe what they believe are people who don't really know themselves – and sadly, don't even care.

Second, the majority of people in the world hold beliefs which are simply untrue. This is just a mathematical fact. Sadly, rather than examine their faith, most people build a wall around themselves to keep the truth out.

If a Christian wants to be an instrument in God's hand to help change people's beliefs, it becomes necessary to help them see the truth. Until non-believers are convinced something different is true, they will continue to follow their old beliefs. Getting to a place where we are able to share Christ this way doesn't just happen. It takes intentional effort to learn the things that need to be shared.

I read something recently that has stuck in my mind. It said: One hundred years ago, high school students studied Greek and Latin. Today, college students study remedial English. The problem in our educational institutions is not that the students are incapable of learning, it is that they are raised and taught in an environment which has such low expectations that the teachers and students alike don't think a higher level is possible. Sadly, we have the same problem of low expectations among Christians. Most don't believe they are capable of effectively shar-

ing Christ in our increasingly pluralistic world. But everyone can do it. It is just a matter of putting forth the effort to gain the knowledge and skills. And if we do, we can become the kind of instrument in God's hand which is able to change the world.

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