LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Maintaining a Biblical Worldview:
Mitigating Emerging Syncretism with Worldly Philosophies
Through Focused Instruction in Christian Theology

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the Liberty University School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by
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Lynchburg, Virginia
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Thesis Project Approval Sheet

__________________________
Dr. Russell S. Woodbridge, Mentor

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Dr. Larry S. McDonald, Reader
Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are granted a “new nature” that enables them to develop thinking, a worldview, based on the mind of Christ. Unfortunately, since every person’s worldview is continually being modified, it becomes ever more challenging for believers to keep their thinking consistent with Scripture. Therefore, this action research thesis assumes consistent participation in focused teaching on fundamental doctrines and theologies of the Christian faith is necessary to develop and maintain a cohesive biblical worldview. This research project comprised the teaching of a five-part Bible study course at a local church in eleven consecutive forty-five-minute classes on five fundamental beliefs that make up a person’s worldview: beliefs about God, reality (metaphysics), knowledge (epistemology), ethics, and human beings (anthropology). Quantitative data were collected by the study participants completing pre-course and post-course worldview surveys. In addition, qualitative data was developed from the researcher’s observation field notes following each class session and outside of the formal class setting. The research results indicated an increasing coherence of the Bible study course participants’ comprehensive biblical worldview knowledge and understanding, affirming this action research thesis. Therefore, local churches are encouraged to provide their church members and attendees with similar consistent Bible study opportunities on fundamental doctrines and theologies of the Christian faith. In doing so, a cohesive biblical worldview can develop, allowing them to respond to the culture they live in and better equip them to help the culture respond to the Savior they follow.


Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................1
Introduction ..........................................................................................................................1
Ministry Context ..................................................................................................................2
  Cultural Setting ..............................................................................................................2
  Church Programs ..........................................................................................................3
  Pandemic Effects ..........................................................................................................4
  Spiritual Culture ..........................................................................................................4
Problem Presented .............................................................................................................7
Purpose Statement .............................................................................................................8
Basic Assumptions ............................................................................................................10
Definitions ..........................................................................................................................11
  Christian Theology ......................................................................................................12
  Ethics .............................................................................................................................13
  Evangelical ....................................................................................................................15
  God .................................................................................................................................15
  Human Beings ...............................................................................................................16
  Knowledge .....................................................................................................................16
  Reality ............................................................................................................................17
  Worldview .....................................................................................................................18
Limitations ..........................................................................................................................18
Delimitations .......................................................................................................................19
Thesis Statement ..............................................................................................................20

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ....................................................................22
Literature Review ..............................................................................................................22
  Understanding Worldview ............................................................................................23
  Core Beliefs About God ...............................................................................................25
    Secular Beliefs About God .........................................................................................25
    Theistic Beliefs About God .........................................................................................27
  Core Beliefs About Reality ...........................................................................................29
    Secular Beliefs About Reality ....................................................................................29
    Biblical Belief About Reality ....................................................................................32
  Core Beliefs About Knowledge .....................................................................................34
    Secular Beliefs About Knowledge ..............................................................................35
    Biblical Belief About Knowledge ..............................................................................37
  Core Beliefs About Ethics .............................................................................................39
    Secular Beliefs About Ethics .....................................................................................40
    Biblical Belief About Ethics .....................................................................................42
  Core Beliefs About Humankind ...................................................................................42
    Secular Beliefs About Humankind ............................................................................43
    Biblical Belief About Humankind ............................................................................45
Theological Foundations ..................................................................................................................47
Where Thinking Begins ..................................................................................................................48
Where Thinking Should Be ..............................................................................................................50
Right-Thinking from Learning .......................................................................................................51
Theoretical Foundations ..................................................................................................................53
Participant Theory ..........................................................................................................................54
Research Distinctives ......................................................................................................................57

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY ........................................................................................................59
Intervention Design ..........................................................................................................................59
Method .............................................................................................................................................60
Project Conceptualization ................................................................................................................61
Class Curriculum .............................................................................................................................61
Data Collection ..................................................................................................................................65
Permissions ........................................................................................................................................69
Promotion and Recruitment ..............................................................................................................69
Project Participants ..........................................................................................................................70
Implementation of Intervention Design .............................................................................................70
Learning Environment ......................................................................................................................71
Consent to Participate and Course Surveys ......................................................................................73
Implementation Observations from Angles .......................................................................................74
The Researcher’s Angle .....................................................................................................................75
The Insider’s Angle ............................................................................................................................79
Summary of Intervention Implementation .........................................................................................81

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS .....................................................................................................................82
Description Data Evaluation .............................................................................................................82
Data Gathering and Scoring Protocols .............................................................................................83
Participant Demographics ...............................................................................................................85
Quantitative Relationships of Study Group Worldviews ................................................................86
Overall Worldview Survey Results for All Participants .....................................................................86
Overall Worldview Survey Results by Demographics .....................................................................88
Worldview Survey Results by Gender .............................................................................................88
Worldview Survey Results by Age ...................................................................................................91
Worldview Survey Results by Years of Education ...........................................................................95
Worldview Survey Results by Years a Christian ............................................................................96
Summary of Overall Worldview Survey Results by Demographics ..................................................98
Overall Worldview Survey Results by Belief Areas .........................................................................99
Worldview Survey Results on God ...................................................................................................99
Worldview Survey Results on Reality ............................................................................................101
Worldview Survey Results on Knowledge ......................................................................................103
Worldview Survey Results on Ethics ..............................................................................................105
Worldview Survey Results on Human Beings ...............................................................................106
Summary of the Intervention Design Effectiveness Based on Results ........................ 108

*Demographics Results Assessment* .............................................................. 109

*Belief Areas Results Assessment* ............................................................... 110

Areas for Intervention Design Improvement ................................................. 110

**CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION** .............................................................................. 112

Revisiting the Problem .................................................................................. 112
Revisiting the Purpose .................................................................................... 113
Revisiting the Thesis ...................................................................................... 114

*Impact on a Biblical Worldview of God* ...................................................... 115

*Impact on a Biblical Worldview of Reality* .................................................. 116

*Impact on a Biblical Worldview of Knowledge* ........................................... 118

*Impact on a Biblical Worldview of Ethics* .................................................... 119

*Impact on a Biblical Worldview of Human Beings* ..................................... 122

*Overall Impact on a Biblical Worldview* ...................................................... 124

Methodology Appraisal .................................................................................. 126
Recommendations for Further Study .............................................................. 128
Researcher’s Overall Assessment .................................................................. 129

Bibliography .................................................................................................... 130
Appendix A ....................................................................................................... 137
Appendix B ....................................................................................................... 164
Appendix C ....................................................................................................... 167
Appendix D ....................................................................................................... 178
Appendix E ....................................................................................................... 181
IRB Approval Letter ......................................................................................... 184
Tables

3.1 Unanticipated Research Study Costs .................................................................71
4.1 Study Group Demographics........................................................................85
4.2 Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Overall Survey Score Comparisons...............87
4.3 Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Survey Score Comparisons (Females)..............89
4.4 Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Survey Score Comparisons (Males) .................90
4.5 Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Survey Score Comparisons (50 to 70 Age Group)......92
4.6 Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Survey Score Comparisons (Above 70 Age Group).....93
4.7 Overall Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Survey Score Comparisons by Demographic ....98
4.8 Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Survey Score Comparisons (Worldview of God) ......100
4.9 Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Survey Score Comparisons (Worldview of Knowledge) ...103
4.10 Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Survey Score Comparisons (Worldview of Human Beings) .................................................................107
Illustrations

Figures

3.1 Classroom Layout.................................................................72
4.1 Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (All Participants)..........................87
4.2 Biblical Worldview Survey Score Distributions (All Participants)................88
4.3 Biblical Worldview Survey Score Distributions (Females)..........................89
4.4 Biblical Worldview Survey Score Distributions (Males)............................90
4.5 Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (By Gender).................................91
4.6 Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Participant Age 30 to 50)...............92
4.7 Biblical Worldview Survey Score Distributions (Age 50 to 70).....................93
4.8 Biblical Worldview Survey Score Distributions (Above Age 70)....................94
4.9 Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (By Age)..................................94
4.10 Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Education Level).........................96
4.11 Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Years a Christian).......................97
4.12 Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Worldview of God).......................100
4.13 Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Worldview of Reality)..................102
4.14 Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Worldview of Knowledge)............104
4.15 Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Worldview of Ethics)....................105
4.16 Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Worldview of Human Beings)........107
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DMIN</td>
<td>Doctor of Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESV</td>
<td>English Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUSOD</td>
<td>Liberty University School of Divinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT30Y</td>
<td>Less Than 30 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GT30Y</td>
<td>Greater Than 30 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASB</td>
<td>New American Standard Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NET</td>
<td>New English Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>Pew Research Center</td>
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

There exist fundamental differences in the ways people think about the world and their place in it. Such thinking differences result from central belief systems that each person develops that include a blend of truth and error embraced with varying degrees of consciousness and consistency.¹ Fundamental to a person’s belief system is their presuppositions or worldviews about life; that is, what it means to be human, which presupposes certain core beliefs about [G]od, the world, truth, and morality.²

In general, two competing worldviews have emerged, one based on human reason and worldly philosophies, and the other based on the God of the Bible and His written Word. Indeed, people who construct their central belief systems based on this world’s philosophies will form very different presuppositions about life and what makes it meaningful than a person whose basic assumptions about life are formed by a central belief in the person and message of Jesus Christ. This DMIN action research thesis will explore an emerging syncretism between these disparate belief systems in the context of a local church setting, The Woodlands Bible Church.

This chapter describes the ministry context, problem statement, and purpose statement and concludes with the project’s thesis statement. The ministry context explores the origins of The Woodlands Bible Church and its demographics, present administrative structure, teaching


² Glenn S. Sunshine, Why You Think the Way You Do: The Story of Western Worldviews from Rome to Home (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 14, 15.
programs, and the researcher’s relationship with the church. The problem statement demonstrates a need for focused teaching on fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith to counter the adverse influences of worldly philosophies on biblical thinking and behavior. The purpose statement articulates the project goal of developing and presenting orderly Bible study lessons designed to shape a person’s thinking from a biblical perspective. The definitions section provides color and explanation to essential terms for the project and includes the researcher’s basic presuppositions regarding project implementation. Finally, project limitations and delimitations are described, and the project thesis statement is articulated.

**Ministry Context**

The local ministry context for this DMIN action research thesis is The Woodlands Bible Church, located in The Woodlands, Texas. The church is an independent, non-denominational Bible church born in 2014 out of an adult Bible study group led by the current senior pastor, a co-vocational graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and gifted administrator and expositor of God’s Word. The church staff comprises the senior pastor, the worship pastor, and an administrative assistant. This researcher is an elder and Bible study teacher within the church. The church has expressed its full support for this action research thesis, including providing church classroom facilities and ample time to support the completion of the project.

**Cultural Setting**

The Woodlands, Texas, is a township situated approximately twenty-seven miles north of downtown Houston. As of January 1, 2020, the population was about 118,000, with a populace
approaching two million within a twenty-mile radius. Median annual household income approaches $119,000 and outperforms the State of Texas average of about $60,000. The township demographics are a majority white (41.2%), with the significant remaining groups being Hispanic (39.7%), African American (12.9%), and Asian (5.2%). The distribution of adults weighs most heavily in the 45-64 age range (42%), followed by the 25-44 range (33%). Households with children under the age of seventeen comprise 39.4% of the township population. Members and regular attendees of The Woodlands Bible Church mirror these demographics.

Church Programs

The church provides a Sunday morning worship service that combines worship through music, teaching, giving, and practicing communion. Bible study opportunities are also available on Sunday mornings to adults and for children up through the fifth grade. The adult Bible study class’s average weekly attendance is thirty-five, while the average weekly attendance for the children’s Bible study class is about nine. A monthly adult men’s evening Bible study is regularly attended by a mix of fifteen church members and attendees. Attendance at a bi-weekly adult women’s evening Bible study also averages about fifteen people. Three small groups are supported by the church and are variously attended. Finally, a monthly question and answer service centered on cultural apologetics and entitled “Axiom” is held on a Sunday evening and led by the senior pastor.

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5 Ibid.

6 “The Woodlands, Texas Demographics.”
Pandemic Effects

The average Sunday morning worship service attendance was approaching eighty-five people before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. After that, in-person attendance at any on-site church activities was curtailed until a formal reopening in early May 2020, when all church programs resumed. Of interest, while all churches in The Woodlands initially followed suit and closed their facilities to in-person attendance, very few churches continued in-person attendance until late July 2020, if at all. Consequently, during the intervening period of May through July 2020, many people began attending The Woodlands Bible Church for the first time, raising attendance at Sunday morning worship services to about one hundred ten. This phenomenon was attributed by some to “no other options” for in-person worship and Bible teaching in the community. Perhaps this was the case, but most who were drawn to the church during this period have remained despite most churches in the vicinity eventually reopening for at least Sunday morning worship.

Spiritual Culture

Since its founding in 2014, The Woodlands Bible Church has traditionally attracted an older, more seasoned membership from which leaders have emerged to serve in the offices of elders. The elders have consistently exemplified a commensurate level of biblical knowledge and discernment, and all have displayed an ability to teach God’s Word accurately (1 Tim 3:2). The senior pastor practices expository preaching and typically teaches through entire books of the Bible throughout the year.

The worship pastor was called to serve at the church in 2018. He hails from South Africa and is a gifted contemporary composer. He ably provides pulpit supply in the senior pastor’s
absence. Of significance, the addition of contemporary worship has attracted a younger
demographic, including families with young children.

The vision of the church is captured in three words, Restoration, Teaching, and Purpose.
Stemming from Romans 12:2, a person’s purpose begins with a commitment to be a living
sacrifice. Such a sacrifice often involves the restoration of a relationship with or a new faith in
the Lord. This relationship, restored or new, is continually reinforced, in part, by experiencing
and embracing sound biblical teaching that facilitates a renewed mind. Once a person has been
restored to the Lord and is being taught the truth of Scripture, they can discover God’s purpose
for their life. This purpose is often delineated in ministry gifts through a sober assessment of a
person’s spiritual gifting. The church’s vision applies to all people who are now or desire to be
serious about their faith, whether a single person or a whole family.

The church’s Statement of Faith embraces each person’s utter spiritual separation from
God at birth. Further, and in keeping with His desiderative will, God’s offer of salvation is valid
for all people. However, His decretive will only results in salvation for those specifically and
unconditionally elected before the foundation of the world. Salvation and faith are given as gifts
by God’s grace (Eph 2:8-9), and semi-Pelagian efforts to assist God with redemption are
rejected.7 Since the unregenerate person is unable to know the things of God, nor do they even
seek him (Rom 3:11), the worldview and corresponding behavior of a believer in Christ should
be distinctly different from the worldview of an unbeliever. Finally, the church strives to
consistently employ a literal, plain, normal, or historical-grammatical hermeneutic in interpreting
and teaching Scripture. Such an interpretive method recognizes God’s successive and

7 The semi-Pelagian view holds that the grace of God and a person’s will work together in salvation, in
which the person must take the initiative.
progressive manifestations of His stewardship and purposes in directing the world’s affairs. This dispensational understanding also acknowledges the sharp scriptural distinctions between the church and Israel.⁸

The church’s Statement of Faith and vision support a process that overlies an interpretive framework that forms the basis for each person’s thinking or how they make sense of life and the world around them. This thinking should inform a biblical worldview that is continuously being reinforced. Indeed, the spiritual culture described above introduces fundamental biblical doctrines and theologies into the framework or lessons being delivered to the participants. However, beyond some Bible exposition, teachers who are willing and able to provide focused instruction in specific fundamental beliefs that support developing a cohesive biblical worldview have not emerged.⁹ Moreover, the predominant age group attending Bible study classes and small group teaching sessions have been an “over fifty” crowd up through 2018 when the worship pastor arrived.

Despite a broader age mix now attending Bible study opportunities provided by the church, symptomatic examples of a lack of consistently focused teaching on fundamental Christian theology have emerged. For example, some church members and attendees are conflating societal mores with biblical moral truth. In other words, syncretism of biblical truth and worldly philosophies has begun to affect people’s thinking adversely, especially those in the twenty-five to forty-five age group. As previously discussed, some of these people have been

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⁸ Charles Ryrie offers, “A dispensation is from God’s viewpoint an economy; from man’s, a responsibility; and in relation to progressive revelation, a stage in it.” Charles C. Ryrie, Dispensationalism, Rev. and expanded ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2007), 36.

⁹ The senior and worship pastors being the exceptions, though their availability to commit more time to additional teaching encounters is quite limited.
drawn to the church through the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing with them diverse backgrounds in biblical knowledge and degrees of biblical worldview formation.

The behaviors in response to this emerging syncretism of worldviews have manifested, at a minimum, in compromises on the authority of Scripture and, therefore, increased toleration of unbiblical actions and ideals (e.g., egalitarianism, homosexuality, and other cultural influences counter to God’s Word) and truths (e.g., evolution and moral relevance). Nevertheless, such symptoms do not imply the church has submitted to worldly philosophies in the main. Instead, the charge is against a growing, perhaps fringe, syncretism that displays weakening biblical worldviews and the need for mitigating actions. The proposed mitigating measures are consistently focused teachings on fundamental Christian theology and embracing this teaching by all manner of church members and other attendees. A broader delineation of this emerging problem is presented in the section that follows.

**Problem Presented**

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are granted a “new nature” resulting from the Holy Spirit’s regeneration. This new nature enables each believer to develop thinking, a worldview based on the mind of Christ. Unfortunately, many believers do not utilize the tools provided by God\(^\text{10}\) to develop thinking biblically and instead develop thinking that integrates the philosophies of the world or the mind of the unregenerate person (i.e., the natural man; cf. 1 Cor 2:14). Since every person’s worldview is continually being modified, it becomes ever more challenging for believers to keep their thinking consistent with Scripture. Moreover, the lack of consistent, 

\(^{10}\) Tools provided by God include intentionally studying His Word, attending to the teaching of Scripture, doctrines, and theologies, and making use of God’s teachers who have studied before (e.g., books and commentaries). For a learned discussion of each of these tools, see C. Fred Smith, *Developing a Biblical Worldview: Seeing Things God’s Way* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 162-71.
focused instruction in fundamental doctrines and theologies of the Christian faith exacerbates this condition by opening the door to the adverse influences of skepticism, secularism, and many other worldly philosophies on a believer’s basic life belief systems.

Since a person’s basic life belief systems, or presuppositions, are manifest in their behavior, once a set of presuppositions about life are embraced, a direction and destination are determined. In other words, people do what they believe. For unbelievers, the destination, in most cases, runs counter to the truth of Scripture, and the cultural influences of such un- or anti-biblical worldviews are having a devastating effect on believer’s worldviews and the behaviors they are portraying, embracing, or tolerating.

For some members and attendees of The Woodlands Bible Church, their five prevailing worldviews about God, reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings have been formed from fundamental Christian beliefs but also appear to be adversely influenced by worldly philosophies. Such weakened, fragmented worldviews could open these believers to deception and could negatively impact their witness and walk for Christ. A buttress to these worldly influences would be to embrace the tools provided by God through His Word. The problem, therefore, is an absence of consistent, focused Bible studies in Christian theology at The Woodlands Bible Church.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this DMIN action research thesis is to implement focused Bible studies in Christian theology at The Woodlands Bible Church. This objective will be accomplished by developing and presenting orderly Bible study lessons on each of the five prevailing core beliefs.

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11 For instance, some, especially those under the age of thirty, challenge God’s authority in His Word by tolerating and often defending homosexuality, not as a person’s free choice but merely their natural proclivity from birth.
that make up a person’s worldview: God, reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings. The participants will be a cross-section of adult church attendees (members and non-members) who will commit to participating in an estimated nine-week Bible study series and understand that their feedback is paramount to the underlying action research. The participants’ tangible benefits will be a focused course of instruction otherwise unavailable to them within the church and further resilience against the corrosion of their biblical worldview by worldly ideas.

The Bible, however, is emphatic in its declaration that people are not what they know but what they think (cf. Heb 5:14). Often people who have studied the Bible for a long time and who also may regularly listen to Bible teaching will assume that they think biblically. They will affirm belief in what the Bible teaches, may cite verses to support their beliefs, may clearly evaluate what others teach, may even be able to explain to others what they believe, but none of these actions guarantees they necessarily think biblically. Moreover, two people may know and embrace the same biblical truth, but one may be sensitive to its application to life and the other not. The reason for this disparity is one has “practiced” or consciously and consistently applied that truth in pondering and responding to life’s circumstances so that it has become “second nature”; the other has not.

Considering these differences, this action research thesis will employ surveys at the beginning and end of the Bible study course to assess whether theologically oriented lessons have contributed to the participants’ more cohesive biblical worldview. The surveys will attempt to measure gains and changes in theological knowledge and will include limited behavioral measures to evaluate what impact the course of study had on the lives of those involved.
Basic Assumptions

This action research thesis’s plenary assumption is that human beings will, by nature, default to their own reason and embrace worldly philosophies about life and the world around them. Escalating numbers, particularly in Western cultures, have become increasingly skeptical about previously trusted authorities and are, in many ways, even questioning the authority of reason. These people groups are beginning to prefer both/and to either/or, and any claims to objectivity are being rejected or regarded merely as a myth. Truth is now relative—what is true for one person may not be the same truth for another.

In contrast, a fully developed, cohesive Christian worldview will turn to God and His Word as the ultimate reality and authority over individuals and world affairs. However, it must be assumed that a Christian worldview will be under constant attack from worldly philosophies based on human reason alone. The results of such a bombardment are the introduction of doubt into the mind of a believer. Symptoms of such doubt include parsing the truth of Scripture to fit cultural narratives. Thus, “new truths” emerge that may include the rejection of the biblical Creation narrative in favor of the “Big Bang,” acceptance of complementary evolutionary theories where God merely set evolution in motion but all creatures evolved from a Darwinian tidal pool, or toleration and acceptance of unbiblical sexual orientations and behaviors.

Since the battle for believers’ minds will not cease until God’s kingdom comes, this action research thesis assumes consistent participation in focused teaching on fundamental doctrines and theologies of the Christian faith is necessary to develop a cohesive biblical worldview. Accordingly, this project also assumes each participant desires to establish and maintain a mature biblical worldview, in part, through continued participation in the focused Bible study classes. The participants are anticipated to display this commitment because they
acknowledge a well-developed, biblical worldview will allow them to respond to the culture in which they live and better equip them to help the culture respond to the Savior they follow.\textsuperscript{12}

Responding to the culture in which the participants live also assumes they do what they believe. Therefore, this action research will have accomplished little if the proposed Bible study classes merely teach information that does not translate into life change by the participants, as evidenced in behavior. Consequently, the proposed worldview-focused Bible study curriculum emphasizes individual spiritual and behavioral growth. This emphasis is expected to result in an evident expansion of the participant’s biblical knowledge and a more cohesive and mature biblical worldview. On these bases alone, this project is anticipated to be a success.

From a practical standpoint, this action research thesis assumes full facility and scheduling support from The Woodlands Bible Church leadership. Further, this research necessitates that a representative group of church members and regular attendees have committed to attending all Bible study classes presented for this project. Finally, this research assumes each Bible study attendee will honestly and openly participate in the surveys needed to quantify the research data.

**Definitions**

Several mentions have thus far been made regarding worldviews. As such, it is appropriate to provide definitions to specific worldview terminology that will be utilized throughout this project. Doing so adds color to possibly bland philosophy terms making themes encompassing a person’s worldview more vivid and relatable. Terms selected for added clarity are defined in the subsections that follow.

Christian Theology

The word “theology” can be parsed into two Greek words: theos, “God,” and logos, “word” or “reason” or “discourse” or “expression.” Thus, a simple definition for theology could be “a rational discourse about the God whom Christians worship and adore.”\(^\text{13}\) However, this definition would be prosaic to most people, and peeling back the layers exposes a richer, dynamic endeavor in which all believers in Christ participate in one way or another. As R. C. Sproul observed, “Everyone is a theologian.”\(^\text{14}\)

Millard Erickson peels back a layer and defines theology as “the study or science of God . . . that seeks to understand [His] creation, particularly human beings and their condition, and [His] redemptive working in relation to humankind.”\(^\text{15}\) Robert Pyne digs a little deeper and explains that theology is a systematic study of the Christian faith from four primary sources: revelation, reason, tradition, and experience.\(^\text{16}\) Systematics seeks to offer the revealed truth about God from Scriptures as a whole, as a unified system, carefully organized to ensure all topics are thoroughly considered.\(^\text{17}\) Combining these definitions renders systematic theology as the presentation of God’s unified truth and His relationship to humanity as found primarily in


Scripture, that is secondarily informed by classical church teaching and the field of human knowledge, and that applies such truths to all of human life and thought.  

Wayne Grudem uncovers a practical layer stressing that systematic theology answers the question “What does the whole Bible teach us today?” about any given topic. In other words, systematic theology focuses on teaching each fundamental Christian belief as present-day believers should understand it. Doing so serves multiple purposes: it builds up the church in its worldview, defends the faith, promotes truth, opposes error, establishes a system of morality and ethics, and guides pastors and Bible teachers in their work.

Theology is often divided into multiple branches of study (e.g., biblical theology, historical theology, practical theology, etc.). However, for this action research thesis, the term theology will refer only to systematic theology, and more specifically, Christian theology. Since The Woodlands Bible Church is characteristically evangelical, Christian theology means carefully organized major doctrinal topics from Scripture fit together consistently from an evangelical perspective.

Ethics

In general terms, ethics deals with what is morally right and morally wrong. But ethics is not strictly a Christian endeavor, for the apostle Paul notes that unbelievers, who exhibit no outward knowledge of the Law of God, demonstrate that the work of the Law is written on their hearts (Rom 2:14-15). Therefore, every person possesses a conscience. Moreover, since every

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18 Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, 2nd ed., s.v. “Systematic Theology.”
19 Grudem, 21, 23.
21 For an excellent overview of the typical branches of theology, see ibid., 42-52.
person has been created in God’s image, all people by their very created nature possess moral and ethical sensitivities lacking in all other of God’s earthly creatures. This intrinsic knowledge is the what of ethics, what is right or wrong. Yet ethics from a worldview perspective is why something is right or wrong. In other words, are there moral laws that govern human conduct? What are they, and from where do they come? Are they the same for all people everywhere, or does morality transcend all other boundaries (cultural, historical, and individual)?

For this action research thesis, ethics is defined as Christian ethics. Christian ethics is Bible-centered ethics; that is, God’s Word is considered, is honestly and carefully interpreted, applies to all of life and life’s ethical decisions, and is the final authority on all matters. Christian ethics affirms the Holy Spirit’s role in illuminating God’s Word for believers, motivating believers toward morally correct behavior, and empowering and enabling a believer to do the right thing. Christian ethics also focuses on people making real-world decisions based on the truth of Scripture. As a worldview component, Christian ethics is for all believers and is central to Christian living. Therefore, when Christian ethics is viewed against the background of a comprehensive and coherent worldview, different worldviews can be compared to ensure the biblical worldview is internally consistent.

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23 Wyndy Corbin Reuschling adds that “Scripture provides [believers] with a living narrative through which the living God ‘beckons us’ in numerous ways to live out the many possibilities presented to us in texts that shape our moral lives in abundant ways.” Wyndy Corbin Reuschling, *Reviving Evangelical Ethics: The Promises and Pitfalls of Classic Models of Morality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 67.

Evangelical

While the term “evangelical” may capture in a broad net ecclesial organizations stretching from independent fundamental-conservative groups through some Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, The Woodlands Bible Church is an expression of evangelical Christianity that emphasizes, but is not limited to, the following fundamental beliefs: the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture alone, the tri-unity of God, Christ’s virgin birth and His deity, Christ’s complete and sufficient atoning sacrifice for sin, Christ’s physical and miraculous resurrection, the necessity of salvation by faith alone through God’s grace alone based on the finished work of Christ alone, the need for global evangelism, the future physical bodily return of Christ to earth, the eternal conscious bliss of all believers, and the everlasting conscious punishment of all unbelievers.\(^{25}\)

God

Is the God of the Bible a personal being? Does He know all things? Does He love all believers with an inseparable love? Is He dynamically involved in all believer’s lives and circumstances? Is He in control of all things? How a person believes regarding these and other questions about God will significantly influence how they interpret and judge reality and daily live their lives.

The theology of God is fundamental to any worldview, whether theistic or other. When used in this action research thesis, God, and therefore His Son and His Spirit (the tri-unity), is the God of Scripture. As God, He is absolutely sovereign (Job 23:13, 43:2; 1 Chr 29:11-12), absolutely holy (Exod 15:11; Rev 15:4), and absolutely just (Deut 32:4; Rom 3:26). His total

\(^{25}\) Geisler, 15.
being is love (Matt 3:17, 17:5; John 3:36, 5:20, 14:31, 17:24; Col 1:13). He is eternal; He has always been, and always will be (Mic 5:2). He knows everything that will ever come to pass (omniscient); He cannot learn (Ps 139:1-6, 147:5; Acts 4:27-28). He is omnipotent, all-powerful (Job 23:13; Ps 115:3, 135:6; Dan 4:35). There is nothing impossible for God (Job 42:2; Zech 8:6; Luke 18:27). He is absolute truth (John 17:3); He cannot lie (Titus 1:1-2). Therefore, His Word is the absolute truth (John 17:17). Finally, He is unchangeable (cf. Exod 3:14; Mal 3:6). His nature and being are infinite and not subject to mutations. He has not evolved, grown, or improved (immutable). He is today all He has ever been and ever will be.

Human Beings

The theology of human beings is typically entitled biblical anthropology. It is the study of human nature and includes their dignity (uniquely created in God’s image), their dualistic unity (of body and soul), and their community as individuals within groups.\(^{26}\) For this research project, a person’s fundamental beliefs about human beings are concerned only with what the Bible says about them and the relation in which each person stands and should stand to God. God’s Word, not scientific inquiry, informs the biblical worldview on the origin (a dualistic unity created by God), condition (saved or unsaved), and destiny (heaven or hell) of all human beings with absolute certainty.

Knowledge

Knowledge is related to an academic term, epistemology. Epistemology is the branch of philosophy investigating what knowledge is, where it comes from, and what makes belief

\(^{26}\) Geisler, 450.
stemming from knowledge rational to embrace. Put another way, epistemology attempts to answer the questions, “What can a person really know, and how do they come about that knowledge?” Such questions are Socratic in nature, meaning they are questions each person asks of themselves. Epistemology, then, is primarily concerned with the first-person perspective; that is, issues an individual experiences, believes, and knows. From a Christian worldview, John Frame argues that human knowledge is “thinking God’s thoughts after him,” in submission to His revealed Word as the ultimate and definitive standard of truth and untruth, right or wrong.

Reality

Reality, or ultimate reality, is a term often described as metaphysics in the realm of philosophy. In essence, reality comprises the ultimate forms or kinds of things that are real. These things are not derived from anything, nor are they dependent on anything. In other words, things that are real necessarily exist. Moreover, reality is never only true for one group or person—it represents what is really true for all people everywhere and at all times, whether people acknowledge the reality or not. Roger Olson adds that every person’s view of ultimate reality revolves around some absolute source that “sustains, controls, governs, or connects everything else.” For believers in Christ, therefore, God is the ultimate reality.

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30 Moreland and Craig, 159.


32 Ibid., 140.
Worldview

Although the depth of the definition of worldview will also be explored in chapter two, the term “worldview” can be simply expressed as an orderly and related set of beliefs (a person’s presuppositions about life) that form the basis of evaluating and integrating into a person’s thinking what they come to believe, and by which they consciously or subconsciously interpret and judge reality. For this action research thesis, a biblical worldview is characterized as an orderly and related set of beliefs about life based upon a person’s committed trust in the person and message of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. These beliefs are not a form of religiosity but are instead propositions that inform believers on their relationship with God, the nature of the universe (reality), knowledge (epistemology), human beings (anthropology), and moral living (ethics).33

Limitations

This DMIN action research thesis is anticipated to encounter certain constraints beyond the control of the researcher. Such limitations begin with a finite sample size; that is, the church leadership has proposed to create a second Sunday morning adult Bible study class to accommodate this action research thesis. Consequently, given the average attendance at the current Sunday morning adult Bible study class is about thirty-five people, the overall size of a second Sunday morning adult Bible study class may only be ten to fifteen people on average. The action research thesis project will also be unable to limit Bible study class participants to any specific demographic beyond those older than eighteen.

The proposed action research thesis project will occur over an estimated nine-week period. As such, consistent full-time attendance by all the participants cannot be assured. In much the same way, the action research thesis project will be taught by the researcher. Therefore, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher’s ability to remain unaffected enough to teach the entire curriculum is largely beyond the researcher’s control.

The Bible study curriculum will be limited to the five predominant themes that comprise a person’s worldview: God, reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings. However, the researcher will be unable to control a participant’s prior level of biblical and theological knowledge related to these five worldview themes. Moreover, the research will be limited by the participants’ basic abilities to receive and process the Bible study curriculum.

Finally, the church has agreed to provide adequate classroom space for this research project for the Bible study class’s entire anticipated duration. Nevertheless, the researcher has no control over the physical facilities and their maintenance nor the continued week-to-week suitability of the facilities to meet this research project’s needs.

**Delimitations**

A specific challenge routinely encountered by the church’s adult Bible study program is limited participation by a greater demographic cross-section. That is, the ideal participants for this action research thesis are the twenty-five to forty-five age group. This age group’s biblical worldview appears to be more affected by worldly philosophies than those over age forty-five. However, participation in the current adult Bible study class by this demographic is generally inconsistent or sparse. Consequently, church members and regular attendees in the twenty-five to forty-five age group will be targeted for participation in this action research. However, any
person over the age of eighteen will be able to participate in the Bible study classes. Moreover, no exclusions will be permitted based on race or gender.

The proposed Bible study classes will be held from 9:30 am to 10:15 am on successive Sundays until the entire course of study is completed (estimated at approximately nine weeks). Anonymous surveys of biblical knowledge and behavioral tendencies will be provided to all participants and completed before the first class and after the last class. The course curriculum will comprise one to two weeks of inductive Bible study directly related to each of the previously described themes that form a person’s worldview. The Bible study curriculum will necessarily incorporate Christian philosophy and theology to contrast worldly philosophical propositions. Each participant will be encouraged to engage the researcher with questions and answers related to specific cultural applications of a biblical worldview.

**Thesis Statement**

People inherently do what they believe, and Christians are no exception. If a person forms their core beliefs from Scripture, they will integrate them into their lifestyle and translate them into action in their community, workplace, church, and home. They become integrated disciples of Christ by expressing their thinking in a Christlike manner and leading a Christlike life. They offer a genuinely biblical worldview that unbelievers can discern what is being lived, albeit imperfectly, and how such a worldview differs from their own.\(^\text{34}\) Unfortunately, secular influences from worldly philosophies constantly bombard a Christian’s worldview. As a result, believers who fail to consciously and consistently evaluate their worldview often end up “catching” their worldview like a virus. In other words, they absorb their worldview from the

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culture around them, infecting the biblical belief system they have already created. The result is a weakened biblical worldview that often manifests in behavior contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

While human beings’ finitude keeps them from total accuracy in embracing and expressing a biblical worldview, mitigation of worldly influences may occur through regular participation in learning opportunities where fundamental doctrines and theologies of the Christian faith are taught. Consequently, if focused Bible studies in Christian theology are provided at The Woodlands Bible Church, its members and attendees may develop and maintain a coherent biblical worldview.

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CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

A person’s thinking encompasses everything they believe and influences their character, values, and lifestyle—in other words, their behavior. Unsurprisingly, the Bible has a great deal to say about how people think—right-thinking originates from a biblical perspective and wrong thinking from an unbiblical or secular perspective. God’s Word is emphatic; a person is what they think (cf. Prov 23:6-8; Matt 15:18-19).

In the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, there is no strict equivalent to the English word mind (translators typically use the terms soul, spirit, or heart as the context demands), nor is there in either testament a unique term indicating the faculty of reflection or cognition. But one thing is clear in Scripture; there is an antithesis between “flesh” (the material aspect of human beings) and the inner self or mind (the immaterial aspect of human beings) that controls the person (cf. Rom 7:25). Moreover, Scripture views the mind only as it actually is, either controlled by the Holy Spirit or alienated from the “knowledge of God” and under the power of Satan and the flesh (cf. Rom 8:6-7; 12:1-2; 1 Cor 2:14-16; Eph 4:17-19).

Unfortunately, ongoing research specific to the United States finds that seven out of ten American adults claim to be Christian, yet a mere 6% of this group base their thinking or worldview on the Word of God. This shift away from a biblical worldview toward a secular worldview appears to result from culture influencing the Christian mind more than individual

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37 Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, s.v. “Mind.”
Christians influencing culture.³⁹ In other words, Christians misunderstand or outright reject the Bible as the foundational source of truth and moral guidance in favor of truth and morality determined by the individual.⁴⁰

Such a sobering trend lends to the following literature review that will assess contemporary literature and research related to five themes within the core of a person’s worldview: beliefs about God, ultimate reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings.

Understanding Worldview

The term worldview encompasses a person’s core belief systems. David Scott suggests the term worldview originates from the German word *weltanshauung*, which means “to look at the world.”⁴¹ Looking at the world involves interpreting what has been learned from various sources into beliefs about life’s most important questions.⁴² These belief systems become the basis of decisions and actions in life, much like a roadmap.⁴³ James Sire provides a concise definition of worldview:

> A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.

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⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.


⁴² Gary Craig Reynolds, “Building Confidence of the Local Church by Renewing the Mind” (Doctor of Ministry diss., Biola University, 2014), 38.

⁴³ Phillips, Brown, and Stonestreet, 8.
Simply put, a worldview provides a framework for how a person views reality. It is the conceptual spectacles through which a person sees, understands, and interprets the world and their place in it. Such a framework surfaces answers to questions such as “is there a God, where did people come from, why do people exist, and where are human beings and everything else going?” In biblical terms, a worldview is an orderly and related set of beliefs about life based upon our committed trust in the person and message of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible.

Unfortunately, a minority of worldviews are based on biblical beliefs, with the vast majority holding to atheistic or otherwise non-Christian theistic precepts. Whatever the core belief systems may be, Mark Snoeberger finds that worldviews are a “locally conditioned phenomenon” that are ever-changing. The results, then, are many interdependent worldviews throughout various cultures across the world, including localized Western cultures such as the United States. For example, recent worldview research for the United States finds that only 4% of adults in Western and Northeastern states hold a biblical worldview. Conversely, double this amount (8%) living in the Midwest and South (historically conservative regions of the country) profess a biblical worldview. Given such localized cultural influences, the challenge for all believers in Jesus Christ is to develop and maintain a biblical worldview formed by central beliefs in His person and message.

When discussing the worldview framework, five basics themes typically emerge from contemporary literature. Each of these themes is surveyed in the sections that follow.

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44 Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, 12.
Core Beliefs About God

The foundational theme emerging from most literature addressing worldviews is the core beliefs about God. Even among those who profess a biblical worldview, a wide variety of beliefs and opinions weave their way through the churches. The rest of the world either views the concept of “God” as utterly preposterous or relegates “he/she/it” into an impersonal being or “force” that is “out there” somewhere, somewhat like a genie in a bottle that can be manipulated in some way to do one’s bidding. As with all of the worldview themes, these apparent dichotomies break down along secular and biblical lines.

Secular Beliefs About God

As previously described, secular beliefs about God generally fall along several lines. The first line is an atheistic belief that there is no supreme being in control of all things, indeed no being dynamically involved in people’s lives and circumstances. The idea of God springs from the imagination of human beings. In other words, God did not create human beings; human beings created God.47 Norman Geisler and William Watkins find those espousing an atheistic belief system often defend their belief that God does not exist based on the presence of evil in the world. Simply put, if an all-loving, all-powerful God exists, he would actively intervene in the world and eradicate evil. However, evil exists in the world; therefore, God does not exist.48

A second line upon which secular beliefs about God fall are pantheism and panentheism. Pantheism is a relatively popular belief that god always exists everywhere, in all things, and within all creatures. The pantheistic god did not create all things; instead, such a god is all

48 Ibid., 60.
things—a transcendental god inseparably intermingled with everything that has ever existed or will exist in the future. This god is necessarily not a personal being and possesses none of the qualities needed to interact personally with human beings. God is simply the impersonal force or spirit behind creation. Patty Tunnicliffe also concludes that people cannot have a personal relationship with such a god because people are that god. Tunnicliffe sums up this view of god as follows: “There is a god, and you are him.”

Panentheism is somewhat of a middle ground between theism and pantheism. Panentheism views God as a finite, mutable administrator of all things working cooperatively with the world, wholly dependent upon the world, toward the ever-increasing perfection of his nature. God is not the universe, but the universe is in God. Such a God needs the world in the same manner a human being needs a soul; they are mutually dependent and required for existence. While there appears to be some disagreement on whether the panentheistic God is one entity or a series of entities, there is consensus that God is personal.

Tunnicliffe adds a final secular belief system to the mix by coining the term “Santatheism.” This god is characterized only by love and exhibits no other attributes such as righteousness or holiness. Such a god is not a judge; he is Santa Claus; therefore, sin, judgment, and hell are not a reality. Instead, god is a jolly old soul whose primary purpose is to make people happy. Consequently, this god is perfect for the present-day, tolerance-driven, pluralistic

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49 Phillips, Brown, and Stonestreet, 33-34. A contemporary portrayal of such a god is the “Force” in the Star Wars films.


51 Geisler and Watkins, 107-08.

52 Sire, 48n29.

societies of the West. Tunnicliffe sums up the god of Santatheism this way: “There is a God, and you will like him.”\textsuperscript{54} These secular views of God stand in stark contrast to theistic beliefs and, most notably, the God of the Bible.

**Theistic Beliefs About God**

At the outset, alternate theistic views of God must be acknowledged, for there are no genuinely generic worldviews, and generic characterizations of theism do not practically comport with real life. Moreover, worldviews are context-specific and, therefore, are expressed differently depending on the culture of origin and practice.\textsuperscript{55} As a result, theistic views of God espoused by Islam, Judaism, and historically those of Deism in the United States warrant an accounting, albeit only briefly.

The [G]od of Islam (Allah) and Judaism is described as strictly monotheistic (in contrast to the Trinitarian “one-God in three persons” emphasis of Scripture), infinite, transcendent, immanent, omniscient, sovereign, and good, with emphasis placed upon his oneness, transcendence, and sovereignty.\textsuperscript{56} The Islamic god exacts justice based upon a strict ethical and ritual system of codes. For both Judaism and Islam, [G]od is a single, personal being. Moreover, nothing happens in life outside of [G]od’s decretive will. In other words, [G]od is not merely an overseer of natural occurrences and human decisions; indeed, he decides them.\textsuperscript{57} While such a

\textsuperscript{54} Tunnicliffe, 44.

\textsuperscript{55} Sire, 235.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 236. The word [G]od is bracketed in this theistic discussion as a contrast to the god of Islam and the God of Judaism. The term Allah is translated in Arabic as “God.” However, the god (Allah) of Islam is not the same as the God (YHWH) of Judaism and Christianity (cf. Exod. 20:3; 1 Cor 8:6). For a detailed discussion of the development of the Islamic understanding of the word Allah, see Randall Price, *Unholy War* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2001), 179-81.

\textsuperscript{57} Phillips, Brown, and Stonestreet, 154.
[G]od seems to mirror the Christian God closely, the critical point to extract from these theistic beliefs is that [G]od exists as Creator and Judge of all and over all.

The Christian view of God also affirms that He exists. God is that which nothing greater can be conceived. He possesses every positive attribute to the maximum possible extent. His attributes, or perfections, do not comprise component parts but describe His total being. For example, love is not part of God’s nature; God is maximal love in His total being—He is omnibenevolent.58 The God of Scripture is omnipresent, and His existence does not depend upon anything outside of Himself; He is self-existent and necessarily a se—of Himself.59 Finally, God is morally perfect; He is absolute Purity, unsullied even by the shadow of sin. His moral standards emanate from this character.60

Early American deists affirmed that God created the universe but is not found in creation; He is other than creation. At the same time, He is conscious of and prescriptively active at every point in creation.61 Yet, deists denied God interacted at all with His creation, including human beings. For a deist, God merely wound creation up like a spinning top, then let creation loose to spin off on its own. Moreover, whatever a person needs to know about God can be discovered through reason alone; supernatural revelation and the miraculous are unnecessary.62 In contrast to this impersonal and distant God, the God revealed in Scripture is a personal and knowable God with whom any person may have a relationship.

58 Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, 116.
61 Moreland and Craig, 522.
62 Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, 25.
From a worldview perspective, people may reject the existence of the God of Scripture. Still, Gary Reynolds rightly observes that the Apostle Paul proclaims that creation alone has been and will continue to be the most unmistakable evidence for the existence of God (Rom 1:20). Moreover, every person will be held accountable for the evidence God has provided since the foundations of the world.  

Core Beliefs About Reality

A critical theme within any worldview is the fundamental beliefs about ultimate reality. This theme attempts to answer the ultimate questions of origin, meaning, morality, destiny, and identity. Consistent with views on God, views of ultimate reality break on secular and biblical lines.

Secular Beliefs About Reality

Secular views of reality generally center on naturalist perspectives, but atheistic persuasions commonly hold that the universe has always existed. Adherents argue that if the universe is not eternal, it somehow came into being out of nothing and by nothing. Consequently, the creation of the universe is rejected in favor of a self-sufficient and self-perpetuating reality. Ronnie P. Campbell explains the naturalist’s view as “a view that there is a material reality that is essentially physical, that exists either necessarily, eternally, or by

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63 Reynolds, 28.
64 This alternative and equally popular view contends the universe came into being ex nihilo in one initial cosmological singularity—i.e., the “Big Bang.” For a discussion of the Friedmann-Lemaitre “big bang” model, see Moreland and Craig, 487-88.
65 Geisler and Watkins, 58.
chance, that is self-organizing—that is to say, it is not organized by a deity or force of sorts—and that every ultimate explanation is inanimate.\(^{66}\)

Secular Humanist views of reality support the most prevalent secular worldviews and often begin with evaluating scientific data with evolutionary presuppositions. Such a worldview does not allow for any reality outside of the physical universe. Consequently, the concept of a transcendent God existing outside of creation would be rejected.\(^{67}\) For a Secular Humanist, the physical universe is merely the result of some cosmic accident, and, in the end, the universe is all that exists. Life spontaneously generated from eternally existent matter and evolved into the human mind. Jeff Myers and David Noebel conclude that Secular Humanists embrace evolutionary theory not as hypothesis but as the factual grounds for an appropriate understanding of the entire world. In other words, evolution links inorganic nature with life, the stars with the earth, matter with the mind, and animals with humankind. The supernatural, especially God, is therefore relegated “to the world of literary mythology.”\(^{68}\)

Notwithstanding, Sean Grier laments that the real battle over such a perceived reality is not between science and religion; instead, the struggle is competing worldviews surrounding scientific data interpretation. Grier suggests the analysis of all available scientific data from a neutral perspective unveils presuppositions of modern evolutionary hypotheses that remain unverifiable scientific findings.\(^{69}\) Conversely, Greg Bahnsen opposes the possibility of neutrality because secular and biblical worldviews have radically divergent interpretations of reality. For


\(^{68}\) Myers and Noebel, 85.

\(^{69}\) Grier, 30.
Christians, all data are pre-interpreted by, created by, and revealed by God and handled to bring glory to God. On the other hand, secular, non-Christians meaningfully interpret such data by their own minds, as ambiguous and contingent, glorifying humanity.  

Contemporary secular views of reality also stem from postmodern belief systems. In such systems, reality is characterized as a unified whole that cannot be divided into true or false. As a result, all beliefs are equally valid because they are part of the greater whole. Truth, then, is manifest as a personal, private matter. One person’s truth about reality may differ from another’s, but both realities are equally valid, even if the views are entirely contradictory.  

Roger Olson concludes that people in modern, pluralistic cultures “piece together absolutely incommensurate pieces of radically divergent maps of reality, creating, whether consciously or unconsciously, incoherent worldviews that then result in absurd cognitive dissonance.”  

Secular views of reality generally empty the world of the divine; space and time are drained of any significance. Paul Gould adds to the discussion noting that space is perceived as little more than a vacuous container for particles in motion. Time has been stripped of meaning and has become a commodity embraced by greed that is usually dispensed when pleasure or accomplishment may be realized. Gould also observes that the world’s modern, materialist conceptions of reality under a “divine-less” umbrella merely result in disenchantment—a reality in which God’s existence is muted, and the gospel of Christ seems implausible, if not undesirable.  

Thankfully, much ink has been spilled regarding a proper biblical view of reality.

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71 Tunnicliffe, 50.
72 Olson, 37.
Biblical Belief About Reality

The Christian view of ultimate reality, or metaphysics, is theism. This worldview posits the existence and actions of a personal God as the ultimate reality who is the Creator of the material and spiritual universe. Metaphysics literally means “what goes before the physical.” It is a concept rooted in wonderment about what can be known and what can be believed. It attempts to evaluate, explain, and account for knowledge and rational beliefs. Equipped with this definition, Olson characterizes metaphysics as the love of the wisdom about ultimate reality as revealed in Scripture. In other words, the Bible itself represents the worldview through which Christians determine the meaning of life and reality. For Olson, it is the lens through which Christians view and absorb the world.

From a cosmological perspective, Garrett DeWeese concludes that Scripture portrays the temporal beginning of the universe. Such a finite beginning necessitates an infinite being without beginning or end. Moreover, all that exists in the universe is sustained by the will of this infinite being, the God of the Bible. Consider John 1:4, where speaking of Jesus Christ (God the Son), John writes:

In the beginning [of the cosmos] was the Word [Logos, mind, reason, thought, wisdom, intelligence, idea, law, order, purpose, design], and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God. The [same] Word was with God in the beginning. All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind (John 1:1-4 NET).

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74 Phillips, Brown, and Stonestreet, 22.
75 Moreland and Craig, 164.
76 Olson, 25.
77 Ibid., 44.
78 DeWeese, 124, 28.
What emerges from John’s pen are the parameters of Christian Philosophy, described by Myers and Noebel as “mind before matter; God before people; plan and design before creation; life from life, and enlightenment from the Light.”\(^7^9\) The orderly and rational mind of God conceived this orderly universe before he spoke it into existence. Therefore, if God did not exist, the entire cosmos, including the world, would not exist. Unlike the Secular Humanists’ claims, the cosmos is not eternal, self-sufficient, or self-explanatory—God freely created it. What misguided arrogance must be present to question or criticize that reality (cf. Job 38 and 39)?

According to the Bible, there is a God-ordained order to creation, and humans can discover that order. This order makes science possible; it compels scientists to seek and capture this order in their laws. Thus, from a biblical worldview perspective, it is unsurprising that philosophers and scientists refer to the universe and all things in it as a manifestation of mathematical laws, order, design, and beauty.

Nevertheless, such a view of reality requires a measure of faith. Reynolds counsels that there are areas of Christian faith that cannot be known with absolute certainty, but what has been revealed in Scripture and creation can give believers confidence to trust things that have not been or are unable to be learned. Faith, then, is believing what has been revealed despite the lack of an exhaustive set of details. But faith requires at least some data points or details, for lacking any knowledge leads to ruin.\(^8^0\) How humans come about any knowledge is the next theme for consideration.

\(^7^9\) Myers and Noebel, 217.
\(^8^0\) Reynolds, 102.
Core Beliefs About Knowledge

The theme regarding knowledge attempts to answer the question, “What can people know, and how can they know it.” It is formally entitled epistemology and comprises the branch of philosophy that investigates the origin, nature, methods, and limits of human knowledge. It is thinking about knowing; it seeks to establish the hows and whys and whats of knowing based on some understanding of ultimate reality—on a worldview.\textsuperscript{81}

Dallas Willard provides a simple definition of knowledge as “the capacity to represent a respective subject matter as it is, on an appropriate basis of thought and/or experience” (italics his).\textsuperscript{82} J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig offer that knowledge is “justified true belief,” a condition where people consider what they know to be true, and because it is true, they believe it.\textsuperscript{83} However, a person must have a reason to believe something. In other words, a justifying condition must be present that meets a certain standard if the belief is to be regarded as knowledge, even if true.\textsuperscript{84}

Justifying conditions are often categorized as coherent or foundational. Coherency means that the entirety of a person’s beliefs, however they may be related, cohere with other beliefs in a suitable, appropriate way to form a new belief that counts as knowledge.\textsuperscript{85} For example, a person may see a person they appear to know in a restaurant but believe it is not them because they believe the person flew to New York that very morning; a person cannot be in two places

\textsuperscript{81} Olson, 25.
\textsuperscript{83} Moreland and Craig, 63.
\textsuperscript{84} DeWeese, 159.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
simultaneously. These beliefs fit together logically, coherently and are based on other beliefs held to be true, resulting in a new belief counted as knowledge.

In contrast to coherency, but still acknowledging that some beliefs can be based on other beliefs, foundationalism proposes that all knowledge is based on some foundations or fundamental beliefs that may or may not include direct evidence. For example, the idea that the Bible is a printed book is believed from direct evidence that a person sees and feels through touch (though it must be cautioned that seeing and feeling by touching are perceptions that can be impaired). However, the belief that the Bible is God’s written Word does not arise from direct evidence (e.g., from touching or seeing). Instead, such a belief is founded on the testimony of Scripture itself prompted by God’s Spirit and of those accurately preaching and teaching its content.

Whichever means human knowledge is gained (i.e., by coherency, foundationalism, or a blend of the two), the resulting knowledge, again, falls along secular and biblical lines as presented in the discussions that follow.

**Secular Beliefs About Knowledge**

From a secular viewpoint, Frame explains that unbelievers claim the ultimate authority or basis for their knowledge is their own reasoning (autonomy) or other sources besides the God of Scripture.\(^6\) Charles Taylor describes such a locus of certainty (the reason for believing) as stemming from “the primacy of the individual” derived from an ethic of “independence, self-control, self-responsibility, of a disengagement which brings control.”\(^7\) Taylor claims this

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\(^6\) Frame, 45.

individualism “is the normal fruit of human self-regard absent the illusory claims of God.”

Indeed, Timothy Keller argues that people often claim their secular belief systems are “simply what was left after science and reason subtracted their former belief in the supernatural. Once that superstition was gone, they were able to see things that had been there all along—that reason alone can establish [a justified true belief].”

Thomas and Richard Howe add that, in general terms, the source of any knowledge can be said to be objective (public, external, fact-based) or subjective (private, internal, personal). For example, they argue a popular view is that “science deals with the objective, public, external and factual and that religion deals with the subjective, private, internal and personal.” Challenges arise, note the Howes, when a person insists that certain wide-ranging issues must be consigned to one realm of knowing or the other. Keller observes such an insistence in unbelievers who will typically embrace science and reason as the sole arbiters of what is real and factual—objective knowing with little if any reliance on the subjective. Moreover, Frame finds such a secular belief system has been infected with postmodern tendencies (the lack of objective knowledge), resulting in unbelievers being simultaneously rationalists and irrationalists. In other words, unbelievers claim ultimate authority employing their own reason (rationalism) while at the same time conceding nothing will unite human reason with objective truth (irrationalism).

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88 Taylor, 571.
90 Ibid., 25.
92 Frame, 45.
Snoeberger suggests the cause of such knowledge disparities is the grace of God. More specifically, through common grace, God restrains the minds of unbelievers, denying them the ability to absolutely reject the existence of God and His standards, despite their attempts to do so. That is, God never allows the unbeliever their autonomy (ultimate authority), even though they may posit such an ill-conceived reality in theory. Nevertheless, Snoeberger concludes that unbelievers will illicitly borrow from the biblical worldview enabling them to possess genuine truth. But even while in possession of genuine truth, they are unable, by their reasoning (rationalism), to possess such truth with any degree of certainty (irrationalism). 93 Scott Oliphant adds, “Any epistemology theory that begins without acknowledging and incorporating the reality of God and his revelation is doomed to fail; it cannot account for even one fact, or for any evidence.” 94 Human knowledge, including scientific knowledge, will always be incomplete and uncertain apart from God’s revelations and grace. 95

**Biblical Belief About Knowledge**

Christians gain knowledge from God through general revelation (the natural order) and special revelation through His written Word. Some may argue that such knowledge assumes God’s existence, so it does, for the Bible never attempts to prove God’s existence. Thus, how can the foundation for knowledge precede a person’s confidence in the absolute reality of the knowledge giver’s existence? Sire says that human beings are created with the capacity to know the world around them and God himself. This knowledge exists because God takes an active role

93 Snoeberger, 362.
95 Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, 39.
in communicating with them. Katherine Dormandy explains that “the truth of the dogmatic-but-true believer’s core beliefs . . . is not serendipitous, but results from divine cognitive guidance.” Much of the evidence for these core beliefs arise from “divinely instituted traditions or revealed texts, and possibly also from philosophical arguments,” through which God guides a believer’s cognition in apprehending these truths.

DeWeese contributes that a biblical worldview commits to the claim that human beings (believers and unbelievers) have, or can have, knowledge of various things, including that of the natural world, the past, about other people, about supernatural events, and most importantly, about God. For DeWeese, Christian epistemology means actively constructing and defending a theory of knowledge that can rationally embrace such knowledge claims. Dormandy adds, “Cultivating epistemic humility—in the sense of being aware of one’s cognitive limitations and working to counteract them—puts even true religious believers in a much better position to achieve epistemic excellence and, in so doing, a deeper and more agile religious cognitive life.”

Glenn Sunshine synthesizes the discussion concluding that God, by His very nature, would create a rational world, a world that rational creatures made in His image can know and understand. However, Daniel Bonevac warns that, apart from God, a person cannot understand the substance of their thoughts and words or their connection to the world Sunshine describes. Indeed, proclaims Bonevac, a person cannot know whether they have any reasons for believing

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96 Sire, 30.
98 DeWeese, 177.
99 Dormandy, 303.
100 Sunshine, 133.
at all or whether any of their perceptions or statements are justifiable true beliefs that can be counted as knowledge if God is not foremost in the equation.\textsuperscript{101}

Snoeberger summarizes the biblical view of knowledge by stressing that all theories of knowledge must be developed from justifiable true beliefs that presuppose the existence and sovereign exclusiveness of the God of Scripture.\textsuperscript{102} Wayne Grudem adds that a wise person has developed knowledge revealed by God and exercises skill in applying such knowledge (a biblical worldview) to their own and others’ situations in life.\textsuperscript{103}

Core Beliefs About Ethics

Perhaps the most widely discussed theme is human conduct, what people believe about right and wrong issues. This discussion is formally entitled ethics and, in the present day, is complicated by subjective views of reality and, therefore, truth. For at least several decades, such subjective, secular views have woven themselves into the fabric of biblical worldviews. For example, a recent study shows that most Americans (58\%) believe moral truth is an individual reality. Only four in ten American adults (42\%) embrace God as the basis for truth. Another four out of ten adults believe the discovery of truth is either from an inner certainty (16\%), from scientific proof (15\%), from tradition (5\%), or merely from public consensus (4\%). According to George Barna, the remaining American adults reject any notions of truth (5\%) or claim ignorance of any basis for truth (13\%).\textsuperscript{104} Finally, American adults are just as likely to rely on

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{102} Snoeberger, 365.
\item \textsuperscript{103} Grudem, \textit{Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning}, 169.
\item \textsuperscript{104} George Barna, \textit{AWVI 2020 Results - Release #5: Perceptions of Truth} (Glendale, AZ: Cultural Research Center, Arizona Christian University, May 19, 2020), 1, https://www.arizonachristian.edu/culturalresearchcenter/research/.
\end{itemize}
the advice or examples of other people (30%) or their inner feelings, experiences, or beliefs (31%) as they are to rely on religious faith (29%) when making moral choices.\footnote{George Barna, AWVI 2020 Results - Release #6: Perceptions of Morality & Moral Choices (Glendale, AZ: Cultural Research Center, Arizona Christian University, June 2, 2020), 1, https://www.arizonachristian.edu/culturalresearchcenter/research/}

Such sobering statistics lead to discussions on secular and biblical views of ethics.

**Secular Beliefs About Ethics**

As the prior statistics exemplify, it is currently in vogue to question or even reject the occurrence of universal or objective truth and morality. Instead, moral standards are being determined by personal preference or cultural consensus. Moreover, it is fashionable to declare there is no natural moral law written on the hearts of all people (contra Rom 2:15).\footnote{Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, 104-05.} Grudem explains that secular belief systems assume moral principles must originate with human beings using only human observation, reason, and perception. Moreover, many people assume it is impossible to know absolute right and wrong. Grudem observes that such a conviction often leads to frustration and anger toward people who claim they know right from wrong for all people (e.g., Christians who believe in absolute truth from the Bible).\footnote{Grudem, Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning, 43, 75.}

For a Secular Humanist, morality is often a manifestation of social convention. Each person’s right and wrong convictions are not suggestions of moral absolutes but reflect conditioned, acceptable behavior influenced by authority figures. Much like the behavior of a dog that is predicated on the shaping of its master, human behavior is said to be shaped by punishment and reward within a normative cultural context.\footnote{Phillips, Brown, and Stonestreet, 28.}

\footnote{105 George Barna, AWVI 2020 Results - Release #6: Perceptions of Morality & Moral Choices (Glendale, AZ: Cultural Research Center, Arizona Christian University, June 2, 2020), 1, https://www.arizonachristian.edu/culturalresearchcenter/research/.}
\footnote{106 Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, 104-05.}
\footnote{107 Grudem, Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning, 43, 75.}
\footnote{108 Phillips, Brown, and Stonestreet, 28.}
determined by its relation to reality; instead, truth originates from various social constructs conceived for different purposes.\(^{109}\)

Those with more postmodern leanings seem to gather around the idea that every person has their own truth. There is no warrant or value in discovering and complying with traditional, culturally-based truths that transcend individual preferences or tastes. Olson characterizes such a position as “cognitive nihilism, a kind of chaotic, anarchic, individualistic view of truth and knowledge that absolutely undermines any hope of morality or ethics outside the individual.”\(^{110}\)

Frame encapsulates the secular view of ethics showing that, apart from Scripture, ethical argument (what is right and wrong) loses clarity and is often unpersuasive. Unbelievers most often do not accept God’s Word as authoritative. Nevertheless, at a minimum, unbelievers may respect an argument that is self-conscious about its presuppositions regarding reality and knowledge.\(^{111}\) Sunshine seems to have uncovered a possibly related example in the British school of atheism, followed by Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris. This school insists that, although science has made God irrelevant, people and cultures can be moral, nonetheless. Sunshine interprets this insistence to mean people can still hold onto the same morals that are rooted in Christian tradition without acknowledging the morals to be of Christian origin.\(^{112}\) Such a premise rings of a backhanded acknowledgment of the truth of Romans 2:15.\(^{113}\)

\(^{109}\) DeWeese, 162.

\(^{110}\) Olson, 38.

\(^{111}\) Frame, 944.

\(^{112}\) Sunshine, 208-09.

\(^{113}\) In Romans 2:15, Paul asserts that in some sense the law can and has been obeyed by those who do not have the law, though the gospel of Jesus Christ will be the standard for future judgment (v. 16).
Biblical Belief About Ethics

A biblical worldview should respond quite emphatically that Scripture declares God has stamped His moral code on the hearts of all people (Rom 2:14-15; cf. Jer 31:31-34).\textsuperscript{114} Put another way, a person’s moral nature results from God impressing His moral standards on their soul.\textsuperscript{115} Since God is immutable, since he never changes in His holiness, he is by definition the very standard of morality in the universe.\textsuperscript{116} Myers and Noebel also hold that Christian morality is established on the conviction of absolute moral principles encountered outside of, but somehow inscribing on, every person’s being. It is an absolute moral order that flows from God’s very nature into human beings’ minds and hearts.\textsuperscript{117}

Grudem explains that an ethical system derived from Scripture will necessarily define right and wrong based on the rules God gives therein. Such an ethical system will also seek to do all for God’s glory and develop a Christlike character within each person. Grudem reaffirms that the absolute moral order contained in God’s Word is not merely the result of human thinking but is revealed by God himself.\textsuperscript{118} Studying biblical ethics correctly strengthens and matures a believer and their biblical worldview and results in greater personal holiness in their lives.\textsuperscript{119}

Core Beliefs About Humankind

Many disciplines make human beings the object of study (e.g., psychology, linguistics, etc.). The theme within the present worldview context regarding humankind is only typically

\textsuperscript{114} Anderson, Clark, and Naugle, 105.
\textsuperscript{115} Phillips, Brown, and Stonestreet, 28.
\textsuperscript{116} Matthew Barrett, \textit{None Greater: The Undomesticated Attributes of God} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2019), 108.
\textsuperscript{117} Myers and Noebel, 41.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 49.
concerned about every person’s origin, condition, and destiny. As with other core beliefs, a
dichotomy between secular and biblical understandings of human beings exists, and this contrast
in beliefs will be the focus of the remaining review.

**Secular Beliefs About Humankind**

Contemporary secular conceptions of human beings remain heavily influenced by
evolutionary propositions. In general, humans originated from the dust of the earth (often
described as the “primordial ooze”), unaided by any divine breath of life, and evolved into
thinking, doing beings. A person is said to be matter in motion with no immortal soul. Thinking
brains have developed, but there is no mind apart from the brain, and equally, there is no soul
independent of the human body.\(^{120}\) Humanity is merely part of a mechanistic universe in which a
person’s evolutionary behavior is displayed. But even the most abstract aspects of each person’s
behavior are reduced to elements of natural processes. For example, life begins absolutely with
birth (not conception) and ends absolutely with death. People are merely viewed as machines
that run for a while but eventually encounter failure or simply run down and quit working.\(^{121}\)
Devoid of all practical meaning, Gould describes the modern human as an “empty self.”\(^{122}\)

Recent research finds among Americans that one person in eight (12%) views people
only as “material substance – biological machines.” Another one in eight (12%) contend people
are “part of the universe.” Barna states that even smaller numbers of people hold human beings
to be mere illusions; no one really exists; they are as “sleeping gods, part of the soul of the
universe.”

\(^{120}\) Geisler and Watkins, 59.


\(^{122}\) Gould, 47.
Perhaps the most astounding data collected reveals most Americans place little value on human life—six in ten adults failed to perceive human life as sacred. Instead, life is viewed without absolute value; it is what each person makes it (37%). Others in this group argue that “life does not attain its full value until [humanity reaches its] highest point of evolution and expression” (11%). Finally, one in ten adults expressed an altogether inability even to know how to value human life.\textsuperscript{123}

Tunnicliffe observes that secular worldviews hold all people to be essentially good in their nature. Consequently, people are not depraved beings needing some type of redemption. Moreover, if there were a God, His desire would be for each person to love themselves because everything begins with the individual. In the end, man becomes God.\textsuperscript{124} A recent study confirming this secular mindset reveals that most American adults (69%) across all geographic and demographic regions hold that people are intrinsically good. Barna explains that research finds this belief originates from a person’s feelings rather than brute facts and often reflects their view of themselves (i.e., they believe themselves to be good). A small portion of American adults defends the general goodness of people based on spiritual grounds. They affirm humans are fundamentally good because all are created in God’s image, are naturally able to discern right from wrong, and are valued by God.\textsuperscript{125} While the basis for such a view is biblically sound, the reality is that humans are not fundamentally good, despite being created in God’s image, being naturally able to discern right from wrong, and being valued by God—a biblical worldview.


\textsuperscript{124} Tunnicliffe, 47-48.

\textsuperscript{125} George Barna, \textit{FULL Release \#8: Views of Sin and Salvation} (Glendale, AZ: Cultural Research Center, Arizona Christian University, August 4, 2020), 1, https://www.arizonachristian.edu/culturalresearchcenter/research/.
Biblical Belief About Humankind

The most notable aspect of any biblical view of human beings is that all have been created in the image of God (Gen 1:26). Literally interpreted, all people have been created in their current form as fully developed beings capable of rational thought, in contrast to the secular premise of a lower creature destined to evolve. Moreover, both testaments of Scripture affirm that human beings are two-dimensional, a functional, dualistic unity of material (“dust of the ground”; Gen 2:7a) and immaterial (“breath of life”; Gen 2:7b). A person’s body falls in the material category, but their immaterial aspect, soul, spirit, heart, mind, conscience, etc., are precisely that, immaterial. The union of the material and immaterial is such that no one has any subjective awareness of the distinct aspects—people only view themselves as a unified whole.

DeWeese encapsulates the human estate noting that people were created with the capacities of consciousness and self-awareness. These capacities enable a person to grasp their roles and responsibilities in life. Additionally, human beings possess the capacity to relate to God spiritually by ruling over creation as His ambassadors. Humans are relational beings, capable of distinguishing between good and evil, right and wrong, and making decisions based on such ideals. Accordingly, each person is morally responsible for their behavior and actions. Finally, humans possess a relational capacity toward other people, not merely communicating with them about the here-and-now but also about past and future experiences and abstract ideas. In other words, humans are capable of expression through language and creativity.

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126 Grier, 29.
127 DeWeese, 229.
128 Ibid., 233.
Since humans are created in the image and likeness of God (meaning they have value), the dignity of each person is closely associated with the dignity of God.\(^{129}\) Such dignity and worth mean that human beings occupy a special place in creation, and this inherent dignity and worth cannot diminish or be taken away.\(^ {130}\) Moreover, humans are created with personality, self-transcendence, intellect, and a sense of morality.\(^ {131}\) Myers and Noebel suggest these human characteristics are foundational to human rights, social order, and marriage—the framework from which emanates the good life for each person and civil society at large.\(^ {132}\)

Scripture confirms that human beings were created good but rebelled against God and became defaced and positionally separated from him, though not to such an extent that restoration is impossible. Consequently, humanity persists in a state of rebellion against God and His purposes. Moreland and Craig explain that people refuse to submit to and worship the Creator. Instead, they rebel against him and travel their own course in life. In doing so, they find themselves alienated from him, morally guilty of His judgment, and pursuing the passions of life (i.e., false gods of their own construct).\(^ {133}\) Snoeberger says that no aspect of any culture may escape such human depravity, even though some aspects of culture are illicitly borrowed from the Christian worldview.

Tunnicliffe proclaims the Bible is clear: “There is a God, and you are not him.” Human beings are not now, nor will they ever be divine. Instead, Scripture informs the human condition; all are sinners before God (Rom 3:23). No one has the potential to transform themselves; real

\(^{129}\) Geisler and Watkins, 41.  
^{130}\) Sunshine, 165, 212.  
^{131}\) Sire, 20.  
^{132}\) Myers and Noebel, 32.  
^{133}\) Moreland and Craig, 551.
transformation only occurs through the indwelling of the Spirit of God that conforms a person to His image. Because God transcends and is free from His creation, Matthew Barrett explains, God can save any person from their state of rebellion and alienation. Furthermore, if God were not sovereign, he would need a person’s help just as much as that person needs God’s help unto salvation. Fortunately, the good news of Jesus Christ is that salvation depends solely on God, who in no way depends on His creatures.

Theological Foundations

Human cognitive faculties designed by God in creation make it possible for human beings to ponder, think, analyze, synthesize, carry on internal conversations, etc., about themselves and the world in which they live. These cognitive faculties play a crucial role in evaluating and responding to life circumstances and planning their future course in the world.

From birth, each person begins developing beliefs about themselves and the world in which they live. These beliefs touch upon many subjects, including principle beliefs about God, ultimate reality (metaphysics), the makeup and functions of human beings (anthropology), how and what can be known (epistemology), and what is right and what is wrong (ethics). This network of beliefs establishes that framework for every person’s worldview—the basis for relating and interpreting human experience.

How a person thinks is played out in how they speak and live, i.e., their behavior (cf. Matt 12:33-37; 15:17-19). Were humanity to live life (in an absolute sense) based on beliefs in the biblical truths about God, each other, and the world, life would approach heaven on earth! Unfortunately, such is not the case.

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134 Tunnicliffe, 48.
135 Barrett, 69.
Where Thinking Begins

The Bible states that all people are created in God’s image (imago Dei) and possess intuitive knowledge about him. Alvin Plantinga explains that within every person exists a “faculty or cognitive mechanism,” what Calvin described as a sensus divinitatis, that will produce beliefs about God when triggered by various circumstances in life.\(^{136}\) In other words, being created in God’s image means that all people always and everywhere carry the knowledge of God within them.\(^{137}\) Such knowledge of God consciously or subconsciously informs a person’s thinking (διαλογισμος), not about what God has made, but about God Himself (Rom 1:19).

The purpose of the implanted knowledge of God within every person, at least since the Fall, has been to ensure all people know the One in whose image they are made. Therefore, such knowledge renders all people “without excuse” concerning God’s existence (Rom 1:20). The problem is that humanity, under the influences of sin, has corrupted the sensus divinitatis (the knowledge of God implanted). The apostle Paul describes the manifestation of this corrupted thinking as suppression of the truth and not acknowledging God’s sovereignty (Rom 1:25-32), a natural phenomenon to all humans beginning from birth (cf. Ps 51:5). The truths people suppress are found in creation (general revelation) and, most importantly, in God’s revealed Word (special revelation; cf. Ps 119:160).

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\(^{136}\) Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 172. According to Moreland and Craig, such life events may include episodes of guilt or gratitude or moments of awe at nature’s splendor. Moreland and Craig, 149.

\(^{137}\) Herman Bavinck more formally writes, “Humans, having been created in the divine image, were gifted with the capacity to receive the impressions of this revelation and thereby to acquire some sense and knowledge of the Eternal Being.” Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt and John Vriend, vol. 2, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 73.
Since life circumstances often call for a firm belief in biblical truth, those not holding a firm belief in biblical truth, who have no trust in biblical truth, or believe arguments against biblical truth, suffer from some cognitive malfunction.\(^{138}\) Their mind has been broken, impeded, hindered, hampered, and thwarted from thinking in the manner they were designed by God to do (Rom 1:21; Eph 4:18; 1 Pet 1:14; cf. 1 Cor 2:8). Such a desperate condition reflects the noetic\(^{139}\) effects of sin, the enslavement of a person’s thinking by their very nature and sinful state (Rom 1:28; 2 Cor 4:4).\(^{140}\) In other words, although human beings were designed to do all things to the glory of God, whether eating, drinking, thinking, knowing, etc. (1 Cor 10:31), sin so limits and compels them that they now, quite naturally, do all things to their own glory, or the glory of something or someone other than God.\(^{141}\) Their mental devices are no longer adequate for discovering and resolving reality. Instead, their minds merely rearrange error.\(^{142}\)

\(^{138}\) The apostle Paul, in describing the human condition in Romans 1-3, portrays a systemic condition that includes a kind of cognitive impairment. In other words, unbelievers are delivered over to an ‘unreasoning mind’ (ἀδόκιμον νοῦν) that corresponds to their failure to acknowledge God (ἐδοκίμασαν; Rom 1:28). Plantinga describes this cognitive impairment or malfunction as “some kind of dysfunction of the sensus divinitatis.” Plantinga, 184. On Plantinga’s view, see also John D. Laing, “Plantinga’s Reformed Epistemology, Evidentialism, and Evangelical Apologetics,” Global Journal of Classic Theology 9, no. 2 (2011): 5, http://www.globaljournalet.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Laing-Ref-Epistemology-Evan-Apol.pdf.

\(^{139}\) From the Greek nous, “mind.”

\(^{140}\) Norman L. Geisler, Systematic Theology, vol. 3, 4 vols. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2002), 147. Thomas McCall describes sinful thinking as irrationality, “contrary to reason rightly ordered.” Thomas H. McCall, Against God and Nature: The Doctrine of Sin, Foundations of Evangelical Theology Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 235. Michael Sudduth opines, “The impedance or impairment of theistic belief producing cognitive processes may result from aspects of our passionate nature (for example, self-will, pride, fear, hatred, hedonism), or from the adoption of beliefs incompatible with theism (for example, belief in the existence of gratuitous evil, metaphysical naturalism, the incoherence of immaterial minds).” Michael Sudduth, The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology, Ashgate Philosophy of Religion Series (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 147-48.

\(^{141}\) Bahnsen notes, “Paul taught that those who reject the word of the cross (which is needed to repair man’s stubborn refusal to submit to the light of God) are reduced to foolishness in their thinking and living (1 Cor. 1:20).” Greg L. Bahnsen, Van Til’s Apologetic: Readings and Analysis (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Pub., 1998), 262.

Although a person’s worldview is a particular function of their heart and is central to their identity as *imago Dei*, the unbiblical thinking described above is the locus from which all people begin their formulation of a worldview.

**Where Thinking Should Be**

At the point of regeneration, the moment a person trusts Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sin and eternal life, they become a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). As a begotten child of God (1 John 5:1), they now possess different cognitive faculties than unbelievers. This new mind or capacity of thinking consists of Scripture as God’s revelation to humanity (2 Pet 1:3), the internal prompting and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:12-15; 2 Cor 2:9-10; Eph 5:18; Col 2:12-13), and the faith (the capacity to understand and believe divine revelation) given to them by God (cf. Eph 2:8).

However, the regeneration process does not afford a person complete cognitive rest about all matters of faith and life. In other words, while a person’s beliefs about and relationship with Jesus Christ begin at regeneration, other conscious and subconscious faith and life commitments develop more gradually. This gradual maturation is progressive sanctification, a process by which a believer’s fundamental beliefs are shaped by conformity to God’s will as revealed in Scripture. Such harmony not only includes the believer’s ingestion of God’s Word through study

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144 Sudduth explains that God’s grace in regeneration repairs a person’s prior cognitive impairment by removing passions and beliefs that impede formation of a variety of theistic beliefs, while at the same time instilling passions “(for example, love of God, sense of beauty in the word) that may be preconditions for, or at least instrumental to, the positive assessment of natural evidences of God’s being and nature.” Sudduth, 148.

145 For relevant discussion on faith and reason, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 645.

and enlightenment by the Holy Spirit, but also their embracing ethical discipline: dedicating their intellectual and spiritual faculties to God (Rom 12:1), not conforming to the philosophies of the world by instead renewing their mind on God’s Word (Rom 12:2), reflecting God’s truth and glory in their lives as children of light (Eph 5:8), and abounding in love (Phil 1:9).\(^{147}\)

Therefore, a believer’s changed cognitive faculties (their thinking) enable them to formulate an orderly and related set of beliefs about life based upon a committed trust in the person and message of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. This biblical worldview sees everything through the lens of Scripture; it is a worldview not defined by culture or experience but allows the Bible to be the determiner.\(^{148}\) Unfortunately, a person who has a belief system based on biblical truth may face situations in life where they choose to live (at least at that moment) based on an antithesis. The reason for such a diversion is the acquisition of a defeater, an argument in opposition to God’s truth for that belief (i.e., a worldly philosophy). The defeater would originate from some intellectual, emotional, or willful failure caused by suppressing God’s truth—a manifestation of sin’s enduring effects and a weakened biblical worldview.\(^{149}\) Fortunately, Scripture provides instruction on reinforcing a biblical worldview against such subjugators.

**Right-Thinking Through Learning**

This action research thesis proposes that a believer’s consistent participation in learning opportunities on focused theologies of the Christian faith will result in a cohesive biblical worldview. Frame describes the term *theology* as “the study of, knowledge of, speaking of,


\(^{148}\) Phillips, Brown, and Stonestreet, 16.

teaching of, learning about God.”

Therefore, the practice of theology is the use of the entirety of God’s revelation (general and special) to meet a believer’s spiritual needs and promote their spiritual growth and health. Theology is effectively discipleship training, and in the context of this action research thesis, teaching will be the primary mechanism to meet its scriptural warrant (cf. Matt 28:19f.).

Scripture represents the “norm” (a word derived from the Latin norma and originally meaning “a carpenter’s square,” a precision tool used to determine the square of a corner and the straightness of a line) when developing the fundamentals of a biblical worldview. In this context, Walter Kaiser finds that Scripture can be used in four different ways: “(1) as a guide, (2) as a guard, (3) as a compass, and (4) as a principle.” Kaiser continues, “Accordingly, guides point out the route we should take, while guards warn us against wrong decisions or paths. Compasses help us gain our orientation, and principles gather the abstract ideas that encapsulate a number of examples found in Scripture.” This action research thesis will embrace these axioms to assist each participant in increasing their biblical knowledge (Prov 1:5, 7, 18:15; Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 2:15, 3:16).

However, biblical knowledge alone does not guarantee a person’s understanding of God’s Word and right-thinking in life’s circumstances. Indeed, the Bible affirms that a person does not truly understand Scripture until they can apply its truths to new situations in life not even conceived by the original text (Matt 16:3; 22:29; Luke 24:25; John 5:39f.; Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:16f.). In other words, the Bible’s whole purpose is to apply its truth to the entirety of a person’s

150 Frame, The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, 77.
151 Ibid., 81.
153 Ibid., 10.
life (John 20:31; Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:16f.).

By teaching God’s Word and its applications (i.e., theology), the goal of a person displaying wise human judgment in harmony with Scripture’s truth (especially regarding the five previously described tenets, or themes, that form any worldview) can be achieved.

**Theoretical Foundations**

Beyond the imperatives to preach and teach God’s Word, there is little process information in Scripture regarding teaching and training methodologies. The Old Testament provides examples of “the schools of the prophets” begun by Samuel (1 Sam 10:5; 19:20) and then Elisha (2 Kgs 2:3, 5; 4:38; 6:1). Though not truly schools in a technical sense, Samuel, Elisha, and other prophets gathered their students together in a designated place and taught them.

The New Testament testimony portrays the apostle Paul and perhaps other local disciples teaching in the school of Tyrannus for two years (Acts 19:9-10). As future leaders of the growing church in Asia, the students gathered daily under Paul’s instruction for theological training.

Jesus also taught His students, the apostles, Christian doctrine and theology, and all other information to effectively propagate the faith to the ends of the earth following His ascension. Thus, the gospel narrative portrays varied teaching locations depending on where Christ and His students are occasioned to be.

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154 Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 84.


It is worth observing that the teaching methods of Jesus and Paul appeared quite simplistic, indicating little is required for effective learning to occur. Moreover, despite the apparent simplicity, the teaching was continuous in reinforcing godly principles under constant attack by the surrounding cultures. While the adult Bible study classes within The Woodlands Bible Church historically mimic these examples from Scripture, focused attention on biblical worldview development has not traditionally been programmed with any intentionality or frequency.

Notwithstanding the biblical teaching examples described above, contemporary information delivery methods were not directly contemplated in Scripture. For instance, modern teaching programs include internet-driven video and podcast series on Christian worldview development. Formal instruction courses for schools and churches are also offered on developing a biblical worldview and are generally tailored to specific age groups.\textsuperscript{157} Most importantly, tools for assessing a person’s worldview before and after participating in a training program are available to researchers.\textsuperscript{158}

### Participant Theory

Research on the formation of biblical worldviews has often included the seven stages of faith development model of James Fowler.\textsuperscript{159} Carolyn Simoneaux summarizes Fowler’s Faith Development Theory within seven age ranges that depict anticipated spiritual maturity levels.

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The first four stages are truly developmental stages from birth through about eighteen years of age. The remaining three stages track from eighteen to well beyond midlife. Simoneaux summarizes these latter stages of faith as follows: a period when a person critically examines their belief system but one that is quickly disillusioned (from eighteen to midlife);160 a period where a person views life as a mystery, often adopting earlier life beliefs but an independent thinker (midlife); and one with a firmly established and generally unwavering biblical worldview.161

However, research by Timothy Jones seems to indicate Fowler’s reality of “faith” is not the same phenomenon as biblical-orthodox faith.162 Instead, Fowler’s “faith” is what Jones describes as an “other-awareness,” an “openness not only to other human beings but also to the otherness of the transcendent realm,” much like Friedrich Schleiermacher’s theology.163 In other words, Fowler’s is a non-propositional understanding of faith; that is, no specific faith content is necessary.164 In contrast, biblical-orthodox faith comprises two commingled and inseparable dimensions: a faith content (propositional truth from Scripture) and a faith commitment (the

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160 Roger Erdvig similarly found Fowler’s stages of faith useful and suggests the eighteen to mid-life range can be quite unsettling for a person as they assume responsibility for their beliefs and behaviors. Roger Charles Stensrud Erdvig, “A Model for Biblical Worldview Development in Evangelical Christian Emerging Adults” (Doctor of Education diss., Liberty University, 2016), 52-53.


162 Jones defines biblical-orthodox faith as “the objective acceptance of the witness of the Christian Scriptures concerning God’s historical self-revelation in Jesus Christ, coupled with a transformative, personal commitment to Jesus Christ.”


164 Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) suggested an authentic faith begins with the self. “I feel this or that way about Christ.” A particular “feeling for God” was the locus for all theology and personal feelings of faith determined a person’s content of revelation. Such is a non-propositional faith based on non-propositional truths. John D. Hannah, Our Legacy: The History of Christian Doctrine (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 61.
transformative, personal commitment to Christ and obedience to God’s Word).\textsuperscript{165} Thus, Jones concludes that Fowler’s stages of faith development model appears to be an actual phenomenon, but the model is inadequate to describe a biblical-orthodox faith.\textsuperscript{166}

Given Jones’s precedent research, an alternate approach to presenting the Bible study curriculum for this action research thesis appears warranted. A suitable alternative may be based on Robert Pazmiño’s model of Christian education to benefit spiritual formation. This model includes proclamation and reception of the Bible study curriculum, engaging the participants in Christian fellowship within and outside the class, worshiping God as revealed through Christ, and advocating for others.\textsuperscript{167}

In any case, and given the blend of participants anticipated for this action research thesis, the Bible study classes need to be interactive upfront so participants can synthesize their life experiences and exposures to worldly philosophies into consensus biblical responses. In other words, “buy-in” will be sought from the project participants on basic worldview premises and a very high-level agreement on what the Bible study classes need to achieve to facilitate meeting this consensus.\textsuperscript{168} This is not to imply the participants direct what the substance of the Bible study materials should be. Instead, the participants will assist in establishing the learning objectives within the context of their own cultural milieu. This learning approach acknowledges the diverse stages of faith and spiritual maturities of the participants (and their demographics) and appears to differ from mainstream approaches to teaching and applying Christian theology in the local church.

\textsuperscript{165} Jones, 9, 18, 115.
\textsuperscript{166} Jones, 116-17.
Tim Sensing adds caution to research endeavors such as those proposed for this project. The Hawthorne Effect is a theory that raises doubt about the reliability of research when the participants know they are being studied. From one perspective, participants in the research project likely desire the researcher to succeed and tailor their participation and survey responses to affect that outcome. However, the ideal mindset is a group chosen to participate based on their desire to learn and grow in spiritual knowledge and maturity. This group will engross themselves in the Bible study curriculum paying little attention to the research formalities. In other words, individual learning and life-changing results take center stage. Sensing suggests the data collected during this action research thesis project be examined for evidence of The Hawthorne Effect to ensure reliable research has occurred.169

Research Distinctives

This action research thesis also differs from the norm because it focuses on adult biblical worldview development. In other words, searches of dissertation and theses databases for research related to biblical worldview formation or the effects on a person or group’s biblical worldview by external factors reveal a general focus on primary education ages (e.g., ages ten through eighteen) up through college-aged development.170 There appears to be little scholarly assessment of a person’s biblical worldview development within the midlife and mature-life ages. This observation is not to imply a scarcity of academic worldview-related literature. Indeed, much has been written in the last several decades on the fundamental tenets of a biblical


170 A plurality of worldview training programs appears to be tailored to the kindergarten through twelfth grade primary school Christian education arena. For example, see “Bible Curriculum That Makes Sense of Today’s World,” Summit Ministries, last modified 2020, accessed November 14, 2020. https://www.summit.org/curriculum/.
worldview and the impact such a worldview has on believers and the culture in which they live and participate. Nevertheless, the lack of adult worldview learning opportunities within the local churches, and for this research project, The Woodlands Bible Church, ensures the fragility and decline of adult biblical worldviews.

In the end, this action research thesis project will correspond to the biblical examples of group teaching based on the described theoretical foundations. Simply put, the Bible study class and curriculum proposed for this action research thesis project generally represent traditional adult Christian education formats within a local church context. The research will also include surveys before and after the curriculum is presented to assess any changes in theological knowledge that should engender positive behavioral changes.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The research methodology was designed to address the problem delineated in chapter one; that is, there is an absence of consistent, focused Bible studies in Christian theology at The Woodlands Bible Church. The research methodology also reflects the theological and theoretical foundations described in chapter two. This chapter will explain the design of the action research thesis project intervention within the context of an adult Bible study course taught by the researcher at The Woodlands Bible Church. The intervention design includes information on pre-course and post-course data gathering surveys, the anticipated participants, and how the qualitative and quantitative data collected from the surveys were retrieved and analyzed. This Methodology section will ultimately conclude with the practical details of the Bible study classes.

Intervention Design

The intervention design comprised teaching adult Bible study classes at The Woodlands Bible Church. The objective of the project design was to address a growing syncretism of biblical worldviews and worldly philosophies among members and attendees of The Woodlands Bible Church through the teaching of focused Bible study classes in Christian theology in each of the five primary belief areas that serve as the foundation for a biblical worldview: God, reality (metaphysics), knowledge (epistemology), ethics, and human beings (anthropology).
Method

The research methodology is described as action research. Ernest T. Stringer suggests action research is based on the proposition that generalized solutions may not fit all contexts. Consequently, the purpose of an inquiry is “to identify an appropriate solution for the particular dynamics at work in a local situation.”\(^{171}\) Therefore, tailoring Bible study curricula to meet the greatest number of potential Bible study participants’ biblical worldview development needs is preferred. Stringer also notes the primary purpose of action research “is to provide the means for people to engage in systematic inquiry and investigation to design an appropriate way of accomplishing a desired goal and to evaluate its effectiveness.”\(^{172}\) Therefore, action research is not just “action” by the facilitator (i.e., preaching and teaching), but more about research designed to benefit the research participants. Creating and implementing a Bible study class merely to transmit Christian doctrines and theologies to the participants is not the point of action research. Instead, the research becomes a change agent. What matters is the behavioral changes in the participant’s lives as they develop and live out a cohesive biblical worldview. In the context of this action research thesis, action research is, in fact, discipleship training.

Appropriate precautions were observed to ensure the researcher did not project explicit presuppositions to the participants on how they should absorb the Bible study curriculum and manifest a cohesive biblical worldview in their lives (i.e., their behavior). Without such precautions, resistance to full participation in the classes by some, if not many, could have occurred. Examples of such resistance could have been the differing presuppositions each

\(^{171}\) Stringer, 6.

\(^{172}\) Ibid.
participant brought to the research regarding the five primary belief areas of Christian theology or their corresponding applications to their local cultural context.

**Project Conceptualization**

The action research objective was accomplished first by the researcher teaching eleven adult Bible study classes at The Woodlands Bible Church. The curriculum for the classes comprised focused studies in Christian theology in each of the five primary belief areas that serve as the foundation for a biblical worldview: God, reality (metaphysics), knowledge (epistemology), ethics, and human beings (anthropology). Each belief area was taught in one forty-five-minute session at 9:30 am on consecutive Sundays, except for the topics of God, which consisted of three class sessions on consecutive Sundays, and knowledge and human beings, which each consisted of two class sessions on consecutive Sundays.¹⁷³ The Bible study curriculum and its presentation attempted to interact intellectually with people from various Bible and theology knowledge levels, much like a sine wave, from the more learned (and hopefully spiritually mature) at its peak to the newly regenerated or seekers in its valley.

**Class Curriculum**

The teaching notes were developed based on the researcher’s exegetical study of Scripture and information encountered in the Literature Review portion of this action research thesis (see example in Appendix A). The researcher provided a three-ring notebook to each Bible study class participant. The notebooks contained student study notes for each of the five foundational belief areas of Christian theology, divider pages for each of the five belief area

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¹⁷³ To clarify the number of classes, there was an introduction class, three classes on God, one class each on reality and ethics, two classes on knowledge and human beings, and a final review class for a total of eleven classes.
notes, and some blank, ruled paper for additional participant notes as need. The student study notes contained Christian theological truths exegetically derived from Scripture presented in an outline format and followed directly along with the researcher’s parallel teaching notes for each class. In addition, the student study notes included blank areas for direct, written notetaking where expanded information could be recorded from the researcher’s presentations and notes. The researcher’s presentation of each class’s information was a lecture format that encouraged open dialogue and questions from and between the participants. The researcher utilized Microsoft PowerPoint® presentations prepared by the researcher to accompany the lecture format (see example in Appendix A). Finally, audio recordings of each class session were made and posted on a password-protected private website to benefit participants who may have missed a class session. These audio recordings also allowed the researcher to revisit each class session to assess the participant’s progress and evaluate the adequacy of the researcher’s answers to questions raised.

The Bible study classes and their order of presentation to the participants were as follows:

1) The study materials began in the first class with an introductory overview of a worldview and how a biblical worldview contrasts with that of non-biblical worldviews. Particular attention was paid to the biblical idea of a person’s mind (or heart) and how thinking errors manifest in a person’s behaviors. The introductory class also provided brief explanations of the five primary belief areas that lay the

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174 For this action research thesis, the electronic visual aids that accompanied each class lecture were displayed from electronic equipment owned and brought to each class by the researcher.

175 Stringer suggests that the content of the teaching necessarily include appropriate language orientated to the listener. He finds this is accomplished by using “inclusive forms of language that have a connotation of togetherness—the first-person plural we rather than the first-person singular I or the third-person you or they.” Stringer, 201. Consequently, the course curricula frequently included first-person dialogue in the teaching notes.
foundation for a biblical worldview. At the same time, feedback was solicited from the class participants on how each of the belief systems might affect a person’s behavior in the world.

2) The second class required three full class periods and surveyed the theology of God. As demonstrated in the literature review portion of this action research thesis, there are two views of [G]od: the atheistic and theistic. The representative belief systems of atheism, pantheism, panentheism, and deism were reviewed and contrasted with God as revealed in Scripture. An evangelical understanding of the God of Scripture was explored with Christian living applications and influences on each participant’s local culture. Typical worldview questions that were answered included: Is the God of the Bible a personal being? Does He know all things? Does He love all believers with an inseparable love? Is He dynamically involved in each believer’s life and circumstances? Is He in control of all things?

3) The third class explored the concept of ultimate reality (metaphysics) through the Bible’s presentation of creation, including the universe, the earth, and all things in them (see Lesson #3 example in Appendix A). Particular attention was paid to delineating biblical beliefs about the physical world in which all people live. Typical worldview questions that were answered included: Is life in this world just the result of a cause-and-effect relationship between events, or is God dynamically involved in them? Does He act causally in nature? Are miracles possible?

4) The fourth class required two full class periods and mined the sources and content of human knowledge (epistemology) by exploring the two-part question, what can a person know, and how can they know it? The first part of the question focuses on the
source of knowledge. As such, naturalistic sources proposed by humanity were surveyed and contrasted with knowledge provided by Scripture. The second part of the question concerns human cognition, the mental process, or the faculty through which each person acquires knowledge. Typical worldview questions that were answered included: What effect does a person’s sinful condition have on their ability to know? Can a person’s reasoning and sense experience be trusted in gaining knowledge? Are a person’s intuitive perceptions of themselves more dependable than their perceptions of their surrounding world? Is truth relative, or must truth be the same for all people? Can God give understanding and meaning to people within their inner self? Finally, how has God revealed himself, and how can a person know what He has revealed?

5) The fifth class explained why certain things are right and wrong (a study of ethics). Though contrasted with present-day cultural mores, the only source for this study was God’s revealed Word. Typical worldview questions that were answered included: Are there moral laws that govern human behavior? If so, what are they? And how can a person know what they are? Is morality relative to individuals or cultures? Or does morality rise above cultural, historical, and individual boundaries?

6) The sixth class also required two full class periods to complete. It comprised the study of human beings (biblical anthropology). The class curriculum focused on the make-up of a human being. Typical worldview questions that were answered included: Are human beings only material (monistic) or material and immaterial (dualistic)? If both material and immaterial, how do the two relate to each other? If the relationship is dynamic, could it be said that each person is a dualistic unity? How
do the biblical concepts of heart, soul, spirit, mind, etc., correspond to this unity?

What is the motivation of the human heart? Does physical death end human existence, or is there conscious, personal existence after death? Are there rewards and punishment after death? What people believe about these things will impact the way they live and how they relate to other people.

7) The final class was a comprehensive review of the entire Bible study curriculum. Each participant was encouraged to share any changes they experienced in their biblical worldview and, if so, what impact these changes might have on their individual lives and in the lives of those around them. A post-course survey was also administered to accumulate data on evaluating the effectiveness of focused teaching in Christian theology on developing a coherent biblical worldview.

**Data Collection**

Data gathering consisted of administering two written surveys. Informed consent was obtained from each participant using the consent form included with the first survey (see Appendix B). The first survey was administered to each Bible study participant to establish a baseline data set of biblical worldviews. The second survey was administered to ascertain each participant’s gains or strengthening of their biblical worldview. It was distributed to the participants in the second class on human beings to allow for time to complete the surveys over the ensuing two weeks. The pre-course and post-course survey contents were identical and contained questions based on a modified form of the Shepherd Survey developed by Rodney L. Basset et al., questions adapted from Barna’s 2020 worldview survey results, and questions from
a brief worldview survey by Summit Ministries (see Appendix C).\textsuperscript{176} The survey questions were a mix of multiple-choice and two-point, Likert scale format.

As all Bible study participants were assumed to be Christians, the survey questions trended among the five primary belief areas that serve as the foundation for a biblical worldview. However, the survey ventured outside this box to anonymously capture views related to Christian beliefs and limited biographical information. Specific survey questions were divided among the following six primary groups:\textsuperscript{177}

1) *Belief.* Questions included views about God’s nature, the nature of human beings, the God-humanity relationship, the origin of life, the inspiration of Scripture, the source of truth, and the existence of a divine plan for both believers and unbelievers.

2) *Knowledge.* Explored facts from Scripture on each of the five foundational worldview beliefs.

3) *Religiosity.* Concerned with the impact of a biblical worldview on a person’s life. Items such as faith importance and commitment, God’s influence on their life, openness to discipleship and spiritual formation, and adherence to the Bible’s moral standards.

4) *The Church.* Questions regarding a person’s beliefs and attitudes about The Woodlands Bible Church and its members. In other words, what was the position of the participants on a variety of current social issues?


\textsuperscript{177} Note that the Shepherd Survey comprises ten categories from which questions are derived. However, the purpose of the Shepherd Survey was to differentiate Christian’s from non-Christians. The surveys utilized for this action research thesis assumed each participant to be a believer in Jesus Christ.
5) *Attitudes.* These questions attempted to discover behavior tendencies given a biblical worldview. For example, is there absolute truth or is truth relative? Is sex before marriage acceptable between consenting adults? Is homosexuality to be embraced and supported? Are abortions always wrong, or should the practice be situationally acceptable (e.g., for medical reasons)?

6) *Biographic.* The questions sought the participant’s age, their highest educational level obtained, how long they have been believers in Christ, how long they have attended The Woodlands Bible Church, and whether they are members or regular attendees. The biblical worldview survey is provided in Appendix C.

The surveys were distributed in written form to all participants committed to the study during the introductory Bible study class and before the final review Bible study class. Each participant was requested to return the completed surveys to the researcher within the first two consecutive weeks of distribution by hand-delivery on Sunday morning at the church. All returned surveys were placed in an 8”x11” manila envelope and always remained in the researcher’s custody. The strictest confidentiality was maintained for all returned surveys, and no personally identifying information was solicited or collected.

Stringer aptly remarks, “A good action research thesis project often has no well-defined ending.”¹⁷⁸ This research project is no exception. Given the research methodology, the estimated nine-week duration for the research project was considered fair and reasonable to evaluate intervention effectiveness. However, the researcher acknowledges the intrinsic value of long-term assessment (e.g., an additional questionnaire about six months after Bible study class completion) to further evaluate any behavioral changes a well-informed biblical worldview may

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¹⁷⁸ Stringer, 207.
have had for the study participants. Nevertheless, this research project’s time constraints precluded collecting and including such long-term data in the project itself.

An additional data gathering tool employed by the researcher was a participant observation journal. Following each class session, the researcher journaled the participants’ characteristics, their methods and style of interaction with one another, the content and manner of their conversations and questions, and subtle factors like body language and tone of voice.\(^{179}\) The purpose of this data was to assess progressive changes that may be occurring in the participant’s biblical worldview that may not be fully articulated by the biblical worldview survey responses alone.

Sensing proposes that observations can be enhanced through “triangulation,” a process of obtaining and recording observations from different angles or perspectives, allowing the accuracy of collected data to be cross-checked. He suggests a simple system that includes the researcher’s observations, an outsider’s observations, and an insider’s observations.\(^{180}\) However, full triangulation was not contemplated or included in the project data gathering methods.

Instead, the project intervention included Sensing’s Insider’s Angle and Researcher’s Angle.\(^{181}\) The Insider Angle views the data set from pre-course and post-course perspectives using quantitative surveys, the primary line of evidence supporting the success of the intervention. The Researcher’s Angle considers the researcher’s recorded observations of the participants, as described above, and serves as a secondary line of evidence supporting the success of the intervention. Given the subject matter’s specialized focus, a third angle was not proposed for this action research thesis. In other words, an Outsider’s Angle may be interesting

\(^{179}\) Sensing, 76.
\(^{180}\) Ibid., 75.
\(^{181}\) Ibid., 78.
(i.e., having another scholar review and comment on the data set) but was resolved to be a tertiary line of evidence unnecessary to support evaluation of the intervention’s success.

Permissions

Approval of the project was obtained from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before implementing the research project design at The Woodlands Bible Church. As a preliminary measure, the researcher completed training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative in order to submit the IRB application. Written approval was also obtained from the leadership of The Woodlands Bible Church for this action thesis research (see Appendix D), and the church offered and provided full support in this research endeavor.

Promotion and Recruitment

The current adult Bible study class at The Woodlands Bible Church was the primary source of participants for this action research thesis. However, the researcher’s Bible study class was promoted through the church’s weekly newsletter transmitted via the Constant Contact® online marketing service as an email to various past and present members and attendees. The promotion began approximately three weeks before starting the Bible study classes resulting in three email announcements regarding the Bible study class. The researcher’s upcoming Bible study class was also announced from the pulpit, starting two weeks before the Bible study classes began (see Appendix E). Copies of a promotional flyer were also available in the church foyer (see Appendix E). This promotional campaign aimed to encourage participation by church members and regular attendees who typically do not attend adult Bible study classes at The Woodlands Bible Church on Sunday mornings.
Project Participants

For this action research thesis, the Bible study participants were limited to adult (i.e., over eighteen years old) attendees of The Woodlands Bible Church (either members or non-members). In addition, participation in the pre-course and post-course biblical worldview surveys (the data gathering portion of this research) was limited to those individuals that provided their written consent on the surveys acknowledging their participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time (see the consent to participate form in Appendix B and the biblical worldview survey in Appendix C). The participants included individuals from various age, educational, socio-economical, and biblically educated groups. Moreover, two church elders and another church education ministry leader enrolled as research participants in the Bible study course.

The researcher is an elder and Sunday morning adult Bible study teacher at The Woodlands Bible Church and developed and taught the Bible study curriculum for this action research project. The researcher had previously taught adult Bible study classes in Christian theology at the church and the lessons and information presented were well received. The researcher holds to an evangelical Christian theology belief system and possesses a cohesive biblical worldview. Such a belief system presupposed biases against unbiblical societal mores and attempted to avoid dogmatic theological discussions that could have restrained open dialogue and learning among the study participants.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

This section provides a detailed account of the intervention implementation, including preparation of the learning environment, descriptions of the Bible study course implementation, and quantitative and qualitative data gathering.
Learning Environment

The church provided a fourteen feet by nineteen feet freshly painted and carpeted classroom for the intervention implementation. The classroom was adequately lighted and climate-controlled and included a whiteboard and a pull-down projection screen mounted on the room’s front wall. However, the church was only able to provide chairs, and no other furniture was readily available. Consequently, the researcher purchased and donated to the church six seminar tables, a small folding desk, a tripod projector stand, a podium, and a drafting chair, as shown in Table 3.1.

### Table 3.1. Unanticipated Research Study Costs

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<th>Tax</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>$6.35</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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</table>

The seminar tables were slender enough to result in three rows separated by an aisle down the middle. The projector stand was positioned in the aisle between the front row of tables, and the podium and drafting chair were offset from the pull-down projection screen at the front of the room. Finally, the folding desk was placed along the outside room wall adjacent to the podium. A researcher-owned laptop computer was placed on the folding desk during each class session. It was connected to a researcher-owned projector through which a Microsoft
PowerPoint™ presentation was projected onto the pulldown screen. The researcher also provided the audio recording equipment mounted on a tripod and positioned at the front of the classroom. The church provided the chairs for the final layout resulting in twenty seats available for the study participants. A rendering of the classroom layout is shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Classroom Layout
Some class participants commented that the overall layout was a bit “tight” (i.e., the chairs were very close together), but such comments diminished after the first two class sessions. Finally, while the climate controls for the classroom were adequate, once seventeen people were settled in the room, the cumulative body heat raised the room temperature very quickly, and the learning environment became uncomfortable. This inconvenience persisted for the first two class sessions. It was alleviated by church staff resetting the air conditioning system thermostat to begin cooling this area of the church one hour before the class started to allow the temperature in the classroom to settle lower before all the attendees arrived.

Consent to Participate and Course Surveys

Seventeen people attended the initial class session and were introduced to the concept of worldviews. At the beginning of the initial class session, the researcher explained the two purposes of the course of study entitled “Maintaining a Biblical Worldview.” First, the church added the five-topic Bible study course to provide more diverse discipleship training for members and attendees. Second, and as previously promoted by the church, the Bible study was being taught as the action research component of the researcher’s doctoral thesis. The researcher further explained the action research would include collecting quantitative data via thirty-question surveys administered in the initial class and near the end of the Bible study course. Finally, the participants were informed that each class session would be audio recorded, and the researcher would take notes (qualitative data) from observations during the class. The audio recordings and portable document format (PDF) versions of the class notes and the PowerPoint™ presentations were made available to the participants each week at the researcher’s password-protected website.
To accomplish the research objectives, the researcher explained the necessity to obtain written consent from each person willing to participate in the research aspect of the Bible study classes. The Consent to Participate forms (see Appendix B) were then distributed to the entire class. At the close of the initial Bible study class, seventeen completed Consent to Participate forms were returned to the researcher, and seventeen pre-course surveys were distributed (see Appendix C). The now seventeen research participants were asked to return their completed pre-course surveys at the start of the next class session the following Sunday.

Implementation Observations from Angles

The following discussions describe the implementation of the Bible study classes grouped into the five basic beliefs that lay the foundation for a biblical worldview and the associated data gathering. Regarding the data gathering, Sensing proposes that observations can be enhanced through “triangulation,” a process of obtaining and recording observations from different angles or perspectives, allowing the accuracy of collected data to be cross-checked. He suggests a simple system that includes using the researcher’s own observations, an outsider’s observations, and an insider’s observations. However, as previously noted, complete triangulation was not included in this action research thesis’s project data gathering methods.

Instead, the project intervention only included Sensing’s Insider’s Angle and Researcher’s Angle. The Insider Angle views the data set from pre-course and post-course perspectives using quantitative surveys, the primary line of evidence supporting the success of the intervention. The Researcher’s Angle recorded the researcher’s observations of the participants following each class session, as described above, and serves as a secondary line of

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182 Sensing, 75.
183 Ibid., 78.
evidence supporting the success of the intervention. Given the subject matter’s specialized focus, a third angle was not proposed for this action research thesis project. In other words, an Outsider’s Angle may be interesting (i.e., having another scholar review and comment on the data set) but would likely be a tertiary line of evidence unnecessary to support evaluation of the intervention’s success.

Finally, the researcher only distributed the class notes and made them available on the password-protected website at the beginning of each class. This approach allowed the researcher to modify or add discussions to teaching and class notes of successive belief lessons based on questions and discussions that arose as the Bible study classes progressed.

The Researcher’s Angle

The introduction class was a blend of administrative activities and teaching an overview of the concept of worldviews. Seventeen people attended the class, and all formally consented to participate in the research aspects of the course. Moreover, all seventeen participants returned completed pre-course surveys to the researcher either at the close of the introductory class session or the following Sunday at the beginning of the first of three lessons on God.

Stringer notes, “We usually find that myriad issues emerge when we start to poke at a problem, which can transform the problem itself and our orientation toward it. Steps taken to solve one problem sometimes take the lid off a whole range of related issues and problems.”

The intervention was designed to take the lid off specific fundamental Christian theologies that serve as the foundation for a cohesive biblical worldview. However, in the researcher’s teaching experience, Stringer’s observation above represented a potential intervention pitfall if not held in

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184 Stringer, 184.
check by “clearly articulated plans based on systematic and inclusive processes of inquiry.”\textsuperscript{185} Therefore, to keep the discussions on each foundational belief system in check, the course curricula primarily inquired of Scripture, God’s self-revelation of himself to humanity. In that context, each study participant brought their presuppositions about God, reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings to the research party. However, these presuppositions create a potential melting pot of ideas, which could translate into chasing rabbits or result in disagreements that are “not uncommon to action research.”\textsuperscript{186}

An example of presuppositions revealed by the inquiry was a primary theme in some questions from the introductory and subsequent classes that involved reconciling God’s sovereignty and human beings’ free will. In other words, there was a growing pressure placed on diminishing God’s power to conform all things to His sovereign will while still allowing human beings to freely choose courses of action, including acceptance or rejection of the divine call to salvation. The researcher and other class participants provided feedback to this and related questions, and the inquiry prompted the researcher to add a discussion on decision-making and God’s will to the teaching and class notes on the worldviews about God.

Despite this example, and to avoid Stringer’s potential intervention pitfall, the researcher attempted to minimize instances where the teaching process became waylaid by tangential discussions on agreement or disagreement with biblical precepts that may not be directly related to the formulation or improvement of a biblical worldview (for example, questions often arose related to the doctrine of election, a topic not directly related to the basic belief areas included in the Bible study curricula). Nevertheless, the researcher was wary of playing the adjudicator in

\textsuperscript{185} Stringer, 184.

\textsuperscript{186} Sensing, 178.
those instances as group discussions were necessary to the intervention, especially where a biblical worldview was tangled with the participant’s own worldly-affected beliefs and experiences. Moreover, such group dynamics must not be confused with positive progress in synthesizing the participant’s biblical worldviews. In the end, group dynamics were closely monitored during each class session to ensure intervention was appropriately and effectively implemented while encouraging fluid on-topic discussions.

During the intervention implementation, three different phenomena were observed: areas where tenets of the five basic Christian beliefs overlapped, areas where a disagreement arose in specific Christian theologies, or areas where no verbal or body-language feedback was present. Sensing describes each of these phenomena as analytical frames, with the first being overlapping “themes or patterns,” the second being areas of disagreement called “slippage,” and the third representing “silence,” or things left unsaid that may need to be further examined.¹⁸⁷

The Bible study course curricula directed the primary overlapping themes from Scripture and its fundamental Christian theologies. However, to aid the participants in comparing and contrasting secular versus biblical worldviews, the researcher included various visual aids in the form of contemporary video or audio clips embedded within the PowerPoint™ presentations. For instance, in the introductory class, a video was shown of a young woman engaged in a street interview regarding the subjects of God and church. Uniquely, the young woman demonstrated a broad background experience with “religion” but was not a Christian and possessed an arbitrary and confusing worldview of God. An additional example was using a clip from the animated feature film The Lion King to represent Western culture espousing pantheistic ideas and belief systems (i.e., the Circle of Life). Finally, audio and video interviews with prominent atheists

¹⁸⁷ Sensing, 197, 200.
such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Neil deGrasse Tyson were used in the lessons on reality, ethics, and the final review Bible study class. In experiencing these audio and visual aids, the participants verbally acknowledged the subtle ways that secular beliefs contrary to a biblical worldview are affecting their communities and churches some had attended in the past. There were also consistent statements that Christians must be wary of such non-biblically based influences on their biblical worldview.

A few vocal participants emerged throughout the Bible study course implementation, with the remaining participants seldom providing any commentary or questions. Among the vocal, predominant slippage was observed in theological areas of God’s sovereignty, human ability, and human free will. For instance, at least one participant displayed tense body language and shook their head in disagreement during the entire class session on knowledge. A post-class discussion revealed the conflict was centered on the Bible’s characterization of the epistemological abilities of unregenerate and regenerated people (i.e., human ability to know God and the things of God). The researcher observed that such an emotionally charged response resulted in all other information present in the class being blocked out. Consequently, in this instance, the class session on knowledge did not positively contribute to every participant’s cohesive biblical worldview, thus resulting in a disconfirmation of the intervention findings. In other words, a person’s presuppositions about biblical truths can be a barrier to codifying a person’s biblical worldview, even in the presence of structured formal teaching on Christian theology from Scripture.

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188 Borrowing ideas from Max Van Manen, Sensing suggests “silence” can occur for various reasons. For some it is a part of who they are. For others there may be some epistemological reasons driven by the “linguistic ability of the speaker, the form of the discourse, or the setting and timing of the discourse.” Sensing, 201; Max Van Manen, Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy, SUNY series in the philosophy of education (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 112-14.
Finally, apparent silences were observed during the intervention implementation. The silences comprised limited group interaction and questions among most of the participants. Moreover, before all the class sessions were completed, one participant withdrew from the class. However, as a direct interview with the participant was not granted, it remains unclear if the withdrawal was predicated on epistemological reasons (e.g., a conflict with the Bible study curricula) or for unrelated reasons.

Areas of observed silence may equate to Pazmiño’s evaluation of the “null curriculum,” which considers the broader context of what is possible but not selected for participants to share or what may just be forgotten.\(^\text{189}\) The analytical frame of silence observed during the intervention suggests that future changes to the intervention content, the Bible study curricula, may be warranted that encourage more participants’ responses. Nevertheless, it is unclear the observed silences disconfirm the overall success of the intervention.

**The Insider’s Angle**

To reiterate, the Insider Angle views the data set from pre-course and post-course perspectives using the quantitative worldview surveys. These survey data represent the primary line of evidence the researcher used to evaluate the intervention’s success. The surveys were distributed at the beginning and near the end of the Bible study course. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, they were instructed to write a unique four-digit number in the blanks provided on the last page of the survey.

All but one participant returned their surveys by the second class session, with a sole participant returning their survey several weeks later. No reason was given for the significant

\(^{189}\) Pazmiño, 247.
delay in returning the survey. Indeed, no verbal feedback was offered by the participants upon their completion of the pre-course survey. However, despite the anonymity of the survey documents, several participants provided amplifying remarks to several true or false questions in their survey. Moreover, some added amplifying comments to the biographic section regarding the number of years they were a Christian. On the other hand, some gave imprecise answers regarding the number of years they had been a Christian and their age. Several did not answer all of the biographic questions on the pre-course survey.

For the post-course surveys, only fifteen of the seventeen original participants returned their survey. Of the remaining two participants, one withdrew from the study midway through the classes, and the other merely declined to complete the survey. All fifteen of the completed post-course surveys were returned to the researcher within four weeks of completing the course of study.

One significant observation from the post-course surveys was that several male participants failed to remember the four-digit code they had used on their pre-course survey (likely the topic of other doctoral research!). Consequently, the researcher had to gather the males together after the course was complete and have them look over the pre-course and post-course surveys to identify their surveys by the handwriting alone. Although the researcher was present, no annotations were made regarding who matched and updated their codes on the surveys, thus ensuring the anonymity of these surveys was not compromised. In the end, all pre-course and post-course surveys were matched and accounted for based on their codes.

As a reminder, the pre-course and post-course worldview surveys were identical in content and layout. Nevertheless, verbal feedback received from the participants on the post-course survey included perceived ambiguity in some of the questions or the provided possible
answers. However, specific survey questions were not mentioned. From the answers obtained on all of the submitted questionnaires, at least the first question on the survey, “Which of these descriptions comes closest to what you believe about the Bible?”, included two similar answers that, in some instances, are both theologically correct: 1) The inspired Word of God that has no errors, although some verses are meant to be symbolic rather than literal, and 2) the actual, true word of God that should be taken literally, word for word. To ensure such ambiguity would not skew the evaluation of the intervention data, a participant’s selection of either of these answers was evaluated as the correct answer for the question. Finally, several participants did not answer questions related to the sanctity of human life (e.g., regarding abortion). While impossible to correlate due to the anonymity of the surveys, at least one participant commented that they were uncomfortable answering some of the survey questions. All fifteen completed surveys included fully answered biographic questions, including precise information regarding the number of years they had been a Christian and their age.

Summary of Intervention Implementation

The implementation of the intervention design was completed as proposed. Overall, the promotion of the action research study resulted in seventeen initial participants in the Bible study course from a cross-section of the church members. Sixteen participants completed the entire Bible study course, and fifteen completed and returned both worldview surveys. The following chapter will evaluate the quantitative data collected from the pre-course and post-course surveys to assess any impact of attending the Bible study classes on the participants’ biblical worldviews.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Descriptive Data Evaluation

As has been posited throughout this action research thesis, a well-developed, biblical worldview allows a believer in Jesus Christ to respond biblically to the culture they live in (i.e., rejecting worldly philosophies) and better equips them to help the culture respond to the Savior they follow through behavioral influence. Although their biblical worldview has been formed from fundamental Christian beliefs, the five prevailing beliefs of some members and attendees of The Woodlands Bible Church about God, reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings have been adversely influenced by worldly philosophies. Consequently, the purpose of this action research thesis was to demonstrate the relationship of the development and cohesiveness of a believer’s biblical worldview, in part, to participation in focused biblical teaching on these five fundamental Christian beliefs.

This action research thesis will also demonstrate the importance of formal, consistent Christian doctrine and theology Bible study classes at The Woodlands Bible Church. This is not to say the church leadership does not embrace adult Bible study programs at all. Instead, the research substantiates that forgoing Christian theology Bible study classes can become detrimental to its members’ and attendees’ biblical worldviews. C.S. Lewis once wrote,

We are now getting to the point at which different beliefs about the universe lead to different behavior. Religion involves a series of statements about facts, which must be either true or false. If they are true, one set of conclusions will follow about the right sailing of the human fleet, if they are false, quite another set.\(^{190}\)

Weakened or fragmented biblical worldviews open believers to deception and often negatively impact their witness and walk for Christ. Therefore, intentional Christian theology training will be shown to be an essential part of each believer’s discipleship training toward influencing the right-sailing of the human fleet.

The action research results are presented in three sections. The first section consists of a brief review of the data collection and evaluation methodology, followed by the second section, which describes the demographic characteristics of the study participants and the relationships between their survey scores. The final section will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the intervention design.

Data Gathering and Scoring Protocols

The quantitative data for this action research thesis project was obtained through pre-course and post-course worldview surveys administered to the study participants. The pre-course and post-course survey contents were identical. They contained questions based on a modified form of the Shepherd Survey, topical questions adapted from Barna’s 2020 worldview survey results, and questions from a brief online worldview survey by Summit Ministries (see Appendix C). The survey questions were a mix of multiple-choice and two-point, Likert scale format (i.e., agree/disagree). Although not explicit within the survey forms distributed to the study participants, the survey questions correlated with the five basic beliefs about God, reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings. The participants’ anonymity was preserved by each recording a discrete four-digit code in a space provided on the last page of their pre-course and post-course surveys. The researcher used these codes to match pre-course and post-course survey

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191 Basset et al., 336; “American Worldview Inventory 2020 Releases.”; “Worldview Checkup: What’s Your Worldview.”
data for analytical comparison. While participants completed seventeen pre-course surveys, only fifteen post-course surveys were completed and returned to the researcher. Consequently, only post-course surveys with corresponding pre-course survey codes were deemed usable for the data analysis.

The answers on the completed surveys were compared to a survey key developed by the researcher that reflected correct responses from a Christian biblical worldview perspective. To effectively evaluate each survey question response, correct question responses were assigned a value of one, while incorrect responses were assigned a value of zero. However, some participants did not answer all or some of pre-course or post-course survey question numbers eight, nine, or ten. Therefore, where no answers were recorded, the response was deemed incorrect for data analysis purposes and was assigned a value of zero. Where multiple responses were permitted to a survey question, a correct score of one was only given if the responses precisely matched the corresponding survey key answers (i.e., no more, no less, and the same answers). Otherwise, the response was deemed incorrect and assigned a score of zero. The worldview survey form distributed to the participants and the researcher’s survey key reflecting the correct answers from a Christian biblical worldview are presented in Appendix C.

Finally, the data collected during this action research thesis project was examined for evidence of The Hawthorne Effect to ensure reliable research had occurred. As previously discussed, The Hawthorne Effect is a theory that raises doubt about the reliability of research when the participants know they are being studied. In other words, participants in research projects can desire the researcher to succeed and tailor their participation and survey responses to affect that outcome. Consequently, the ideal mindset is a group chosen to participate based on their desire to learn and grow in spiritual knowledge and maturity, engaging in the Bible study
curriculum and paying little attention to the research formalities. In other words, individual learning and life-changing results are the primary focus.\textsuperscript{192} The researcher observed no obvious evidence of The Hawthorne Effect from class discussions or worldview survey responses.

Participant Demographics

The initial action research study participants comprised nine females and eight males (see Table 4.1). The fifteen who completed the entire Bible study course and returned completed pre-course and post-course worldview surveys (hereafter the Study Group) consisted of eight females and seven males ranging in ages from thirty-two to seventy-six. Levels of education ranged from high school graduate to doctorate. The Study Group indicated they were believers in Jesus Christ and Christians for twenty-one to sixty-nine years. Thirteen in the Study Group were members of The Woodlands Bible Church, and the remaining two were regular attenders.

\textbf{Table 4.1. Study Group Demographics}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% of Study Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 70</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduates</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Graduates</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degrees or Above</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years a Christian</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;30 Years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;30 Years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significantly, seven (almost one-half) of the Study Group verbalized that they had never attended or infrequently attend Sunday morning adult Bible study classes at The Woodlands Bible Church. This observation demonstrates the effectiveness of the intervention promotion and indicates the importance of providing consistent, formal Christian doctrine and theology Bible study classes at The Woodlands Bible Church. Thus, the Bible study course effectively expanded the discipleship training ministry of the church, fulfilling one of the purposes of the action research thesis intervention.

**Quantitative Relationships of Study Group Worldviews**

This section will evaluate the overall Study Group responses to the pre-course and post-course worldview survey questions utilizing standard descriptive statistics and mean difference comparisons. First, the overall pre-course versus post-course survey data will be analyzed, followed by data analysis within demographics grouped by gender, age ranges, levels of education attained, and years of being a Christian. Next, the relationships of responses to survey questions in the five basic belief areas of God, reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings will follow. Finally, a summary evaluation of the comprehensive worldview survey results will be performed, describing the observed impact of the intervention on the development and cohesiveness of the study participants’ biblical worldviews.

**Overall Worldview Survey Results for All Participants**

Cumulative overall correct answer scores from the pre-course Study Group surveys ranged from 56.67 to 100, with a mean score of 88.04 and a standard deviation of 11.55. Eighty-two percent of the scores were above 80, 11.7% between 70 and 75, and an outlier occurred at 56.67. Cumulative overall correct answer scores from the post-course Study Group surveys
ranged from 73.33 to 100, with a mean score of 91.56 and a standard deviation of 8.90. Eighty-six percent of the scores were above 80, with the remaining scores between 73 and 80. No outliers were observed in the post-course survey scores.

**Table 4.2. Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Overall Survey Score Comparisons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Correct-Pre</th>
<th>% Correct-Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>88.04</td>
<td>91.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>93.33</td>
<td>93.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>43.33</td>
<td>26.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>56.67</td>
<td>73.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of pre-course versus post-course survey scores for all participants is provided in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1.

As shown in Table 4.2, the range of scores narrowed from the pre-course to post-course surveys suggesting an increasing coherence of the Study Group’s overall biblical worldview knowledge and understanding. In addition, a means analysis revealed a 3.99% increase in the overall mean scores. This slight increase suggests the Study Group began the research study with
a generally well-formed biblical worldview (see Figure 4.2). Thus, at a minimum, the intervention implementation successfully increased the cohesiveness of the Study Group’s overall biblical worldview knowledge and understanding.

![Graph showing Biblical Worldview Survey Score Distributions](image)

**Figure 4.2. Biblical Worldview Survey Score Distributions (All Participants)**

**Overall Worldview Survey Results by Demographics**

The participants’ responses to biographic questions in the pre-course and post-course worldview surveys facilitated evaluating the qualitative survey answer results by the following demographic categories: gender, age ranges, level of education, and the number of years a Christian. The relationships of the quantitative data from each of these demographic categories are evaluated in the sections that follow.

**Worldview Survey Results by Gender**

Overall correct answer scores by Study Group females from the pre-course surveys ranged from 56.67 to 100, with a mean score of 87.04 and a standard deviation of 14.09. Seventy-seven percent of the scores were above 80, 11.1% between 70 and 80, and an outlier occurred at 56.67. Cumulative overall correct answer scores from the post-course surveys ranged
from 73.33 to 100, with a mean score of 93.75 and a standard deviation of 8.63. Eighty-six percent of the scores were above 80, with the remaining scores between 73 and 80. No outliers were observed in the post-course survey scores. A comparison of the female participants’ pre-course versus post-course survey scores is provided in Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Correct-Pre</th>
<th>% Correct-Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>87.04</td>
<td>93.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>93.33</td>
<td>96.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>43.33</td>
<td>26.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>56.67</td>
<td>73.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3. Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Survey Score Comparisons (Females)

![Figure 4.3. Biblical Worldview Survey Score Distributions (Females)](image)

Overall correct answer scores by Study Group males from the pre-course surveys ranged from 70.0 to 96.67, with a mean score of 89.17 and a standard deviation of 8.68. Eighty-eight percent of the scores were above 80, and one outlier occurred at 70.00. Overall correct answer scores by Study Group males from the post-course surveys ranged from 76.67 to 100, with a mean score of 89.05 and a standard deviation of 9.17. Eighty-eight percent of the scores were again above 80, with the remaining score being 76.67. No outliers were observed in the post-
course survey scores. A comparison of the male participants’ pre-course versus post-course survey scores is provided in Table 4.4 and Figure 4.4.

**Table 4.4. Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Survey Score Comparisons (Males)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Correct-Pre</th>
<th>Correct-Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>89.17</td>
<td>89.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>86.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>26.67</td>
<td>23.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>96.67</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>76.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 4.4. Biblical Worldview Survey Score Distributions (Males)](image)

The range of correct answer scores for Study Group females noticeably narrowed from the pre-course to post-course surveys suggesting an increasing coherence of the female participants’ overall biblical worldview knowledge and understanding. Further, a means analysis revealed a 7.7% increase in the overall mean scores, supporting an increasing coherence in the female participants’ overall biblical worldview knowledge and understanding. In comparison, although the range of overall correct answer scores for Study Group males only marginally decreased from pre-course to post-course surveys, the range narrowing still suggests an increasing coherence of the male participants’ overall biblical worldview knowledge and
understanding. On the other hand, a means analysis revealed a 0.1% decrease in the overall mean scores, possibly indicating a slight weakening of the male participants’ overall biblical worldview knowledge and understanding. A comparison of overall pre-course versus post-course worldview survey correct answer mean scores by gender is presented in Figure 4.5.

![Figure 4.5. Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (By Gender)](image)

**Worldview Survey Results by Age**

The pre-course worldview survey Study Group scores were examined among three age groups: 30 to 50, 50 to 70, and above 70 years old. Overall pre-course survey correct answer scores in the 30 to 50 age group (the smallest of the three) ranged from 90.0 to 100, with a mean score of 96.67 and a standard deviation of 4.71. All the pre-course survey correct answer scores were 90 or above, and no outliers were observed. Only two post-course surveys in the 30 to 50 age group were returned to the researcher. The correct answer scores were both 100. While a 3.4% increase in the overall biblical worldview knowledge and understanding in the 30 to 50 age group was observed, a broad conclusion could not be drawn regarding the effectiveness of the intervention within this age category due to the scarcity of the post-course survey data. A comparison of
overall pre-course versus post-course worldview survey correct answer scores for the 30 to 50 age group is presented in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6. Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Participant Age 30 to 50)

Overall correct answer scores from the 50 to 70 age group pre-course surveys ranged from 70.00 to 96.67, with a mean score of 84.76 and a standard deviation of 9.97 (see Table 4.5). About 71.4% of the scores were above 80, with the remaining scores being 70.00 and 73.33, and no outliers were observed.

Table 4.5. Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Survey Score Comparisons (50 to 70 Age Group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Correct-Pre</th>
<th>% Correct-Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>84.67</td>
<td>88.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>86.67</td>
<td>93.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>26.67</td>
<td>26.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>96.67</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>73.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall correct answer scores from the 50 to 70 age group post-course surveys ranged from 73.33 to 100, with a mean score of 88.10 and a standard deviation of 11.20. Again, about 71.4% of the scores were above 80, with the remaining scores being 73.33 and 76.67, and no
outliers were observed. A comparison of overall pre-course versus post-course worldview survey correct answer scores for the 50 to 70 age group is presented in Figure 4.7.

![Bar chart showing percentage of scores for different age groups with pre and post-course data.]

**Figure 4.7. Biblical Worldview Survey Score Distributions (Age 50 to 70)**

As shown in Table 4.6, the overall pre-course survey correct answer scores in the last and second-largest age group (above 70) ranged from 56.67 to 93.33, with a mean score of 86.11 and a standard deviation of 14.67.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Correct-Pre</th>
<th>% Correct-Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>86.11</td>
<td>92.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>93.33</td>
<td>95.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>36.67</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>93.33</td>
<td>96.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>56.67</td>
<td>86.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6. Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Survey Score Comparisons (Above 70 Age Group)

About 83% of the scores were above 80, and one outlier was observed at 56.67. Overall correct answer scores from the above 70 age group post-course surveys ranged from 86.67 to 100, with a mean score of 92.78 and a standard deviation of 4.91. Again, all the scores were above 80, and no outliers were observed.
Figure 4.8. Biblical Worldview Survey Score Distributions (Above Age 70)

A comparison of overall pre-course versus post-course worldview survey correct answer scores for the above 70 age group is presented in Figure 4.8. Figure 4.9 depicts the broad range of correct answer scores for Study Group participants in the three age range categories.

Figure 4.9. Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (By Age)

The ranges of the mean correct answer scores narrowed in the 30 to 50 and above 70 age groups and remained static in the 50 to 70 age group. The observed changes in the 30 to 50 and
above 70 age groups suggest an increasing coherence of these Study Group participants’ overall biblical worldview knowledge and understanding.

A means analysis revealed a 3.4% increase in the overall mean scores in the 30 to 50 age group and a 7.7% increase in the overall mean scores in the above 70 age group. These mean score increases also support an increasing coherence of these Study Group participants’ comprehensive biblical worldview knowledge and understanding.

Notwithstanding the overall 3.9% increase in the mean scores for the 50 to 70 age group, the static nature of the range of mean scores arose from the cumulative effects of increases in correct answer scores in 57.1% of these participants, 14.3% remaining the same, and 28.6% decreasing their number of correct answer responses. Consequently, while an increasing coherence of the 50 to 70 age group’s overall biblical worldview knowledge and understanding was present, the intervention implementation did not measurably impact the biblical worldviews of some study participants within this age group.

**Worldview Survey Results by Years of Education**

Demographic categories were also grouped by the years of education completed by each of the Study Group participants. The groupings consisted of high school graduates, some college, college graduates, and master’s degrees or above. Overall mean pre-course to post-course correct answer scores decreased from 91.67 to 86.67 for the high school graduates. However, this data set only included two participants and, therefore, the resulting means were highly influenced by the responses of a single participant. Consequently, the impact of the intervention implementation on the overall biblical worldview knowledge and understanding of the high school graduates is inconclusive.
The remaining education groups demonstrated increasing pre-course to post-course correct answer mean scores averaging 85.83 to 91.11, though only the college graduate group (six participants) showed a substantial increase, as depicted in Figure 4.10.

![Bar chart showing mean scores for different education levels](image)

**Figure 4.10. Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Education Level)**

The observed overall mean score increases in the some college, college graduates, and master’s degrees or above Study Group participants support an increasing coherence of their biblical worldview knowledge and understanding. Moreover, the narrowing of their average range of mean scores from 27.78 to 15.56 further reveals an increasing coherence of their overall biblical worldview knowledge and understanding.

**Worldview Survey Results by Years a Christian**

The final two Study Group categories that emerged from the biographic data pertained to the number of years each participant indicated that were a Christian, the first group being Christians less than 30 years (LT30Y) and the other group Christians for greater than 30 years (GT30Y). The overall pre-course correct answer scores for the LT30Y Study Group participants ranged from 86.67 to 100, with a mean score of 93.33 and a standard deviation of 5.27. Again,
all correct answer scores were above 80, and no outliers were observed. As shown in Figure 4.11, cumulative overall post-course correct answer scores from the LT30Y Study Group participants ranged from 86.67 to 100, with a mean score of 96.67 and a standard deviation of 5.77. All correct answer scores were above 80, though an outlier of 86.67 was observed.

![Bar chart showing mean scores for different age groups](image)

**Figure 4.11. Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Years a Christian)**

The overall pre-course correct answer scores for the GT30Y Study Group participants ranged from 56.67 to 93.33, with a mean score of 83.33 and a standard deviation of 12.67. Seventy percent of the correct answer scores were above 80, and no outliers were observed. Cumulative overall post-course correct answer scores from the GT30Y Study Group participants ranged from 73.33 to 100, with a mean score of 89.00 and a standard deviation of 9.30. Eighty percent of the correct answer scores were above 80, and no outliers were observed.

A means analysis revealed a 3.6% increase in the overall mean scores in the LT30Y group and a 6.8% increase in the overall mean scores in the GT30Y group. The observed increases support an increasing coherence in the biblical worldview knowledge and understanding of participants in both demographic groups. This observation is further supported
by an average 5% narrowing of the correct answer mean score range of the combined LT30Y and GT30Y groups.

**Summary of Overall Worldview Survey Results by Demographics**

As demonstrated, changes in pre-course and post-course correct answer scores were observed in demographic categories as subsets of the entire Study Group. The demographic categories observed consisted of gender, age, years of being a Christian, and education level (see Table 4.7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>% Correct-Pre</th>
<th>% Correct-Post</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>87.04</td>
<td>93.75</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>89.17</td>
<td>89.05</td>
<td>-0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>% Correct-Pre</th>
<th>% Correct-Post</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 to 50</td>
<td>96.67</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 70</td>
<td>84.76</td>
<td>88.10</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>86.11</td>
<td>92.78</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years a Christian</th>
<th>% Correct-Pre</th>
<th>% Correct-Post</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;30 Years</td>
<td>93.33</td>
<td>96.67</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;30 Years</td>
<td>83.33</td>
<td>89.00</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>% Correct-Pre</th>
<th>% Correct-Post</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduates</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>86.67</td>
<td>-5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>87.50</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Graduates</td>
<td>85.56</td>
<td>96.11</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degrees+</td>
<td>84.44</td>
<td>85.56</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall data comparisons revealed increasing trends in all demographic categories except high school graduates. The diversity of the demographic categories, coupled with the general increasing correct answer trends, suggests the intervention implementation resulted in an increasing coherence of the Study Group’s biblical worldview knowledge and understanding. However, given the small size (“n”) of the Study Group (n=15), correct answer score increases
or decreases from a small number of Study Group participants in a particular category had a more significant effect on the mean scores within each demographic category than would likely be apparent with a larger data set (i.e., n ≥ 30). For instance, the decreasing percentage of correct answer scores for two Study Group males (out of seven) offset the static or increasing results for the remaining Study Group males. Moreover, these two male participants’ decreasing correct answer score percentages were masked (i.e., revealed no evident influence on the data analysis results) when evaluated within other demographic categories.

**Overall Worldview Survey Results by Belief Areas**

The correct answer scores between the pre-course and post-course worldview surveys were thematically evaluated within the five belief areas that form the foundation for a worldview: God, reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings. Observations regarding the impact of the intervention implementation (i.e., participation in the Bible study course) on the Study Group’s biblical worldviews in these primary belief areas are presented in the following sections. In addition, the worldview survey key that delineates the corresponding belief area of each survey question is provided in Appendix C.

**Worldview Survey Results on God**

Question eleven was the survey question regarding a biblical worldview of God observed to be significantly problematic for the Study Group. The question read, “Having faith matters more than which faith you have,” to which the participant was to agree or disagree. Most of the Study Group participants (73.3%) agreed with this statement, while 20.0% disagreed on the pre-course and post-course surveys, and 6.7% disagreed only on the post-course survey. Given the small sample size (n = 15), changes in percent correct survey answers by a few participants
significantly impacted the mean answer scores. It is unclear if the survey question was considered ambiguous by the participants (i.e., having faith in the God of Scripture versus some other “kind” of faith or faith in some other god) or if some other factor influenced the incorrect responses.

Table 4.8. Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Survey Score Comparisons (Worldview of God)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Correct-Pre</th>
<th>% Correct-Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>97.06</td>
<td>97.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>83.33</td>
<td>67.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 4.12. Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Worldview of God)](image)

Assuming question eleven was anomalous, Table 4.8 and Figure 4.12 reveal the overall remaining pre-course to post-course mean answer scores for the Study Group regarding a biblical worldview of God increased from 97.06 to 97.78. About 93.3% of the pre-course correct answer scores were above 80, and 93.3% of the post-course correct answer scores were 100.\(^{193}\)

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\(^{193}\) The worldview survey question eleven data was assumed to be anomalous and was omitted from the data represented by Table 4.8 and Figure 4.12.
Despite the apparent problems with question eleven, a means analysis revealed a 0.7% increase in the overall Study Group mean scores regarding a biblical worldview of God. Since most of the participants’ pre-course percent correct answer scores were 100 (three were 83.33), the minimal overall increase observed supports both a pre-existing and an increasing coherence in the participant’s biblical worldview knowledge and understanding of God.

Worldview Survey Results on Reality

Of the two survey questions regarding a biblical worldview of reality, only question six was significantly problematic for the Study Group. The question read, “What do you believe about the origin of the world?” Six distinct answer choices were provided, with only the first answer being biblically correct: “God created the universe in six 24-hour days about 6,000 years ago, designing the earth’s creatures pretty much in their current form.” Forty-seven percent of the participants responded correctly on the pre-course survey and 60.0% on the post-course survey. However, 33.3% of the participants answered incorrectly on both the pre-course and post-course surveys selecting the second answer, “God created the universe at some point in the distant past and gave the earth’s creatures the capacity to change and adapt over time.”

The selection of either of these answers could have stemmed from ambiguity in the answers themselves or incomplete or unclear information provided in the Bible study curricula. For instance, while the researcher believes a “young earth” is the correct biblical worldview, limiting the earth’s age to 6,000 years is untenable. Further, the second answer also contains reasonable positions on the age of the world (i.e., created some time in the distant past) and, within limits, the earth’s creatures having the capacity to change and adapt over time (i.e.,
microevolution). Consequently, answer one or two would have been correct for survey question six, given their potential interpretive challenges.

Given the limited number of survey questions regarding the biblical worldview of reality (two total survey questions), only a means analysis of the overall pre-course and post-course survey results is informative, as shown in Figure 4.13.

![Figure 4.13. Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Worldview of Reality)](image)

Despite the challenges posed by question six, the overall correct answer mean scores increased by 24.1%. Nevertheless, the number of survey questions (two) regarding a biblical worldview of reality are insufficient to definitively determine the impact the intervention implementation had on the participant’s biblical worldview knowledge and understanding of reality.

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Worldview Survey Results on Knowledge

The worldview survey included ten questions regarding a biblical worldview of knowledge. Only question twenty-nine evidenced some disagreement among the participants. The question read, “I can only know God because of my personal commitment to Jesus Christ,” to which the participants were to agree or disagree. Almost twelve percent of the Study Group (11.7%) disagreed with this biblically correct statement on both the pre-course and post-course surveys, and 6.7% disagreed on the post-course survey only. Again, the basis for these incorrect responses was not known from the survey data alone. However, in discussions within the two class sessions on knowledge, the participants verbalized agreement with the theological truth of natural revelation presented in Romans 1:18-20. Consequently, since all human beings can know God from an objective sense, some of the Study Group constituents may have conflated objective knowledge of God with spiritual and relational knowledge of God (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-13; 2 Cor 2:13-14), thereby resulting in incorrect responses.

Whatever the impetus for the selected incorrect responses to question twenty-nine, as shown in Table 4.9, overall pre-course survey correct answer scores regarding a biblical worldview of knowledge ranged from 60.00 to 100, with a mean score of 91.76 and a standard deviation of 11.31. About 88% of the scores were above 90.00, with the remaining scores being 60.00 and 70.00. The low score of 60.00 represented the outlier in the pre-course survey scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Correct-Pre</th>
<th>% Correct-Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>91.76</td>
<td>92.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>90.00</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>70.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The overall correct answer scores from post-course surveys ranged from 70.00 to 100, with a mean score of 92.67 and a standard deviation of 9.61. Due to the influence of question twenty-nine, 93.3% of the scores were above 80.00, with the remaining score being 70.00, and no outliers were observed. A comparison of the participants’ pre-course versus post-course survey scores regarding a biblical worldview of knowledge is provided in Figure 4.14.

![Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores](image)

**Figure 4.14. Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Worldview of Knowledge)**

The range of correct answer scores for the Study Group narrowed from the pre-course to post-course surveys reflecting an increasing coherence of the participants’ biblical worldview of reality. Further, a means analysis revealed a 1.0% increase in the overall mean scores, supporting a slight increase in the coherence of the Study Group’s biblical worldview regarding knowledge. However, the high overall pre-course and post-course mean correct answer scores also suggest the Study Group began the intervention with a well-developed biblical worldview of knowledge. Therefore, the Bible study classes on knowledge likely only reinforced or refined this worldview component for the Study Group.
Worldview Survey Results on Ethics

The worldview survey included three questions regarding a biblical worldview of ethics. No significant incorrect answers were observed among the participants. The overall pre-course survey correct answer scores regarding a biblical worldview of ethics ranged from 33.33 to 100, with a mean score of 86.27 and a standard deviation of 23.74. About 71% of the scores were 100, with the remaining scores ranging from 33.33 to 66.67 and representing outliers in the pre-course survey scores. Overall correct answer scores from post-course surveys ranged from 66.67 to 100, with a mean score of 97.78 and a standard deviation of 8.61. All of the scores were 100, except a single outlier of 66.67. The outliers of 66.67 on the pre-course and post-course survey question twelve are attributed to a single participant and are therefore considered anomalous.

![Figure 4.15. Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Worldview of Ethics)](image)

Given the limited number of questions regarding the biblical worldview of ethics (three total survey questions), only a means analysis of the overall pre-course and post-course survey results is informative, as shown in Figure 4.15. A means analysis revealed a 13.3% increase in the overall mean scores, supporting an increase in the coherence of the Study Group’s biblical worldview regarding ethics. Further, the range of pre-course to post-course correct answer scores
narrowed considerably, supporting an increasing coherence of the participants’ biblical worldview of ethics.

**Worldview Survey Results on Human Beings**

Similar to the biblical belief about knowledge, the worldview survey included ten questions regarding the biblical worldview of human beings. While some individual incorrect answers were observed among many of the questions, question seven evidenced the most disagreement among the participants. The question read, “People are basically good,” to which the participants agreed or disagreed. Almost 24% of the Study Group agreed with this biblically incorrect statement on the pre-course survey, and 33.3% agreed on the post-course survey. Again, the basis for these incorrect responses was not known from the survey data alone.

Moreover, in-class discussions within the two class sessions on human beings did not reveal any qualitative data suggesting disagreement with the Bible study curricula. Nevertheless, Barna has recently found that 75% of adults attending evangelical churches (The Woodlands Bible Church is described as evangelical) believe people are basically good. Thus, although most of the Study Group answered question seven correctly, a lower percentage of the Study group holds to the biblically incorrect belief than Barna’s nationwide survey results would expect. Nevertheless, the overall increase in these specific incorrect responses indicates the intervention implementation cannot be counted successful regarding survey question seven.

The overall pre-course survey correct answer scores regarding the biblical worldview of human beings ranged from 33.33 to 100, with a mean score of 85.62 and a standard deviation of

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17.46. About 29.4% of the scores were above 88.89, with 23.4% ranging from 66.67 to 77.78, and one outlier was observed at 33.33.

Table 4.10. Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Survey Score Comparisons
(Worldview of Human Beings)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Correct-Pre</th>
<th>% Correct-Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>85.62</td>
<td>90.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>88.89</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>66.67</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>66.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.16. Biblical Worldview Survey Mean Scores (Worldview of Human Beings)

As shown in Table 4.10 and Figure 4.16, overall correct answer scores from post-course surveys ranged from 66.67 to 100, with a mean score of 90.37 and a standard deviation of 13.84. Due to the influence, in part, of question seven, 40.0% of the scores ranged from 66.67 to 88.89, with the remaining scores all being 100. No outliers were observed in the post-course survey correct answer score percentages.

A means analysis revealed a nominal 5.55% increase in the overall mean scores, supporting an increase in the coherence of the Study Group’s biblical worldview regarding human beings. Further, the range of pre-course to post-course correct answer scores was also
narrowed, supporting an increasing coherence of the participants’ biblical worldview of human beings.

Summary of the Intervention Design Effectiveness Based on Results

Recognizing that generalized intervention solutions may not fit all contexts, this action research thesis intervention was designed as an appropriate solution for the particular dynamics at work at The Woodlands Bible Church. These dynamics included fulfilling a mission of the church in providing appropriate discipleship training opportunities and content to its members and attendees. In the context of this action research thesis, the intervention focused on implementing a Bible study curriculum at the church to meet the greatest number of potential Bible study participants’ biblical worldview development needs.

However, the local dynamics also restricted classroom space available for the Bible study classes to a smaller room resulting in a limited number of people being able to participate in the intervention implementation. Consequently, the resulting participant population began with only seventeen participants. It ended with sixteen participants, of which fifteen participated in the entire Bible study course and completed and returned pre-course and post-course surveys to the researcher.

The limited number of participants (n=15) precluded significance testing of the pre-course and post-course survey data, a testing methodology that generally necessitates at least thirty participants (i.e., n≥30) to approximate normal distributions. Instead, evaluations of mean pre-course and post-course worldview survey correct answer scores were performed.

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196 Stringer, 6.
among demographic categories consisting of the participant’s gender, age, level of education, and years of being a Christian. The demographically-based evaluations were followed by assessing the mean score results within each of the five basic belief areas that form the basis for a biblical worldview: God, reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings.

**Demographic Results Assessment**

The demographic categories were formulated from the biographic information responses on the worldview surveys. The categories were reasonable for the designed intervention, and some data correlations emerged. However, the scarcity of the data and resulting assessment trends did not demonstrate clear causation between participation in the Bible study classes and the observed demographic categories. For example, correlating a Study Group male with decreasing correct answer score percentages does not imply that a male’s consistent participation in formal Bible study classes in Christian theology will weaken their biblical worldviews. Conversely, it would be spurious to conclude that the significant increase in correct answer scores for college graduates implied a higher level of biblical worldview cognition based solely on their level of education. In other words, in both of these examples, correlation does not imply causation. However, were the Study Group size more significant (i.e., a sample population with \( n \geq 30 \)), some causation may have emerged based on demographic categories alone.

Notwithstanding the data size limitation, the overall increasing mean correct answer scores for the Study Group, irrespective of the various demographic groupings, demonstrate the positive impact of the intervention implementation on the biblical worldview of the Study Group as a whole.
Belief Areas Results Assessment

The limited data set also influenced the results when thematically organized by worldview belief areas. The most significant influences occurred where the number of survey questions related to a belief area was small. For instance, only two survey questions were provided in the belief area regarding reality. For one question, one-third of the Study Group participants answered incorrectly on both the pre-course and post-course surveys. Thus, although the overall mean correct answer scores for the worldview belief area of reality increased, the high number of incorrect responses on one question skewed the overall scores. Nevertheless, even with the limited number of questions, the static incorrect answer results for one-third of the participants suggested an inconsistent or compromised biblical worldview regarding reality. Thus, modification to the Bible study course curriculum on reality, and the biblical views of God and knowledge for similar reasons, would be warranted.

Unsurprisingly, despite the limited data size and the unbalanced number of worldview survey questions per belief area, the overall increasing mean correct answer scores for the Study Group across all belief areas correspond with the demographic results. These corresponding results demonstrate the positive impact of the intervention implementation on the biblical worldview of the Study Group as a whole.

Areas for Intervention Design Improvement

Significant observations emerged from the intervention implementation results suggesting three areas of design improvement that could translate into more significant measurements of the intervention effectiveness. First, the size of the sample population should be expanded to at least thirty participants. Due to space limitations, this expansion may not be feasible for smaller local churches, such as The Woodlands Bible Church. Consequently, the
Bible study course could be successively taught to two or more groups of participants. New participants could be engaged for each Study Group resulting in an overall Study Group size greater than thirty. However, such a plan would also assume the local church has a population of thirty or more willing research participants.

A hybrid quantitative and qualitative data gathering approach could be used in place of multiple intervention implementations (i.e., teaching the Bible study course to multiple groups). In other words, in addition to the pre-course and post-course worldview surveys, formal interviews with each participant could be performed to collect more detailed feedback regarding each course section for each belief area. Of course, analyzing the results of this data collection methodology would insert a measure of the researcher’s subjectivity (more of the Researcher’s Angle). Still, it could compensate for unclear or unknown reasons for incorrect survey question responses, especially when such incorrect answers are significant in number.

Finally, the worldview survey questions should be more balanced among all five basic beliefs on God, reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings. To achieve such balance would require increasing the number of survey questions to fifty or more, with at least ten questions per belief area. This expansion of the worldview survey, even where the sample population is limited, would likely provide a more meaningful evaluation of the results across all the belief areas. However, no additions or changes to the biographic information requested on the survey appear necessary.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This chapter will compare and contrast information developed in chapters one and two with the results of the intervention implementation described in chapters three and four. The objective is to answer the “so what?” question begged from any research effort, and this action research thesis is no exception.

Revisiting the Problem

The Woodlands Bible Church comprises a diverse community of believers and seekers of the Lord Jesus Christ. They hail from various ecclesial and theological backgrounds and span ages from young adults to those exceeding threescore and ten. The church members and attendees are well-served by the pastoral staff, and a primary mission of the church is to develop mature Christian disciples. Tools provided for such spiritual maturation have typically included a Sunday morning adult Bible study class, worship services with doctrinally and theologically sound sermons, small group studies, and men’s and women’s Bible study groups. Indeed, by availing themselves of these “discipleship tools,” the worldviews of many members and attendees of The Woodlands Bible Church have been formed from fundamental biblically based beliefs.

Yet, despite possessing foundational Christian beliefs, fundamental beliefs for some members and attendees of The Woodlands Bible Church about God, reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings, beliefs that form a biblical worldview, appear to have been adversely influenced by worldly philosophies. Indeed, the intervention implementation results partly corroborate such weakened, fragmented beliefs for some participants in this study. Consequently,
these believer’s diminished biblical worldviews could negatively impact their witness and walk for Christ (behavioral research beyond the scope of this action research thesis). A buttress to these worldly influences would be to consistently participate in focused teaching on fundamental doctrines and theologies of the Christian faith to develop and maintain a cohesive biblical worldview.

**Revisiting the Purpose**

Christian education does not begin and end in formal institutions for learning. Christian education must be present in all ministries, especially churches where capable teachers and adequate facilities may be found. Where Christian education is absent, formal learning can stagnate, and secular creep begins to have its way with a believer’s worldview.

The primary focus for this action research thesis was to assist participants in a Bible study course on basic Christian theologies in developing and maintaining a cohesive biblical worldview. Pazmiño responds to such a focus noting that affirming Christ as Lord assumes the importance of Christian theology, “defined most simply as the study of God for all of life.” He continues, writing, “Theology grapples with the implication of faith as mediated through the experience of God’s revelation. Such implications must deal with the thought and practice of education. Thus theology is indispensable for the task of Christian education.”

This DMIN action research thesis aimed to implement focused Bible studies in Christian theology at The Woodlands Bible Church. This objective was accomplished by developing and presenting orderly Bible study lessons on each of the five prevailing core beliefs that make up a person’s worldview (God, reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings). But teaching classes

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198 Pazmiño, 65.
can be very mechanical, and the learning results for the participants less than predictable, especially given the Bible study classes were designed to change the participants’ worldview beliefs to comport with that of Scripture. In the case of the intervention implementation, the beliefs of the Study Group participants were stretched. Indeed, some were stretched nearly to a breaking point (at least one participant withdrew from the research study). But none expressed any offense in having their beliefs confronted, however adversely affected by unbiblical philosophies. Rebecca McLaughlin remarks that attempting to change a person’s beliefs is a mark of respecting them. She writes,

> When examined more closely, attempting to persuade others to change their beliefs is a sign of respect. You are treating them as thinking agents with the ability to decide what they believe, not just products of their cultural environment. We should not be offended when people challenge our beliefs: we should be flattered!199

Since the church leaders agreed to continue offering learning opportunities for its members and attendees on fundamental doctrines and theologies of the Christian faith, the purpose of this action research thesis was, therefore, accomplished.

**Revisiting the Thesis**

While the purpose of this action research thesis was to implement ongoing focused Bible studies in Christian theology at The Woodlands Bible Church, the primary thesis proposed by this research was that participation in these Bible study classes would result in a more cohesive biblical worldview. Therefore, the Study Group participants were exposed to successive Bible study classes that compared and contrasted secular versus biblical beliefs about God, reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings. The relative changes in the participant’s biblical

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worldviews were measured from worldview surveys they completed at the beginning and near the end of the entire course of study. Evaluations of these changes are discussed in the sections that follow.

Impact on a Biblical Worldview of God

The essential element of any worldview is what it says or does not say about God. Various beliefs and opinions about God emerge even among those who claim to be biblically oriented Christians. For instance, some view God as an impersonal transcendent being who is somewhat like a mystical genie who can be manipulated in some way to do one’s bidding. Consequently, the Bible study classes confronted beliefs that challenged whether the God of the Bible is a personal being? Does He know all things, and is He in control of all things? Does He love believers with an inseparable love, and is He dynamically involved in their lives and circumstances? What a person believes in their frame of reference about these and other questions about God will significantly influence their worldview.

The Bible study classes proposed that a biblically-based worldview about God accepts that He is absolutely sovereign, holy, and just. His total being is love. He is eternal, that is, has always been, and always will be. He is omniscient; He knows everything that will ever come to pass. He is omnipotent (all-powerful); nothing is impossible for Him. He is absolute truth; He cannot lie. Therefore, His Word is absolute truth, not generally true! Finally, He is unchangeable; His nature and being are infinite and not subject to mutations. He has not evolved, grown, or improved. Everything He is today, He has ever been and ever will be.

So how did the Study Group respond to these propositions from Scripture? Compared with the ongoing worldview-in-America research Barna has conducted, the Study Group’s overall beliefs about God before participating in the related Bible study classes reflected a
biblically correct pre-course survey answer mean score of 97.06%. This orthodox biblical view holds that God created and controls the universe, is all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient), and without fault. He is likewise absolutely just in His decisions (His decretive will). According to Barna, half of the nation accepts this biblically orthodox view of God, whereas 84% of born-again Christians in America include these beliefs about God in their worldviews.²⁰⁰

The Study Group’s performance on the post-course worldview survey revealed a slight increase in the correct survey answer mean score to 97.78%. Buried within this increase are examples of upward correct answer score movements among the entire Study Group of about 11%. The observed overall slight improvement likely reflects the strength of their beginning biblical worldview of God or may suggest potential shortcomings of the intervention design. Nevertheless, this increase still demonstrates a positive shift in their worldview knowledge and understanding of the God of Scripture. Therefore, the Bible study classes appear to have positively influenced the participant’s biblical worldviews about God.

**Impact on a Biblical Worldview of Reality**

This element is often discussed under metaphysics and encompasses people’s beliefs about the physical world. The Bible study curriculum attempted to answer questions like: Is life in this world just the result of a cause and effect relationship between events, or is God dynamically involved in them? Does He act causally in nature, and are miracles possible? A person’s beliefs in these areas alone will impact their attitude toward and participation in prayer to God.

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To address these types of questions, the Bible study class on reality proposed a formula suggested by William Halverson. He writes,

At the center of every worldview is what might be called the touchstone proposition (a statement having a fixed truth-value) of that worldview, a proposition that is held to be the fundamental truth about reality and serves as a criterion to determine which other propositions may or may not count as candidates for belief. If a given proposition $P$ is seen to be inconsistent with the touchstone proposition of one’s worldview, then as long as one holds that worldview, proposition $P$ must be regarded as false.²⁰¹

The touchstone proposition about reality from a biblical worldview is this: There is a sovereign, all-powerful God that created everything out of absolutely nothing; that there are God-ordained purpose and order to the creation, thus making the formulation of scientific law possible; that God has revealed Himself and His moral will in Scripture; and that God acts causally within the natural realm through miracles, revelation, and providence (there is a dynamic relationship between God and His creation). Therefore, any belief a person has, or any suggestion they are considering believing that is in any way inconsistent with this touchstone proposition, is to be regarded as false. It would be non-reality.

Unfortunately, a definitive evaluation of the Bible study classes’ impact on the Study Group’s biblical beliefs about reality was hampered by the unbalanced nature of the pre-course and post-course worldview survey questions. In other words, as only two survey questions pertained to beliefs related to reality (i.e., metaphysics), any pre-course to post-course changes in this worldview belief area were susceptible to significant influences when a single question posed challenges for the participants. Indeed, a single survey question received many incorrect pre-course and post-course responses that biased the overall correct answer mean score lower.

Impact on a Biblical Worldview of Knowledge

The Bible study course included classes on epistemology, which represents the division of philosophy that investigates the nature and origin of knowledge. The issue is this: What can a person know, and how can they know it? A second area visited was cognition, the mental process or faculty by which knowledge is acquired. Two Bible study class sessions probed the sinful condition of human beings to assess what effect this condition has on their ability to know? Other questions engaged included, can people trust their reasoning and sense experiences in gaining knowledge? Are a person’s intuitive perceptions of themselves more dependable than their perceptions of the world around them? Is truth relative, or must truth be the same for all people? Finally, how has God revealed Himself, and how can a person know what He has shown?

The biblically-based worldview that arose from the Bible study classes regarding knowledge demonstrated that human knowledge is possible because He who created and knows all things exhaustively is also the “light of all people” (John 1:4). Christ is “the true light, which enlightens everyone” (John 1:9). That is why a person can know. What a person can know and how they can obtain this knowledge comes in small part from the natural order of Creation. People can understand the universe because an understanding God made it to be understood.202 But the primary source of knowledge is God’s self-revelation of Himself to humankind through

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202 James W. Sire, Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 57.
the Bible. Thus, people are capable of attaining knowledge about God through Scripture; it is how people can know. For Christians, this is precisely what should be expected.

Similar to their initial beliefs about God, the Study Group as a whole began the Bible study classes with a well-developed worldview regarding knowledge. Their pre-course overall worldview survey correct answer mean score was 91.76%, though some individual scores fell within the 60 to 70 percentile range. While the selected lower scores could be characterized as outliers, they suggest some secular influences are pressing on this belief area, or selected worldview survey questions on knowledge were ambiguous.

The post-course worldview survey correct answer mean score for the Study Group increased slightly to 92.67%. Individual scores also shifted higher, with none in the 60% range and a higher percentage at 100% (the pre-course to post-course 100% scores increased from 47.06% to 53.33%). However, individual post-course scores remained the same or decreased on the same pre-course questions, where some also provided incorrect responses. Consequently, either a firmly established faulty biblical worldview was observed, or the related worldview survey questions were flawed, resulting in incorrect responses. Nevertheless, the increase in pre-course to post-course worldview survey correct answer scores suggests, at a minimum, that the overall worldviews of the Study Group participants increased in their biblical knowledge and understanding related to knowledge.

Impact on a Biblical Worldview of Ethics

Most people are more aware of the ethical aspect of their worldview than their beliefs about reality and knowledge. Of course, people regularly make judgments about their conduct.

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203 To reiterate, where no response was provided to a survey question, the answer was counted as incorrect for purposes of the intervention assessment.
and the conduct of others, believing that certain things are right and wrong. But the kinds of ethical beliefs important to a person’s worldview are more fundamental than moral judgments about single actions. Indeed, the critical question is why something is wrong. Therefore, the Bible study classes attempted to answer questions like these: Are there moral laws that govern human behavior? If so, what are they, and how can people know what they are? Is morality relative to individuals or cultures, or does morality rise above cultural, historical, and individual boundaries? Listening to people talk today about the various moral issues people face individually and as a culture reveals what they believe about right and wrong issues. Thus, in practical terms, biblical ethics helps a person understand the importance of having a robust and biblically-based worldview.

The Bible study class on ethics acknowledged the Christian ethical system’s claim to be the whole truth, handed down as absolute truth from God to humanity. Naugle encapsulates this idea, writing, “‘Worldview’ in Christian perspective implies the objective existence of the trinitarian God whose essential character establishes the moral order of the universe and whose word, wisdom, and law define and govern all aspect of created existence.”204 Because Christian norms are sourced from Scripture and Scripture is God’s self-revelation, God’s Word can show that an action or decision is right or wrong, just or unjust, true or false. On this basis, John and Paul Feinberg add that “by reflecting on God’s attributes and the world he made, reason can see the reasonableness of what God has prescribed. For the same reasons . . . reason on its own can reach some perception of what should and should not be done.”205

204 Naugle, 260.
Barna’s recent American worldview survey revealed that 46% of American evangelicals hold that moral truth is individually derived. In comparison, 48% believe there are absolute truths that apply to all people, in all places, at all times. The survey further revealed that while 72% of American evangelicals identify God as the basis for truth, only 58% turn to the Bible as their primary source of moral guidance.206

The Study Group for this action research thesis fared slightly better at the onset than American evangelicals with an overall pre-course worldview survey correct answer mean score of 86.27%. Syncretism with secular beliefs appeared most prominently in a single survey question regarding sex and marriage. In this instance, the responses varied but essentially affirmed that sex outside of marriage was acceptable. Fortunately, the overall post-course worldview survey correct answer mean score rose to 97.78%. The overall increase was supported by a significant increase of 100% correct survey question responses from 70.59% to 93.33%. The apparent syncretism also diminished to 6.67% incorrect responses to the selected sex-outside-of-marriage question.

Given the 11.5% increase in the overall worldview survey correct answer mean score, the Study Group’s beliefs regarding ethics were the most influenced by the Bible study classes. Indeed, ethics is likely the most prominent issue of the day. Therefore, it should be no surprise that the truth of Scripture positively influenced the participant’s worldview knowledge and understanding regarding Christian ethics.

Impact on a Biblical Worldview of Human Beings

Every person’s worldview includes beliefs about human beings. For instance, fundamental beliefs about a person’s makeup are: is a human monistic (only material) or dualistic (material and immaterial)? If both material and immaterial, how do the two relate to each other? If the relationship is dynamic, could it be said they are a dualistic unity? How do the biblical concepts of heart, soul, spirit, mind, etc., apply? What is the motivation of the human heart? Does physical death end human existence, or is there conscious, personal existence after death? Are there rewards and punishment after death? What people believe about these things will impact how they live and control how they relate to others.

The Bible study classes concluded that a well-formed biblical view of human beings accepts that all people have been created in God’s image (Gen 1:26) and that human life is sacred. In other words, all humans have been created in their current form as fully developed beings capable of rational thought. Also, a human being is not an animal, and as a personal being with intrinsic and absolute value, they are more than will, intellect [with reasoning], and emotion (Gen 1:26; Jas 3:9). In contrast to animals (that also possess will, intellect, and emotion), a person has a spiritual life (Eph 2:1-5). Human beings also possess a conscience (Rom 2:14-15) and moral and ethical sensitivities (Eph 4:17-19). But after the sin of Adam, this image was changed in nature (Gen 5:3; Rom 8:29).

A biblical worldview about human beings also accepts that the condition of every human being in Adam (all of Adam’s posterity) renders them hopelessly and helplessly lost and under eternal condemnation apart from the grace of God. No one is capable of saving themselves. Indeed, no matter how good a person tries to be, they are still sinners by nature and practice.

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207 Grier, 29.
Consequently, no one can enter God’s perfect heaven without Jesus Christ. In short, having a fallen nature means that human beings are not simply sinners because they sin (the habit of it); instead, they sin because they are sinners (the fact of it).208

In light of this reality, the biblical beliefs regarding a human being’s fallen nature and capabilities weighed heavily on a few of the Study Group participants. Specifically, the matter at hand became an issue of human responsibility and free will (cf. Rom 9), the latter of which was not a focus of the Bible study curriculum. A further area of contention was the belief in the “goodness” of human beings despite their fallen nature. Barna found that 70% of American evangelicals hold a view that people are basically good.209 In comparison, about 66% of the Bible study participants affirmed that same view on the pre-course and post-course surveys. Therefore, apparent syncretism with secular philosophy, consciously or unconsciously, was observed among the Study Group.

A few in the Study group also encountered challenges in responding to some questions regarding the sanctity of human life. In other words, no responses were recorded on specific questions related to abortion. It is unclear if experiential barriers (i.e., personal encounters with an abortion issue) were the cause of no responses or if unbiblical beliefs regarding abortion were manifest. Nevertheless, Barna found that only 60% of American evangelicals viewed human life as “sacred.”210 In comparison, recent research by the Pew Research Center (PRC) on the attitudes of Americans toward abortion found that 77% of White evangelicals said abortion should be

208 Geisler, Systematic Theology, 149.
210 Ibid., 64.
illegal in all or most cases, while 21% said it should be legal “in at least most instances.” In contrast to the PRC findings, and though less granular regarding the legality, 80% of the Study Group responded with biblically correct answers to the worldview survey questions on abortion, thereby affirming the sanctity of human life as proclaimed by Scripture.

Notwithstanding the apparent biblical worldview deficiencies described above, the Study Group’s overall post-course worldview survey correct answer mean score increased from 85.62% to 90.37%. In addition, the individual post-course survey correct answer scores also shifted higher, with the percentage of 100% correct answers rising from 35.39% to 60.00%. Again, these correct answer score increases demonstrate gains in biblical knowledge and understanding regarding their worldview beliefs of human beings. Thus, as with the other fundamental Christian beliefs included in the action research thesis implementation, a positive impact on the biblical worldviews of the Study Group as a whole was observed.

**Overall Impact on a Biblical Worldview**

Everyone has a worldview; the challenge is upon what basis their worldview is formed. If humanity is to think God’s thoughts after Him, the correct basis for any worldview must be the God of the Bible and His Word. Unfortunately, only 6% of the American adult population possess a biblical worldview as of this action research thesis. Even more revealing, Barna found that only 20% of born-again Christians (one in five and the same proportion that attends evangelical churches) have a biblical worldview. These statistics should be stark indicators to

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all Christian leaders that the battle for the human mind is being lost to unbiblical secular philosophies and non-truths. Attempts to counter-attack these secular worldviews are borne out in Christian ministries, especially churches providing their members and attendees with consistent Bible study opportunities on fundamental doctrines and theologies of the Christian faith. In doing so, secular worldviews may be defeated in exchange for a cohesive biblical worldview.

While the biblical worldviews of some members and attendees of The Woodlands Bible Church appear to have been adversely influenced by worldly philosophies, as demonstrated in chapter three, the overall biblical worldviews of the Study Group participants were far stronger at the beginning of the Bible study classes than the averages noted above. This reality should not be construed as phenomenological. Instead, and including in-class and post-class discussions in the assessment, the initial strength of their biblical worldviews was predicated on their active engagement with God’s Word through individual study and attendance to various manners of biblically-based teaching throughout their lives.

The strengthening of the participant’s overall biblical worldview through attendance and participation in the intervention implementation demonstrated, at a minimum, that the Bible study classes effectively contributed to the participant’s progressive growth in their knowledge of the things of God, however slight in some areas. This process is fundamental to discipleship, a focus of The Woodlands Bible Church. Indeed, and partially due to this action research thesis, the church has added consistent Bible study opportunities on fundamental doctrines and theologies of the Christian faith to its discipleship training ministry.
Methodology Appraisal

Collectively, the intervention design and implementation were not unique to this action research thesis. In other words, using formal Bible studies to establish, enrich, and maintain a Christian’s beliefs in fundamental biblical doctrines and theologies was a common ministry of Western churches for decades. It has only been a more recent phenomenon that these formal learning opportunities appear to have waned. Despite this diminishing church focus, the form, content, and structure of the Bible study classes taught for this action research thesis were consistent with the researcher’s experience in classroom-based Christian education within a church environment. However, from an intervention implementation perspective, several challenges arose.

First, only a small classroom venue in which the Bible study classes could be taught was available. As it was, the classroom space provided by the church only supported up to twenty participants. From a research perspective, as previously discussed, this limited classroom size adversely affected the collection and evaluation of the research data (i.e., a minimum of thirty participants are needed for sensitivity testing of research data). While the Bible study course could be taught more than once to account for the data volume shortcomings, the length of time to achieve such a data population may outweigh available or allotted research time.

Second, unanticipated research project expenses were encountered since the classroom space only included chairs. In the researcher’s opinion, structured learning necessitates an adequate learning environment. Therefore, tables and other facilitator-related furniture were purchased for the classroom to benefit the Bible study participants.

Finally, some questions in the pre-course and post-course worldview surveys (they were identical) exhibited some ambiguity based on the participant’s responses. Moreover, the ratio of
questions to each of the five belief areas was unbalanced, resulting in sparse data available for at least the belief area regarding reality. Thus, the worldview surveys should be modified to clarify any deficiencies, implied or otherwise, in the wording of the questions and answers. In addition, additional questions should be added to provide a more balanced data set for research assessment purposes.

Despite these survey content concerns, surveys remain a valid data collection and assessment tool for this kind of research. However, where small data sets are likely to be encountered, such as in this study, the inclusion of formal interviews with each participant or from focus groups could be performed to collect more qualitative feedback regarding each course section for each belief area.

A specific area for improvement would be in the Bible study curricula. For instance, since the content of each Bible study class was developed by the researcher, observed shortcomings in the participant’s post-course understandings of biblical principles could be attributed, in part, to unclear or incomplete teaching or class notes contents. Pazmiño rightly notes, “Christians must acknowledge that place of mystery and incomplete knowledge in both doctrine and life, which counters any stance of arrogance in relation to one’s own perspective on life, theology, and education.” Acknowledging this reality, some biblical truths were inadequately correlated with a biblical worldview or contrasted with secular non-truths in the Bible study curricula.

Apart from an action research thesis context, the Bible study classes’ content and format would be adequate for any Christian ministry, especially for churches. The only caveat being that some of the curricula should be revised to correlate better biblically-based beliefs on God,

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213 Pazmiño, 181.
reality, knowledge, ethics, and human beings with the progressive development of a Christian worldview.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

The next step in biblical worldview development studies might be to evaluate long-term behavioral changes arising from consistent training in and maintaining a cohesive biblical worldview. Indeed, knowledge gains alone are fruitless endeavors if such knowledge is not translated into individuals’ behavioral changes within their local community (i.e., checking a box on a worldview survey is no proof of a person’s active faith). How a long-term behavioral study would be facilitated is unclear. Nevertheless, such an investigation would appear feasible on a smaller scale, perhaps within a church or parachurch ministry context. The scope of this action research thesis did not contemplate such long-term data collection and evaluation.

An additional research focus area could be re-engaging churches to provide formal learning opportunities for their members and attendees. Unfortunately, many Western churches devote little time or resources to the experiential perfection of their church body through discipleship training, such as has been performed through this action research thesis. There is, however, hope, as Howard Hendricks once wrote,

> Though it may take time, once you get people over the barrier and into the true joy of discovery and learning, they can never again settle for education that’s less exciting. They’ll never be satisfied with anything less than a deep involvement in the learning process.²¹⁴

Getting churches excited about the learning process may require upward momentum from the church body or determination by various ministry leaders. But even slight gains in learning

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opportunities related to formulating and living a biblical worldview should positively influence present Christian communities and their local cultures.

**Researcher’s Overall Assessment**

The over-arching conclusion that emerged from this action research thesis is that intentionality is necessary to develop and maintain a cohesive biblical worldview. To reiterate, God’s Word is emphatic; a person is what they think (cf. Prov 23:6-8; Matt 15:18-19).

Consequently, shaping a person’s thinking based upon a committed trust in the person and message of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible becomes a crucial component in the life-long discipleship process. But merely attending Sunday morning sermons and small-group devotional meetings is unlikely to sufficiently inform a believer’s understanding of fundamental Christian beliefs that genuinely support a biblical worldview. Instead, intentionality in providing relevant learning opportunities to build a foundation of basic Christian beliefs is needed.

Unfortunately, many churches in the Western tradition have vacated their adult Bible study programs in favor of often watered-down devotionals or canned “one size fits all” curricula. In the mean, these approaches do little to shape a person’s thinking into Bible-based cultural transformation. Thus, if this action research thesis accomplished nothing more than enlightening readers of the positive influence of implementing consistent teaching programs in Christian theology in their local ministries, then the research served a compelling, reflective purpose.
Bibliography


APPENDIX A

BIBLE STUDY COURSE CURRICULUM

This appendix contains the example teaching notes, presentation slides, and student notes for the Bible study class on reality, one of the seven classes taught in eleven consecutive sessions on maintaining a biblical worldview. The seven classes comprised:

1. Introduction to Worldviews (one session)
2. Beliefs About God (three sessions)
3. Beliefs About Reality (one session)
4. Beliefs About Knowledge (two sessions)
5. Beliefs About Ethics (one session)
6. Beliefs About Human Beings (two sessions)
7. Review of a Biblical Worldview (one session)
1A. Ultimate Reality as a Component of Worldview

Today, we will look at the second of our five core beliefs that make up our biblical worldview: ultimate reality. Ultimate Reality is a subject often discussed under the term metaphysics in the philosophical world. It may sound complicated and mysterious, but a person’s worldview does not need to be complicated to include metaphysical beliefs. Those beliefs typically answer such questions as:

- What is the relationship between God and the universe?
- Is the existence of the universe a brute fact?
- Is the universe eternal?
- Did an eternal, personal, omnipotent God create the world?
- Are God and the world coeternal and interdependent?
- Is the world best understood in a non-purposeful way? Or is there purpose in the universe?
- What is the ultimate nature of the universe?
- Is the cosmos ultimately material or spiritual, or something else?
- Is the universe a self-enclosed system in the sense that everything that happens is caused and explained by other events within the system? Or can a supernatural reality (a being beyond the natural order) act causally within nature?
- Are miracles possible?

Most people probably have never really thought about most of these questions. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that everyone has some response (i.e., belief) about most, if not all, of them.

2A. Reality Defined

The American Heritage Dictionary defines reality in this way: “The quality or state of being actual or true.”\(^1\) Webster’s Dictionary expands on this a bit, adding “something that is neither derivative nor dependent but exists necessarily”—in other words, a foundational truth.

\(^1\) American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth ed. s.v. “Reality.”
that cannot waiver.² It is not derived from any formula, and it depends upon nothing to remain true.

Reality is never only valid for one group or person—it represents what is really true for all people everywhere and at all times, whether people acknowledge the reality or not.³ Indeed, every person’s view of ultimate reality revolves around some absolute source that sustains, controls, governs, or connects everything together.⁴ For believers in Jesus Christ, therefore, God is the ultimate reality.

3A. Secular Views of Reality

Fundamental beliefs about ultimate reality attempt to answer the ultimate questions of origin, meaning, morality, destiny, and identity. Consistent with views on God, views of ultimate reality break on secular and biblical lines.

1B. Secular Humanism

Secular Humanist views of reality support the most prevalent secular worldviews and often begin with evaluating scientific data that assumes evolution. Such a worldview does not allow for any reality outside of the physical universe. Consequently, the concept of a transcendent God existing outside of Creation would be rejected.⁵

For a Secular Humanist, the material universe is merely the result of some cosmic accident, and, in the end, the universe is all that exists. Life spontaneously generated from eternally existent matter and evolved into the human mind (from the ooze to the zoo to you!). Secular Humanists do not consider evolution a theory but as the factual grounds for a proper understanding of the entire world. In other words, evolution links inorganic nature with life, the stars with the earth, matter with the mind, and animals with humankind.⁶

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⁴ Ibid., 140.
⁶ Jeff Myers and David A. Noebel, Understanding the Times: A Survey of Competing Worldviews, Understanding the Times Series (Manitou Springs, CO; Colorado Springs: Summit Ministries; David C. Cook,
Some of you may recall Carl Sagan, the 1981 recipient of the Humanist of the Year award. He authored over 600 scientific papers and articles and was a co-author or editor of more than 20 books. However, he is probably best known for his PBS television series *Cosmos: A Personal Journey*. Sagan summed up the Secular Humanist view, writing: “The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.”

For Secular Humanists, no personal First Cause exists, only the cosmos. They would say: “Nature is but an endless series of efficient causes. She cannot create, but she eternally transforms. There was no beginning, and there can be no end.” Therefore, they do not need a God to explain the origin of the cosmos.

As Christians, we consider these humanist views entirely irrational. Their underlying position is tantamount to claiming that this building came together without an architect, plan, or engineer. Of course, the real world does not happen that way, but it does in the minds of those who reject a supernatural Designer and Builder.

**2B. Cosmic Humanism (pantheism)**

Cosmic Humanism is often termed transcendentalism and reflects the pantheism we studied in the last few weeks. Recall that pantheism holds that god always exists everywhere, in all things, and within all creatures. The pantheistic god did not create all things; instead, such a god is all things—a transcendental god inseparably intermingled with everything that has ever existed or will exist in the future. Therefore, in transcendental thought, I am the absolute center of my reality; everything external is merely a reality based on what I project from within. Consider what Rhonda Byrne claimed in her 2006 bestseller *The Secret*, “The Secret means that we are creators of our Universe, and that every wish that we want to create will manifest in our lives.”

Contemporary Cosmic Humanism has its roots in the Romantic poets of the 1800s, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and Henry David Thoreau (so his

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Maintaining a Biblical Worldview
Lesson #3 – Reality (metaphysics)

Walden Pond utopia). They rejected the God of the Bible and embraced a transcendent quality of spirituality experienced purely through personal reflection.¹⁰

These ideas didn’t attract a broad audience until the 1960s, when Hollywood and Eastern gurus latched on to them. More recently, celebrities such as Julia Roberts and Russell Brand have identified themselves with Hinduism. In contrast, Tiger Woods, Orlando Bloom (of Lord of the Rings fame), Seven Seagal, and Richard Gere openly embrace Zen Buddhism. Others like Tom Cruise, John Travolta, and Greta Van Susteren express a belief in Scientology. As a result, Cosmic Humanism ideas are widely disseminated through movies, television, and escalating book sales.

So, where do their core beliefs about ultimate reality lay? Well, they reject naturalistic and materialistic philosophies because such explanations deny the supernatural. They would say that if the spiritual aspects of life lead to higher consciousness and inner truth, all reality should be viewed from a supernatural or spiritual perspective. Therefore, nothing is natural; everything is supernatural. All reality is spiritual, from a grain of sand to the Milky Way.¹¹

Can we see examples of Cosmic Humanism in pop culture? Most certainly! Remember the movie The Matrix. Do you remember when Neo goes to visit the Oracle with Morpheus? While he is waiting, he focuses on a boy in Buddhist robes sitting cross-legged on the floor. The boy is bending metal spoons by merely staring at them. He explains to a puzzled Neo, “Don’t try to bend the spoon. That’s impossible. Instead, only try to realize the truth …. There is no spoon.” This statement reflects a classic Hindu/Buddhist conception of reality—that what we see is an illusionary world.

Therefore, until we realize that reality is a mental construct created by our senses and consciousness (i.e., there really is no spoon), we are free to change our consciousness and perception of the spoon. In other words, there is no objective world, only the reality created by our minds.

So, the ultimate reality of Cosmic Humanism, or pantheism, is spiritual because god, which is everything, is ultimately spiritual. Therefore, spirit is the only substance that exists, and matter is only a manifestation of spirit.

¹⁰ Myers and Noebel, 126.
¹¹ Ibid.
3B. Postmodernism

Contemporary secular views of reality also stem from postmodern belief systems. In such systems, reality is characterized as a unified whole that cannot be divided into true or false. As a result, all beliefs are equally valid because they are part of the greater whole. Truth, then, is a personal, private matter. One person’s truth about reality may differ from another’s, but both realities are equally valid, even if the views are entirely contradictory. Indeed, people in modern, pluralistic cultures have begun to piece together radically different maps of reality, creating, whether consciously or unconsciously, incoherent worldviews resulting in outrageous behaviors and beliefs that do not align.

For this reason, in most cases, a postmodernist will reject explanations that claim to be valid for all groups, cultures, traditions, or races. Interpretation is everything; reality only forms through a person’s interpretations of what the world means to them individually. Postmodernism relies on individual experience over abstract principles (feelings over facts), always believing that each person’s experiences will necessarily be fallible and relative (i.e., subject to error and personal), never absolute and universal (valid for all people in all places at all times).

Secular views of reality generally empty the world of the divine. Such a “divine-less” umbrella merely results in disenchantment—a reality in which God’s existence is muted, and the gospel of Christ seems implausible, if not undesirable. Thankfully, much ink has been spilled regarding a proper biblical view of reality. So, let’s look at the truth!

4A. Biblical View of Reality

The Bible begins with, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). Many early Christians found it important to counter Plato’s explanation of Creation using

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13 Olson, 37.

the biblical view of God. Therefore, they stipulated that God created the world *ex nihilo* (from nothing), an essential tenet of the Christian worldview.

These early Christians believed it necessary to show how the Christian understanding of Creation differed from the account of the world’s origin offered by Greek philosophers such as Plato. Plato’s god (if indeed that is an appropriate word for his Craftsman) was not the infinite, all-powerful, and sovereign God of the Bible; instead, his god was finite and limited.\(^{15}\)

The Christian account of Creation is taken from Scripture (God’s revelation of absolute truth to us). In that account, nothing existed before Creation except our triune God. There was no time or space; there was no pre-existing matter. Everything that exists besides God depends totally upon Him for its existence. Consider John 1:4, where, speaking of Jesus Christ (God the Son), John writes:

*In the beginning* [of the cosmos] *was the Word* [Logos, mind, reason, thought, wisdom, intelligence, idea, law, order, purpose, design], *and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men* (John 1:1-4).

What emerges from John’s pen are the parameters of Christian Philosophy—“mind before matter; God before people; plan and design before creation; life from life, and enlightenment from the Light.”\(^ {16}\) The orderly and rational mind of God conceived this orderly universe before he spoke it into existence. Therefore, if God did not exist, the entire cosmos, including the world, would not exist. Unlike the Secular Humanists’ claims, the cosmos is not eternal, self-sufficient, or self-explanatory—God freely created it.

According to the Bible, there is a God-ordained order to Creation, and human beings can discover that order. This order makes science possible; it compels scientists to seek and capture this order in their laws. Thus, from a biblical worldview perspective, it is unsurprising that philosophers and scientists refer to the universe and all things in it as a manifestation of mathematical laws, order, design, and beauty.

It is no accident that at every level of the cosmos—sub-atomic, atomic, organic, inorganic, sub-human, human, earth, moon, sun, stars, and galaxies—all things manifest

\(^{15}\) Ibid.

\(^{16}\) Myers and Noebel, 217.
extraordinary order and rationality that can be reasonably explained only as the result of a deliberate, creative act of God.\textsuperscript{17}

So we can now use our biblical worldview about ultimate reality to answer some of the questions I posed earlier: the world’s existence is NOT brute fact, nor is the world a purposeless machine. Instead, the world exists due to a free decision to create by God who is eternal, transcendent (beyond the universe), spiritual (that is, non-material), omnipotent, loving, and personal (cf. Col 1:15-17).

5A. Conclusion

Many people dismiss out of hand the reality described by the Bible. For example, the Bible states that people who do not trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins will go to hell. That is reality! But many refuse to believe it, choosing instead to redefine God—“My god is a god of love, etc.” (remember Santatheism?); He wouldn’t send anyone to hell. They may deny the Bible’s inerrancy or be a person who sees life’s meaning only in terms of this life’s experiences rather than in terms of eternal considerations.

The critical question is this: Is it possible to judge and interpret reality accurately? The answer is YES! Different religions only prove that there are different takes on reality, not that there are other realities; they all make exclusive claims. William Halverson suggests the following formula:

At the center of every worldview is what might be called the touchstone proposition (a statement having a fixed truth-value) of that worldview, a proposition that is held to be the fundamental truth about reality and serves as a criterion to determine which other propositions may or may not count as candidates for belief. If a given proposition $P$ is seen to be inconsistent with the touchstone proposition of one’s worldview, then as long as one holds that worldview, proposition $P$ must be regarded as false.\textsuperscript{18}

The touchstone proposition from a biblical worldview is this: There is a sovereign, all-powerful God that created everything out of absolutely nothing; that there are God-ordained purpose and order to the Creation, thus making the formulation of scientific law possible; that God has revealed Himself and His moral will in Scripture; and that God acts causally within the

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\textsuperscript{17} David A. Noebel, \textit{Understanding the Times}, 2nd abridged and rev. ed. (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Press, 2006), 90.
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natural realm through miracles, revelation, and providence. Therefore, any belief we have, or any suggestion that we are considering believing that is in any way inconsistent with this touchstone proposition, is to be regarded as false! It would be non-reality! Think about the following biblical example of non-reality from Genesis 3:1-13.\(^\text{19}\)

**Reality:** Then the LORD God commanded the man, “You may freely eat fruit from every tree of the orchard, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will surely die” (Gen 2:16-17).

**Satan’s Proposition:** “You shall not surely die” (Gen 3:4).

**Satan’s Rationale:** “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will open and you will be like divine beings who know good and evil” (Gen 3:5).

**Result:** They thought they were experiencing reality—until God confronted them with reality—then they tried to rationalize non-reality!

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate” (Gen 3:6-13).

So, what is the touchstone proposition of the world? Paul tells us plainly in Romans 1:18-25,

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the Creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and

\(^{19}\) Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are from the New English Translation (NET) Bible (Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C., 2019).
worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!

Amen.

The Bible says that to experience God’s life (in reality), we must know it (objective truth of the Bible) and obey it (subjective experience). Not to do so is to live in non-reality!
Bibliography


1A. Review

In our introduction several weeks ago, I argued from Scriptures that “we are what we think.” For example, proverbs 23:6-7 says, “Do not eat the bread of a man who is stingy; do not desire his delicacies, for he is like one who is inwardly calculating. ‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you.”

So how we think has a direct bearing on how we live out our lives. In other words, we behave the way we do because of how we think—which we have labeled our “worldview.” Because all people have varying worldviews based on their culture or environment, religion, understanding of reality, and education level in some respects, they often find themselves in conflict with one another.

As believers, our task is to develop, nurture, and maintain a worldview based upon assumptions about life formed by our central beliefs in the person and message of Jesus Christ. Clearly, we cannot do this by conforming to a worldview derived from humankind. Instead, our thinking must be transformed by renewing our minds on Scripture; we must study it and contemplate it so that by our actions and words (i.e., how we live out our lives), we prove what the will of God is—His good, acceptable, and perfect will (Rom 12:2). This is right-thinking. The alternative to right-thinking is that we are likely not living entirely within the will of God. In that case, there are inevitable consequences for us and everyone with whom we come in contact.

I have argued that five fundamental core beliefs make up a worldview (not everything we believe, however). These core beliefs are about God, reality (how we view the world), knowledge (what can we know and how can we know it?), ethics, and human beings. Over the past two weeks, we looked at our core beliefs about God, specifically, His attributes, or as I think it is better described, His perfections.

We saw from the Scriptures that He is absolutely sovereign, absolutely holy, and absolutely just. We saw that His total being is love. He is eternal; that is, He has always been and always will be. He is omniscient; He knows everything that will ever come to pass—He cannot learn. He is omnipotent, all-powerful. There is nothing impossible for God. He is absolute truth and cannot lie; therefore, His Word is absolute truth (not generally true; it is absolutely true!).

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1 Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (ESV) Bible (London: Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2016).
Finally, he is unchangeable; His nature and being are infinite and not subject to mutations. He has not evolved, grown, or improved. All that He is today He has ever been and ever will be.

We looked to Scripture to define these fundamental perfections of God because He must be the foundation upon which we as Christians consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality. He must be the foundation of our worldview.

2A. Ultimate Reality as a Component of Worldview

Today, we will look at the second of our five core beliefs that make up our biblical worldview: ultimate reality. Ultimate Reality is a subject often discussed under the term metaphysics in the philosophical world. It may sound complicated and mysterious, but a person’s worldview does not need to be complicated to include metaphysical beliefs. Those beliefs typically answer such questions as:

- What is the relationship between God and the universe?
- Is the existence of the universe a brute fact?
- Is the universe eternal?
- Did an eternal, personal, omnipotent God create the world?
- Are God and the world coeternal and interdependent?
- Is the world best understood in a non-purposeful way? Or is there purpose in the universe?
- What is the ultimate nature of the universe?
- Is the cosmos ultimately material or spiritual, or something else?
- Is the universe a self-enclosed system in the sense that everything that happens is caused and explained by other events within the system? Or can a supernatural reality (a being beyond the natural order) act causally within nature?
- Are miracles possible?

Most people probably have never really thought about most of these questions. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that everyone has some response (i.e., belief) about most, if not all, of them.
3A. Reality Defined

The American Heritage Dictionary defines reality in this way: “The quality or state of being actual or true.”  

Webster’s Dictionary expands on this a bit, adding “something that is neither derivative nor dependent but exists necessarily”—in other words, a foundational truth that cannot waiver.  

It is not derived from any formula, and it depends upon nothing to remain true.

Reality is never only valid for one group or person—it represents what is really true for all people everywhere and at all times, whether people acknowledge the reality or not. Indeed, every person’s view of ultimate reality revolves around some absolute source that sustains, controls, governs, or connects everything together. For believers in Jesus Christ, therefore, God is the ultimate reality.

4A. Secular Views of Reality

Fundamental beliefs about ultimate reality attempt to answer the ultimate questions of origin, meaning, morality, destiny, and identity. Consistent with views on God, views of ultimate reality break on secular and biblical lines.

1B. Secular Humanism

Secular Humanist views of reality support the most prevalent secular worldviews and often begin with evaluating scientific data that assumes evolution. Such a worldview does not allow for any reality outside of the physical universe. Consequently, the concept of a transcendent God existing outside of Creation would be rejected.

For a Secular Humanist, the material universe is merely the result of some cosmic accident, and, in the end, the universe is all that exists. Life spontaneously generated from

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5 Ibid., 140.

eternally existent matter and evolved into the human mind (from the ooze to the zoo to you!). Secular Humanists do not consider evolution a theory but as the factual grounds for a proper understanding of the entire world. In other words, evolution links inorganic nature with life, the stars with the earth, matter with the mind, and animals with humankind.²

Some of you may recall Carl Sagan, the 1981 recipient of the Humanist of the Year award. He authored over 600 scientific papers and articles and was co-author or editor of more than 20 books. However, he is probably best known for his PBS television series *Cosmos: A Personal Journey*. Sagan summed up the Secular Humanist view, writing: “The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.”³

[Play Secular Humanist clip]

For Secular Humanists, no personal First Cause exists, only the cosmos. They would say, “Nature is but an endless series of efficient causes. She cannot create, but she eternally transforms. There was no beginning, and there can be no end.”⁴ Therefore, they do not need a God to explain the origin of the cosmos.

As Christians, we consider these humanist views entirely irrational. Their underlying position is tantamount to claiming that this building came together without an architect, plan, or engineer. Of course, the real world does not happen that way, but it does in the minds of those who reject a supernatural Designer and Builder.

2B. Cosmic Humanism (pantheism)

Cosmic Humanism is often termed transcendentalism and is a reflection of the pantheism we studied last week. Recall that pantheism holds that god always exists everywhere, in all things, and within all creatures. The pantheistic god did not create all things; instead, such a god is all things—a transcendental god inseparably intermingled with everything that has ever existed or will exist in the future. Therefore, in

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transcendental thought, I am the absolute center of my reality; everything external is merely a reality based on what I project from within. Consider what Rhonda Byrne claimed in her 2006 bestseller *The Secret*, “The Secret means that we are creators of our Universe, and that every wish that we want to create will manifest in our lives.”

Contemporary Cosmic Humanism has its roots in the Romantic poets of the 1800s, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and Henry David Thoreau (so his Walden Pond utopia). They rejected the God of the Bible and embraced a transcendent quality of spirituality experienced purely through personal reflection. For example, in his book Walden, Thoreau wrote, “It is what a man thinks of himself that really determines his fate.”

These ideas didn’t attract a broad audience until the 1960s, when Hollywood and Eastern gurus latched on to them. More recently, celebrities such as Julia Roberts and Russell Brand have identified themselves with Hinduism. In contrast, Tiger Woods, Orlando Bloom (of Lord of the Rings fame), Seven Seagal, and Richard Gere openly embrace Zen Buddhism. Others like Tom Cruise, John Travolta, and Greta Van Susteren express a belief in Scientology. As a result, Cosmic Humanism ideas are widely disseminated through movies, television, and escalating book sales.

So, where do their core beliefs about ultimate reality lay? Well, they reject naturalistic and materialistic philosophies because such explanations deny the supernatural. They would say if the spiritual aspects of life lead to higher consciousness and inner truth, all reality should be viewed from a supernatural or spiritual perspective. Therefore, nothing is natural; everything is supernatural. All reality is spiritual, from a grain of sand to the Milky Way.

Can we see examples of Cosmic Humanism in pop culture? Most certainly! Remember the movie *The Matrix*. Do you remember when Neo goes to visit the Oracle with Morpheus? [Play Matrix clip] While he is waiting, he focuses on a boy in Buddhist robes sitting cross-legged on the floor. The boy is bending metal spoons by merely

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11 Myers and Noebel, 126.

12 Ibid.
Maintaining a Biblical Worldview
Lesson #3 – Reality (metaphysics)

staring at them. He explains to a puzzled Neo, “Don’t try to bend the spoon. That’s impossible. Instead, only try to realize the truth …. There is no spoon.”

This statement reflects a classic Hindu/Buddhist conception of reality—that what we see is an illusionary world. Therefore, until we realize that reality is a mental construct created by our senses and consciousness (i.e., there really is no spoon), we are free to change our consciousness and perception of the spoon. In other words, there is no objective world, only the reality created by our minds.

So, the ultimate reality of Cosmic Humanism, or pantheism, is spiritual because god, which is everything, is ultimately spiritual. Therefore, spirit is the only substance that exists, and matter is only a manifestation of spirit.

3B. Postmodernism

Contemporary secular views of reality also stem from postmodern belief systems. In such systems, reality is characterized as a unified whole that cannot be divided into true or false. As a result, all beliefs are equally valid because they are part of the greater whole. Truth, then, is a personal, private matter. One person’s truth about reality may differ from another’s, but both realities are equally valid, even if the views are entirely contradictory. Indeed, people in modern, pluralistic cultures have begun to piece together radically different maps of reality, creating, whether consciously or unconsciously, incoherent worldviews resulting in outrageous behaviors and beliefs that do not align.

For this reason, in most cases, a postmodernist will reject explanations that claim to be valid for all groups, cultures, traditions, or races. Interpretation is everything; reality only forms through a person’s interpretations of what the world means to them individually. Postmodernism relies on individual experience over abstract principles (feelings over facts), always believing that each person’s experiences will necessarily be

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14 Olson, 37.
fallible and relative (i.e., subject to error and personal), and never absolute and universal (valid for all people in all places at all times).

Secular views of reality generally empty the world of the divine. Such a “divine-less” umbrella merely results in disenchantment—a reality in which God’s existence is muted, and the gospel of Christ seems implausible, if not undesirable.¹⁵ Thankfully, much ink has been spilled regarding a proper biblical view of reality. So, let’s look at the truth!

5A. Biblical View of Reality

The Bible begins with, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). Many early Christians found it important to counter Plato’s explanation of Creation using the biblical view of God. That is, they stipulated that God created the world ex nihilo (from nothing)—which is an essential tenet of the Christian worldview (wouldn’t you all agree?).

These early Christians believed it necessary to show how the Christian understanding of Creation differed from Plato’s account of the world’s origin. Plato had suggested that a godlike being, the Craftsman (the demiurge/father and maker of the universe), had brought the world into being by fashioning eternal stuff or matter after the pattern of eternal ideas that existed independently of the Craftsman. Moreover, this creative activity took place in a space-time receptacle or box that existed independently of the Craftsman.¹⁶

Early Christian thinkers such as Augustine wanted the world to know that the Christian God and the Christian view of Creation differed totally from this platonic picture. Plato’s god (if indeed that is an appropriate word for his Craftsman) was not the infinite, all-powerful, and sovereign God of the Bible; instead, his god was finite and limited.¹⁷

The Christian account of Creation is taken from Scripture (God’s revelation of absolute truth to us). In that account, nothing existed before Creation except our triune God. There was no time or space; there was no pre-existing matter. Everything that exists besides God depends totally upon Him for its existence. Consider John 1:4, where speaking of Jesus Christ (God the


¹⁷ Ibid.
Son), John writes:

*In the beginning* [of the cosmos] *was the Word* [Logos, mind, reason, thought, wisdom, intelligence, idea, law, order, purpose, design], *and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men* (John 1:1-4).

What emerges from John’s pen are the parameters of Christian Philosophy—“mind before matter; God before people; plan and design before creation; life from life, and enlightenment from the Light.”¹⁸ The orderly and rational mind of God conceived this orderly universe before he spoke it into existence. Therefore, if God did not exist, the entire cosmos, including the world, would not exist. Unlike the Secular Humanists’ claims, the universe is not eternal, self-sufficient, or self-explanatory—God freely created it. What misguided arrogance must be present to question or criticize that reality!

[S.M. Lockridge audio] [Read aloud Job 38 and 39]

According to the Bible, there is a God-ordained order to Creation, and human beings can discover that order. This order makes the science Neal deGrasse Tyson talked about possible; it compels scientists to seek and capture this order in their laws. Thus, from a biblical worldview perspective, it is unsurprising that philosophers and scientists refer to the universe and all things in it as a manifestation of mathematical laws, order, design, and beauty.

It is no accident that at every level of the cosmos—sub-atomic, atomic, organic, inorganic, sub-human, human, earth, moon, sun, stars, and galaxies—all things manifest extraordinary order and rationality that can be reasonably explained only as the result of a deliberate, creative act of God.¹⁹

So, we can now use our biblical worldview about ultimate reality to answer some of the questions I posed earlier: the world’s existence is NOT brute fact, nor is the world a purposeless machine. Instead, the world exists due to a free decision to create by God who is eternal, transcendent (beyond the universe), spiritual (non-material), omnipotent, loving, and personal. Speaking of Jesus Christ, Paul writes:

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¹⁸ Myers and Noebel, 217.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all Creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Col 1:15-17).

6A. Conclusion

Many people dismiss out of hand the reality described by the Bible. For example, the Bible states that people who do not trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins will go to hell. That is reality! But many refuse to believe it, choosing instead to redefine God—“My god is a god of love, etc.,” He wouldn’t send anyone to hell. They may deny the Bible’s inerrancy or be a person who sees life’s meaning only in terms of this life’s experiences rather than in terms of eternal considerations.

The critical question is this: Is it possible to judge and interpret reality accurately? The answer is YES! Different religions only prove that there are different takes on reality, not that there are other realities; they all make exclusive claims.

William Halverson suggests the following formula:

At the center of every worldview is what might be called the touchstone proposition (a statement having a fixed truth-value) of that worldview, a proposition that is held to be the fundamental truth about reality and serves as a criterion to determine which other propositions may or may not count as candidates for belief. If a given proposition \( P \) is seen to be inconsistent with the touchstone proposition of one’s worldview, then as long as one holds that worldview, proposition \( P \) must be regarded as false.\(^{20}\)

The touchstone proposition from a biblical worldview is this: There is a sovereign, all-powerful God that created everything out of absolutely nothing; that there are God-ordained purpose and order to the Creation, thus making the formulation of scientific law possible; that God has revealed Himself and His moral will in Scripture; and that God acts causally within the natural realm through miracles, revelation, and providence (there is a dynamic relationship between God and His Creation). Therefore, any belief we have, or any suggestion that we are considering believing that is in any way inconsistent with this touchstone proposition, is to be

regarded as false! It would be non-reality! Think about the following biblical example of non-reality from Genesis 3:1-13.

**Reality:** Then the LORD God commanded the man, “You may freely eat fruit from every tree of the orchard, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will surely die” (Gen 2:16-17 NET).

**Satan’s Proposition:** “You shall not surely die” (Gen 3:4).

**Satan’s Rationale:** “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will open and you will be like divine beings who know good and evil” (Gen 3:5 NET).

**Result:** They thought they were experiencing reality—until God confronted them with reality—then they tried to rationalize non-reality!

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

They are now experiencing a new reality, but now they try to rationalize non-reality.

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate” (Gen 3:6-13 NET).

So, what is the touchstone proposition of the world? Paul tells us plainly in Romans 1:18-25,

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the Creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and

21 New English Translation (NET) Bible (Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C., 2019)
worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!

Amen.

The Bible says that to experience God’s life (in reality), we must know it (objective truth of the Bible) and obey it (subjective experience). Not to do so is to live in non-reality!
Bibliography


Maintaining a Biblical Worldview

Lesson 3

A worldview is a set of beliefs (i.e., how we think) about the most important issues in life.

Biblical Worldview
An orderly and related set of beliefs about life based upon our committed trust in the person and message of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible.

A Biblical Worldview of Reality

AHD: The quality or state of being actual or true.

Webster’s: Something that is neither derivative nor dependent but exists necessarily.
Secular Humanism

The physical universe came into being by accident and that it is all that exists.

“The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.”
Carl Sagan

 Cosmic Humanism
(aka Pantheism)

The self is the absolute center of reality.

Mother Earth

Plant earth, and indeed the whole universe, is a living organism.

“The Secret means that we are creators of our Universe, and that every wish that we want to create will manifest in our lives.”
Rhonda Byrne, The Secret
Spirit is the only substance that exists, and matter is only a manifestation of spirit.

Postmodernism
- Relies on concrete experience over abstract principles.
- The outcome of one's own experience will necessarily be fallible and relative, rather than certain and universal.

Biblical Worldview of Reality
- Nothing existed prior to Creation except our triune God.
- Everything else that exists besides God depends totally upon God for its existence.
- The orderly universe was conceived in the orderly and rational mind of God before it was created.

William Halverson: At the center of every worldview is what might be called the touchstone proposition (a statement having a fixed truth-value) of that worldview, a proposition that is held to be the fundamental truth about reality and serves as a criterion to determine which other propositions may or may not count as candidates for belief. If a given proposition $P$ is seen to be inconsistent with the touchstone proposition of one’s worldview, then as long as one holds that worldview, proposition $P$ must be regarded as false.

Biblical Worldview of Reality
- If God did not exist, the cosmos and, therefore, the world would not exist.
- The world exists as a result of a free decision to create by God who is eternal, transcendent (beyond the universe), spiritual (that is, non-material), omnipotent, loving, and personal.

The Biblical $P$
There is a sovereign, all powerful God that created all that is out there, that which did not exist previously; that there is God-ordained purpose and order to the creation, thus making the formulation of scientific law possible; that God has revealed himself and his moral will in Scripture; and that God acts causally within the natural realm through miracles, revelation, and providence.
Biblical Worldview of Reality

The Bible says that to experience God's life (in reality) we must know it (objective truth of the Bible) and obey it (subjective experience).

Not to do so is to live in non-reality!
APPENDIX B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Title of the Project: Maintaining a Biblical Worldview: Mitigating Emerging Syncretism with Worldly Philosophies Through Focused Instruction in Christian Theology

Principal Investigator: Scott K. Leafe, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invitation to be Part of a Research Study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be eighteen years of age. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.</td>
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Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the study about and why is it being done?</th>
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<tr>
<td>A biblical worldview is characterized as an orderly and related set of beliefs about life based upon a person’s committed trust in the person and message of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. These beliefs inform believers on their relationship with God, the nature of the universe, knowledge (what a person can know and how they know it), human beings (their creation and nature), and moral living (what determines right or wrong). The purpose of the study is to evaluate the impact on a person’s biblical worldview by participating in focused Bible study classes on these specific belief areas of Christian theology.</td>
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<tr>
<th>What will happen if you take part in this study?</th>
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<tr>
<td>If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Participate in pre-course and post-course surveys (i.e., before the first class and after the last class). The thirty-question surveys will be administered manually and should take no more than 45 minutes each to complete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Participate in nine 45-minute Bible study classes to be held at 9:30 am on consecutive Sundays beginning in late-March 2021. Audio recordings of each class will be performed for the researcher’s post-class evaluation only.</td>
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<tr>
<th>How could you or others benefit from this study?</th>
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<tr>
<td>The direct benefits you should expect to receive from participating in this study are expanding your biblical knowledge and developing a more cohesive and mature biblical worldview. A well-developed, biblical worldview will allow you to respond to the culture in which you live and better equip you to help the culture respond to the Savior you follow.</td>
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<th>What risks might you experience from being in this study?</th>
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<tr>
<td>The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.</td>
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</table>
How will personal information be protected?
The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Anonymous data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers.

- Participant responses will be anonymous and kept confidential through the use of codes selected by each participant.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Each Bible study class session will be audio-recorded and assessed by the researcher only. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision about whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with The Woodlands Bible Church. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?
If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?
The researcher conducting this study is Scott Leafe. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at [contact information]. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Dr. Russell S. Woodbridge, at [contact information].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [contact information].

The remainder of this page is intentionally blank.
By signing this document, you agree to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I am 18 years of age or older. I consent to participate in the study.

____________________________________
Printed Participant’s Name

____________________________________
Signature & Date
APPENDIX C

Biblical Worldview Survey and Key

Included in this appendix is the Bible Worldview Survey administered to all participants committed to the study during the introductory Bible study class and before the final review Bible study class. Also included is the Biblical Worldview Survey answer key depicting the biblically correct answers used as the basis for the quantitative analysis of the intervention results.
**Biblical Worldview Survey**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** These questions consider different aspects of a Christian worldview. The questions stem from a person's beliefs about: God, creation, and history; the Bible, truth, and morality; and human nature, human character. Select the answer that best fits your view and fully shade in the corresponding circle.\(^1\)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Which of these descriptions comes closest to what you believe about the Bible? (Choose one only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ The inspired Word of God that has no errors, although some verses are meant to be symbolic rather than literal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The actual, true word of God that should be taken literally, word for word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The inspired word of God but with some factual or historical errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Just one of many holy books that provide religious teaching; it is neither more nor less reliable than the sacred literature of other religious traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Not inspired by God but tells how its authors understood the ways and principles of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ A valuable text that has helped society develop, but it is neither divine nor inspired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ A book of fables and myths that have little, if any, basis in reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Don't know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>There are many different beliefs about God or a higher power. Which of these descriptions comes closest to what you, personally, believe? (Choose one only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ God is the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect, and just creator of the universe who rules the universe today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ A higher power may exist, but nobody really knows for certain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ God refers to the total realization of personal, human potential or a state of higher consciousness that a person may reach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ There is no such thing as God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ There are many gods, each with different power and authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Everyone is god.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Don't know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the universal, common purpose, or ultimate reason for living? (Choose one only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Experiencing happiness or fulfillment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Evolving into our full potential, physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Knowing, loving, and serving God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Furthering the development of humanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Living a long, healthy life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Advancing world peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ There is no universal or common purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Unsure / don’t know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Absolute moral truth**

Identifying moral truth is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to every person, all the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What is the basis for truth? (Choose one only)**

- God
- Scientific proof
- Inner certainty
- Tradition
- Public agreement
- There is no truth.
- Don’t know.

**What do you believe about the origin of the world? (Choose one only)**

- God created the universe in six 24-hour days about 6,000 years ago, designing the earth’s creatures pretty much in their current form.
- God created the universe at some point in the distant past and gave the earth’s creatures the capacity to change and adapt over time.
- The universe and the earth came into being at some point in the distant past; life evolved over millions of years from earlier life forms with no god or intelligent force.
- God sparked the universe into existence at some point in the distant past and used the natural process of evolution to bring about the many kinds of life we see today.
- Other
- Not sure

**Human Nature**

People are basically good.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Value of Human Life**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human beings are God’s creation, made in His image, are separated from God and need redemption.</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human life is sacred.</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Bible is ambiguous on abortion.</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Views on Faith, Sin, and Salvation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Having faith matters more than which faith you have.</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You consciously and consistently try to avoid sinning because you know your sins break God’s heart.  

Agree ☐  Disagree ☐

You have a personal responsibility, in appropriate situations, to share your religious beliefs with people who believe differently than you.  

Agree ☐  Disagree ☐

A person who is generally good, or does enough good things for others, will earn a place in Heaven.  

Agree ☐  Disagree ☐

You consider yourself to be a Christian; and when you die you will go to Heaven only because you have accepted Jesus Christ as your savior.  

Agree ☐  Disagree ☐

What is a human being?  *(Choose one only)*

☐ A highly evolved, complex animal  
☐ Part of the larger “mind” that is the universe  
☐ Just a physical body with a brain that works like a computer  
☐ A physical and spiritual being with value apart from what they do  
☐ The sum of their experiences  
☐ Don’t know.

Which of the following statements do you agree with?  *(Select all that apply)*

☐ There is nothing wrong with sex before marriage if two people love one another.  
☐ Any kind of sex between two consenting adults is acceptable.  
☐ A marriage is one man married to one woman for life.  
☐ I don’t think God is really concerned about what kind of marriage is best.  
☐ A marriage is two adults bound by legal marriage, regardless of their genders.  
☐ Not sure

Which statement best describes what you believe about history?  *(Choose one only)*

☐ God has worked through history for his purposes.  
☐ Social progress helps humankind become better and better.  
☐ There is no real direction for history; things just happen.  
☐ Each society must decide for itself what is the best course.  
☐ None of these  
☐ Not sure

Which is the main cause of society’s problems?  *(Choose one only)*

☐ Rich people taking advantage of the working class  
☐ Society does not submit to God and it should be forced to do so.  
☐ Conflict between groups that insist they alone possess the truth  
☐ Sin is the cause of problems in society.  
☐ We do not appreciate our own god-like nature.  
☐ Not sure
### Views on Christian Beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God will bring about certain circumstances which will result in the judgement and destruction of evil.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can have the personal presence of God in my life.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are certain required duties to maintaining a strong Christian lifestyle (i.e., prayer, doing good deeds, and helping others).</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is possible to have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By following the teachings of Jesus Christ and incorporating them into my daily life, I receive such things as peace, confidence, and hope.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
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<td>God literally and physically raised Jesus from the dead.</td>
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<td>I believe in miracles because of my confidence in God to perform such things.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>Because of God’s grace through Jesus Christ, believers are no longer condemned by God’s Law.</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>Because of my personal commitment to Jesus Christ, I am assured I have eternal life from God.</td>
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<td>I can only know God because of my personal commitment to Jesus Christ.</td>
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<td>Everyone’s life has been twisted by sin and the only adequate remedy to this problem is Jesus Christ.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Statistical Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is your age? __________________________

Highest level of education completed? *(Choose one below only)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Graduate</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How many years have you been a Christian? __________________________

Association with The Woodlands Bible Church

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership Status</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Member</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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Please carefully read and respond to this section.

This research is designed to evaluate a person’s worldview. This study is being conducted by Scott K. Leafe for the purposes of doctoral thesis research. Any information you have provided will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

For data compilation purposes, please enter a unique 4-digit code below. Note that this code ensures your anonymity and should be used on both surveys administered for this study.

Unique 4-Digit Code: _______ _______ _______ _______

(Suggest mother’s birthdate. Ex: March 16 = 0316)
Biblical Worldview Survey Key

INSTRUCTIONS: These questions consider different aspects of a Christian worldview. The questions stem from a person’s beliefs about: God, creation, and history; the Bible, truth, and morality; and human nature, human character. Select the answer that best fits your view and fully shade in the corresponding circle.¹

THEME KEY: GOD = G, REALITY = R, KNOWLEDGE = K, ETHICS = E, HUMAN BEINGS = H

1. Which of these descriptions comes closest to what you believe about the Bible? (Choose one only) K
   - The inspired Word of God that has no errors, although some verses are meant to be symbolic rather than literal
   - The actual, true word of God that should be taken literally, word for word
   - The inspired word of God but with some factual or historical errors
   - Just one of many holy books that provide religious teaching: it is neither more nor less reliable than the sacred literature of other religious traditions
   - Not inspired by God but tells how its authors understood the ways and principles of God
   - A valuable text that has helped society develop, but it is neither divine nor inspired
   - A book of fables and myths that have little, if any, basis in reality
   - Don’t know.

2. There are many different beliefs about God or a higher power. Which of these descriptions comes closest to what you, personally, believe? (Choose one only) G
   - God is the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect, and just creator of the universe who rules the universe today.
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   - God refers to the total realization of personal, human potential or a state of higher consciousness that a person may reach.
   - There is no such thing as God.
   - There are many gods, each with different power and authority.
   - Everyone is god.
   - Don’t know.

3. What is the universal, common purpose, or ultimate reason for living? (Choose one only) R
   - Experiencing happiness or fulfillment
   - Evolving into our full potential, physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually
   - Knowing, loving, and serving God
   - Furthering the development of humanity
   - Living a long, healthy life
   - Advancing world peace
   - There is no universal or common purpose
   - Unsure / don’t know

4. Absolute moral truth
Identifying moral truth is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to every person, all the time.

Agree ○ Disagree ●

5. What is the basis for truth? (Choose one only)
- God
- Scientific proof
- Inner certainty
- Tradition
- Public agreement
- There is no truth.
- Don’t know.

6. What do you believe about the origin of the world? (Choose one only)
- God created the universe in six 24-hour days about 6,000 years ago, designing the earth’s creatures pretty much in their current form.
- God created the universe at some point in the distant past and gave the earth’s creatures the capacity to change and adapt over time.
- The universe and the earth came into being at some point in the distant past; life evolved over millions of years from earlier life forms with no god or intelligent force.
- God sparked the universe into existence at some point in the distant past and used the natural process of evolution to bring about the many kinds of life we see today.
- Other
- Not sure

7. Human Nature
People are basically good.

Agree ○ Disagree ●

The Value of Human Life

8. Human beings are God’s creation, made in His image, are separated from God and need redemption.

Agree ● Disagree ○

9. Human life is sacred.

Agree ● Disagree ○

10. The Bible is ambiguous on abortion.

Agree ○ Disagree ●

Views on Faith, Sin, and Salvation

11. Having faith matters more than which faith you have.

Agree ○ Disagree ●
12. You consciously and consistently try to avoid sinning because you know your sins break God’s heart. Agree ● Disagree ○

13. You have a personal responsibility, in appropriate situations, to share your religious beliefs with people who believe differently than you. Agree ● Disagree ○

14. A person who is generally good, or does enough good things for others, will earn a place in Heaven. Agree ○ Disagree ●

15. You consider yourself to be a Christian; and when you die you will go to Heaven only because you have accepted Jesus Christ as your savior. Agree ● Disagree ○

16. **What is a human being? (Choose one only)**
   - A highly evolved, complex animal
   - Part of the larger “mind” that is the universe
   - Just a physical body with a brain that works like a computer
   - A physical and spiritual being with value apart from what they do
   - The sum of their experiences
   - Don’t know.

17. **Which of the following statements do you agree with? (Select all that apply)**
   - There is nothing wrong with sex before marriage if two people love one another.
   - Any kind of sex between two consenting adults is acceptable.
   - A marriage is one man married to one woman for life.
   - I don’t think God is really concerned about what kind of marriage is best.
   - A marriage is two adults bound by legal marriage, regardless of their genders.
   - Not sure

18. **Which statement best describes what you believe about history? (Choose one only)**
   - God has worked through history for his purposes.
   - Social progress helps humankind become better and better.
   - There is no real direction for history; things just happen.
   - Each society must decide for itself what is the best course.
   - None of these
   - Not sure

19. **Which is the main cause of society’s problems? (Choose one only)**
   - Rich people taking advantage of the working class
   - Society does not submit to God and it should be forced to do so.
   - Conflict between groups that insist they alone possess the truth
   - Sin is the cause of problems in society.
   - We do not appreciate our own god-like nature.
   - Not sure
### Views on Christian Beliefs

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. God will bring about certain circumstances which will result in the judgement and destruction of evil.</td>
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</table>

### Statistical Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your age?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of education completed? (Choose one below only)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many years have you been a Christian?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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For data compilation purposes, please enter a unique 4-digit code below. Note that this code ensures your anonymity and should be used on both surveys administered for this study.

**Unique 4-Digit Code:**

(Suggest mother’s birthdate. Ex: March 16 = 0316)
APPENDIX D

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT CHURCH

Included in this appendix is the researcher’s letter requesting permission to conduct the action research thesis intervention at The Woodlands Bible Church. Also included is the formal, written permission letter from The Woodlands Bible Church permitting the researcher to conduct the proposed action research thesis intervention within the church facilities and seek volunteer participants from its members and attendees.
December 7, 2020

Mark Keough  
Senior Pastor  
The Woodlands Bible Church  

Dear Pastor Keough:

As a graduate student in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree in Apologetics and Theology. The title of my research project is “Maintaining a Biblical Worldview: Mitigating Emerging Syncretism with Worldly Philosophies Through Focused Instruction in Christian Theology.” The purpose of my research is to conduct focused Bible studies in Christian theology at The Woodlands Bible Church that results in attendees developing and maintaining a coherent biblical worldview.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at the church and contact members and attendees of the church to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be asked to complete pre-course and post-course biblical worldview surveys before participating in the study. Participants will also be presented with informed consent information before participating. Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. An example permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Scott K. Leafe, M.Div.  
Graduate Student  
John W. Rawlings School of Divinity  
Liberty University
December 11, 2020

Mr. Scott Leafe  
Graduate Student  
John W. Rawlings School of Divinity  
Liberty University  
1971 University Boulevard  
Lynchburg, VA 24515

Dear Scott,

Thank you for sharing with us your research proposal “Maintaining a Biblical World View: Mitigating Emerging Syncretism with Worldly Philosophies Through Focused Instruction in Christian Theology.” After carefully reviewing your proposal, the elders and I have agreed to grant you permission to conduct your study at The Woodlands Bible Church and have done so for the following 4 reasons:

1. You will be proactively contacting attendees and members of our church and offering them an opportunity to participate in a well thought out systematic approach to Christian Theological understanding.

2. You are going to measure the theological understanding that attendees and members possess with before and after results.

3. You are demonstrating respect for the attendees and members privacy through “informed consent” information before participating in these studies.

4. As a member of our body, you have patiently attended our weekly studies, have respectfully asked questions of our teachers, have accepted the opportunities offered to teach classes and have delivered excellent scholarly but practical studies.

We all look forward to your success in this endeavor and are anxious to see the results.

Sincerely,

Mark J. Kaough  
Senior Pastor
APPENDIX E

PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENT AND PROMOTIONAL FLYER

The following pulpit promotion will be made as part of the regular worship service announcements starting two weeks before the Bible study classes begin. The attached promotional flyer will be distributed as an email to various past and present members and attendees through the church’s weekly newsletter transmitted via the Constant Contact® online marketing service.

Pulpit Announcement

A new adult Bible study class starts two weeks from today in the fellowship meeting area behind the sanctuary. The estimated nine-week course will be taught by Scott Leafe and will focus on maintaining a biblical worldview. The classes are part of research Scott is conducting as a doctoral candidate at Liberty University.

On that note, you may be asking what a biblical worldview is? Consider that a person’s thinking encompasses everything they believe and influences their character, values, and lifestyle—in other words, their behavior. Unsurprisingly, the Bible has a great deal to say about how people think—right-thinking originates from a biblical perspective and wrong thinking from an unbiblical or worldly view.

A biblical worldview is what a person believes about life based on their committed trust in the person and message of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. These beliefs tell us about our relationship with God; the nature of the universe; what a person can know and how they know it; the creation of human beings and their nature; and moral living or what determines right or
wrong. The Bible study will attempt to help each person develop and maintain a cohesive biblical worldview.

Everyone is encouraged to participate in the classes. However, some of Scott’s research will require volunteers to take two anonymous biblical worldview surveys. Those who participate in the surveys also need to attend all or most of the nine Bible study classes. As such, Scott is asking for as many volunteers as possible to commit to attending the classes and participate in the biblical worldview surveys. Participation in the research portion of the classes is entirely voluntary, and even if you volunteer to be part of the research, you can “unvolunteer” at any time.

If you would like to volunteer for Scott’s research study, please see him after the service. There is also a flyer in the back with Scott’s contact information. We encourage everyone to consider attending this class as we believe the information will teach you how to appropriately respond to the culture in which you live and better equip you to help the culture respond to the Savior you follow.
Biblical Worldview Study

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Are you interested in how your beliefs about God, the universe, and everything in it fits with what the Bible says?

If you answered yes to both of these questions, you might be eligible to participate in a biblical worldviews research study.

A biblical worldview is characterized as an orderly and related set of beliefs about life based upon a person’s committed trust in the person and message of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. These beliefs inform believers on their relationship with God, the nature of the universe, knowledge (what a person can know and how they know it?), human beings (their creation and nature), and moral living (what determines right or wrong). The purpose of the study is to evaluate the impact on a person’s biblical worldview by participating in focused Bible study classes on these specific belief areas of Christian theology.

Participation will consist of taking two thirty-question surveys administered before the first class and after the last class. Participation will also require attending nine 45-minute Bible study classes at 9:30 am on consecutive Sundays beginning in late-March 2021.

The study is being conducted at
The Woodlands Bible Church

Scott Leafe, a doctoral candidate in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study. Please contact Mr. Leafe at [Contact Information] for more information.
February 17, 2021

Scott Leafe
Russell Woodbridge


Dear Scott Leafe and Russell Woodbridge,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason: Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word research with the word project throughout both documents.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at [email protected].

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office