

OpenTheo

Worldview and Values



Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture - Steve Gregg

In a discussion led by Steve Gregg, the importance of aligning one's worldview with biblical principles and values is emphasized. This includes not just addressing a few cultural issues but tearing down whole structures of darkness and replacing them with truth and light. It is argued that every person has a set of values, whether they are aware of it or not, and that educators should be aware of the values they are instilling in their students. The discussion also touches on Christianity's stances on various social issues and the need to value what is important to God rather than what is highly esteemed by society.

Transcript

We're going to continue now our series on what a radically Christian counterculture would mean. We're going to continue where we left off last time in your notes. In this session, we're going to talk principally about the issue of worldview and more importantly, values as expressions or dimensions of culture.

This is the area in which Christianity has the most to offer and the most to challenge about the prevailing notions in the dominant Western culture and probably any culture that Christianity invades. That's exactly, of course, what Christianity endeavors to do is to invade. Christianity is a militant religion, not in the sense of militaristic, but in the sense of, as Jesus put it, the kingdom of God suffers violence and those who are violent will take it by force.

Not in the sense of physical violence, but rather that Jesus is saying that the kingdom of God has been introduced into a situation where tension prevails between it and the culture in which it has been introduced. It will prevail. Like leaven in a lump, it will change the lump as long as it remains true to its own genius, as one of the quotes we read the other day said.

But it will prevail not without a struggle because there are two kingdoms, the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is here to stay, but it has its times of progress and times of stasis, we could say, where it is not seemingly advancing,

and even some times of perhaps regress in history. But it is our desire to see our own times and those that we can influence through our children and grandchildren to be times of progress for the kingdom of God.

This requires that just as the world responds violently against the kingdom of God, Jesus said, even though the kingdom of God suffers violence, yet those who will take it, those who will seize it, will do so forcibly. And this does not mean we use the same kind of force as the world uses against us, but we have the same determination as the world brings to the task of resisting. In fact, hopefully more determination.

Jesus said, What king, if he's being attacked by another king and he himself has ten thousand soldiers and the other king has twenty thousand soldiers, will he not sit down and decide whether he, with his ten thousand, has enough to go out and conquer the one who has twenty thousand? He said, If he can't do it, he'll go out and make conditions of peace with the other king. Now, of course, in the illustration, which happens to come from Luke 14, the king deciding whether he will make peace or make war with his adversary is you, and the adversary is the enemy. You, as an agent of the kingdom of God, if your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to go into a battle where you are like a king who has ten thousand and your enemy has twenty thousand.

Now, of course, Jesus says some kings under such circumstances might just surrender, might just go and seek conditions of peace. Well, if someone is invading you, conditions of peace, then you surrender. You come under that person's rule.

That is not an option for serious-minded Christians. We don't just say, Well, the devil is putting up such a hard fight and we're soft-numbered, we might as well just give it up. Unfortunately, there are people who do that, but that is not really an option for a true Christian.

But what we are told is that we are joining a battle where we are, at the moment, outnumbered. That does not mean that we cannot win, but it means that we cannot win without bringing a greater determination, maybe double the determination that the opponent has, because he has twice the forces we have. Of course, that is not entirely a clear analogy because we have more force on our side if we take God into the equation than the whole world put together.

But when it comes to human resources, when it comes to visible encouragement, we will not find our way of thinking encouraged generally by the multitudes, not initially, at least. But we, therefore, must bring a greater determination than they have. If the kingdom of God suffers violence, then the people who would take the kingdom must bring an equal or greater degree of determination to the task.

And if that is done, the Bible makes it very clear, we will win. And this is not just winning souls for Christ, it is winning a war that affects culture and establishes an alternative

society under the rule of Jesus Christ. Now, whether we win, by the way, before Jesus comes back or only by his return is one of those eschatological questions that people can debate who are either premillennial or amillennial or postmillennial, I am not suggesting an answer to that question.

But we will win when Jesus returns or prior to that, depending on the effort and the utilization of resources given to us in the gospel. And if we are true to the gospel, if we will live completely and encourage others to do so by the gospel, there will be a different scene that has not yet or not recently been seen in our present society. Now, for this to happen, we need to not simply challenge a few things in the dominant culture.

This has been the approach, I think, of the church, the conservative churches in America in recent years. Basically say, the culture has become terrible, we are going to complain, we are going to maybe boycott the sponsors of the television shows that seem to promote values we disagree with, we are going to march on Washington to resist the advance of the militant homosexual agenda, we are going to have campaigns against abortion, we are going to write to our senators, etc., etc., etc. And basically there are certain areas of culture that grossly offend us.

The murder of unborn babies, the flouting of God's norms for sexual relations and deviancy, and especially the content of television and movies. Now, you see, it is one thing to say, we are going to boycott the sponsors of these programs that promote lesbianism. It is another thing to say, I am going to throw my TV out, I won't even know which programs are promoting lesbianism, and my kids won't either.

Now, some people might say, well, that's like being an ostrich sticking your head in the sand and not knowing what the enemy is doing. Perhaps there are some watchdog ministries that God calls people to watch that junk and to tell us what is going on, hopefully in milder terms than it is viewed. But it is, I think, very seldom part of the agenda of the church to get rid of that influence from the home altogether.

It is rather, we want to keep our television, we want to keep watching the programs, but we want them to not offend our sensibilities. I was listening to a Christian radio station the other day, a talk show, and the host was interviewing somebody who I think had written a book about rap music. I came and made an interview, I don't know what the book was about, but they were talking about the horrible messages that are coming across to our kids, and the host, who is a Christian, said, well, what can we do? How can we protect our kids from this? It is almost like she didn't have a clue what you can do.

I don't think that would be too hard for me to figure out. Don't let the kids listen to it. That is an easy one, that is a no-brainer, but it isn't a no-brainer to the church in general.

They don't think, well, don't let the kids watch TV, don't let the kids listen to this music, don't let the kids associate with people who destroy the values of Christ, because the

church is not really emotionally prepared for a radically Christian counterculture, where everything is brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is just a few things that want to change. Let's just try to get rid of the worst television program, let's try to get rid of the worst abuses of sexual perversion and so forth that it confronts, and let's keep the rest of our society largely the way we have always been comfortable with it.

That, I think, first of all, it does not work, and secondly, it may even be dangerous. If there is going to be a cultural alternative presented to the world by the church, it's got to be a consistently, seamlessly alternative culture. I have some examples, two examples I got from Paul Hebert's book and then some of my own I've come up with.

He gives examples of cases on the mission field where a change in one aspect of a people's culture, when they become Christians, actually brings about undesirable results in some other area if the whole culture doesn't undergo revolution. He gives an example of African natives in certain villages who, before they were Christians, they swept out their villages, kept the streets spotlessly clean and so forth, and then, when they became Christians, litter began to accumulate, and they just let it. Their villages became junk heaps.

It turned out, when inquiry was made into why this is, that the natives in their pagan culture believed that the spirits of the jungle want to sneak up on them into their villages and they hide behind rocks and debris and junk and so forth, and they didn't want any of that in their village because these would be places where the spirits could sneak up and take refuge behind these things. But once they became Christians and they didn't fear the spirits anymore, they had no motivation to clean up the junk. So they didn't.

Now, what we can see there is, in addition to getting rid of their fear of spirits, we need to teach some things about stewardship and about management of the community and so forth, which would agree with biblical principles generally. But you can't just change one aspect of the culture, in some cases, without bringing about undesirable results, if the whole culture isn't brought into adjustment to the new worldview and the new mentality. Another example Hebert gives is that in some societies, if a married man dies, leaving his wife, obviously a widow in many cultures, with very few options open to her for her own support, this is true also in biblical times, but it's still true in some cultures that we would call primitive.

She is to marry the brother of her deceased husband. And this is so even if that brother already has another wife. In other words, the culture requires him to take an additional wife if it happens to be the widow of his brother.

Now, that would be an instance where the ethics of a culture actually require polygamy. Now, if we bring Christianity in there, the people become Christians and we teach them that polygamy is not God's way and that monogamous marriage is the revealed pattern for marriage in the scriptures. Then we're going to find some of these widows left

without any anything to support them, at least in the unless some other things are introduced, some other charitable structures or something or if you can't just change one thing, forbid polygamy and not expect there to be complications because cultures are usually somewhat seamless and self-consistent.

That's how they survive generation by generation. By being self-consistent, they may be terrible cultures, but they but their practices are all interwoven like a fabric and you pull out one fabric, one string of that fabric and much of it will unravel. And so you need to not just address one or two issues.

You need to go in there with a wrecking ball and tear down the whole structures of darkness and replace them with truth and with light. Now, that maybe doesn't all happen in one day. And maybe you have to decide which issues have to be addressed most directly and leaned on the most first.

And also, of course, when I'm talking about renovating the whole culture, I don't mean to say that we have to teach these people to eat with forks. That's not part of the culture that Christianity calls us to renovate. But certainly the values and ethics and morals and and so forth of a culture need to be addressed.

But they have to be thoroughgoingly addressed. There has to be consistency of the culture that we introduce rather than bringing in a quasi Christian adjustment without addressing all the relevant issues. Now, in American culture or in American society, there is currently an almost unnoticed but emerging counterculture of the sort that I'm interested in myself, a group of people who are interested in following Jesus more radically.

Now, not all of these would be on exactly the same page I'm at. In fact, many of them are not at all. But I do find as I'm traveling and as we our publications receive response from all over the country and other parts of the world, too, that we are part of.

We're discovering that we are part of a network. I guess we're networking now, but we were not part of a network. We're part of a movement that is kind of grassroots where certain people, they're actually in some cases leaving the traditional churches because the churches are too carnal and these people are setting up alternative cultures within their own family.

And then on occasion, good fortune or providence causes them to meet someone else with similar values. And if they meet enough families like this, they begin to associate. In my own case, we have a number of families and they stretch it from the Eugene and Portland and Salem area and Forest Grove and all over.

And it's not like we have a big cluster of such people here in McMinnville. But our network, which people who we could see within an hour's drive, is a growing network of

people who are very largely of the type that we are and who are interested in what we're talking about. Now, because it is so few and because they are scattered so far and wide, it is hardly noticeable to anyone who's not looking for it.

And I don't think they've really been much noticed. One of the common things that many of these people have is homeschooling. And I'm not saying that homeschooling is the only way Christians can be Christians and educate their children.

I think it is the best way. And I believe that any other alternative is a mistake unless it is something in the circumstances to render it necessary. But I will say this, that it tends to be a common denominator, even where other common denominators are lacking in such people, that they have taken their children out of the system and are teaching them at home.

I just noticed as I was in 7-Eleven the other day that the current issue of Newsweek, the cover story is homeschooling right for your children. I thought, ah, the counterculture is being noticed by the major media. I mean, we're still few in number, but it is emerging, enough so that even the major culture has to take stock of it, has to at least recognize it's there.

No doubt they'll be critical. I believe it's emerging. But as it emerges, it's important that those who participate must be consistently Christian, not just challenge a few things, not just not just challenge public school, for example.

OK, now we homeschool. Now we're radical. Not necessarily.

Now we got rid of our television. Now we're radical. Not necessarily.

That may be a step in the right direction, but there needs to be consistency that grows from a thoroughgoing commitment to going back to what the Scripture teaches and applying those principles in every area of life. I have some examples similar to those on the mission field that Hebert brings up. These are examples that I have observed in our own culture and the emerging counterculture, where one change can be made, but without the corresponding total change in lifestyle and cultural expression, there can be problems.

One of those has to do with homeschooling, and that is lots of people decide to homeschool their kids and to become radical. But unless they also re-evaluate all of their educational priorities, this can be devastating. When we first started homeschooling, when our oldest child was a first grader, we went to the educational authorities in town, and we got a list of the kinds of things that they would want all first graders to learn in their first grade year.

We were astonished. There were things that I never learned in all my years of school on the list. There were probably 200 things on there that they said they want the average

first grader to be taught in all these areas.

My wife was overwhelmed. The burden of homeschooling falls much more on her than on me. And some of these things she didn't even know.

And even if she knew them, she didn't see how she could possibly fit them all into a school year. And I guaranteed her they don't fit them all into a school year at the public school. If anything, the public schools teach less now than they did when I was in school, and we didn't learn a tenth of the things on that list.

But the thing is, homeschoolers often get overwhelmed because they go to the world and say, well, what do we have to teach our children? We're going to start doing this at home. And what I told my wife is, disregard what they say you should be teaching your children. God didn't give them your children.

God gave you and me our children. And therefore, God leaves it to us to decide what our children should be learning, not to the school authorities what they should be learning. And when parents do not make a thoroughgoing change in their educational philosophy and say, well, wait a minute, who says my children have to learn all these particular things this particular year? God doesn't say that.

The Bible doesn't say they have to learn that. It's not. It does not reflect my priorities as a Christian that they learn that.

If people remain under the influence of the educational priorities of the world, but they simply change the location of where they're educating the children, it becomes overwhelming. Because the average mother simply can't do all of that. And what I'm saying is that she doesn't need to, but she needs to challenge the assumption that goes with it.

We've seen many people begin to homeschool and then they stop because it's just they get burned out real quick. And the reason is they're trying to follow. They're basically trying to set up the pattern of the public school at home.

And the public school pattern is not a natural learning environment for children. It's not a good environment for children. And it's not anything that Christians who decide to homeschool should set it as one of their goals to emulate.

Christians should train their children in the things they see their children need to be trained in and not be intimidated by school authorities as to what they think your children need to learn. I mean, after all, those are the people who think your children need to learn tolerance of alternative sexual lifestyles and so forth. I mean, who made them the authority of what my children should learn? And we need to be radical enough to not just say, well, I made the big move.

I decided to homeschool. We got to make the next move and say, I'm also going to determine before God and not before anyone else what I will homeschool. How many hours? What form this education will take? What the priorities will be? The rate at which I will teach? I'm not going to try to keep up with what the world says I'm supposed to be doing.

As a matter of fact, my children are much more better educated than their age mates in public school. But the fact is, if they were not, I would not be worried about it. And I think it's become a disaster in cases where people said, I'm going to adopt the pattern of homeschooling, reject the dominant cultural idea that you send your kids off to public school.

But if they don't make further changes in their mentality about education, that it often becomes devastating and they lose interest. They begin to think it can't be done. And then, of course, they give up.

Another example would be Christians in the church opposing fornication in principle, but they don't restructure all male female relationship norms. Now, what I mean by that is in Christian youth groups are always telling kids how to avoid the temptation of sex, you know, and how to conduct themselves on dates so as not to fall into that. Very few churches I've known have challenged the whole idea of the mixing of young men and women in private, romantically arousing situations, which we call dating.

As to whether there's any biblical basis for this or even whether it agrees with what the Bible teaches, even whether the Bible would allow this. The church just assumes certain things about the norms of male female relationship that come from the dominant culture and then tries to teach the children how not to get into trouble in these relationships and with a tremendous failure rate. And not surprisingly so.

The failure rate comes because the church has failed to be radical enough in addressing the issues of how men and women should relate to one another, especially when they're alone and whether they should be alone as often as they are with each other. Another example is the giving up of birth control without adopting the necessary commitment to children's nurture. I have a friend on the radio.

I've mentioned to you before that he doesn't agree with my views on birth control, though he and I are quite good friends and he agrees with me on many things, but whatever we disagree on doesn't seem to cause problems in the relationship, of course. But he said on his radio program that he disagreed with my position on birth control because he said, my friend Steve Gregg doesn't believe in birth control, but he says, Steve and his wife are good parents and I think it's good for them not to use birth control. I mean, they're good parents to their children.

He says, I know lots of couples that would be terrible parents and I think it's probably

right for them to use birth control. Well, that's not the right answer. If there are people who would be terrible parents, the answer is not they better use birth control.

The answer is they ought to become better parents. The gospel addresses all areas of behavior and if people would begin to be the kind of parents and the kind of husbands and wives that the Bible calls Christians to be, there wouldn't be the problem of these people shouldn't have children because they make terrible parents. But there are people who, you know, they hear a message or something, a convincing message that birth control is not necessarily part of God's plan for family life.

And they say, wow, that's true. And they throw out the condoms or whatever they've been using. And then they get pregnant and they're not ready for kids because they haven't changed anything else about the way they view or treat children.

They've just, they've gotten a legalistic rejection of the practice of birth control, which is a rather radical thing in terms of our present culture to do. But they haven't also radically adopted Christ's attitude toward children and the attitude that the nurture of children is as high a calling as any calling could possibly be, higher than most, according to Jesus, and making the appropriate commitments to their children. And people, if they stop using birth control and they have 10 kids, but the woman's still working a job outside the home and sending her kids to school, this is disastrous in most cases.

So giving up one thing, changing one aspect, but not bringing about the total conformity to the scriptural principle at the same time is not wise and sometimes dangerous. Another example would be where a family does give up a second income. The woman says, okay, I've read the Bible.

I do believe that I should be at home with my children rather than our family living on a double income. We're going to have my husband is going to raise all the money for the family and I'm going to stay home and be a mom. Well, that's fine as long as you also change your spending pattern.

To reduce your family income to one income instead of two, but to keep the same spending patterns you had when you had two incomes is going to be problematic. You're going to end up in debt over your head. Eventually, the wife's going to have to go back to work and take two jobs in order to get out of debt.

I've seen it happen. It's not just one thing you do. Oh, it's the radical thing.

The radical Christian thing is for the woman not to work. True. I believe that's true biblically, but there's more than that.

The Bible addresses the whole issue of financial management, the whole issue of lifestyle norms, and our American culture is not in agreement with them. And too many Christians just go along with the American ideals about prosperity and income and

lifestyle and so forth. And they assume they have to have a relatively new car or two.

They assume they have to have a stereo system, that their kids have to have name brand clothes. They assume that the kids' clothes should be bought from new retail outlets instead of from thrift stores. I mean, these assumptions are cultural.

And I've known so many women who say, oh, I just wish I could go home and be with my kids. I hate being in a job, but we just can't afford it. We just can't afford to live on one income.

That's true. They can't with their present spending pattern. But guess what? There's good news.

You don't have to continue your same spending pattern. Paul said, having food and clothing, let us therewith be content. Can you imagine any family that could not afford to live on that principle with one full-time income? It's just that Christians are not content.

And that is a radically Christian thing to be. But to maintain the same materialistic tastes and habits and try to do just one thing, namely bring mom home, that is not going to work. You've got to change everything related to that in the culture, not just one thing.

People like myself who don't believe in psychotherapy are often somewhat criticized by those who are Christians and do believe in psychotherapy. They believe there is such thing as Christian psychotherapy. They often say, well, you can't just give out Bible verses like aspirins to people.

I mean, people's problems are complex. You can't just quote, be anxious for nothing to somebody who's got a severe problem with anxiety. It just doesn't work.

You can't give out Bible verses like aspirin. I object to this statement, though there is a sense in which it is true. You can't just give out one Bible verse about one problem and hope for it to work like an aspirin on a headache.

It is true that people who battle with severe anxiety, it usually won't work just to quote the Bible verse, be anxious for nothing. But there are other reasons for their anxiety that are spiritual in nature. And if those are addressed also from a biblical perspective, the whole issue of confidence in God, the whole issue of death to self, denying self and resignation to the will of God.

I mean, once you get those things down, which are the basic Christian mentality that the Bible teaches, there's not much left to be anxious about. All that's left is by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make your request known to God and then peace of God and keep your hearts in marriage. It's true.

Some Christians, they deal with somebody who's in a complex, terrible emotional or

mental or relational situation, and they just give out a few Bible verses that work for them. See, to me, I've never been in a crisis that I couldn't solve by remembering something that's in the Bible. Honestly, I mean, emotional or whatever.

I mean, I've had I've been through some meat grinder experiences, but there's never been a situation where what I was going through could not be totally managed by appeal to something that God said. And remembering that and believing that solved the problem. I mean, I'm not saying pain went away, but I'm just saying it is manageable.

There's no problem, really no crisis. But then my life has been more or less ordered by scripture since my youth. I may assume that the person who comes in who's had a meat grinder childhood, grew up in a broken home, been molested as a child and has had nothing but the same kind of stuff all their life.

They're in a marriage that's similar to that. And they come in here and say, you know, I'm terribly perplexed and depressed and full of anxiety that if I can just quote the same verse that works for me, that will work for them just that way. Now, I'm not saying that the Bible isn't relevant to all.

What I'm saying is, I may already have many of the biblical structures in my lifestyle that make it possible for a single verse to snap me back right in the right frame of mind. Someone else may have almost nothing biblical going on in their lifestyle and to just tell them to not be depressed or did not be anxious and give them a scripture report. I'm not saying there isn't power in the scripture, but the real power in the scripture is to transform the whole life.

And the application of all of the truth of scripture to the life will indeed eliminate all those things that people go to therapists about. I believe that. I don't believe Christians need psychotherapists.

I think they need to bring their life into conformity with everything that God has said. But the problem is when we don't ask them to bring everything into life in conformity with what Bible says and try to treat symptoms by giving a Bible verse on that symptom. You know, that's like giving out an aspirin pill.

You know, you've got a headache because you've got cancer, but you take enough aspirin and the headache goes away. It is correct to say we don't just give out Bible verses as aspirin, but we do need to dish out the Bible as food on a regular basis so that it nourishes and affects and determines the whole of every area of the person's spiritual health. And the answer is not in psychotherapy.

It is in the word of God. But a lot of people just assume since they know a Bible verse for a problem, that if they give some of that Bible verse, that's going to solve the problem. It can potentially if other systems in the lifestyle are also brought into conformity with

biblical patterns.

So it's important. What I'm trying to point out to you is that if we don't get it consistent, it won't do. It won't help.

It can only sometimes be disastrous for us to just try to fix one thing here, one thing there. The really obvious things that need to change. We need to go back to the root and say, let's get it all right from ground up and do it the way Jesus said.

Let's go back to our basic assumptions, our worldview, our values and start there. Let's not just treat the symptoms above the surface. Why don't you turn to that handout I've given you that has a triangle on it? This is a very simple illustration.

It's based on what I saw that came from an organization called Summit Ministries. I've changed some of the features of it because of points I wanted to make, but the basic diagram was something like what they had. As you can see, the triangle represents your life, and there's a line drawn across that says surface level.

Let's picture that triangle like an iceberg, and the surface level is perhaps the waterline. As you know, with an iceberg, about 10% of it's above the waterline, about 90% is below. It's a little bit that way, maybe a lot that way, with human personality as well and behavior.

That is, the part that's above the surface that's visible to everybody is behavior, but behavior just doesn't float around on a raft. It's got a foundation that's below the surface that people looking on can't see unless they know how to look right. That behavior grows out of a foundation.

Prior assumptions and so forth that are in place that call forth behavior. All behavior is called forth by some other things that are not so clearly seen that are below the surface, and at the lowest point, at the foundational level of a person's behavior, there is the worldview. I mentioned this in our last lecture when we talked about the cognitive dimensions of culture, what you know to be true about the world.

Now, in the Christian life, the worldview is tremendously different than that of anything other than the Christian life, because worldview has to do with the way we view reality in several categories. I've listed them there. Theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, law, politics, economics, history.

That is, what a person believes about these things forms what his worldview is. For example, in the area of theology, everybody has a theology. Theology is belief about God.

An atheist has a theology. His theology is there's no God. That's a theological proposition.

It's not a scientific proposition, certainly. It's simply an expression of a person's theological bias. A person who believes there's no God, that is his theology.

A person who believes there's many gods, that's his theology. A person who believes there's one God with three heads, that's a theological proposition. A person who believes there's one God with one head, that's a different theological proposition.

A person who believes there's a God who wants his people to go out and murder and pillage and convert by the edge of the sword, that's a theological outlook. People who believe that God is more like Jesus is yet another theological proposition. The view that you have of God is a very important thing about your worldview because there are two essential worldviews and there are variations upon them.

But the two essential worldviews are what we normally call the Judeo-Christian worldview and the Eastern or the Hindu worldview. The Judeo-Christian worldview proposes that there is one God and he is transcendent to the creation. He is not part of it.

He is above it, separate from it, and he made it. He intervenes in it. He has all power over it, but he is not an element within the creation.

He is above and outside of the realm of the created things. As such, he is the governor of the creative realm and he has the right to dictate right and wrong and things like that. Now the Hindu system or the Eastern worldview holds that there is not just one God.

There are many, many gods. All of these make up sort of an essence or a force that permeates all things in creation. And God in the Hindu system is not transcendent but inherent in creation.

You are part of God. I am part of God. Your dog and your goldfish are part of God.

The trees outside are part of God. God is inherent in all of creation. The rocks and the hills, the clouds, the birds, they're all part of God.

Of course, you'll recognize that as New Age, but before the New Age ever came along and tried to be original, it was just plain old Hinduism. And that is called monism as opposed to theism, but it is a theological proposition that a growing number of Westerners hold and, of course, people in the East have held for centuries. The idea that God is inherent in all things and non-personal, but the God of the Christian is personal and transcendent, not inherent.

He stands above all things in creation, all stand under his judgment, and all things are to be conformed to his will if possible. And, of course, then once you've got that proposition, then your concept of what kind of God we're talking about, his personality, his values, his taste and so forth, that differs from person to person. For the Christian, he

needs to go to Jesus as the model of what God is like.

Jesus said, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. So, a radically Christian worldview is going to have a view of God that is informed by the life and teachings of Jesus. What about philosophy? You know, issues of, actually ethics is put down here as a separate category, but issues of ethics, issues of what we call epistemology, how truth is known, whether there is such a thing as truth, whether there is absolute truth or not.

Is there absolute right and absolute wrong? These are philosophical questions. In our own age, our dominant culture takes what's called a relativistic view, for the most part. It is said that some huge percentage, something like 90 percent of entering college freshmen in America, in a survey, showed that they believed in relativism, which means everything is relative, nothing is absolute.

There's no absolute right or wrong, some things are wrong in some circumstances, but the same things are not wrong in other circumstances. It depends on whether it's right for you, or wrong for you. Likewise, truth itself is considered to be relative.

Something may be true for you, but there's no objective absolute truth, so what may be true to you may be indeed a lie to me, but what's true to me may be not true to you. And with this relativism, there's a tremendous degree of tolerance advocated for almost anyone's opinion about things, because although I believe something is true, you may believe something diametrically opposed to that, but that could be true for you. I mean, who am I to say that I have the truth and someone else doesn't have the truth? However, the philosophy of Christianity from the Bible is absolutism.

There is absolute truth. All things either conform to that truth or deviate from it, and will be judged by their deviation from it. Truth, there is a standard that all are conformed to that truth is determined by who God is and what he has made things to be.

There is absolute right and wrong. This is philosophical and ethical thinking, and that is part of everyone's worldview. What you believe about who God is, what you believe about the absolute or relative nature of truth and ethics, those things are part of a worldview.

Biology, of course, Christians have very different biological view of things. I mean, biology has to do with what we think about ourselves in the material sense, who we are and where we came from, and what our nature is. Of course, the evolutionary philosophy is the dominant philosophy in our present culture.

It's diametrically opposed to the biblical biological teaching of special creation. Now, there are some Christians who believe in creation and evolution. They simply mix the two by saying that God made evolution happen.

I don't agree with them. I think that the evidence is way against them, though I'm not

emotionally opposed to this. In terms of worldview, it doesn't matter too much whether God used evolution or fiat creation.

I believe in fiat creation. I believe in a six-day creation. I take the biblical account rather literally, but some don't.

As far as I'm concerned, as long as they're making God the author of creation, the end result is essentially the same. The question is whether the creation exists, whether we, biological systems that we are, whether we exist for a purpose and by design or not. That is really part of the biological philosophy that is part of a worldview.

We are highly complex organisms. Are we here by design or by accident? Are we here made by somebody for a purpose that he had in mind, or was there no one who made us and there was no purpose in mind? There's no meaning. This gives rise to nihilism, the idea that nothing matters.

There's no value. Nothing matters. If there is no purpose, then there can be no ethics.

There can be no morality. Morality is based on whether you fulfill a purpose or not. If God made us and he made us to fulfill certain purposes, then not to do so would be sin.

If no one made us and we're not made for any particular purpose, we just happen to be a biological accident, then no one can say that the way I'm living is any better than or worse than the way someone else is living. I'm just doing what animals do. It comes naturally.

You see, man is either an animal or he's a quasi-God. Now, I don't mean to say that humans are divine. I'm simply saying that the Bible indicates that man was made in the image of God rather than in the image of animals.

And a person's assumptions about biology are going to be very different from a Christian worldview than from a non-Christian. Psychology, once again, our dominant culture has been sometimes called the psychological culture, the psychological society, because more and more behavior patterns are not interpreted in terms of morality, but in terms of therapeutic consideration. If a person was a homosexual several decades ago, the American Psychiatric Association listed his behavior as mentally ill.

Now, prior to that, of course, Christians believed homosexuality was sin. That's a moral issue, not a medical issue. But until fairly recently, the American Psychiatric Association listed homosexuality as one of the mental illnesses.

Now, what's interesting is their books have been revised. It's not even considered to be aberrant anymore. It's no longer even called a mental... it's neither a moral issue nor a mental illness.

It's just another kind of normalcy. But you can see how subjective this psychological approach thing is, because behavior is evaluated by no absolute standard except the opinion of a therapist. You know, I think you're okay.

I think you're not okay. And that's basically how evaluations come about. And if somebody's behavior deviates from the average or normal behavior of a society, they're going to be they're going to be given a therapeutic label.

They're going to be called mentally ill. And they're going to be considered to be, you know, a candidate for therapy. But biblically, most of the things that are called mental illness are really moral issues.

The Bible doesn't talk about a drunkard as a person who has a disease of alcoholism. It doesn't consider a person who's got rampant and unbridled lust as a person, a voyeurist or you know, a person with a sex addiction, which is commonly used nowadays. But I mean, the Bible has moral categories that it has that it designates as behavior.

But more and more, our dominant culture is not doing this. They're refusing to make moral judgments. They're making psychological assessments.

And the question, of course, boils down to two questions. Psychology boils down to two questions. What is the model of man? And what is the method of change? Psychologists have their model of man.

He's a machine, a biological machine that can get not only physically sick, but mentally sick. And the method of change is any number of 250 varieties of psychotherapy that are available. The biblical model of man is that he is a moral creation made in the image of God, but marred and fallen and therefore suffering consequences and complexities in his life that he was not designed to experience because he was not designed to sin.

And the method of change is to repent of sin and to cooperate with the grace of God to bring about sanctification and reformation of life. So that's a totally different psychological outlook than that of the world. And you can see in these categories of worldview disciplines that on almost every one, the Christian has a different take if he follows the Bible than the world has.

We've got to move along. Sociology, law, politics, these are all, of course, have to do with the interrelationship of humans with each other in society and so forth. Obviously, Christians are going to have a lot of distinctive things to say about that because most of what the Bible talks about is social behavior and interrelations between people.

Actually, all of Christianity boils down to two relationships, a relationship with God, a relationship with everyone else. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength, and love your neighbors yourself. That's Christian sociology and religion.

And very different than what the world advocates. The world would say that certain disenfranchised minorities need to be granted special status and all kinds of things come up that are not necessarily biblical at all. I was listening to another talk show the other day and apparently a liberal called in and was talking about how we need to make sure that Clinton doesn't get out of office because if Clinton is taken out of office, the Republicans will take over and they'll destroy Social Security.

Which, by the way, I don't think is true, but he was saying, you know, we are entitled to Social Security. The government needs to take care of us. And the host, who is a conservative, didn't agree with that and neither do I. I don't see anything in the Bible that says the government is there to take care of me when I get old.

That's a political and a sociological assumption that just, I don't think the Bible would support that, but it's a growing assumption that we need the state to be a nanny. We need the state to be our protector. The state, I mean, in all areas of life, not just from invading armies from other countries or from criminals, but from poverty and from discomfort and from all kinds of things.

The government needs to establish all kinds of agencies for this. A radically Christian view based on Scripture will not support most of these popular notions. Economics? Is Christianity communistic or capitalistic or socialistic or something else? Well, we're going to have to discuss that.

I don't have time to go into the complexities of that now because of the shortage of time we have, but let me just say, I believe there is a radically Christian approach to issues of finance and economics and money that needs to be explored, and in this series we will do so. Part of the assumptions about economy is, should everything be shared equally among all people, or should persons have sole right of control over that which they legally earn? Well, the answer to that question will be part of your world view, what you believe about economic theory. Also, of course, history.

A perception of history, an interpretation of history is part of world view. As we look at history, we can see God moving in this movement, raising up this kingdom, bringing down that kingdom. This is an act of God's judgment in history.

This is a case of God blessing something that he liked. That's a Christian interpretation of history in many cases. The world's view of history? Everything's just cyclical, goes around in cyclical patterns.

Christians' view of history is, it's linear. God started at one place, he's bringing history to a designed and determined conclusion, and everything that happens, even though there's some cycles within the pattern, eventually things are moving more and more toward what God wants to materialize in the end. That's a Christian view of history, I think, that the Bible presents.

The world, and Hinduism too, basically tend to see history as cyclical. Everything just goes in cycles, and there's no progress. There's no purpose.

There's no overriding sovereignty bringing it further along to a more advanced point that is desired by the creator than where we were before. But Christians view history differently. Now, the way you view theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, law, politics, economic history, these are areas that the answer to the question, how do you view these things, is going to define what is called your world view.

Now, those are the basic cognitive things you believe you know. That's part of culture. That's the cognitive dimension of culture.

Resting upon your world view comes another dimension, that is your values. Your values means what you place esteem upon, what you consider to possess worth, and what you consider to be desirable to pursue. You'll sacrifice some things for other things, even though both may be things you like.

There's a hierarchy of values. You value some things more than others. You'll sacrifice one thing for another thing, even if they're both desirable, because one thing is more valuable to you than the other.

This has to do with the whole realm of what your values are. I've listed in the triangular some of the values. I'm not going to speak about those right now, because I have the other side of the same page.

We go into that more. But what I believe is evident is that a person's life, and therefore the corporate life of many persons living together, is colored by, first of all, the basic world view of that community. And from that world view arise certain shared values.

And from those values spring up behaviors and patterns of behavior. Behavior is the part everyone can see. The rest is below the surface, but it's there.

And if you change the world view, or if you change the values, the behaviors will change by themselves. Because behaviors are simply the outflowing of, or the expression of certain values which are informed by a certain world view. Whether accurate or inaccurate world view, it will determine values and behavior.

Now turn to the other side of that sheet, if you would. We won't be able to go over this as thoroughly as I'd like, but I've made some observations about the whole issue of values. The things that we value dictate life patterns and pursuits.

That's essentially what I said about behaviors. Behaviors rest upon and grow out of a sense of certain value system. Everyone's got one.

If they're aware of it or not, they've got one. And the things they value dictate what they

will do, their patterns of behavior and the pursuits that they engage in. There's no values-free zone in real life.

Some people talk about, you know, education needs to be values-free. We need to be able to teach sex education in a values-free environment, not trying to put some kind of moral stigma on it. You can't do that.

Because sex is either a moral issue or it's not a moral issue. As soon as you decide that you're going to teach it as a non-moral issue, you've chosen that as your philosophy of values. Sex is not a moral issue.

That's a value judgment. And there is no area of life, real life, that is truly values-free. You can't have values-free education.

You can't have values-free counseling. A lot of times psychologists say, well, it doesn't matter whether your counselors are Christian or non-Christian. We just use objective psychological science as our means of therapy.

You say, that isn't true. Every therapist has an opinion about what's right and what's wrong, what the model of man is and what the method of change is. And those are his values.

And he's going to inform you that you need to change or not change based on whether he thinks what you're doing is right or wrong. That reflects his values. No counselor, no educator operates without being dominated by his values.

Matthew 1230, Jesus said, he that is not with me is against me. Therefore, you can't be a values-neutral person. You are either valuing the things that loyalty to Jesus dictates that you value, or you're valuing the things that being against Jesus dictates to you.

There's no middle neutral ground there. Every item in our lives is ranked in some position in our hierarchy of values, whether by our deliberate evaluation or by default. What I mean by that is, you might deliberately have said, I'm going to value my family above my career.

Or you might deliberately say, I'm going to value my career above my family. Now you might deliberately do that, or you might value one or the other without determining to do so, just by default, because you didn't make any decision or the career crowds up the family or vice versa. But somewhere along the line, many things will crowd up, many other things.

You can't do everything. You're a finite being, and there's an almost infinite number of options in life. You're going to choose a career.

You're going to choose a spouse. You're going to choose a family lifestyle. You're going

to choose a standard of living and so forth, as opposed to choosing other options available in all those categories.

You could choose a different husband or wife than the one you chose. You could choose a different career. But you will choose what you choose based on what you value most highly at the time.

You may do so according to a pre-decided set of values, a hierarchy of values, where I value this more than that. It's important to me to get a good-looking woman. It doesn't have to have that much personality, but she's got to be good-looking.

Very few people determine that deliberately, but a lot of people make that decision anyway by default, because that's what they value without having even defined it. I'm going to marry a rich guy. It doesn't matter if he's a good Christian.

He's a rich guy. A lot of women make a decision like that. They may not know that that's what they're doing, but their value system is determining things for them, and there's a hierarchy of values.

They might like to have a rich guy who's also a good Christian, but if they either have to marry a good Christian who's not rich, or a rich guy who's not a Christian, they will decide according to their hierarchy of values what matters most to them. Choices are made according to our assessment of the relative values of various ends and means. That is to say, when you make a choice about vocation, about associations, about marriage, about education of children, about purchases, whenever you make a decision, that decision comes as a result of your assessment of the relative value of a thing in your personal value system, and that will determine your behavior.

There's an example given here of Moses in Hebrews chapter 11, verses 24 through 26. Hebrews 11, verses 24 through 26, By faith, Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. Why? Because he esteemed the reproach of Christ's greater riches.

That's his value hierarchy. The reproach of Christ, he esteemed greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he looked to the reward. Now notice, he made a hard choice for some people.

Some people wouldn't have made that choice. He could be the son of Pharaoh's daughter and live in the lap of luxury, maybe become the next king, or he could forsake all that in order to be right with God and in the company of God's people and suffer with them. Now, he made the choice, and of course he made a commendable choice, but why did he do it? Same reason anyone makes any choice.

He followed his value system. He valued the reproach of Christ as greater riches, that is

of greater value, than the treasures of Egypt. He had these things in the scale.

He had to wait. Now, I'm either going to have to give up the treasures of Egypt, or I'm going to have to give up my righteous standing with God. I think I value my relationship with God and my association with His people more than I value my association with Egypt and the treasures and the benefits there.

He made a choice according to his value system. He esteemed one better than another, and he made his choice according to the reward. The Bible doesn't say Moses really made the hard choice.

He really went against his own grain here. No, he did the thing that he thought would be most rewarding. We always do, by the way.

We might flatter ourselves that we are very, you know, unselfish in our decisions, but we really do, even Christians do, make the choice that they believe will be more rewarding. Isn't that why God continually holds rewards and punishments out before us as incentives? Isn't that why Jesus said, you know, it's better to cut off your right hand and go to heaven that way than to retain it and go to hell with it? Isn't He basically saying, hey, make the choice in your own better interest. You know, is it not better for you to enter into life with one hand than to enter into hell with two? What's He appealing to there? That which motivates us all.

We make the choice that we think is best for us. Now, hopefully, we've matured to the point where we also are maybe more concerned about God than we are about ourselves. But even that we don't do without recognizing that it's better for me, too, to side with God.

In the eternal sense of things, it's to my advantage to choose God rather than to just live for now. If I didn't believe that, I probably wouldn't live for God. And if it wasn't right for me to act on that value system, why would God enforce it by continually offering incentives based on reward for right conduct and punishment for bad conduct? It is the way we all are motivated.

Moses made a choice very few people would make, but that's because his value system was different than theirs. Most people would value the treasures of Egypt more than the reproach of Christ. He didn't.

And therefore, he did that which he had a mind for the reward of things. He did that which he thought would be most rewarding in the ultimate sense, as we all do. We also need to remember this, and we'll have to close with this thought today, I'm afraid, that God's values are radically at odds with those of the natural man.

Jesus was telling his disciples at Caesarea Philippi that he was going to have to go to the cross and be rejected and murdered and all that stuff. And Peter, thinking he was doing

the right thing, said, Lord, no, not so. This can never happen to you.

And Jesus said, Get behind me, Satan. You are an offense to me because you do not savor the things of God. You savor the things of man.

The idea of Jesus going to the cross is what no man would savor. But Jesus savored the things of God, and therefore he endured the cross, despite the shame, for the joy that was set before him. He had a value system.

He esteemed the things of God more than things of his own comfort and his own survival, as we all must. Peter, on the other hand, still had a worldly humanistic value system. He favored the things of man, not the things of God.

And it offended Jesus. I wonder how many Christians offend Jesus every day in the expression of their value system, in the choices they make in life, because we value the things of man and not the things of God. In Luke 16, in verse 15, Luke 16, 15, Jesus said, The things that are highly esteemed among men are an abomination to God.

That's a strong statement. The things highly valued, highly esteemed by men are not highly valued by God. They're an abomination to God.

And with that in mind, we need to look at this whole issue of values, realizing that, hey, I may have to change everything in my value system if I'm going to bring it into conformity with God's value system, which is the only thing that a radically Christian counterculture or a radically Christian disciple can do. If my behavior is going to conform to what God wants to be, then my values first have to be brought into line with what God values. And in our next session, we will explore that.

What does God value? What is the radically Christian value system, which informs a radically Christian worldview?