

OpenTheo

Worldview



Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture - Steve Gregg

In this talk by Steve Gregg, he discusses the concept of worldview values and how they affect our behavior and beliefs. He emphasizes that God's values and man's values are often opposite, and that as Christians, we need to adopt God's values in order to live a Christ-centered life. Gregg also touches on the importance of valuing things like marriage and selflessness over selfishness, and how understanding the value of our time and resources can demonstrate our priorities. Overall, Gregg offers insights on how a Christian worldview can shape our values, beliefs, and actions.

Transcript

Tonight's talk I have entitled Worldview and Values. If that doesn't mean much to you, if you don't know where we're going with that, it should mean a lot to you by the time we're done. I don't have enough for everybody, but there are couples here who could share one or whatever.

At the end, if you're interested, you can get a copy of my notes that I'm teaching from. I would give them to you in advance so you could follow along while I'm teaching, but I'd prefer not to for a couple reasons. One, you might be distracted by them and draw and doodle on them while I'm talking and not listen as carefully.

And secondly, you might notice how many things I have to leave out when I see my time disappearing. So, I will have the notes available if you would like them before you leave. If you hear things that you say, well, I wish I could have written that down, I will have the scriptures I use and the points I make and such will be available.

I'd like you to begin with me by turning to Matthew chapter 16. There are some very often preached upon verses in this chapter, although the verse I'd like to look at tonight is not necessarily one that I've heard preached a lot about. It is the context of Jesus taking his disciples to Caesarea Philippi where he asked them, who do men say that I am? And they gave him sort of a survey of the various opinions that were extant among the Jewish people.

And then he said, whom do you say that I am? And they said, well, Peter said, you're the

Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus said, blessed are you, Simon Barjot, of flesh and blood. I have not revealed this unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven.

And that's the part that's preached on most often and rightly so, justly so. But there is a sequel to that. And what I'd like to start with tonight comes from that sequel.

Jesus, in verse 21, it says, From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and raised again the third day. Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee. In verse 23, But Jesus turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offense unto me.

For thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Now, it's a bit of alarming to realize that a disciple as loyal to Jesus as Peter could require this rebuke. And of course, the most striking thing about the rebuke is that he says, Get thee behind me, Satan.

It's the only time we know of that Jesus ever referred to a human person as Satan, called him Satan. And probably that's the thing that sticks out in our mind most, maybe so much so that we become distracted from what is in the rest of the rebuke. I mean, we say, well, Peter said what he did because apparently Satan was speaking through him.

And that's indicated by Jesus saying, Get behind me, Satan. And that is very possibly true. That might be what Jesus meant when he said, Get behind me, Satan.

Maybe that Satan was speaking through Peter. It's also a possibility that he was simply referring to Peter as an adversary, which is what the word Satan means. In the Hebrew, Satan means an adversary.

He might have been telling Peter, You're an adversary to me when you say these things. But it's not my desire to speculate about the whole issue of the exact meaning of his saying, Get behind me, Satan. But there's something else Jesus said, which I believe tells us the reason that Peter made the mistake he did and said what he did, whether it was Satan speaking through him or whatever.

There was something that resided in Peter that made him susceptible to making the mistake he made and warranting this particular review. And that is expressed in the words of Jesus when he said, For thou art an offense to me. Can you imagine being a disciple of Jesus and Him having to say to you, I'm offended by you? You know, is it possible the church could be offensive to Jesus? Could He be offended? Well, read Revelation chapters 2 and 3, and you'll find there's a fair number of churches that offend Him in one particular or another.

But even Peter offended Christ. And Jesus said, You are an offense to me. And He told

him why.

Because you savor not the things of God, but the things of men. Now, He didn't say you savor the things of Satan as opposed to the things of God. He said you savor the things of men rather than the things of God.

Now, you savor them. We don't use the word savor except in a very narrow context in modern English. We think of it maybe as we think of savory food or something.

But the word savor suggests the idea of valuing something, being attracted to something, having a taste for a certain thing. That which you savor. Now, the problem Peter had, although he was a true disciple and a sincere follower of Christ, was that he had not yet, like ourselves probably, he had not yet been fully transformed by the renewing of his mind.

We're told in Romans chapter 12 and verse 2 that that's the project, is to be not conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Now, the minds are the thought processes and the underlying assumptions and beliefs and attitudes and values and so forth that we have. And while Peter certainly had in his mind agreed to many truths of Christianity and was very loyal to those truths, in fact, just prior to this he had said, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

He certainly had his mind on the right track there. But there was an area where his mind was not fully renewed and that was in his, what we could call his values. He savored things that were of man rather than things that were of God.

He valued human things, things that men value as opposed to the things that God values. And that is why Peter said what he said. Jesus said, I'm going to be given over to the chief priests and the Jews and they're going to kill me.

I'll be crucified. And Peter, he didn't see any good in that. He didn't see how that could be a good thing.

He evaluated that instantly as a bad deal and said, no, Lord, this can't be so. He even rebuked Jesus for talking that way. And Jesus said, you're offending me, Peter.

And your problem is this. It's not that you don't mean well. It's not that you're not loyal.

It's that there's an area of your life that is calling forth this wrong reaction to my plan and God's plan. And it is that you value and you savor the things of men. Rather than the things of God.

What do men savor? Well, avoid pain at any cost. Preserve your life as long as you can. You know, be the winner in every conflict.

Don't end up nailed to a cross by other people. I mean, men, all men, except for those

who have adopted the values of God, would see going to the cross as a real bad deal. But we know because Paul calls it the wisdom of God in 1 Corinthians 2. It's the wisdom of God revealed in a mystery.

The secret wisdom, which was not known to the rulers of this world. And if they had known it, they wouldn't have crucified the Lord of Glory, Paul says. In God's secret wisdom, there was something really good about Jesus dying.

And we have, in retrospect, a much clearer idea of why that was good than Peter could have had at that point. But it was his attachment to human value systems that made him see Christ crucified as a bad thing. Something to be avoided at all costs.

But it was not God's idea of a bad thing. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, it says in Isaiah 53. It was God's pleasure.

The pleasure of the Lord will be prospering in His hand, it says in Isaiah 53. The death of Jesus was actually a good thing. There were some bad things about it.

Judas did a bad thing. Caiaphas did a bad thing. The Romans did a bad thing.

Everyone involved did bad things. But the net result in the sovereignty of God, in the providence of God, was that a good thing resulted. A good thing that God actually intended from eternity past should happen for the salvation of men.

And one in which we now, in retrospect, we all rejoice in that. But Peter wasn't rejoicing in it because he could not... And I'm not sure he could be blamed for it at this point. He didn't know as much as we do.

But he could not embrace God's assessment, God's evaluation of this particular thing. In this case, the suffering and death of Christ. Now, that failure to assess this in God's way on Peter's part was simply part of the whole fabric of his not having adopted God's values.

He savored the things of men, not the things of God. Now, we can be a little embarrassed for Peter sometimes when we read this story. You know, when Jesus says, Get behind me, Satan.

That had to be mighty embarrassing, especially in front of the other disciples. And it's a little uncomfortable reading Jesus saying that to one of his disciples. But really, what Peter did might be more excusable than us doing the same thing since he didn't even have a New Testament to read.

He didn't have retrospect to look back and see the things that we can see. We have a Bible. Many of us have been reading the Bible for years and years and years.

And yet, I dare say that to some of us, Christ could say, You are an offense to me

because you value what man values, not what God values. Now, that's what I want to talk about tonight. Values.

We're talking about the elements and the features of a radically Christian counterculture. A culture is seen in the distinctive modes of dress and speech and family behavior and other external behaviors of a society. If you go to China, if you go to Russia, if you go to England, if you go to some tribal group in Africa or in the Amazon, you'll find different cultures.

And the differences in these cultures will be seen primarily, initially, in terms of how they conduct marriage and family life, how they make their living, what foods they eat, how they dress or undress. The various things that differ about cultures, the first thing you see are the external things, the above-ground sort of things, the normative behaviors of a people. And when we talk about a Christian culture or a Christian counterculture, we are going ultimately to be talking about some of those kinds of things.

Christian behaviors that are quite visible. Everyone looking on can see these people live differently than other people live. But before we can get to that, we have to get to that which underlies every culture, whether it's a Christian culture or whether it's pagan culture.

What underlies every cultural behavior norms is a worldview and values. All behavioral norms spring from a value system. And that value system itself is part of a worldview that is held by those people.

Now, to have a culture arise and be sustained among a people, it is not done at the point of a sword. It is not accomplished by conquest. It's not accomplished by threats.

It's not accomplished by paying people off. A culture arises spontaneously from certain roots. And those roots are the foundational worldview and value system of a group of people.

From those roots inevitably grow consistent behavior patterns, consistent with those foundational things. Now, many are perplexed at how the American culture has changed so much in the past 30, 40 years. And can't figure out why it is that 40 years ago homosexuals were ashamed to be known as homosexuals in public.

And now they march through the streets and have gay pride parades. And they have no shame at all. One wonders why it was that 40 years ago decent people never got divorced.

And if they did, they were very ashamed of it. It was a marriage failure. It was something everyone was ashamed of if it occurred in their circle, in their family.

But now people get divorced at the drop of a hat. You know, people wear attire at the

beach and in other places that people 40 years ago would never be seen in public in. There's no modesty.

And we think, how have things gone so wrong? How have things gone so bad? And the answer has got to be recognized as there's been a shift in the worldview of the American people. Now, the answer for us as Christians is not try to get that shift to go back to what it was 40 years ago. But if we're going to shift at all, and we all know we can't just conform to this present culture.

It's too corrupt. It's going down to hell fast. We need to somehow have an alternative to the present culture.

But if we're going to be doing a shifting, my recommendation is we don't just shift it back to what it was 40 years ago. But we go further back, more like 2,000 years. And go back there.

Because that's where the problems began to arise in the church when people began to deviate from the teaching of Christ and the apostles. And the church did that quite early on and continued to do it fairly consistently until this present time. And so we need to find out, well, what was the worldview and the values taught by Christ and the apostles? Let me introduce some ideas to you here that may not be new to you.

But a culture's behavioral norms are dictated by that culture's value system. And it is a value system. People don't just have some kind of haphazard anecdotal collection of values about various things.

People have a system of values where there is something supremely valuable. And all other things basically are tributaries or related branches of that thing. And although some people have never thought out what their value system is.

In fact, I think that's why many Christians are as carnal as they are. They read the Bible and they agree with their minds that the Bible's values are good and right. But they actually live a different value system which they really hold to.

And they've never identified. And that's one thing I hope to, if we can, remedy in some measure tonight, is to be able to help us to really identify what values am I really embracing and living by. It's one thing to say, I agree with the Bible.

Whatever Jesus said, I agree with that. Well, fine. Every Christian ought to say that.

But a lot of Christians who would say that, their daily lives, the way they spend their money, the way they entertain themselves, the way they dress, the way they conduct relationships and business and so forth, it's very clear they have a different value system than that which the Bible teaches. And we might as well find out if we're deceiving ourselves here. Now, several introductory points about values.

There is no values-free zone in a culture. There's a lot of people who would like to have a values-free educational system. They don't want Christians intruding into public education with Christian values, because that's religion.

That's mixing religion with state things. And so we need to have values-free education. One plus one equals two.

That's values-free, right? Well, that indeed may be seen as a values-free statement. But most education, you can't educate people about history. You can't educate people about politics.

You can't educate people about science. You can't educate children without the teacher's values being an underlying informing characteristic of what is being taught. And then when you add to things that kids are taught in school, things like psychology and sociology and things like that, you're going to get all kinds of values mixed in there, because human beings have values.

And there's no human teacher can teach any subject that relates at all to the nature of reality without their values coming through and basically being transmitted in some measure to children. We can't have a values-free education. People who recommend that Christians go to psychological counselors when they need adjustment or help or whatever, often make the mistake of thinking that there is some values-free kind of counseling out there called psychology.

Well, as far as I'm concerned, psychology not only is not values-free, but it's pagan. And it's, I mean, there are Christians who call themselves Christian psychologists, and they may indeed be true Christians, but their psychology is not Christian, because there is no school of psychology that was ever developed by a Christian. All the major 250 branches of psychology that are out there, that are practiced by professionals and taught in universities, were all developed by non-Christian people.

And the Bible says, do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, and there's a reason for that, because the ungodly, because they are ungodly, give ungodly counsel. And while some people say, well, you know, this person has really the kinds of personal problems they need a professional for, they can't get that from an untrained, you know, pastor or Christian friend. And then they got to go to a professional.

But you have to realize that when anyone's giving counsel to anyone else about their life, that counselor's values, you know, are pervasive in what they counsel. I heard some time ago about, well, no, I won't give an example, because it would be too close to home in some ways. But I'll say this.

There's a lot of people who think that they can go to a counselor, a therapist or something, and they're going to get some strictly scientific, strictly medical kind of a

remedy for their behavior problems. But you see, behavior problems are moral. They're not medical.

I'm not saying that having a medical condition won't sometimes make you do strange things behaviorally. But essentially, what are regarded as psychological problems are moral and spiritual problems. And the person who counsels somebody about life problems, their values are going to inform what counsel they give.

And Christians, I believe, should never go to non-Christian counselors with the problems of their lives. I don't care how many degrees the counselor has. The more he has, the more dangerous he is, as far as I'm concerned, because there has not yet been a psychologically trained professional who didn't get his psychology from a book or a theory that was developed by a non-Christian.

There simply aren't any Christian psychologists out there. I realize there are books out there in the Christian bookstore that say, so-and-so Christian psychologist, even Dr. Dobson's program introduced him, Christian psychologist James Dobson. Well, he's a psychologist in the sense that he spouts psychological ideas.

But a psychological thinker who has developed a system, a therapy of psychology, is behind every psychologist's work and thinking. And all of those who have developed schools of psychological thought are non-Christians. And, you know, there was a survey done by a Christian organization.

They surveyed a thousand, I think it was a thousand, Christian psychologists. And they asked them to say whose research and whose work had most influenced them in their thinking and their understanding of human problems and so forth. And the names at the top of the list were Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Albert Ellis.

All these men are not only non-Christians but anti-Christians. And yet these were all Christian psychologists who were polled about this. And they all named these non-Christians as having had the greatest influence in their thinking.

You're not going to get any values-free counseling, certainly not from the non-Christians. And I don't claim, if you come to me for counseling, which I don't recommend that you do, but if you do, I'm not going to give you any values-free counseling. It'll be free of charge, but it won't be values-free.

Because I've got values, and I think they're right. And I'm going to counsel you along the lines of what I think matters. And that's what values means, what matters, what's good, what's better, what's right, what's wrong.

That's what values determine or assess. Every item in our lives is ranked in some position in our hierarchy of values, whether we do that deliberately or by default. Now, that means that all the things in your life, your job, your leisure time, your wife or

husband, your children, your parents, whatever, your neighbors, your church, your devotional time, your dinner, all the things in your life, they all stand somewhere in a hierarchy of values.

You can tell which things are higher because you'll sacrifice some of the lower things for things that are higher in your value system. You might miss a meal in order to work late. Well, then maybe that means working your job, getting your job done, is a higher value to you than making sure you make three meals a day.

And I'm not saying that's a bad value right there or a good one. I'm just saying that that illustrates that there are some things more valuable than others in our lives. We have a hierarchy of values in our lives, and we may have never ever sat down to evaluate it.

One can, by the way, by observing our behavior. But you may have never observed your own behavior objectively enough to assess what your real hierarchy of values is. By the time we're done tonight, you will have had an opportunity to do that.

The choices we make in life, what I'll do for a living, what my standard of living will be, who I'll marry, what size family I'll have, these kinds of decisions, how I'll spend my money, who I'll vote for, all of these things are dictated by this value system that we have. There are many Christians who voted for Mr. Clinton in both times he ran. I use the word Christian because these people would call themselves Christians.

I can't tell you that they are or are not really Christians. I wonder, to tell you the truth, I'm not sure how a Christian could vote for somebody as corrupt as that. But there are many people who are professing Christians, evangelicals, who voted for Clinton.

And they do so, if you ask them why they did it, they say that, well, it was good for the economy. Well, that tells you something about their value system. It means that having a good economy, job security, is more important than avoiding late-term abortions, for example.

More important than having a man in the White House who knows who his wife is and what to do about being married as opposed to being a stray dog or something. I mean, there are certain things that many of us would like to see in our leadership. But what if the vote comes between a person who would promote something a little more moral in our society and someone who promotes a better economy? Well, the choice you make, I'm not telling you what choice you should make, I think you can pick up what my opinion is, but the choice you make will exhibit where your values are.

The choices you make in all areas of life spring from that hierarchy of values. You might wish that we could have a good economy and have no late-term abortions. But if one candidate is going to give you late-term abortions and a good economy, and the other one is going to eliminate late-term abortions and maybe not so good an economy, then

you get to decide which is more important to you.

And whichever you decide exhibits where your values lie, what your value system is. We read in Scripture that Moses had to weigh some things and made a decision, a very historically important decision, based upon his evaluation of a couple of different options. In Hebrews chapter 11, verses 24 through 26, recounting a familiar story, of course, from Exodus, the writer of Hebrews says this, By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Notice now verse 26, esteeming, that means valuing, the way he esteemed things, the value he placed upon them, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. Now, that phrase, that he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the wealth of Egypt, tells us something about his value system. Now, he did enjoy the wealth of Egypt in his earlier years, and if he had never had to compromise, he probably would have enjoyed having the wealth of Egypt through the rest of his life.

The problem is there came a decision to be made. He had to say, well, what's going to be more important to me? What am I going to esteem more? On the one hand, there's the treasures of Egypt, which I already possess. I can hold on to these.

On the other hand, there's this choice over here that would involve me in embracing the sufferings of the people of God, and suffering with them. And I find it really interesting that he, in a sense, there are many good things and rewarding things about being a Christian, of course, and being godly, but the reproach of Christ and the persecution and the suffering that comes on us for Christ is not one of the more attractive elements of being a Christian. There are attractive elements, but that's not the most.

That would probably be the least attractive element of being a Christian, is the persecution and the ostracism and so forth that some people give us for that. But Moses took the worst aspects of being godly, the persecution, the reproach of Christ, and he weighed them in the balances against the best that, at that time, the world itself could offer, the treasures of Egypt, the wealthiest country in the world, and he was one of the most powerful men in it. He put the worst that Christ had to offer on the scales against the best that the world had to offer, and he said, you know, this reproach of Christ is greater riches than these treasures of Egypt.

Now, that exhibited the value system that he embraced. He had a hierarchy of values. Did he like the treasures of Egypt? Probably.

Wouldn't you? But not as much as he esteemed the value of being in right relationship with God, including participating in the suffering of the people of God, if that's what it takes. And so, we see that decisions, live decisions are made that reflect where our

values really are, regardless of what we may think our values are. We really demonstrate what our values are by our actions.

Going into this study, we need to realize that God's values, which, of course, we are to adopt for ourselves because we're supposed to have the mind of Christ. Let this mind be in you, which is also in Christ Jesus, Paul said, and Philippians 2. God's values are the opposite of man's. If yours aren't the opposite of man's, then yours and God's aren't the same.

You savor the things of man rather than the things of God. Now, I'm not making this up. I'm just, you know, saying what's plain.

I think you have to agree with that, whether that sounds enjoyable to agree with or not. The fact is that God's values and man's are different. How different? Well, Jesus said in Luke 16.15, Luke 16.15 He said, Those things that are highly esteemed among men, highly valued among men, what did He say? What's the rest of that? Are an abomination to God.

He didn't even say it like this. He didn't say, you know, things that men highly esteem, God esteems less highly than men do. He said the things that are highly esteemed among men are an abomination to God.

Abomination is a stench to God. They're not only less valuable in God's sight, they have negative value, extreme negative value. God's values and man's are at opposite poles from each other.

And that should tell us that becoming a Christian and submitting to the process of the renewing of our minds and eventually taking on the mind of Christ, having this mind in us that was in Christ, Jesus, is going to involve us in a transformation of our thinking that is far more radical than most churches are willing to let people know about. And more radical than maybe most of us are really eager to think about. It may mean that if the things I value are the same as the things my worldly neighbor values, that I'm valuing that which is an abomination to God.

Because things that are highly esteemed among men are an abomination to God. I don't know if any of you will be here next week. Now, a value system does not arise in a vacuum.

It arises in an environment. It is an aspect, a value system is an element within a world view. And the value system of that world view is dictated by prior assumptions of that world view.

Values just don't appear. Values reflect prior assumptions of a group's world view. When we talk about a world view, I'm not sure if everyone knows what that word means.

Although it's very commonly used, I imagine most of you probably do know what it means. But a world view has to do with the whole scheme of the way a society or a people view reality. What they believe the world is.

What they believe the nature of things is. And this is the different aspects of a culture's world view are seen in their differences on a number of categories. Like their theology, their concept of history, their ethics.

The ethics of a group are part of their world view. Their economics, their sociology, their sense of authority and government and law. Different cultures have different ideas about those.

And those differences are differences in the fundamental world view. I mean, take one of those issues by itself, the concept of authority. If you have a society that recognizes Jesus Christ as the ultimate authority, then he trumps all other authorities.

And whatever he says, those people do. But if you have a society like there was 40 years ago in this country, where Christ had authority, but so did a whole lot of other institutions that had authority. A lot of Christians didn't know the difference between serving Jesus and serving in the American military.

Because God and country were about similar in their authority, in people's minds. And it was a more moral country than it is now because God was still in the equation. The authority of God was still a factor.

Now, 40 years later from that, we have a society that the authority of God isn't even in the picture. The only authority that governs the average person is impulse, sentiment, preference. That's the only thing that dictates authoritatively what someone's going to do.

And so we've got a cultural shift that is very largely due to a shift in the concept of authority. The authority of Christ as opposed to the authority of the individual. And a culture changes as the worldview of that culture shifts.

It is essentially the consensus of a society about several worldview issues that gives rise to the particular value system of that society and therefore the behavior of that society. Let me take some of those categories real briefly here and tell you what I mean. I said the concept of history is part of a worldview of a people.

You might think history is a straightforward, you know, no-nonsense, scientific kind of a discipline that all intelligent people would approach the same way, but that's not true. For one thing, one of the issues involved in a view of history is the view of the most ancient of all history, the origin of all things. Now, we often think of the issues of evolution versus creation as issues somehow related to the scientific realm.

They're not related to the scientific realm. Science deals with things that are observed, repeatedly observed, and about which you can hypothesize and you can experiment and you can reproduce it in a laboratory. Creation has never been observed, nor has evolution.

Evolution and creation, I'm a creationist myself, but whichever of those two things is true, they are not really, strictly speaking, in the realm of empirical science. They are in the realm of history. They have to do with unrepeatable, historic things, the origin of the universe.

That happened once. You can't take it into a laboratory and test it and create a universe again and see how it works. It's not a repeatable, predictable, testable thing.

It is a historic, unique event. Now, if your view of history is that God created everything, well, that makes a huge difference. In your whole concept of almost everything, then if you think there is no God and natural forces and matter and energy came together and created itself through natural law, and that is, of course, a principle shift that has occurred in Western civilization.

It was not too many decades ago that most people believed. Frankly, I think in America still most people believe that God created, but they're out in the universities and so forth and in the media. There's simply no place given to that possibility.

And so the dominant culture is basically promoting the idea that, as far as history is concerned, we didn't get here by creation. We got here by natural forces through a process of natural selection or evolution. Now, that's a concept of history.

It has a lot to do with the way ethics and values and so forth are decided and lifestyles are lived. Another concept of history that differs from one culture to another is that, in some cultures, history is viewed as cycles, cyclic, and there's really no goal of history and no beginning of it. In the Eastern world view, basically, history is just a series of cycles that repeat themselves.

We just all live at some point in that circle, and eventually our descendants will come around to the same point that our ancestors were at, and it'll go again. The Bible teaches a linear view of history, that God started things at a particular time. He's going to end them at a certain time.

And history is moving toward a particular goal. It's moving a certain direction. That makes a big difference in the way you live your life.

If you think, well, what's it matter what contribution I make at this point? I mean, it's all going to come back around to where it was before I was here anyway. Or if you believe that God is moving in the direction toward a goal, and I can participate in that progress and bring history forward, at least in this little piece of it that I'm living in, in a significant

way. Different world views have different concepts of history, and it makes a difference in their lives.

Ethics is another aspect of world view. Christians believe that ethics, that is, what's right and wrong, very closely associated with the issue of morals, are revealed, that God has revealed His character, His standards, and that we are to submit to what He has revealed. Our culture today believes in what is called relativism, and that everything is relative.

There's nothing absolute. There's no absolute ethics. That which might be right for you might be wrong for me.

That which might be a sin for you might be actually a virtue for me. That is how our culture, our dominant culture today thinks. There's a lot more of that creeping into the church than you probably care to know.

But there's a lot of rejection of the authoritative, revealed ethics of Scripture in our society, and it makes a huge difference in the way people live their lives, obviously. Economics is another major factor of world view, because economics has to do with the whole issue of survival, for one thing. The basic economic thing is food.

And once food is taken care of, if you have extra food, you can barter it for something not as essential as food, maybe some luxuries or something. And eventually, if you've got a lot more than you need to eat, you can have a thriving economy going on. You can have different mediums of trade besides food.

You can use coinage. You can use symbolic values like gold and silver that don't have anything like the innate value that's attributed to them, but they serve as a medium of exchange that people recognize. And then you've got this economy thing going.

But the main difference between certain cultures in this respect of economics has a lot to do with the theory of ownership of property. Who owns the property? Does the state own the property? Does the collective humanity own the property communally? Or is there private ownership of property? These different views are out there in different cultures, hold different views, and live differently because of it. Another economic issue that different cultures are at variance about is the nature of wealth.

It's often illustrated, the differences of the socialist, like communist, worldview, believes that wealth is something that exists in a static quantity, and it must be divided up fairly, and that wealth is seen like a pie, you know, and you cut pieces for everybody. And if somebody gets too big a piece, that means someone else is going to get too little a piece. And justice requires, according to a communist ethic, justice requires that everyone get just an equal amount.

Of course, communism has never really produced that result. It's just the rulers get all

the money and the laborers get all the poverty. But in theory, a communist ethic is that wealth exists.

There's just so much of it. And it's our place to share it equally. And that's why communists think that we Americans are really pretty bad folks because we only have about 5% of the world's population, but we consume a lot larger than 5% of the world's resources.

Well, it's true. I forget. I think we consume maybe 70%.

No, couldn't be that much. Let's say 50% just for the sake of argument. Let's say Americans are 5% of the world's population and consume 50% of the world's resources.

Resources would not be just food, but, you know, textiles and minerals and energy and so forth. I mean, we have a lot more energy here in the form of electricity and so forth than most of the rest of the world. Is that unfair? Well, according to communist socialist worldview, that is unfair because by our taking 50%, that only leaves 50% for the rest of the world.

The other 95% of the people. And therefore, we're taking more than our fair share. But there's another view of that which is available, which I think is taught in the Bible, actually.

And it's not the pie idea that if I get too big a piece, someone else has to get too small a piece. The teaching of the scripture is that wealth is generated, created by labor. And if I do more labor than someone else, I will probably have more wealth than they have.

Now, there may be other factors that make it harder for some people to generate wealth. If they live where there's a famine or, you know, where there's, you know, there's no - crops don't grow or they've got oppressive government that takes what they earn. I mean, there's a lot of ways that this doesn't work out perfectly.

But the general scheme of the Bible is - the economic idea is in the sweat of your face, you eat your bread and you toil. And from your toil comes produce. And if you toil harder, you get more.

Certainly, that's what the book of Proverbs says again and again and again. You know, the slothful man will come to poverty. The diligent man will have abundance.

That's the scriptural teaching throughout. Now, of course, what a man who labors hard and has abundance should do with his money is another issue. I think Jesus' teachings on that need to be applied more consistently than they have been in the church.

But the issue of what to do once you have money is a separate issue. But the issue of where does wealth come from? Well, you know, some worldviews say, well, it's just this

sum total of wealth out there. We just have to divide it up.

Another worldview says no. Wealth is not a static quantity. It is something that more is produced by more labor and less is produced by less labor.

Very different worldview. Very different economics in different societies. Worldviews differ in terms of their sociology.

What is the role of the community or of the family? Does it take a village to raise a child? That's a sociological proposition. And, of course, you know that Hillary Clinton wrote a book by that name, but she took the adage it takes a village to raise a child from some African saying, allegedly, some tribal group had this as one of their mottos. It takes a village to raise a child.

Well, does it? In a sense, it takes a village for any of us to survive. And so in some measure, you know, we need society. But the question is the rearing of the child.

Is that the task assigned to a village or is that the task assigned to a family? Well, there are different views on that. Obviously, Mrs. Clinton, or is it Rodham, she believes it's assigned to the community. Many of us who are more informed by scripture believe it's assigned to parents, not to the government, not to the society at large.

Acknowledging, of course, that even the parents depend on the presence of a larger society even to make their own living and to function. But these are sociological differences that different cultures hold, different parts of their worldview. Well, those are just some examples of how differences in worldview underlie as foundational different attitudes and values and behaviors of different cultures.

Now, there are two worldview categories in particular I want to talk about. There's more that we could, but these are the main ones. I think that almost all aspects of a culture's or of a society's worldview comes from their approach to these two issues.

One is what is the nature of reality? And the other is what is the nature of man? Now, one reason our dominant culture is so far removed from Christianity is because they give the wrong answers to these two basic questions that underlie everything else. What is the nature of reality? For example, is reality real or is it just something that we imagine? You might say, what a stupid question. Well, people in India don't think that's a stupid question.

In Hinduism, which is a religion that a huge, huge percentage of the world embraces and some societies are shaped by it. In Hinduism, all of reality is considered Maya, which is a Hindu word for illusion. There's no reality at all.

It's just whatever you created in your mind. What you perceive it to be is what it is. Well, that's certainly one view of reality, and it's certainly a different one than I hold.

I hold the view, which I think the Bible teaches rather clearly, that reality is an objective phenomenon. And our views and our understanding either conforms or does not conform to what really is real. If what we believe conforms to what is real, then we have found the truth.

If what we believe does not conform to what is real, we're deceived. But in a view that all is illusory, then nobody is more deceived or more enlightened than anyone else. Everyone is equally right because the world is whatever they imagine it to be.

And a lot of people who are of the older generation than myself have been very perplexed to find that they can't communicate with many of the people of my generation because the hippies who were my age, back in the 60s and 70s, they adopted this Hindu idea that all is Maya. There's nothing really objectively real at all. And so when you try to talk to them about facing reality, they didn't believe reality exists.

They didn't believe there is such a thing as objective reality. And of course, these days, the way they say is there's no such thing as absolute truth. Well, the Bible certainly teaches the opposite of that.

But our culture has come to the conclusion that there is no absolute truth. And that has made a very anti-Christian culture that we live in. Christianity has got to identify its own view of reality from the Scripture.

Another aspect of a view of reality that's part of a worldview is the choice between naturalism or supernaturalism. A classic example of a naturalistic view of reality is that which Carl Sagan, the late Carl Sagan, who became a creationist by dying, Carl Sagan used to say, I never heard him say because I didn't watch TV, I don't have a TV, never saw him, but he's quoted frequently. Sagan always said, the cosmos is all there is.

Well, you can define cosmos that way if you want. You can just say whatever is, is what we're calling the cosmos. But what he really meant was this.

The tangible, natural, physical universe, that's all there is. And essentially, that was a way of asserting there is nothing outside of nature. There is nothing above and beyond nature.

There is no God, in other words. Nature is all there is. And that's called metaphysical naturalism.

That's the belief that all that we have to deal with in this life is just things that are natural, natural laws, natural things, and there's no supernatural. Of course, such a view would believe there's no God, which puts it immediately at odds with Christianity, but believes there's no miracles. Can't possibly believe in the virgin birth of Christ or his resurrection or any of his miracles.

I mean, naturalism rules those out as a starting point. Christian's view of reality is supernaturalistic because we assume there is something beyond nature, supra-natural, something above that which is natural, and that is, of course, God. Another variable in a view of reality would be the choice between transcendence and imminence.

Now, some of these words you might say, I never use these words. I don't even know if I've ever heard them before, so what do I need to know them? Well, this is just some of the options out there. You might meet somebody someday who isn't a Christian.

You go somewhere other than church, you might, maybe you're at church, you'll meet somebody who's not a Christian. And a lot of people believe in the doctrine of imminence. That means that God is imminent in everything.

These are people who believe there is something, they have some concept of God. It's part of their theology. But they believe that God is in the rocks, God is in the trees, God is in the ocean, God is in the mountains, God is in the flowers, God is in the deer and the bears and the grizzlies and so forth.

Everything is divine because God is in all. And that is the world view. That basically informs the animal rights advocates and very many of the environmentalists today.

They have this view that the divine is that which is imminent, infused in everything. Well, there's an alternative to that and that's not in the Bible. And that is that God is not, the divine essence is not imminent in all of nature.

But God, the divine one, is transcendent to nature. His existence was established before there was any nature. And once nature has been dissolved and the elements have burned in a fervent heat, He'll still exist.

That nature, that God is not contingent on nature, He is transcendent. That means He's above and outside of nature. He's not part of nature.

That is the difference that Christianity makes from much of the popular view today. Another aspect of the nature of reality is whether there is a moral reality or not. Moralism versus amoralism.

And we talked a little bit about those when we talk about ethics, that some people believe some things are absolutely morally wrong. Others believe nothing is absolutely wrong all the time. That which is morally wrong in this situation might in fact be right over in this situation over here.

And some would say there aren't even any morals at all. To talk about morals is nonsense because to talk about morals presupposes that there's some transcendent lawgiver and those that don't believe in a transcendent lawgiver don't have any basis for believing in morality. And therefore you should just do whatever feels good to you and

try to avoid hurting other people.

And you only do that so you don't get into trouble not because there's any morality that compels you. This is a different view of reality. Some people believe, I believe, the Bible teaches that we live in a moral universe with a moral arbiter at the top of it all.

But many in our culture today and in other cultures have different views about this. They say there is no morality. Now, I said the nature of reality is one of the key questions.

The other is the key question of the nature of man. What are the options here? Christians believe very differently about the nature of man than do non-Christians, generally speaking. And that changes their world view and their values and their culture.

First question, is man alone in the universe and dependent on his own wits and his own resources to get by? That's what most people believe today. Or is he contingent? Is he created by and sustained by a creator? Is his well-being dependent upon having a positive relationship with that creator? Obviously, those who don't believe in creation don't believe in a creator and don't believe that man has any need to have a relationship with a creator. In fact, most of them think that belief in a creator is rather counterproductive.

Something that will inhibit scientific progress and advance of our human evolution as a species onto something greater. Well, different cultures, different world views, different views of the nature of man. Is man basically good? Is he basically bad? Or is he basically neutral? And he is, you know, the forces of society work upon him and make him either good or bad.

Of course, classical Christian theology and I believe the Bible teaches that man is essentially bad. That is, I believe that man still has some of the nature of God, some of the image of God in him. Though we are fallen, and everything we do is corrupted by the fall, yet there is still, as there is original sin, there is still some original goodness in the sense that there are people who are not Christians who still have a sense that it's better to be philanthropic than to be a criminal.

Okay? There is still that basic element of good that probably is residual in fallen man because he was made in the image of God. And even James tells us that when we don't love our brother, we are not loving him who is made in the image of God. Man is fallen, but he still bears some of the image of God.

But the fallen is the important thing to consider. That man left to himself will do evil, not good. Man is born with a propensity that makes it easier for him to be selfish than to be unselfish.

Easier for him to do wrong than to do right. The Bible teaches that this is true of children. It says foolishness, which in Proverbs, foolishness is always a moral thing.

It's not just IQ. It has to do with having no fear of God. The foolish person is one who has no fear of God in the Proverbs.

It says foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. It says a child left to himself brings his mother to shame. A child left to himself doesn't live out his divine nature.

He lives out his fallen nature. That's why parents need to direct a child. That's why many people don't believe in directing a child anymore.

In our culture, it's often considered to be barbaric to discipline a child or to make decisions for the life of a child. There's this United Nations Treaty for the Rights of the Child that several administrations have tried to push through. Fortunately, they haven't succeeded yet.

But it basically would say that children are free agents. They should not be governed by their parents at all. This stems from what? Who would come up with such a zany idea as that? Forty years ago, no one would have suggested that children don't need parental guidance.

But the world view of our society shifted and the view of man as either basically good or at least neutral. And that left to themselves, children will grow up into good folks. This is, of course, the basis of much psychology as well.

That is pervading our culture. Is man an eternal being or a temporal being? Obviously, that has a lot to do with whether we are naturalist or supernaturalist in our view of reality. Of course, the Bible teaches we're eternal.

And therefore, the decisions we make are much wiser if they affect us positively eternally than if they simply have short-range benefits to us. Paul said, we look not at things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen. For the things that are seen are temporal.

But the things that are not seen are eternal. The values of the Christian are focused upon that which is eternal. And that changes everything in our choices.

I mean, Christians go to the stake and are burned alive in the prime of life because they won't deny Christ. You can't get an unbeliever to do that. Because why? Well, because the unbeliever, this life is all he knows about, all he has.

The believer knows of another. And that world view, that man is eternal. He's not temporal.

He's not just an animal. Not just a higher product of evolution than a dog or an ape. He's made in the image of God to have an eternal existence.

That is part of our world view, our view of the nature of man. And of course, by man we

mean humanity. Okay, now, let me move along here, I hope, more quickly.

Let me identify for you three top priorities in a Christian's value system. These are priorities that are non-negotiables. These are the foundational values of the Christian life as identified in Scripture for us.

There are three that I'd like to call your attention to. One is in 1 Corinthians chapter 10. 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 31, Paul says, Whether therefore you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Now, to the glory of God suggests that the object we have in view is that God would be glorified. That God would be exalted. That He would accrue happiness to Himself.

That He would accrue honor to Himself. That the net result of what we've done would be that people would honor and respect and revere God more. That what we do enhances people's understanding of the glory of God so that God is glorified in their sight.

Whatever we do, we are to do unto or with the goal in mind of God's glory. In fact, sin is defined by Paul in Romans chapter 3 as simply falling short of this. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

We fail to glorify God. That's what sin is. And Paul says, this glorifying God is an issue that doesn't just have to do with the way we sing our songs and say our prayers and conduct ourselves at religious services.

This goes down to the nitty-gritty of everything in our lives. What you eat and what you drink. The most mundane things that all people do.

Even irreligious people. Even animals do that. Animals eat and drink.

The most animal-like aspects of our daily existence. Even those are to be governed by the value of saying, may God be glorified. I will eat or I will not eat today.

I will eat this instead of that. I will eat this much instead of that much. Or whatever.

My choices in what I eat and drink are governed by my concern for the glory of God. And if what I eat and drink, then everything else too. Paul is not just identifying those few things.

He's saying that whatever you do, getting down to the most mundane and animal-like aspects of our existence, even those are offered to God as a form of worship by us. Whatever we do is motivated by the value that God must be glorified in my life, not only ultimately, but right now in every decision I make. A second value that the Scriptures identify for the Christian that must underlie everything is found in a well-known Scripture in Matthew chapter 6 in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6 and verse 33. Jesus said, but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Again, this is in the context of eating and drinking.

He's talking about food and clothing, natural things that people are concerned about. In fact, he said these are the things the Gentiles seek after because the Gentiles don't have anything higher to seek after. But we are to seek after not those things.

We are supposed to leave those things for God to add to us as we seek the one thing needful. To seek first the kingdom of God. Whatever we do is to be for the glory of God, and what we do is to be a promotion of the kingdom of God, of God's reign.

Not only that God will be glorified, but that God's reign and influence over the lives of men and over our own will be increased. We are seeking the fortunes of God's kingdom, not our own. Not our own little agendas, not our own little estates.

It's God's kingdom we are here to promote. If we do something else, if that's not what's motivating all that we do, we are traitors to the kingdom that we belong to. Our citizenship is in heaven.

We are ambassadors for Christ. Everything that we do, like ambassadors in the Donasal nation, they represent the interests of the country that they are citizens of. Promotion of the kingdom of God is the obsession of the true Christian disciple.

One other thing that is very important that the Scripture lays out that should underlie all of our values is in Proverbs chapter 4. We might say, well, that's the Old Testament. How could that be radically Christian? Christians have to do with Christ. Well, Jesus didn't change everything.

Certainly what Jesus taught agrees with this proverb. Jesus actually said some of the same things, but I like the way it's stated in this proverb. Proverbs 4 in verse 23 says, Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

Now, where it says keep thy heart with all diligence, the phrase with all diligence is kind of a free translation into English. The Hebrew words actually there are above all keeping. So, it literally says in the Hebrew, the word keep can mean guard.

Guard your heart or keep your heart above all keeping or above all guarding, for out of it are the issues of life. Now, what you guard is what you value. If you pay 50 cents for a pen, and you sign a check on the hood of a car for some transaction, you might accidentally leave that pen on the hood of the car and you wouldn't miss it.

You might be kicking yourself that you didn't have it later just because you need it again, but you didn't spend much for it, you don't value it very highly. It will get out of your sight and you'll lend it out, and you won't even remember to ask someone to give it

back. But if you pay \$150 for a pen, when you lend it out, you're going to keep track of where it is.

You're going to remember to ask for it back in case they forget. You're not going to lay it on the hood of the car and walk away from it. You're going to guard that thing because you value that more than a 50 cent pen.

You guard your garden from deer and pests and weeds because you value the produce of that garden. You guard your house with locks, and you might even have guns and things like that, and maybe security systems. You guard your house because that is a thing of value, at least economically, that's materially probably the most valuable thing you own is your house.

So, you guard it, you value it. But the Scripture says, guard your heart above all guarding. That is, above all else that you guard, you should guard your heart more, which means you should value the purity of your heart more than you value the retention of your house, the produce of your garden, your car, whatever else you guard carefully.

Guard your heart more than that because you can lose your house and not lose your soul. And what does it profit if you don't lose your house and you do lose your soul? What's it profit if you gain the whole world and lose your soul? Losing a house is a disaster, but it's not necessarily a tragedy. It might even be good for you.

It might be God's dealing for you. Never know. I have a house.

I'm vulnerable. I could lose my house. I wouldn't enjoy losing my house.

I want to give you that information very clearly. I'm not saying that I don't care about my house. I do.

But if I lost my house and did not lose my heart, did not lose my soul, it is not a tragedy. It is a setback of sorts. It is hardship, but it's not a tragedy.

Losing your soul is the ultimate tragedy. Guard your heart. If your heart is corrupted, if the purity of your heart is compromised, that is a greater tragedy than that the deer get in your whole garden or that you lose all your jewelry to a burglar or whatever.

Guard your heart above all that. Why? You guard what you value. Value the purity of your heart more than you value anything else.

Guard it more than you guard anything else. So what do we have here? Some basic things the Bible says to value most. The glory of God, the kingdom of God, and the integrity of your own heart, the moral integrity of your heart.

Those things. If those are your essential values, then your life will be different in

everything you do practically. I mean I'm not saying you won't eat some meals similar to unbelievers eating their meals.

You might even eat in the same restaurants and order the same food, but you'll be doing it for different reasons. Everything you do will be motivated by your values. And you'll make your decisions with God in mind, which an unbeliever does not, and which many Christians I'm afraid do not.

And should. Let me... I'm not quite done here. Just to put a finer point on this, I'd like to identify some of the key values that are corollaries of those three that I've just mentioned.

Some of the key values that dictate distinctively Christian behavior and choices. There are some of our values that don't differ from those of moral non-believers. We value our marriages so we won't get divorced.

Well, a Mormon might not get a divorce either because he values his marriage. We value our children so we home-school them. I'm not saying if you don't home-school you don't value your children, but that's speaking for myself.

We value our children so we home-school our children. That's our expression of how we value them. Non-Christians sometimes home-school too because they value their children.

So there are some things that Christians do that reflect similar values to that of some non-Christians. But there are some distinctive values of Christians that cannot really... They're not identical even to the values of moral non-Christians. The first thing is that we recognize that eternity matters more than time.

A non-Christian who doesn't have any concept or any hope of eternity, that can't be a governing factor in his thinking. But the Christian, as I said from 2 Corinthians 4.18, looks not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen. Because the things that are seen are temporal, and the things that are not seen are eternal.

And the Christian lives, if he's living like a Christian, with the motto, Eternity is long, time is short. And to choose suffering for a season with the people of God, instead of enjoying the pleasures of sin for that same season. Moses made the right choice there because he had respect unto the reward, it says.

What reward? Here he was in the lap of luxury in Pharaoh's house. And he leaves that to go out and live in the wilderness and be picked on by these three million malcontents. And he doesn't even get to go into the Promised Land with all of them.

What's the reward he got? Well, he didn't get a reward in this life. But I bet you he's got a good reward right now. And he valued things based on a more long-term reward.

Christians can see beyond, because we can see what God has told us about. Eternity exists. It says of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Hebrews chapter 11, that they endured not having received the promises.

They died in faith, because they could see them afar off. And they looked for a city whose builder and maker is God. If they had wanted immediate gratification, they could have gone back to the country they came from, the writer of Hebrews says.

But they didn't. They were looking for something eternal. They were after something that had eternal benefit.

It says in Hebrews chapter 10, of the Christians to whom that epistle was written, it says, do you remember back when you were younger Christians? He's encouraging them to be as zealous as they used to be. He says, you cheerfully endured the spoiling of your goods, that is the plunder of your possessions. You cheerfully endured that, knowing that you have a greater reward in heaven.

It says in Hebrews chapter 11, that people were sawn in two. They were perished by the sword. They lived in sheepskins and goatskins, and in caves and dens of the earth.

It says, and they refused deliverance from these things, because they sought a better resurrection. I'll tell you, once eternity is burned into your brain as the primary concern, it changes the decisions you make about everything, about money, about marriage, or at least about divorce. You know, putting eternity first changes a lot.

When you see in the church, the divorce rate comparable to the divorce rate in the world, what you can know, one thing you can know, I don't know what all the factors are, but one thing is certainly a factor, and that is that at least those 50% of the people who are getting divorced, they do not have eternity as a guiding principle of their value system. They are not looking at the things that are not seen. They are looking at the things that are seen.

They are looking at the temporal. I can't stand to live with this person another 40 years. Well, okay, then disobey God and live in hell forever.

Great trade-off. People who have eternity as their value system, this marriage may not be very happy, but Jesus said there is no marriage in the resurrection. There is relief at the end here.

Now, some people don't like the fact that Jesus said there is no marriage in the resurrection, but whether we like it or not, that's true. The resurrection is what it's like forever after. And whether you like being married or not, you are not going to be married in the resurrection.

But for those who are in unhappy marriages, and there have been many Christians

throughout history that are not in happy marriages. Some of them married to non-believers, very unhappy situations. But in Scripture, they are always exhorted to stay in those marriages and to be faithful to the vows they made, because eternity is the payoff.

And eternity is long. Time is short. Time seems long, because that's the only thing our experience has ever given us any frame of reference for, but it really is short.

And if you really believe what the Bible says, then that will have a lot to do with your choices. Another guiding value of the Christian life is that humility and trust in God are better than self-confidence and self-esteem. Now, this is again in direct opposition to the world, because actually the Greek culture and the Roman culture both despised humble men.

They believed that humility was a sign of despicable weakness. Christ comes along and says, Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the meek.

Those are the enviable men. Those are the commendable men. It's a flip-flop value from that of the world.

The world says you need to have high self-esteem. Jesus says you don't need high self-esteem. You need to be poor in spirit.

Paul says, Esteem others better than yourselves, or in honor preferring one another to yourselves. He says, Do not think more highly of oneself than he ought. He says in Romans 12, 3. The teaching of Scripture is that low self-esteem is actually not only what pleases God, but which is more blessed to the person who possesses it.

Everybody seems to have advice these days, even in the Christian bookstores, about what to do about low self-esteem. Like it's a disease you've got to cure. My advice is this.

If you have low self-esteem, enjoy it while you can. Because if you really have it, God's likely to exalt you, and then you'll have trouble maintaining low self-esteem. And that's a fact.

God exalts the humble, but he brings down the proud. If you've got high self-esteem, God will fix it probably. But it's not something to aim at.

I'll tell you that. Humility. Because our humility as a Christian, we value humility because it is an awareness of the right relationship between creature and creator.

Those who don't have or care about a right relationship with creature or creator, they're their own creator. Self-made men, as far as they're concerned, and they worship their creator. Which is themselves, as they view it.

And so there's pride, there's arrogance, there's self-sufficiency, there's self-dependence. The Bible teaches that trusting in God is a higher value than trusting in self. Woe unto

him that puts his trust in man, Jeremiah said.

And Proverbs says, he that puts his trust in his own self is a fool. But the Bible teaches that trusting in God is the place of blessing, and it's very different. It dictates different behaviors.

The world says you've got to look out for yourself. If you don't, no one's going to look out for you. Therefore, you need to put away something for the future.

You need to protect yourself, your interests, and so forth. The Bible says, no, freely receive, freely give. He that seeks to save his life will lose it.

He that loses his life for my sake shall find it the opposite. Just put your trust in God and don't have any confidence in the flesh. Don't have any confidence in self.

That's what humility amounts to, is putting yourself in the right relationship to your Creator and to others that He's created. Pride is simply man usurping the place of the Creator and giving himself the prerogatives of his Creator. That's a different value.

And it's honored in the world. I was just commenting to my family today how that, as much as I agree with much of what some of the conservative talk shows say, I've listened off and on to Rush Limbaugh for many years. He's a very boastful guy.

Now, frankly, I don't know that he's as proud as he comes off. I think it's probably part of his radio persona that he pretends to be more proud than he is. But he's not a Christian.

And that boastfulness, that persona of boastfulness seems to appeal to people because he's the most listened to talk show host in the world. And yet his principal characteristic on his program is his arrogance. Or at least his pretended arrogance.

I think he's actually more humble than he comes off. But the fact is, it's his persona. And it works because people respect or are attracted to a man who's got self-respect.

A man who has self-confidence. In Scripture we're taught that self-confidence is not a desirable goal. And those who think they stand better take heed lest they fall.

Better to be humble than trust in God. Another very important value in the Christian life that we need to be aware of in Scripture is faithfulness is more important than convenience. In the world, convenience is of very high value.

You can tell by listening to any advertisements for any products you want or any service. Any bank, any fast food restaurant, any product. What is the selling point? It's convenient.

No long lines. Won't interrupt your life. You can have it your way.

Just the way you want it. And convenience is the principal selling point in almost all advertising for whatever product is being sold. Convenience must be a high value in our culture.

That people will go out and buy things for no other reason than in many cases they're just more convenient than what they had before. Convenience is all nice. I'm not saying we should reject all convenience.

But to a Christian, faithfulness is more important than convenience. And how that really translates is that the Christian has to keep his word even when it becomes inconvenient to do so. The godly man in Proverbs chapter 20 and verse 4 is the one who swears to his own hurt and doesn't change.

That means he commits himself. He swears to do a thing and it turns out it's going to hurt him to carry it out. He swore to his own hurt.

It's going to cost him more than he figured. But he doesn't change. Why? Because he's faithful.

It's inconvenient for him to keep his promise but he does it anyway because faithfulness matters more than convenience. And that's what principle is. That's what character is.

Character exists in a person who says it's going to cost me more than I wished it would but I've made a commitment. I'm going to stand by my principles. I'm going to stand by my integrity.

Integrity is another word for faithfulness. The Bible uses the word faithfulness. It doesn't use the word integrity.

But the Bible indicates we're to be faithful even unto death. It's very inconvenient to die. But we're supposed to be faithful even to death.

But those who value convenience above faithfulness will deny Christ in order to gain the convenience of escape from persecution or martyrdom or whatever. Faithfulness can be extremely inconvenient. But every Christian who thinks like a Christian values faithfulness and integrity more than they value their convenience.

And even a lot of non-believers used to be that way. But I don't know if there's too many like that now. But Christianity calls us to that.

One other value that's a key value I think we need to keep in mind and it's very obvious from the teaching of Christ about love. Because He told us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. In fact, He told us to do more than that and to love each other as He loved us.

But what that translates into in terms of a particular value in our system of values is that

to protect the interests and seek the advantage of others is more important than to seek our own advantage or our own interests. Paul said in Philippians 2 that every man should not seek his own interests only but also the interests of others. In Romans 12.10 he said that in honor we should prefer one another.

We should honor other people's wishes. We should defer to others more. We should prefer them to ourselves.

That's what Christ did and that's the mind of Christ. Have this mind in you that was in Christ Jesus that He was in the form of God but He took on the form of a servant. Which means He gave up His prerogatives.

He gave up His convenience in order to serve the interests of our advantage and our well-being. And that is the mind we're supposed to have. That to promote the interests of others to promote the advantage of others is more valuable than to have our own way.

That is, of course, what love is about. Now, I've got about 10 minutes by my reckoning and I'm going to close by giving you four ways to identify your value. I said earlier that we all have a value system.

We all have a hierarchy of values but we don't all know what they are because we haven't always looked at ourselves and our lives in such a way as to really identify what our values are. We might flatter ourselves that we have Christian values. Many Christians would say they have family values but in many cases people who profess to have family values still are pursuing two incomes instead of having mom at home with the kids.

They're still sending their kids off to public school because it's more convenient than to really disciple them at home as the Bible, I believe, encourages us to do. Whether or not we send our kids to school any part of the day, we're still supposed to disciple them at home. There are things in the modern evangelical conservative church, a church that espouses family values, that aren't biblical family values.

People flatter themselves if they're Christians or professing Christians that their values are those of the Bible. But what usually happens when they read the Bible is they see those scriptures clearly that confirm the values they already embrace. And the ones that challenge them, they kind of write those off as unclear, vague, probably symbolic, not literal.

And some things in the Bible are not literal. Some things are symbolic. But the fact is we have this grid through which we allow ourselves to see those scriptures that confirm whatever our values are that we follow and kind of filter out those ones that really go against our grain.

Here's how we can know what our real values are. I'll give you four tests. Very simple, very objective, very unmistakable.

First, where does your elective money go? Now, I use the adjective elective to distinguish a very important thing. Much of our money is not elective. We don't have any choice about it.

We have to pay our rent. We have to pay for our food. We have to pay our bills.

If we have debts, we have to pay those. We have to support our children. The money that is spent on these things is not elective money.

That's something we're required to do. And many people, probably some in this room, don't have very much elective money at all. But once you've paid all those debts, there's really nothing left.

In fact, sometimes there's a negative balance. But in America, the average person does have more than it takes just to stay alive. Paul said, having food and raiment, let us with these things be content.

And of course, I don't need a roof over your head too and a wood stove. But beyond these few things, we should be content because that's all that's necessary for living. The rest is elective money.

That is that which we can elect or choose to do with what we wish. We're free. Now, where your elective money goes is to those things you value most.

Jesus said that. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. You will pay your money for the things that you value more than money.

And if you value nothing more than money, then you'll use your money to generate more money. But the fact is, whatever money you have that you don't absolutely need to survive is a barometer, a flawless barometer according to Jesus Christ, of where your heart is. And if you want to know what your values are, just look at where that money is going.

Look at the check stubs. Say, well, what do I value most? Now, happy is the man who can look at his check stub and say, well, you know, this check went out to support this poor family and this poor family and I support this orphan over here in Bangladesh through Compassion International or World Vision and I'm supporting these missionaries over here and I helped the church put in a heater when their heater went out. I mean, if the money is going to things that really are the things that God values, then that's a good indicator, a good symptom, a symptom of good values on your part.

But if the money is going to the things that man highly esteems, but which are an

abomination to God, then pay attention. Learn something about yourself. Another test similar to it is how your elective time is spent.

Now, we only have so much leisure. Most of us are not independently wealthy. We have to do something for a living.

But once we have done what we must do for a living and we have elective time, time we can use how we prefer, we will demonstrate in that way what we value because time and money are simply different forms of the same commodity. And all of our time and all of our money belongs to God. So, what we do to feed our families and ourselves are really things we do in service to God because He cares about our families and us being fed and so forth.

But the rest of the money besides and the time, the extra time is God's too. And so, I mean, you simply will spend more time, elective time, on those things you value and are attracted to than you will on things you aren't attracted to and don't value. Another test is, and this is very important, what do you desire for your children? Is it important to you that they get a college education? Why? I mean, maybe that's good for them.

I don't know. I don't know what their calling is. But is that an important thing to you? If you say, yes, because my child is called to be a doctor or a nurse and they need a college education, I say, well, if that's how they're going to serve God, amen, I don't have anything against that.

But if you say, well, I just want to be able to make a good living, yeah, I know college can be a dangerous environment spiritually and a lot of Christians who are faithful Christians until they go to college, lose their faith in college, but just got to take that chance because I don't want my child to be a loser. I want my child to have a good job. Well, I'd rather my children didn't have a good job.

I'd rather they had a minimum wage job and had their souls intact. John said in 3 John verse 4, and he was actually talking about his spiritual children, but he probably had no physical children, so his feelings toward his spiritual children transferred. He says, I have no greater joy than to see my children walking in the truth.

No greater joy means I value nothing higher. Nothing brings me more delight than to see my children walking in the truth. What if they're poor? Well, if they're walking in the truth, that's my greatest joy.

What if they're persecuted? Well, if they're walking in the truth, my joy is fulfilled. What if they're handicapped? What if they're sick? Well, the question is not any of those things. Nobody's life is perfect, but are they walking in the truth? That matters more than anything else to a right-minded Christian.

If my child had the opportunity to be President of the United States, I would not like it as

much as if they had the opportunity to be a missionary to an unreached people group in some jungle where they'd make no money and possibly endanger their health because they would be serving a higher government, the Kingdom of God. What you want for your children is what you value. You can say, well, I don't value worldly things, but then what course are you steering your children on? You can tell because Jesus said in Luke 11, 13 that earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to their children and are motivated to do so.

Therefore, what you want for your children is what you esteem to be good and your values will be demonstrated by the course you set for your children that you want them to go. One other test of your values is what are you willing to sacrifice for? Obviously, we can't pursue every option available to us and some things have to be sacrificed to others. We might like to have four different things that are mutually exclusive, so we have to pick one of them.

The one thing we pick to the exclusion of others is what we value most. If we choose to get rich and be promoted in our field rather than to nurture our family, well then, we've sacrificed our family for our career and a lot of women do that, by the way. A lot of men do, too.

But I won't broad brush everybody. It seems to me that the majority of women who go out and get second incomes when their husbands are actually earning enough to support them are sacrificing, in some measure, their families for something else, a career that matters, apparently, more than their family. Now, they wouldn't say their career matters more than their family and that's why I have to tell you this, because they don't know it.

They don't recognize what their own values are, but you can see they'll sacrifice this for that. Very clear what their values are. They can fool themselves all they want to, but there are objective tests that don't lie.

Where do you spend your money when it's elective? Where do you spend your elective time? What are you seeking for your children? And what are you sacrificing one thing for, any other things for? Those things will tell you. Don't be mad at me if you don't like the results of the test, but that's what the scripture tells us. And so, as Christians, we need to recognize that a Christian counterculture, or a Christian culture, will arise from a Christian worldview and values.

And I suspect that one reason that the church does not exhibit to the world today a distinctively Christian culture is because many Christians have not been disciplined in biblical values. And that is why I wanted to give some attention to them tonight.