



CENTERED



CW101

WEEK 1 : THE NATURE OF BELIEF

CENTERED INTRODUCTION

In Ancient Athens, there was a place called the Agora. The Agora was not merely a building or location, it was an idea . . . an idea that people could gather and discuss the ultimate things in life in a respectful and mutually beneficial way. From the steps of the Agora one could hear the voices of Socrates and Plato ring out into the streets. It provided a space for the community to gather and engage in deep and meaningful conversations. It was a place that stretched people.

In today's world, it feels like social media has erased civilized dialogue. Most of the time when we engage online, we hear from voices that either mirror our position completely or the loud and biting voices of strong polar opposition. The spectrum in-between remains unheard. Where is the space for safe and respectful discussions built around mutual-humility? Where is the place where we allow ourselves to be stretched? The CENTERED Project is our attempt to provide such a space. Like the Ancient Agora, Centered hopes to provide a space where people can engage in meaningful conversations about things that matter.

In light of that mutual humility, we want you to know from the onset.

CENTERED explores the topic of worldview. Our working definition of worldview is . . . what you believe about the most important and meaningful questions in life.

We will be presenting the Christ-Centered Worldview's answers to those questions. However, it's important to point out that you don't have to be a Christian to explore how Jesus answers the most important questions in life. Getting a picture of the Christ-Centered Worldview will allow you to better consider those claims and compare them with others.

In addition, CENTERED will compare the Christ-Centered Worldview's answers to the most important questions in life with a number of other worldviews. We have tried to provide a fair and well-informed analysis/critique of the other worldviews we engage but ask for grace in our missteps.

So . . . even if you would not consider yourself a Christ follower, we hope that you feel safe to engage, debate, and disagree. We are not looking to indoctrinate but to initiate a conversation.

HERE IS A QUICK BREAKDOWN OF THE WEEKS...

Week 1 –The Nature of Belief –This is what we are exploring today

Week 2—Where Did It All Come From?

Week 3—Who Are We?

Week 4—What's Wrong

Week 5—Who is Jesus?

Week 6—What's the Cure?

Week 7—Is There Hope?

WATCH SHORT FILM

What struck you from the film? What questions did it raise? What did you agree/disagree with?

INTRO QUESTIONS

In general, how do we generally come to believe something? What is the criteria for us to believe something?

The beliefs that we form make up our worldview. In light of that, we want to take a few minutes to look at a couple important points about worldview. Then, we will shift gears and talk about the GRID that we will be using every week to explore each question. Remember . . . our working definition of worldview is . . . “what you believe about the most important and meaningful questions of life.”

#1 EVERYONE HAS A WORLDVIEW

Worldviews can be held...

Consistently or inconsistently *what do you think this means?*

Consciously or unconsciously *What do you think this means?*

They can be true, partially true, or entirely false *What do you think this means?*

One reason so many of us live out our worldview unconsciously and inconsistently is that we no longer take time for reflection. This is not new. All the way back in 1654, mathematician, physicist, and theologian Blaise Pascal said, “All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone.”

What do you think Pascal means by this? Do you think that is true? If so, why do we struggle with it?

YOUR CHOICE: REFLECTION OR ELECTROCUTION

In 2014, researchers at the University of Virginia conducted an experiment with this exact dilemma in mind. Here’s what they did...

Researchers gathered a group of people. One at a time, they took them into a room with extremely low stimuli. The walls were white. There was only one chair in the room. There were no clocks, no paintings, just white walls. Then, they took all of the subjects phones, keys, electronics, etc—anything that could engage them.

The challenge—sit for 20 minutes in the chair, without falling asleep, with only your thoughts. The researchers told subjects to simply relax and enjoy themselves.

There was however, one major twist. In this room, there was one button. If you pushed this button, you would receive a painful electric shock.

Just to remove the possible motivation of curiosity, the researchers had the subjects push this button and receive the shock before the experiment began. In fact, after the subjects received the shock, the researchers asked the subjects if they would “pay money to avoid being shocked again?” To which ALL of the subjects answered yes.

So . . . the experiment begins. 20 minutes with nothing but your own thoughts . . . or . . . push a button and receive a painful shock to stimulate you.

There was a very different response between men and women. 25% of women pushed the button.

What does the Blaise Pascal’s quote and this experiment illustrate about the human experience in relation to the issue of living out a conscious and consistent worldview?

In today’s culture, what are the biggest barriers to self-reflection?

#2 EVERY WORLDVIEW IS FORMED WITHIN A DEFAULT CULTURAL BACKGROUND

A FISH STORY—by David Foster Wallace

There were two young fish swimming along when they happened to meet a wise old fish swimming the other way. The old fish nods at the younger fish and says, 'Morning boys, how's the water?' The two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and says, 'What the heck is water?'

How do you think this story relates to the idea that every worldview is formed within a cultural background?

The water we swim in is the cultural background. It is the starting place from which we build our worldview. It is the assumptions and practices of our society that are the default positions which we take for granted. We all come to the table with these default positions. There is no neutral starting place.

Do you think the background that we "swim" in is one that leans in favor of belief or unbelief? Why?

As we move forward through the weeks, we will return to this idea of the cultural background and try to draw out some of the cultural conditions that we bring to the table as we engage in worldview questions.

THE GRID

One of the things that CENTERED does is provide you with a tool that creates a shared foundation for comparing worldviews. It allows you to compare "apples to apples." Hopefully, this GRID will help you process your own beliefs and engage with others on common ground.

We will filter that question through the following grid.

CLAIMS- How does each worldview answer the question? What claims does it make?

REASONS- What are the reasons each worldview makes such a claim? This will also include looking at the evidence surrounding the claim.

IMPLICATIONS- Think of the word "IF." IF this claim is true, what does that mean. If..., Then...

ACTIONS- In light of the claim, reasons, and implications...how should it transform my heart? How should I live? What actions should it inspire?

PRACTICING THE GRID

Let's break down into smaller tables (or 3-5) and try to put this GRID into practice.

FIRST...an example from the Christ-Centered Worldview

1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-14

¹² But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

Which of the 4 points of the GRID does this text address?

Now let's look at an example from an interview titled, "Why Are We Here," where Duke University professor, Alex Rosenberg talks about his view, commonly described as scientism, which we also might call naturalism—the idea that science can explain everything. When asked about his answer to a number of major questions, he quickly listed off his answers saying...

"So, is there a God? Of course not. What is the meaning of the universe? It doesn't have any. What is the purpose of life? Ditto. Is there a difference between right and wrong, good and bad? There's not a moral difference between them. What is the nature of the relationship between the mind and the brain? They're identical. The mind is the brain. Is there free will? Not a chance. Do the lessons of the past have any particular bearing that would help us cope with the future? Less and less, if it ever had any at all."

Which of the GRID topic does this quote address?

GROUP ACTIVITY—WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS—GRID PRACTICE

Christianity, like all religions, is not only a religion, it is also a worldview. Worldview claims are not isolated belief statements separate from reality; they are claims about what reality consists of. To be viable, a worldview has to address the most important and meaningful questions of life. If a worldview glosses over, avoids, or ignores any of the major questions, it should be cause for concern.

When we look at Scripture, the verses are not just some nice sayings about God. They are often informing us to the way we should view the world. Or, if you are not a Jesus follower, it at very least helps you see how the earliest Jesus followers viewed the world.

Read Colossians 1:15-20

As a group, make a list of claims this text makes about reality? What truth claims is it making?

What are the implications of such claims?

If the claims are true, what actions should it inspire?

Come back together and share.

PRACTICE/HOMEWORK

Even though the quote from Blaise Pascal and the University of Virginia experiment illustrates just how hard it is to sit quietly with our minds, both Scripture and the spiritual masters throughout history see quiet reflection and contemplation as vital for a follower of Jesus. In light of that...

Find some space for self-reflection this week. Even if you only have 5-10 minutes, journal your thoughts on next weeks worldview question...Where did it all come from? Ask yourself these questions...

What do I believe (at least in my mind) about the origin of life?

How do I think the Christian Worldview would answer the question

What are my hang-ups/doubts about the Christian Worldview's explanation?

How would/should it effect my view of the world and my actions if there really is a God that created the world and cares about the people in it?

Offer your reflections to God in prayer

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WEEK 2 : WHERE DID IT ALL COME FROM

WEEK 1 RECAP

Last week we kicked off the CENTERED PROJECT, discussing the nature of belief. Today, we are going to get into our first WORLDVIEW QUESTION—WHERE DID IT ALL COME FROM? Remember, our working definition of a worldview is, “what you believe about the most important and meaningful questions of life.” Before we get into it, let’s review the “grid” that we will be using each week.

CLAIMS—What are the claims each worldview makes in answering the question?

REASONS—What are the reasons they make such a claim?

IMPLICATIONS—What are the implications in other areas of life if the claim is true? Think . . .
“IF” _____, Then _____

ACTIONS—What actions should it inspire? How should we live in response?

WATCH SHORT FILM

What struck you from the film? Did you find any piece particularly compelling or moving? Did it raise any questions in your mind?

The film used some words that we don't often use in description of our every-day experience—words like astonishing, wonder, majesty and mystery. When was the last time you have been hit with “wonder”? Where were you? What were you doing?

Do you think that a sense of wonder speaks to something spiritual in us? Why or why not? Why do we experience it?

WHERE DID IT ALL COME FROM?

What are some of the most common answers you hear to the question, Where did it all come from? (Beyond simply the Christian answer)

WORLDVIEW GRID - CLAIMS

NATURALISM- Generally speaking, naturalism is just a fancy word for the belief that holds that all that exists is matter...stuff like molecules, chemicals, atoms, electrons, etc. Nothing exists beyond the natural world—no soul, no spirit, no wonder—just matter. This could also generally be described as the atheistic view.

In light of this, how do you think a naturalist would answer the question, “where did it all come from?”

PANTHEISM OR NEW AGE- Generally speaking, Pantheism holds that the whole universe is eternal and divine. Not that God created the whole universe . . . but that the whole universe IS God.

How do you think someone with a pantheistic worldview would answer the question, where did it all come from?

ISLAM- Islam believes that God (Allah) created all things. In this way, they are monotheistic, like Christianity. Where Islam would balk at the claims of Christianity is its inclusion of Jesus in creation.

WORLDVIEW POINT: What we see from this quick look at three different worldviews, is that they hold three very different beliefs about where it all came from. That points to a very important point about worldviews. Often, they ARE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE.

What does that mean? Well, while it may seem nice or politically correct to claim that “all religions are the same,” or “all religions lead to the same place,” we see from just this first basic question that these three (of many) different worldviews answer the first BASIC question of where did it all come from completely different. To make the claim that “all religions/worldviews are the same” is actually to belittle all religions and perhaps is the most exclusive claim of any. It is to claim, “I am right and ALL other religions are wrong.”

CHRIST-CENTERED WORLDVIEW- There is a large number of texts in the Bible that illustrate the Christ-Centered Worldview’s answer to the question, “Where did it all come from?” However, over this series, we really want to single out Colossians 1:15-20 because it is believed to be one of the earliest and most complete statements of Jesus. So, even though we looked at it last week, let’s read it together again, keeping in mind the question “Where did it all come from?”

COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

How does this text answer the question, "Where did it all come from?"

While there is a variety of views within the Christian worldview on the "how" God created (i.e. 7 literal days, guided evolutionary, intelligent design, day-age theory), the Christian worldview believes that the universe was created by a loving, transcendent (beyond space/time) and personal God.

Using this description of the Christ-Centered Worldview, can you name one or two points of difference or disagreement between the Christian Worldview and the Pantheistic or New Age Worldview?

What about naturalism? Where does naturalism and the Christ-Centered Worldview differ?

WORLDVIEW POINT: On a normal day-to-day basis, people don't walk around claiming to be a Pantheist, Naturalist, etc. Still, some of the ideas from these worldviews—For instance, the idea of a "general" creator of some kind that is ultimately unknowable and impersonal or that all we can truly know is the material—have become a part of our cultural background story, seeping into our own worldview without us even realizing it. Until we are actively seeking to live a consistent worldview, we all are generally a melting pot of inconsistent worldview mixtures.

WORLDVIEW GRID—REASONS

For this series, we are using the image of a scale for reasons. The idea behind using the scale is to illustrate that we ALL live in the tension of both belief and unbelief, faith and doubt. There are many solid reasons to believe in God, but we don't deny that there are things, both intellectually and experientially, that we struggle with.

We all have doubts. When you think of the doubt side of the scale, do these come from more intellectual reasons or experiential reasons? Things you think or things you experience? Share if you are comfortable.

TRANSITION: We've acknowledged that we all have things that add weight to the doubt side of the scale. Now, we want to spend some time adding weight to the belief side of the scale. We will only have time to briefly introduce three basic arguments.

#1 MIND

When exploring the possibility of a creator of the universe, one of the things on the belief side of the scale ...is also a claim. "The Christ Centered Worldview believes **MIND** came before **MATTER**. Matter cannot create Mind.

Blocks Analogy (*Could do a write up for a teacher—or could create a short video*)

Minds can arrange things . . . What is hard to imagine is "unguided" matter could create minds - which themselves are able to create.

#2 COMPREHENSION OF THE UNIVERSE—FINE TUNING

In a 1936 Science Journal, Albert Einstein wrote, "The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility...the fact that it is comprehensive is a miracle"?

What do you think Einstein is saying here? Do you agree with him? Does the “comprehensibility” of the universe hold much weight for you?

Sir Fred Hoyle was a 19th century British mathematician and astronomer as well as an atheist turned agnostic. In his work on mathematics, he calculated that the chances of life originating on this planet as 1:10^{40,000}. While that number is so large it almost loses meaning, consider the fact that the number of estimate atoms *in the entire universe* is 10⁸⁰.

Towards the end of his career of studying the origins of the universe, Fred Hoyle wrote:

“Would you not say to yourself, ‘A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion beyond question.’”

How does this speak to the evidence of a creator?

Granting that Fred Hoyle’s math is correct, what are your thoughts on Fred Hoyle’s statement?

What are some possible answers other than a creator? Which seems more probable?

#3 COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT—WORLDVIEW COMPARISON

Let's go back to some of our other worldview claims to the question, "Where did it all come from?" We said that Pantheists believe in an eternal universe and that naturalists would argue—counter to Fred Hoyle's math—that there is no creator at all. The universe simply arose from natural causes. But how does the evidence speak to these claims? .

COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT VIDEO

<https://youtu.be/6CullBuMCLg0>

What stood out to you from the video?

A logical syllogism states two premises. If both are found to be true in relation to one another, the conclusion is valid. Do you agree with the 2 premises found in the Kalam Cosmological argument? Why or why not?

Premise 1—Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its beginning.

Premise 2—The universe began to exist.

Conclusion—Therefore, the universe has a cause of its beginning.

How does this argument weaken the possibility of some of the claims of Pantheism and Naturalism?

The world-renowned physicist Stephen Hawking said, “almost everyone now believes that the universe, and time itself, had a beginning...at the Big Bang.”

How does the Big Bang support The Kalam Cosmological argument?

WORLDVIEW GRID—IMPLICATIONS

When we ask a question like, “Where did it all come from,” we not only answer that question but actually gain insight into other major questions as well. That is because the answer to this question does not exist in a vacuum—the implications spill over into other areas of life as well. For instance:

J.R. Tolkien (Lord of the Rings Guy) said, “If you do not believe in a personal God, the question, ‘What is the purpose of life?’ is unaskable and unanswerable?”

What does Tolkien mean by this? How can he make this claim? And . . . what does this have to do with Pantheism?

In similar fashion, if everything came from an unguided and natural process—matter, atoms, molecules, and chemicals all smashing together—what does that mean for the question of purpose? Meaning? Hope? Life after death?

What are some of the implications if the answer to the question of where did it come from is—from an artist-like, powerful, and personal creator created us?

WORLDVIEW GRID—ACTION

Let's grant (even if it is just a momentary hypothetical for you) that the Christ-Hymn we read in Colossians is an accurate picture of reality.

How does the Christ-Centered Worldview's answer that everything was created by a personal, loving God, affect the way we live and experience the world?

How can it or should it change the way we view the world around us?

How should it affect the way we move and act in the world?

Which worldview(s) we talked about today are most consistent with an ethic of love?

CLOSING

We can choose to get sucked into the cultural story that we hear everyday, a story that suggests that the world is simply a giant cosmic accident . . . that there is ultimately no purpose or meaning other than the meaning we create, and that the awe and wonder you feel from time to time is simply an illusion produced by chemicals rushing around in your brain...

OR...we can choose to live our lives under the headline of a better story, one that says that a loving, personal and artistic God CHOSE to create this world, which includes choosing to create you. That all of life contains a bit of wonder and awe. That this world is not a cosmic accident, but a beautiful creation filled with built-in meaning, purpose, and value.

What we believe about the question of origin—the question of “Where did it all come from?,” matters because it determines the lens that you will view life through, which will influence the way you think, act, and feel about your experience of the world.

PRACTICE

This week’s practice is to . . .

Look for wonder. We all get so stuck in our daily routine that at times it is hard for us to see beyond the mundane. This week, be on the lookout for wonder. Take a photo of something that sparks a sense of wonder or awe. This could be something big or small—maybe it is even seeing something mundane in a new way. Be prepared to share next week.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If your group enjoyed the Cosmological Argument Video, point them to a resource called “Reasonable Faith.” If you search “Animated Videos Reasonable Faith” in YouTube, you will find a series of videos related to evidence of God’s existence similar to the Cosmological Argument. For those that want to go even deeper, Reasonable Faith also has a website with countless articles surrounding a variety of apologetic topics as well as debates, podcasts, and interviews.

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WEEK 3 : WHO ARE WE?

WEEK 2 RECAP

Welcome to Week 3 of the CENTERED PROJECT. Throughout this series we are exploring what it means to have a Christ-Centered Worldview. Our working definition of a worldview is, “what you believe about the most important and meaningful questions of life.” Last week we looked at the question, “Where did it all come from?” Today we will explore the question of humanity asking, “Who are we?”

Each week we are using the same grid to frame our discussion.

CLAIMS—What are the claims each worldview makes in answering the question?

REASONS—What are the reasons they make such a claim?

IMPLICATIONS—What are the implications in other areas of life if the claim is true?

Think “IF”... “THEN”

ACTIONS—What actions should it inspire? How should we live in response?

WATCH SHORT FILM

What struck you from the film? Did you find any piece particularly compelling or moving? Did it raise any questions in your mind? Did you find yourself disagreeing with any part of it?

THE BIG QUESTION...

Today we are exploring the question of humanity...specifically "Who are we?"

What do you think the default answer to that question is in our culture today? How would most people answer that question?

CLAIMS

#1 - HUMANS AS SPECKS

In the film we heard a number of different answers to the question of, Who are we? Answers like . . .

We are specks

We are highly evolved animals

We are nothing more than a mind that is basically a computer

We also heard a part of the Christ-Centered worldview's answer to the question.

Let's begin exploring these claims by comparing Bill Nye's answer and the ancient Hebrew poet and king, David's answer. They tell two very different stories.

One story, Bill Nye's story, falls in line with the worldview of **naturalism**—which says that all there is in the world is stuff . . . matter. This includes things like atoms, chemicals, minerals, etc. but nothing beyond that . . . no God, no soul, no spirit.

Materialism's answer to, "Who am I" would be something to the effect of . . . nothing more than a combination of stuff. There is nothing spiritual about you...no soul, really not even a "self" . . . there is no "you." Just chemicals reacting in your brain.

Then, there's David's story. In the book of Psalms, King David tells a different narrative of the value of people. Let's look closer at the stories.

BILL NYE'S QUOTE

"I'm just another speck of sand. And Earth, really, in the cosmic scheme of things, is another speck, and our sun...and unremarkable star, nothing special...another speck. And the galaxy is a speck. I'm a speck on a speck orbiting a speck among other specks amongst still other specks in the middle of specklessness! I am insignificant! I suck!"

Ok...keep that in mind as we read David's words in Psalm 8:3-6...this is the VOICE translation.

KING DAVID'S QUOTE

³ *When I gaze to the skies and meditate on Your creation—
on the moon, stars, and all You have made,*

⁴ *I can't help but wonder why You care about mortals—
sons and daughters of men—
specks of dust floating about the cosmos.*

⁵ *But You placed the son of man just beneath God
and honored him like royalty, crowning him with glory and honor.*

⁶ *You ordained him to govern the works of Your hands,
To nurture the offspring of Your divine imagination;
You placed everything on earth beneath his feet:*

What do you notice about the similarities and differences in how these two men view themselves/
people?

What is the difference between what Bill Nye and King David see as THE IMPLICATIONS of living
in a giant universe?

King David sees it completely different. The size and grandeur of the universe causes David to worship
because he is blown away by the fact that the God that created all of that...loves and relates to people.
He sees us as infinitely valuable. He might argue **IF** our creator has the power to create all of this and
cares about us at the same time, **THEN** we must hold infinite value.

#2 - HUMANS AS HIGHLY EVOLVED ANIMALS

GROUP ACTIVITY—HOW ARE WE DIFFERENT

Break down into smaller groups. Give each group 60 seconds to come up with a list of ways that humans are unique from animals.

#3 - HUMANS = MINDS

Another claim that materialists and naturalists make is that we are nothing more than minds...the mind is really “the stuff” we are. Many argue that there is no difference between mind and action, mind and self, mind and thought. We are essentially computers, programmed with no free-will.

To consider how much you might align or disagree with this position, answer the following question...If some brilliant scientist created a procedure that could upload your entire mind into a robot that looked and sounded exactly like you...would it be you? Why or why not?

This question helps us think through the question of soul. If you would argue that the robot **IS** you, then you may be viewing people from the worldview of materialism...that all we are is mind and matter. However, if you would argue that the robot **IS NOT** you, it is likely because you believe (even if you don't realize it) in some kind of concept of soul or some spiritual self, outside of our mind/brain.

REASONS-THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

The Christ-Centered Worldview denies that we are insignificant specks, merely highly evolved animals, and that we nothing more than our minds. Instead, the Christ-Centered Worldview claims that every human has inherent worth and value because they are created in the image of God.

But...why would Christians claim humans are made in the "Image of God?"

READ GENESIS 1:26-27

"Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.'"

What do you think it means that we are made in God's image?

Dr. Walton, Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College gives us one way (among many) to put language around what it means to be made in the image of God.

He says, "In the ancient near east world (time/place when Genesis was written) an "image" was believed to carry the essence of that which it represented. An idol image of a deity would be used in the worship of that deity because it contained the deity's essence. This would not suggest that the image could do what the deity could do, nor that it looked the same as the deity. Rather, the deity's work was thought to be accomplished through the idol."

If Dr. Walton is correct, what does it mean that humans are made in the image of God?

IMPLICATIONS

Remember . . . worldview claims do not exist in a vacuum. Each claim has implications that spread through all areas of our lives. Said another way . . . beliefs have consequences. Let's consider the implications surrounding this question.

What might be some implications of human worth **IF...**

We believe humans are just highly-evolved animal?

We believe humans are nothing more than matter—natural stuff like atoms, molecules, minerals, etc. etc.?

We believe that we are made in the image of a creator God who cared enough about us to enter humanity, sacrifice himself, and restore the relationship?

IMPLICATIONS

Similarly, what does it mean for our value/purpose/meaning IF...

We believe humans are just highly-evolved animal?

We believe humans are nothing more than matter...natural stuff like atoms, molecules, minerals, etc. etc.?

We believe that we are made in the image of a creator God who cared enough about us to enter humanity, sacrifice himself, and restore the relationship?

Supreme Court Justice, Oliver Wendell Holmes (1841-1935) said, "I see no reason for attributing to man a significance different in kind from that which belongs to a baboon or a grain of sand." If that is true, and we are nothing more than just highly-evolved animals, what action does it inspire...with regard to social justice and how we treat people? What would be the motivation for social justice?

If we were able to live consistently and fully in response to the Christ-Centered Worldview's view of people...what actions might it inspire?

PRACTICE

For this week's practice. . . One night this week, either by yourself or with your family/friends, go outside and sit or stand under the stars. Read Psalm 8 out loud taking in the vastness of space. (If family/friends are with you, take turns reciting it one by one). Imagine all the nights King David, as a young shepherd, stood under the stars looking up at the grandeur of God. Spend a few moments looking up, reflecting on the dual fact that we are tiny yet hold infinite worth.

CW101

WEEK 4 : WHAT'S WRONG?

WEEK 3 RECAP

We are in week 4 of our CENTERED SERIES, which is all about exploring the Christ-Centered Worldview. Remember—our working definition of a worldview is, “what you believe about the most important and meaningful questions of life.” Last week we discussed the question, Who am I? The Christ-Centered worldview’s answer is that we are all made in the image of God and, therefore, have inherent worth. But that’s not the whole story of humanity. Today we are going to examine the question, “What’s wrong?” Although we will deviate from our normal structure of systematically moving through the grid this week, all four points of the grid are present—once again, they are.

Claims—What are the claims each worldview makes in answering the question?

Reasons—What are the reasons they make such a claim?

Implications—What are the implications in other areas of life if the claim is true?

Think “IF”, “Then”

Actions—What actions should it inspire? How should we live in response?

WATCH SHORT FILM

What struck you from the film? Did you find any piece particularly compelling or moving? Did it raise any questions in your mind?

CLAIMS - WHAT'S WRONG?

What are a few different ways that people might answer the question, "What's wrong with the world?" What do you think our current culture's general answer would be?

What would you say if someone asked you to summarize the Christ-Centered Worldview's answer to that question?

While a number of different terms, illustrations and metaphors have been used throughout the history of Christian thought, the answer as stated in the film is, “God created the world good, . . . he entrusted it to mankind as stewards . . . man chooses to reject God’s way of doing things . . . poison is injected into the entire system.”

REASONS - WHAT’S WRONG?

Romans 7:18-25

¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Romans 3:23

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 8:19-22

¹⁹ For all creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that[a] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time

What did you find? How do the scriptures support the claims?

CLAIMS - MORAL ARGUMENT

It is somewhat difficult to have a comparative worldview discussion to the larger question of what's wrong with the world. That's a pretty big question that doesn't lend itself to simple answers. Instead, we will shrink it down to the more general idea of right and wrong. While the answer for many other worldviews would be similar to the Christ-Centered worldview's general idea that something is off, the conversation gets varied and interesting when we get into the question of right and wrong

To begin let's discuss the following question. Do you think that there is an ACTUAL right and wrong or do you think that throughout history people have just made up the rules/categories of right and wrong? What makes you say that?

Many people in our culture today would claim—and this sneaks into the Christ-Centered Worldview as well—that right and wrong are different for each person. Or, right and wrong are at least different for each culture. These two views are likely the dominant position in our culture today, which makes them worth exploring.

Individual Moral Relativism - Individual moral relativism argues that belief that right and wrong change from person to person.

According to IMR, morality (right and wrong) is up for each person to decide.

There are no universal moral truths—that is—there is no right or wrong that is true for everyone at all times.

Cultural Moral Relativism - The belief that right and wrong change from culture to culture.

There are no moral standards true for everyone.

Culture determines what is right for everyone who lives in the culture.

SIDE NOTE - SELF-DEFEATING STATEMENTS

You have all probably heard someone say—or maybe said yourself—“You shouldn’t force your morality on someone else?” Or—“You shouldn’t tell people what is right and wrong.”

Philosophers call this a “SELF-DEFEATING STATEMENT”

Q- Can you guess why it would be called that?

Q- Can you think of any other self-defeating statements?

IMPLICATIONS

Example 1: Modern-Day Slavery

In the film, you heard that modern-day slavery is a \$150 BILLION dollar a year industry—40.3 million individuals are currently caught in the slave trade and 1 out of 4 of those is a child.

Do you think it is ok for some countries/cultures to engage in slavery if it's agreed upon by a majority?

Is the “wrongness” of slavery a personal opinion? Asked another way—If you think that selling slave trade is wrong, but your best friend thinks it's no big deal—Are you both right?

If they were being consistent with their worldview, how would the individual moral relativist have to answer that question? How would the cultural moral relativist have to answer? How might they defend it?

Example 2: WWII History

Here's another example from history which you may all know well.

In 1933, a man named Hitler was appointed head of the German State

Hitler (along with his party) believed that there were hierarchies of different races—some were superior, and some were inferior.

Not only that—he also worked to eliminate all disabled people, homosexuals, and other minorities that didn't fit into his idea of the Aryan Race.

From 1941-1945, Hitler and the Nazi party systematically killed 6 million Jews; an estimated 1 million of them were children.

Is this (racism, murder, torture, etc) wrong for all people in all cultures, at all times? If so, why?

That leads to the next big question—If we all sense that the answer is that Hitler's actions were wrong for all people, in all cultures, at all times—Who declares or decides such a thing is wrong? Who makes the call on right and wrong?

Remember . . . Hitler had the majority with him. He was not acting alone so it the answer can't be majority.

If a moral relativist (which is what many in our culture—believers included—seem to be) is actually living out their beliefs consistently . . . What would they have to say about modern-day slavery or the holocaust?

If a person responds with, "well everyone just instinctively knows that's wrong" (which obviously isn't true based on the slave trades 150 billion/year) how do we know? Who decided that for us?

This is where the Christ-Centered Worldview is vastly different than individual and cultural moral relativism. The Christ-Centered Worldview claims that there are at least some things that are right and wrong for everyone at all times.

For Christians, rather than individual preference or cultural majority, right and wrong are determined by God—more specifically, the character of God.

In an over-simplified sense, right is when reality (and our actions) align with the characteristics of God (love, truth, goodness, etc).

Wrong is when reality (and our actions) don't align with the characteristics of God.

Our morals are determined by who God is and we find the clearest picture of that in scripture—most completely in the life of Jesus.

ACTION - SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT

Not only does scripture help us understand what is wrong, it also shows us what is right . . . what to pursue instead. It lays out what it looks like to live out God's vision for life. Returning to Paul's 1st-century letter to the Romans, let's look at Romans 12:9-21.

GROUP ACTIVITY - In groups of 3-5, read Romans 12:9-21 and form a list of what it looks like to live to the full in God's vision of life.

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.[a] Do not be conceited.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"[b] says the Lord. 20 On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

If he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."[c]

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

What does live to the full look like in God's vision of life? How does this text describe a Kingdom personality?

PRACTICE

This week's practice is a version of the ancient practice of contemplation. It has a sort of strange name and can definitely feel uncomfortable. It is known as the practice of "Sitting in Your Sin Before God."

What we are going to do is prayerful take on a posture of openness (which might simply be sitting down with hands resting palms up on your knees), acknowledging our brokenness and weakness before God, and in our heart, soul, or "mind's eye" (whatever language you use) look at God looking at you in love.

You will likely feel exposed. You will likely want to make excuses or false promises. However, the goal of this practice is to avoid that. We are simply sitting in our fallenness and struggle, exposing it all out there before God without excuse or promise, and receiving God's love in that state of brokenness. Simply basking in the love of God.

CW101

WEEK 5 : WHO IS JESUS?

WEEK 5 INTRO

Welcome to week 5 of the CENTERED PROJECT - exploring the Christ-Centered Worldview. Remember . . . our working definition of worldview is . . . what you believe about the most important and meaningful questions of life. This week we are exploring the question, Who is Jesus?

Worldview Grid Assessment Tool

Claims - What are the claims each worldview makes in answering the question?

Reasons - What are the reasons they make such a claim?

Implications - What are the implications in other areas of life if the claim is true?

Think "IF"....., "Then".....

Actions - What actions should it inspire? How should we live in response?

WATCH SHORT FILM

INTRO QUESTIONS

What are some ways that you hear Jesus described in today's culture? How do the majority of people talk about him?

When you think of Jesus's influence, what are some things that he DIDN'T have going for him? See if you can come up with a list of 5 things.

Given all of that, how do you think someone who didn't follow Jesus would rationally explain Jesus's influence? How did someone with all that going against him become the most influential man in history?

How might a follower of Jesus answer that same question?

CLAIMS

Before exploring the Christ-Centered Worldview's answer to the question, Who is Jesus? Let's quickly look at how a few other worldviews answer the question. We will only have time to state their claim, not directly explore their reasons.

Naturalism - everything is matter, there is no supernatural. Obviously, there is a span of belief when it comes to any given naturalists take on Jesus. Richard Dawkins is a well-known naturalist at the popular level. Here is his response to the question of Jesus.

Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 2006

"Nobody knows who the 4 evangelists [Matthew, Mark, Luke, John] were, but they almost certainly never met Jesus personally. Much of what they wrote was in no sense an honest attempt at history. . . . The gospels are ancient fiction."

Richard Dawkins, *Outgrowing God*, 2019

"Jesus was a great moral teacher. . . . Someone as intelligent as Jesus would have been an atheist if he had known what we know today."

Eastern Pantheism - posits that all of reality is spiritual.

A pantheist would likely say that Jesus was not THE god but a god. He was a man who completed a process of spiritual evolution and became an enlightened master.

Islam - There are 93 verses in the Koran that talk about Jesus. The Koran affirms that 1) Jesus was messiah, 2) He was born of a virgin, 3) He performed miracles, 4) He was accompanied by disciples, 5) He was rejected by the Jewish establishment, and 6) He was raised to heaven.

At the same time, Islam denies the fact that Jesus was ever crucified or resurrected.

"O people of Scripture [Jews and Christians]. Do not exceed the limits in your religion, nor say of Allah aught but the truth. The Messiah, 'Isa [Jesus], son of Maryam [Mary] was a messenger of Allah and His Word. . . . Say not: "Three [trinity]." Cease. [It is] better for you. For Allah is [the only] One [God], glory be to Him [for exalted is He] above having a son."

Quran 4:171

There's no doubt that Jesus was a great man. However, the Christ-Centered Worldview believes that He was more than a man. The Christ-Centered Worldview claims that Jesus was FULLY GOD and FULLY MAN. We want to spend some time, examining scripture to see why Christians believe that.

REASONS

One of the arguments used historically to try and refute the idea that Jesus is God is the claim that Jesus was just a man, but over time his legend grew and grew until eventually he began to be viewed as God.

If true, that would be problematic.

Two ways to explore this claim is . . .

Look at what the earliest Christians claimed about Jesus and

Look at what Jesus claimed about himself.

First, what did the earliest Christians claim about Jesus?

Reason #1: Early Creeds

Over the last 30 years or so there have been some groundbreaking insights that have added major weight to the historical reliability of both the Bible and the claim that the earliest Christians viewed Jesus as God. One of those insights is the identification of early creeds.

Creeds are statements of belief that were written and recited for a number of different reasons—to clarify beliefs, to promote unity, and to be used in worship. What was discovered was that throughout the letters of the New Testament, there are a number of early creeds used by the church to talk about Jesus. Two examples are Philippians 2 and Colossians 1 (both written by AD 60—30 years after Jesus’s death).

What is important to remember is that even though these texts were written 30 years after Jesus’s death (which is still really early), the realization that these are early church creeds suggests they had been read and used in worship for years and years before Paul ever wrote them down. Paul writes them as if they are already common language among the churches. Even more, the earliest known creed in the book of 1 Corinthians is usually dated in the AD 30’s...within just a few years of Jesus’s death.

Group Scripture Engagement Activity

Directions: Break down into smaller groups and read these early creeds. Either have one group read Philippians 2: 5-11 and the other group read Colossians 1:15-20...OR...Have each group read both.

As you read the text, make a list of the claims the early Christians are making about Jesus.

What from this text would lead us to believe that Jesus is fully God?

What from this text points to Jesus's humanity?

Another source worth noting on this subject comes, not from scripture, but from a letter to the emperor. In 112 AD, a Roman Magistrate named Pliny the Younger wrote a letter to the Emperor Trajan.

"They [the Christians] were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then to reassemble to partake of food—but food of ordinary and innocent kind."

What this letter illustrates, is that even to the outside observer, the early Christians were worshipping Jesus as God.

Reason #2: Who Did Jesus Say He Was?

We have seen pretty good evidence to suggest that the earliest Christians viewed Jesus as fully God and fully Man . . . but . . . what about those who claim that Jesus never actually said he was God? How do we respond to that?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSQDov6NNp0> - WHO DID JESUS THINK HE WAS

What evidence or arguments from this video gives good reason to claim that Jesus thought he was God? Can you think of anymore besides what was on the video?

The Greatest Question Asked by the Greatest Man

One time when Jesus was walking with his disciples, he stopped and asked what might be the most important question any of us will ever be asked . . .

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Right here in Matthew, we see the greatest question being asked by the greatest man in history. That makes it pretty important. And it’s the same question that each of us have to consider if we are going to take our search for truth seriously.

Of course, we could simply ignore the question and just keep living our lives with blinders on, but C.S. Lewis (The Chronicles of Narnia guy) argued that if Jesus really made outrageous claim about being God, that is not really a valid option. He said.

“I’m trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” - C.S. Lewis

What do you think C.S. Lewis means by this quote?

Do you agree/disagree, why?

How does this quote speak to the implications of Jesus's claim to be God?

ACTIONS

BREAK INTO SMALLER GROUPS and try to come up with a list of 5-10 ways that Jesus still impacts society today. Another way to think of it is, historically, what have Jesus's followers contributed to society—this might include institutions, innovations, philosophy, art.

If you actually believe the claim that Jesus is God . . . what personal actions should it inspire? How should it affect the way you view the world?

PRACTICE

Personal Reflection on Scripture

Find a quiet space and read back through Philippians 2:5-11 and Colossians 1:15-20

Consider the claims that the texts are making about Jesus

Gauge your heart as to what you believe about those claims and what you struggle to believe.

Offer it up to God in prayer.

CW101

WEEK 6 : WHAT IS THE CURE?

WEEK 6 INTRO

We are in week 6 of our Centered Series, which means that we only have 1 weeks left! Last week we discussed the question, “What is the Problem?” In last week’s film, G.K. Chesterton summed up the Christ-Centered Worldview’s answer well, simply saying, “I am.” This week we ask the question, “What is the cure?”

WATCH SHORT FILM

What stood out to you from the film? Did you find any piece particularly compelling or moving? Did it raise any questions in your mind?

CLAIMS

We are going to use a scenario to help us think through the claims different worldviews make when answering the question, “What is the cure?”

Here is the scenario—you have been invited to a very fancy art show at the local art museum. I’m talking so fancy that you have to rent a tux (maybe even a top hat) or an evening gown. You put on said formal attire and you head to the art gallery. As you are making the rounds, taking in the beautiful works of art, you drop your program . . . no big deal, you just bend over and pick it up.

BUT . . . as you bend over you accidentally bump a column holding a \$400,000 ceramic bowl. In that moment, everything starts to move in super-slow motion. You jerk back up, hoping to catch the bowl before it falls, only to feel it slide through the tips of your fingers as you reach for it. The bowl hits the floor, shattering into a thousand pieces. The whole crowd is staring at you. You wish you could turn invisible or run but you know that the room is filled with security cameras that taped the whole thing. What do you do?????

What are some possible ways, if any, you could fix the problem?

If we take this same scenario and imagine that it is an illustration for the brokenness of humanity, we can gain insight into how a number of different worldviews answer the question, “What is the cure?”

Thinking back to the film—How might an eastern worldview address the problem of the bowl? As the breaker of the bowl, what would your fate be? Or how would you fix it?

What about Islam? The video told us that in Islam, Allah is the ultimate judge. The question is, How will he judge? You broke the ceramic bowl—What do you do to make up for it, and how do you know if you’re forgiven?

What about naturalism? Naturalism claims that the world is only atoms and molecules, nothing supernatural or “other” in the world. How might you address the problem as a naturalist?

What about the Christ-Centered Worldview? If we think of Jesus as the artist, how do we fix the problem of the broken ceramic bowl?

THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW - REASONS and IMPLICATIONS

The Christ-Centered worldview claims that the answer to the question, “What is the cure?” is Jesus’s death on the cross as an act of grace. Historically, theologians have explained this using a number of different analogies that are housed in theological language—concepts like recapitulation, sacrifice, expiation, moral communication, satisfaction, ransom etc. Each of these words (that aren’t necessary to know) are summary descriptions of what has been found in scripture and can all be helpful.

Theologian Dr. Steven Cone says,

“There is a depth of riches in Christ. Because Christ’s saving work is the work of a divine person in history, because it deals with the absurdity of sin, and because its purpose is to bring us into a life whose fullness we cannot yet imagine, no human conception can completely sum up the way that Christ saves us. There are multiple analogies, each reflecting different insights, and responding to different questions . . . none of which serve as the master narrative that the others must fit into. Through all of them we seek to understand our reconciliation to God.”

GROUP ACTIVITY

Break down into smaller groups. Each group will examine a number of different scriptures, looking for what language it uses to describe Christ’s work on the cross, and/or the implications of his work (If... Then). Each group will record their findings and share when finished.

Other helpful questions to approach these verses might be asking...

What does it tell us about Christ and what does it say about us?

How and in what ways does Christ save?

How do we move on from the stain of sin (guilt, shame, etc)?

How is justice honored and forgiveness offered at the same time?

GROUP 1

Colossians 1:19-22

2 Corinthians 5:17-18

Matthew 20:26-28

1 John 2:1-2

Galatians 1:3-5

GROUP 2

John 3:14-17 Read along with Numbers 21:4-8 (what is the connection between the two passages)

Romans 5:1-5

1 Timothy 2:5-6

1 John 4:9-10

Ephesians 5:1-2

IMPLICATIONS

What are some of the implications of Christ's saving work that were found in the verses we just examined?

Can you think of any more implications? IF this is true, THEN...

ACTIONS

If the Christ-Centered worldview is correct, and incarnation and death on the cross are the cure for the brokenness of humanity...

What actions should it inspire? How should this reality change the way we think and act in the world?

Why do you think that it often does not inspire action for believers?

PRACTICE

This week spend some time prayerfully reading through John's accounts of Jesus's death on the cross (John chapters 18 and 19). Put yourself in the room, the crowd, place yourself at the scene of the cross as you read.

Prayerful reading means directing the words you are reading and your inner monologue as you read, back towards God. This may include doubts, joy, sadness, etc.—bring it all before God.

CW101

WEEK 7 : IS THERE HOPE?

WEEK 7 INTRO

You have officially made it to the final week of the Centered Project. Over the last 7 weeks, we have explored what it means to have a Christ-Centered Worldview. Remember, our working definition of “worldview” is—what you believe about the most important and meaningful questions of life.

We have used the same worldview assessment tool every week.

Every worldview consists of 1. CLAIMS—2. REASONS—3. IMPLICATIONS—4. ACTIONS.

In our final week, we will be exploring the question, “Is there hope?”

WATCH SHORT FILM

What stood out to you from the film? Did you find any piece particularly compelling or moving?
Did it raise any questions in your mind?

CLAIMS

Every worldview has to answer the question, what happens when we die? Is there hope beyond death? In this section, we will examine the claims made by a number of different worldviews in response to this question.

Naturalism

Naturalism claims that nature (the physical—i.e. atoms, molecules, etc) is all that there is. Nobel Prize winning philosopher and mathematician, Bertrand Russell sums up the claims of naturalism, saying,

“That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labors or the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man’s achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul’s habitation henceforth be safely built.”

What strikes you (or stands out to you) from this quote?

How would Bertrand Russell (and fellow naturalists) answer the question, is there hope? What makes you say that?

Pantheism or New Age Spirituality

Pantheism or New Age Spirituality claims that ALL of reality (rocks, trees, water, humans, birds, etc) is ultimately divine. Upon death, the spiritual part of us returns to become part of the one impersonal divine energy.

While the pantheistic worldview seems to hold out some inkling of hope beyond death, how is it different from the Christ-Centered worldview view of hope beyond death?

Christ-Centered Worldview

The Christ-Centered Worldview claims that there is real hope in both life and in death...that hope is tied to a historical event, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Historians now believe that 1 Corinthians 15 is an early Christian creed, dated to just 2-3 years after the death of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas (Peter), and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.”

How does the creed from 1 Corinthians 15 provide us with both claims and reasons?

Why do you think Paul makes the point that some of the witnesses were still living at the time of his writing? How does that strengthen his claim?

REASONS—Evidence of the Resurrection

We see from the earliest creed of the early church that the believers tied their hope to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Everything centered around that event. This naturally leads us to wonder, is there any evidence of the resurrection of Jesus?

To answer this question, we are going to look at a number of different videos. Two are from Dr. William Lane Craig's ministry, Reasonable Faith, and one was made by One Life.

<https://youtu.be/4qhQRMhUK1o> - WATCH "DID JESUS REALLY RISE FROM THE DEAD PART ONE"
VIDEO (6 MIN)

What stood out to you from the video?

For you, what fact seemed to be the strongest argument? Weakest?

What questions did it bring up?

Did any part of it help strengthen your faith?

One of the historical facts mentioned in the video was the disciples belief, even to the point of death.

Historian and New Testament Scholar, Dr. Gary Habermas, said,

“Virtually all scholars studying Jesus’s resurrection, whether conservative, moderate, or liberal, acknowledge that Jesus’s earliest followers were convinced not only that Jesus was raised from the dead but also that he had appeared alive to many of them on several occasions. Further, scholars also almost unanimously recognize that two former skeptics, James the brother of Jesus and Saul of Tarsus (Paul), became believers after they, too, were convinced that they had seen the risen Jesus.”

A few years ago, One Life created a video that addressed this very idea.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwQUPbL6ghQ> - WATCH “EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION” VIDEO(5 min)

What stood out to you from the video?

Did any part of it help strengthen your faith?

We want to examine one more thing before moving away from reasons to believe. This is Part Two of “Did Jesus Really Rise From the Dead” and it covers the major theories that have formed over the years to find a way to naturally explain the empty tomb. Check it out.

<https://youtu.be/6SbJ4p6WiZE> - Watch “DID JESUS REALLY RISE FROM THE DEAD PART TWO” (6 MIN)

What stood out to you from the video?

In your mind, what was the strongest argument? Weakest?

What questions did it bring up?

Did any part of it strengthen your faith?

IMPLICATIONS

Now that we have explored the reasons why we can confidently believe in the resurrection of Jesus, let's think about the implications. Remember . . . beliefs don't live in isolation, they work through all parts of our lives and actions.

When we think implications, it helps to think... "IF" _____ is true, "THEN" it means _____.

What are the implications IF Jesus did NOT really rise from the dead?

What are the implications IF Jesus really DID rise from the dead? In smaller groups, try to come up with 3, "IF" Jesus really did rise from the dead, "THEN" _____. Think of it in terms of what it means for things like death, fear, identity, suffering, the Bible, etc.

ACTIONS

Belief is not confined to our thoughts. True belief is lived out in action.

If Jesus really did rise from the dead, proving to be God, how should it affect the way we live? In smaller groups, think of 5 tangible ways this reality should affect our actions.

SERIES CLOSING QUESTIONS

Looking back over the series, what was your favorite week?

Was there anything that really stuck with you from this series?

How has this series helped you trust and follow Jesus more?

