

The background of the slide is an abstract composition. On the left side, there are several concentric circles in shades of blue and teal, creating a tunnel-like effect. In the center of these circles, there is a small, colorful vortex or nebula with orange, red, and blue hues. The right side of the image is a soft, out-of-focus background with warm, orange and yellow tones, suggesting a sunset or sunrise sky.

Worldview Thinking

Revisiting the Fundamental Orientations of Our Minds and Hearts



Welcome!

Most of us remember the joy and pleasure we experienced from a magnificent view, whether from a mountain peak or from the railings of cruise ship. Similarly, a biblical worldview broadens our perspective, frames the way we see the world, turns our eyes toward Creator God, delights our souls, and shows us the grandeur, majesty, and beauty of Christ. We are glad you joined us this morning for Part 6 of our series on *Worldview Thinking* and pray you will be enriched by what you learn from God's Word.

Introduction

In our last lecture on *Worldview Thinking*, I encouraged you to engage in an ongoing process of examining your minds and hearts in order that you might “know yourself” (Socrates), including your deeply held presuppositions and worldviews. Using Solomon’s simile about a person’s thoughts being like water in a deep well (Prov. 20:5), we highlighted John Calvin’s teaching on “the knowledge of God and of ourselves.” The more he examined Scripture and meditated on it, the more he understood that as we come to know ourselves, we increasingly know God. And the more we know God, the more we come to know ourselves. It was his understanding that neither of these views took priority over the other, and he didn’t know which one came first.



Introduction

Having begun this process of increasing our awareness of our own presuppositions, we now continue our journey of exploring the vast regions of our hearts that remain hidden – not just from others, but from ourselves. We must be able to assure ourselves that our beliefs are actually based on true knowledge and not our personal opinions.

However, before we can go about the business of knowing specific things, we must know what ***knowing is*** (Frame). This is the field of ***epistemology***, “the theory of knowledge and understanding, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope, and the distinction between justified belief and opinion” (OED). In other words: What do we know? On what basis do we know? And how do we know?



Introduction

While epistemology is a complex subject and has been the subject of many books, articles, and debates, we should not shy away from considering key principles and truths which we can apply in our everyday lives. First, we would do well to listen to Os Guinness' assessment of the extensiveness of knowledge: **“There is more to knowing than knowing will ever know.”** However, this idea should not overwhelm us nor deter us from the acquisition of knowledge. Rather, we should humbly come before God and enter fully into the arena of history – to see what He wants us to see, to hear what He wants us to hear, and to know what He wants us to know. He will guide us by His Spirit and provide the answers we need to live for His honor and glory.



Eight Basic Worldview Questions

1

What Is Prime Reality –
the Really Real?

2

**What Is the Nature of
External Reality?**

3

What Is a Human Being?

4

What Happens to a
Person at Death?

5

Why Is It Possible to
Know Anything at All?

6

How Do We Know What
Is Right and Wrong?

7

What Is the Meaning of
Human History?

8

What Personal, Life-
Orienting Commitments Are
Consistent with This
Worldview?



Eight Essential Worldview Questions

Our Second Question: What Is the Nature of External Reality?

What Is the Nature of External Reality?

- Summary Statement: Is the world created or autonomous, chaotic or orderly, matter or spirit? Do we emphasize our subjective, personal relationship to the world or its objectivity apart from us? (Sire).
- Which view is the most likely to be true?
- “We should choose the one (worldview) that, when applied to the whole of reality, gives us the most coherent picture of the world” (Nash).



Where Does Thinking Begin?

“God is at the root of human thinking and mental reasoning. As human beings, we can think about logic. Our mental activity is another dimension to the character of logic. And again our minds have their roots in God’s mind. We are made in his image, and our thoughts imitate his thoughts. We think his thoughts after him. The coherence of logic with our minds rests on divine coherence. God’s logical consistency and his truthfulness cohere with his ability to think, and his thoughts are consistent....Human thinking is always derivative” (Vern Poythress).





Two Ways To Reason

- **Autonomously:** From the Greek *auto* (self) + *nomos* (law) = **self-law**; “living under one’s own laws; independent” (Liddell and Scott’s Greek Lexicon). “Our own human powers are ultimate when we engage in the process of evaluation...Autonomy means making human judgment and human standards for judgment an ultimate touchstone in one’s life” (Vern Poythress).
- **The Christian Way:** “To listen submissively to the instruction of Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of the universe.” This is the way of submitting to divine revelation.
- Each person has to decide between the two. No one can remain neutral.



How Do We Come To Know Anything?

- How is it that a person comes to know, to perceive, to understand?
- What are the sources of our spiritual beliefs?
- What method or methods do we use for verification of our beliefs?
- Is religious assertion simply a matter of faith?
- What is the relationship between faith and knowledge?
- “Is faith essentially emotive, volitional, moral or intellectual? Do religious assertions rest on authority, intuition, experience, speculation, or personal preference and prejudice?” (Henry).



How Do We Come To Know Anything?

- Are our beliefs determined by subjective, personal preferences and opinions, or by revelation?
- Do we tend to judge situations and people through the lens of our own prejudices?
- Do we believe in supernatural divine self-disclosure, that God intervened in human history and spoke to man as man?
- Do we believe that God's self-revelation is contained in the language, statements, and propositions of the biblical text?



As You Think, Remember the Fall in Eden

- The fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was a “catastrophic personality shock” and completely altered God’s perfect creation - and we know it.
- We all have the **noetic effects** (on the mind) **of sin**. “We are all by nature rebels against God and we do not want to submit” (Poythress).
- “Our **sinfulness infects our reasoning**, so that we come to the evidence with corrupted standards for judging it. Even if the Bible is genuine, we want to judge it rather than submit to God. We want to remain in charge of our life (autonomy), including the life of reasoning” (Poythress).
- All people fall into some inconsistencies at some point or another.



The Effects of the Fall



“Most of us are inconsistent about our worldviews. Our viewpoint comes from the melting pot. We get mixed up. Our pot has a dash of faith and a dash of skepticism. We are at once religious and secular. We believe in God, sometimes. Our religion has elements of superstition at some times and is tempered by sober science at other times. We are at the same time Christians and card-carrying pragmatists. On Sunday we say the creed. On Monday we are fatalists. We try to separate our religious life from the rest of our life. We live by holding contradictory beliefs. Living in contradictions can be exciting. Life is surely more than logic. But the contradictory life is a confusing life, a life of inconsistency and incoherence. Its bottom line is chaos” (R.C. Sproul).



What Is the Nature of External Reality?

*How Would You Arrive At An
Answer To This Question?*





Ways of Knowing

- **Divine Self-Disclosure:** God has spoken.
 - Self-Revelation applies logic to premises given in revelation.
 - History is indispensable for Christianity.
- **Rationalism:** “The theory that all knowledge, and therefore all religious knowledge, can be deduced from logic alone, i.e., logic apart from both revelation and sensory experience” (Clark).
- **Empiricism:** All knowledge is based on sensation alone. Nothing can be more certain than what appears to our senses.
- How shall we begin? By assuming the authority of sensation, the authority of logic, or the authority of God?



Prerequisites For Knowledge

1. **The Validity of the Law of Non-Contradiction:** This is the foundation upon which all rationality is established. *A* cannot be *non-A* at the same time and in the same relationship. A thing cannot be square and not square at the same time and in the same relationship. Aristotle: “The same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect.”
2. **The Validity of the Law of Causality:** Every effect must have a cause.
3. **The Basic Reliability of Sense Perception:** How we acquire knowledge of the external world.



Mystical Intuition

- Intuition, or **immediate apprehension**, is claimed “to be found in one’s own inner experience as an instant awareness of the religious Ultimate.”
- “Religious mysticism depicts intuition as a way of knowing that contrasts with both reason and sensation, and therefore also with intelligible divine revelation.”
- “Mystics claim that **direct insight** into the invisible world is available through personal illumination as a means of access to the Divine allegedly transcending all ordinary levels of human experience.”
- The religious experience is **unverifiable** by ordinary ways of knowing.



Problems With Intuition

- This view requires the **suspension of reason**.
- If God is beyond truth, what criterion of truth and error remains?
- A “lapse in self-consciousness can only mean the surrender of any personal knowledge whatever.”
- The mystic is left with no ground for speech about God. Reality cannot be described when it is said to be inherently inexpressible.
- **Common expressions:** “I can feel God.” “It doesn’t matter what God’s Word says, I know this is right.” “I have a special feeling about what God wants me to do.” “God spoke to me about this last night.”



Rational Intuition

- Scholars such as Augustine and Calvin made the case for *a priori* knowledge on the reality that man is the *imago Dei* (the image of God).
- This view of man is called **preformation** (e.g., “the categories of thought are aptitudes for thought implanted by the Creator and synchronized with the whole of created reality”).
- “God is the source of all truth, the human mind is an instrument for recognizing truth, and the rational awareness of God is given *a priori* (lit., *from what comes before*; deductive reasoning) in correlation with man’s self-awareness, so that man as a knower stands always in epistemic relationship with his Maker and Judge.”



Experience/Empiricism

- The empiricists consider **sense observation** the source of all truth and knowledge. All truth is held to be derived from experience (*a posteriori*, lit., *from what comes after*; inductive reasoning).
- “For more than two centuries the modern mind has been empirically oriented.”
- “The modern spirit has opted for empiricism as its way of knowing the externally real world, and the inevitable consequence of this decision is secularity.”
- “Taken by itself, the empirical method provides **no basis for affirming or denying supranatural realities**, since by definition it is a method for dealing only with perceptible realities.”

How Do You Know A Frog?

Do you understand a frog more on a biological dissecting table or in its natural habitat?





Nancy Pearcey: *Finding Truth*

- “How can I be sure that **my senses** are telling me the truth?”
- “Empiricism ends by claiming that the only thing humans are capable of knowing is a **succession of sensations** – like a filmstrip running through our heads.” Ernst Mach (from whom we get the term “Mach 1” for the speed of sound) said, “The world consists only of sensations.”
- “Using sensory experience alone, there is **no way to build a bridge from internal mental images to the external world**. We are trapped in the prison house of our minds.”



Reason

- “The rationalistic method of knowing considers human reasoning as the only reliable source of knowledge.”
- “The underlying assumption of philosophical rationalism is that the **mind of man** – simply in view of its latent potentialities, or veiled divinity, or the human mind’s explicit and direct continuity with the mind of God – **possesses an inherent potentiality for solving all intellectual problems.**”
- Rationalism means that “man in his present condition is able **by rational inquiry to arrive at the whole truth about reality and life.**”
- “Human reason is **not** a source of infallible truth about ultimate reality.”

John Frame

“Every philosophy must use its own standards in proving its conclusions; otherwise, it is simply inconsistent. Those who believe that human reason is the ultimate authority (**rationalists**) must presuppose the authority of reason in their arguments for rationalism. Those who believe in the ultimacy of sense experience must presuppose it in arguing for their philosophy (**empiricism**). And skeptics must be skeptical of their own skepticism.”





Concluding Thoughts

1. Seek to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind” (Lk. 10:27).
2. Strive to think analogically. “By this is meant that God is the original and that man is the derivative. God has an absolute self-contained system within himself....Man must, to be sure, think God’s thoughts after him; but this means that he must, in seeking to form his own system, constantly be subject to the authority of God’s system *to the extent* that this is revealed to him” (Cornelius van Til). R.C. Sproul explains that analogical knowledge implies true but limited knowledge and takes into account the Creator’s infinity and human finitude.



Concluding Thoughts

3. Recognize that “only God can provide us with an eternal perspective and speak to us with absolute and final authority” (Sproul).
4. Do not reject the life of the mind – irrespective of the cost.
5. Pursue the truth regardless of its implications.
6. Combine truth and obedience to the truth (knowing and doing, believing and obeying, theory and practice, orthodoxy and orthopraxy).
7. Be content with what you cannot know. “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).