

The Role of Worldview in Moral Orientation

Jeff Zust speaks: I'd like to welcome everybody in the name of our Lord. And our guest today is Major General retired Doug Anson, United States Army. I'll let him explain the ministry that he does. He is our speaker because we are creating an apologetics lesson for the Intern ministry ethics training that we're conducting to draw focus to the centrality of worldview within the formation of a professional military ethic.

Doug is going to be our teacher, and a summary for our intent is: worldviews (or our beliefs) inform and shape our moral orientations, AND our moral orientations are what are what direct our ethical practices. The Apostle James said it best when he said, "faith without works is dead."

We're hoping this lesson is very helpful for you in your ministry, because we're not just dealing with individual values or single scriptural texts, we're dealing with complex and diverse conceptions of the world in pluralistic contexts and we need to think through how we talk through these issues, how we understand ourselves, and how we understand others to better equip us to be ministers and professional officers.

As a final introduction today, in my daily devotions today, one verse stood out to me from Matthew 8, beginning in verse 18. Here Jesus tells his listeners, "That a good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a rotten tree can't produce good fruit. Thus, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is to be chopped down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, you will know them by their fruit."

Thus, our Lord reminds us that our ministry it is all about producing good fruit. This really spoke to me about the importance of teaching, helping, and encouraging ourselves as well as others to bear good fruit in they do in their professional and private roles in life. And with that let's bow our heads for a quick word of prayer, then I'll turn it over to Doug for the today's lesson.

Heavenly Father, thank you for bringing us to the beginning of a new day. We pause to praise you, to worship with you, to hear your word and to learn from each other. Come be our guest in this training and go with us as we go with you in our ministries. We ask these things in Jesus' Holy Name. Amen.

MG Doug Anson speaks:

Okay. Thanks, Jeff. Thanks for the invite. I appreciate it and appreciate everyone getting up at nine different hours across the globe.

What I'm going to talk about, let me bring the slides up. What I'm going to do is share with you some of the ideas that will go into an introductory worldview class for our MCF and chaplain students and interns.

For some of you, worldviews may be new or not well understood, but I hope I can explain its relevance in both our faith in general and to ethics in particular.

This is what I want to talk about. Introduction, I'll say a little bit about myself, but I think you've seen my bio, so I don't want to go into much detail.

I'll say a little bit about my ministry, Apologetics on Mission.

And then I'll give you the bottom line in terms of the relationship between worldviews and ethics.

We need to take a little bit of time to formally define worldview, why they matter, and, then I'll give you a brief outline of what this worldview class would look like that Jeff and I are working on.

And then the references I'll show you, I would also provide to our students. So while this The intent of this talk is not to be the class that will be used by the interns and other MCFs and chaplains. This is really just an introduction and give you some ideas of what would be included in that class.

All right, a little bit about myself. I am a Christian, a lifetime Christian. In fact, sometimes it's embarrassing to say that I I really can't remember the moment when I came to know Jesus Christ, but I always felt him walking alongside me my entire life. A little bit about my background in terms of a soldier. And this is how I articulated to young officers or cadets at military academies when they ask me, what did my career look like? And while my career is different perhaps than many others i think every one of us can say that there was something unique or different about our careers. Mine was clearly shaped and impacted by two major international events, the Cold War in particular, the end of the Cold War, and then 9-11.

So graduated from West Point in 1979, went into the infantry. First assignment was Korea.

but they brought me back from Korea and assigned me to the brand new National Training Center at Fort Rowan.

That picture there is me wearing the US version of a Russian uniform.

because I was part of the opposing force there. They would bring in units, brigades every month, and we would aggress against them.

turned out to be successful, at least in terms of the first Gulf War, because when our Our units went over to the Middle East back in the early 90s. They were very successful, and a lot of it was attributed to the training at Fort Irwin.

Cold War came to an end. I left the active component, joined the reserves, and went to work at Los Alamos National Laboratory. The Army had sent me off to graduate school, so I had to technical background and worked on decision analysis tools. I had an operations research degree.

But during the 90s, I taught at West Point in summer school as part of my reserve duty, as well as recruited for the academy.

When 9-11 rolled around, my life and many other lives changed radically.

I was 44 years old at that time and really thought that they would not call me up.

But I was called up with three days' notice shortly after 9-11.

And for the next 12 years, I was mobilized five times and spent over seven years on active duty.

As you can imagine, the impact on my family was significant. And actually, that's part of my story in terms of discovering apologetics.

So spent the first couple of years in the Pentagon and then the rest of the time with special operations.

retired in 2013, then retired from the laboratory two years later, And since then, my focus on what I jokingly call my third career is in service to the Lord in my ministry apologetics mission.

So yes, I continue to serve, but more directly for the Lord in this ministry, AOM, or Apologetics on Mission.

Apologetics, what is it? Apologetics is not well understood, certainly by nonbelievers, even by many Christians.

So it's the rational and evidential basis for Christianity. Apologetics is the...

is the English word for the Greek word found in the New Testament, apologia, which means to defend or defend the faith.

Some of the verses citing or exhorting apologetics include 1 Peter 3.15, Acts 22.1, And 1st Philippians 1, 7.

I discovered apologetics about 12 years ago after my oldest son walked away from his faith.

in a search to find a way to talk to him about God and faith, and eventually the gospel.

I was led to apologetics through a series of what we call an AOM God things or providential events.

I studied at both the Denver Seminary and the Talbot School of Theology in Biola University, where I received my master's degree.

Now, throughout the history of the church, apologists have addressed many different challenges and questions about Christianity.

Many involve theological questions. Many involve what one might call general revelation challenges.

evidence of God in his creation. As such, and particularly relevant to today's culture, Apologetics offers evidence and rational arguments for God and Christianity, in history, in science, mathematics, philosophy, archaeology, worldviews, etc.

worldviews is what we want to focus on today. AOM's mission.

We serve where there is little awareness, visibility, and access to apologetics.

and our primary focus is outside the US in the majority world.

We provide training. We try to build long-term relationships with and train leaders in those regions to defend biblical Christianity.

and empower the next generation to do the same. We serve in Latin America. I've been to Honduras, El Salvador, Brazil, and Chile with Axe.

I've been to Africa, Kenya, Rwanda, or I should say Rwanda, as they say there, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

and other folks in our ministry have been to Nigeria, South Africa, Croatia, and Taiwan.

Well, most of our activity is working through churches and pastors. I lead the military outreach team.

portion of AOM, and I'm working closely with both ACTS and the IAEC. In fact, I recently joined the IAEC's board of directors.

A little bit more about apologetics before we get into worldviews. Here is the Apologetics Study Bible.

As it says here, there are 140 short articles by over 100 authors addressing And here's a sample of some of the topics that are discussed now.

These topics give you a hint of the breadth of apologetics.

And what I find interesting is that these short articles, while they're really at a high level, spread throughout the Bible where where scripture is relevant to what they're talking about in apologetics, or I should say it the other way around.

where the apologetics discussion is relevant to that particular scriptural passage.

So, if you're looking for a reference for apologetics, this would be one. And I'll share some other references at the end of the talk.

But as you see at the bottom, world views, that is one area in the breadth of apologetics, and that is the area that I have focused on mostly in my studies and my application. In fact, it's the area that led me back to talk to my son and have some discussions about faith in a way that he's willing to talk about.

So, I find real utility in worldviews and evangelism as well as discipleship.

All right, let's do the bottom line up front. This is what some people call the ethics triangle.

So what drives ethical behavior? This suggests that it's beliefs or values.

There are organizational values, there are cultural values, there are personal values.

Cultures and professions, military included, possess and proclaim values that they want all members to embrace.

The goal, of course, is to have all the members embrace and internalize the values so that the desired behavior follows.

MCS and chaplains are certainly influenced by their own cultural and military professional values.

Their military values are likely stated clearly by their chain of command.

But the cultural values may be unclear or even conflict with the professional military values.

And the behavior of military leaders may differ from their professed professional values. And all of this, of course, leads to ethical challenges and dilemmas. I mentioned personal values. I'll come back to those shortly.

But as an aside, last month, I went on mission with the leadership from Axe and IAC down to Chile.

And I had an opportunity to talk to the Carabineros NCO Academy.

Now the Carabineros are the Chilean National Police.

Now I knew going in that I would likely have a mixed audience. There would be Christians and non-Christians, there would be Protestants, there would be Catholics. So my talk had to be oriented for that diverse audience.

So I spoke about professional excellence and values as the basis for professionalism.

While I didn't discuss Chilean cultural values, I did compare US Army values and the Carabinero values, which, by the way, were very similar.

I told them, though, that the most important set of values are our personal values. So what do I mean by personal values? I asked them that question. Certainly for MCFs and chaplains, they are biblically based values.

But as Probe Ministries says, a person's code of ethics or behavior will be no better than the foundation of truth or values or worldview or lack thereof that it is based upon.

So to generalize the source of personal values, I'm going to use worldviews as this source.

So this is the complete ethics triangle.

Ken Samples, an apologist and worldview author writes, different worldviews are the reason people hold certain views on such ultimate concerns as truth, reality, ethics, and values.

And Ken adds, because beliefs or values precede behavior, understanding what our worldview is, being familiar with its component elements, and learning to evaluate different worldviews can equip people to deal more wholesomely with harsh reality and with each other.

some quick and for you all obvious examples of a worldview and the effect it has on ultimately one's behavior.

So a person holding a biblical worldview has a set of values which we can ascertain from, for example, the life of Jesus, the life and teaching of Jesus himself, the Ten Commandments, or perhaps Paul's food of the Spirit.

Those who are in Christ are growing in their Christ likeness is hopefully evidenced by these values or traits.

Whereas a person holding, say, a pantheistic or a Buddhist worldview, like a high school classmate of mine, they hold many of the same values as us believers, elements of love, peace, kindness, gentleness altruism but these values come from a very different place a very different worldview, which causes my classmate as a devoted Buddhist to behave in very different ways depending on the circumstances.

So let's be sure we understand what a worldview is. According to the Worldview Study Bible, The term worldview has been around for a long time. First employed by philosopher Immanuel

Kant, the concept of a worldview took on new significance for Christians with the publication of James Orr's book, the Christian view of God and the world. James Orr, by the way, was a Scottish Presbyterian minister and theologian back in the 1800s.

But it has only been recently that Christians have taken interest in worldview studies as an essential task and the mandate to become serious Christian thinkers.

Let's look at a simple definition of a world view.

a system of beliefs about the world and myself that influences the way I live. Again, from probe ministries.

A system of beliefs that influences the way I live. Let's look at another definition that has a few more specifics in it.

A worldview is a blueprint or a map for reality.

It's a framework of our most basic beliefs that shapes our view of and for the world.

And perhaps most importantly, at least in terms of this discussion, it is the basis for our decisions and actions. It's the basis for ethical behavior.

All right, let's talk about why worldviews matter. And I think I've already stated or implied several reasons.

for why worldviews matter, the most important of which least related to teaching ethics is that worldviews are the source of one's personal values and ultimately one's behavior.

While worldviews, now this is, what I'm going to share with you here comes from my first professor in apologetics at the Denver Seminary, Doug Groteis, a brilliant apologist and philosopher.

He says, while worldviews can be dissected intellectually, and we'll do some of that here, and we'll certainly do that in the class we'll put together for the ethics program.

They also reflect and address the orientation of one's innermost being that is the heart.

Now, it's worth noting in the real world that some people profess a certain worldview, but don't actually embrace it. Unfortunately, that's true for some professing Christians.

So, this suggests that despite what someone might say is their worldview, it's their behavior that's the true indicator of their worldview values.

What's in their heart, as Groteis says here, is where their values and behavior emerge from.

Now, while I highly recommend, highly recommend that our MCFs and chaplains intentionally form and understand and live out their worldview, they will need to understand the other competing worldviews that surround them.

For example, those worldviews that others profess, like fellow Muslim chaplains.

I had an opportunity to speak to the Nigerian Air Force Protestant chaplains last year. They asked me to give a talk on apologetics.

And I think there were 20 or so chaplains in the audience, but they told me that there's that they work side by side with Muslim chaplains. That's the reality of their environment. Should they understand the Islamic worldview? Absolutely.

So you need to understand what other world views are of the people you work with and culture largely endorses, as well as those that exist in the hearts that they serve.

So I'll say a few more words about the need to understand other worldviews in a moment.

So continuing along the theme of why worldview matters, let's look at at least a few ideas as to why it matters to us as Christians in the Christian or the biblical worldview.

Three ideas. Number one, it sets us Christians apart from the world.

As Paul tells us in Romans 12, a Christian worldview will keep us from being, quote unquote, conformed to this world.

The Christian worldview also aids our spiritual transformation. Paul tells us to renew our minds.

Because thinking as a Christian is part of the process of sanctification.

And thirdly, the Christian worldview helps us to know how to live. That is how to think and how to act.

as Paul explains again in Romans 12. It allows us to, quote-unquote, discern what is the good pleasing and perfect will of God. Knowing how to live is what we're talking about here in our ethical discussions.

I want to take a moment to talk about a specific scriptural reference to worldviews. But before I do that, Paul calls followers of Jesus to renew their minds, as we just stated, and to offer themselves as living sacrifices to him.

Similarly, Peter calls believers prepare their minds for action. These exhortations form the foundation for learning to think, Christianly about life and about the world and how we should behave in it. This is the beginning of worldview thinking. And this is according to the Christian worldview handbook.

Now, while we're looking at worldviews primarily from the perspective of ethics, worldview understanding also has both discipleship and evangelism implications.

I can tell you from a personal perspective, my understanding of the biblical worldview and other worldviews has significantly reinforced my faith. Once I compared and contrasted several worldviews, became obvious, intellectually obvious, at least, that the biblical worldview of Christianity is absolutely true.

At least now, nonbelievers may not agree with me, but I would argue vehemently that the Christian worldview is by far the most plausible worldview compared to any other. When I realized this, I knew that I could talk about my faith both to my son and other non-believers like him.

from an intellectual perspective, if that's where they were coming from, if that's where their questions arose.

because I was absolutely convinced about the truth of the Christian worldview.

Apologetics enables this in general, but understanding of worldviews in particular is critical to discipleship.

Let me just take a moment to show how worldview understanding also has evangelistic aspects.

And I'll do that with Paul, specifically when he was in Athens.

And here in Acts 17, as I'm sure you well know, Paul found his way to Athens And there he proclaimed the gospel to both Jews and pagans.

But his approach varied according to the worldviews of his audience.

Now, as I'm sure you all know, whenever Paul went somewhere, the first place that he would go to in the town or the city is the synagogue.

And who is he talking to in the synagogue? He's talking to Jews, those who held a Judaic worldview.

which is very similar to the emerging Christian worldview.

the Christians and the Jews shared the concept of God, the Trinitarian God, the monolithic God that creator, the personal God creator of the universe. They shared understanding and the authority of scripture, at least scripture existed then.

So, Paul could make the case for Jesus Christ as the Messiah. He could get right to the gospel.

But he was invited by the pagans to come up and speak to the Areopagus Council up on Mars Hill and that's at the forefront of this picture because they had heard him and they wanted to hear what he was talking about.

But as Luke tells us, the council was comprised of Greek intellectuals who held predominantly two worldviews.

Epicureanism and Stoicism. Now those two worldviews are generally not in existence today, but if we were to look at them in some detail, Epicureanism is fundamentally materialism or atheism.

Stoicism is fundamentally pantheism. And Paul knew because he knew these worldviews being so well-educated, that he could not immediately make the case for Christ and share the gospel.

They had never heard of Christ. They knew nothing of scripture. And so, he had to start somewhere else.

And if we could discuss in detail the amazing discussion that he shared with them But he started in general revelation and eventually worked his way up to the resurrection.

and the person who was resurrected. It never actually stated Jesus's name. But here's an example how understanding of worldviews affects the way we witness, the way we share our faith.

And that's absolutely true today. I know in my interaction with non-believers, my first attempt is to understand where they're coming from and what their worldview is. And once you understand worldviews, you can very quickly pick up on the perspective of the worldview of the person you're talking to.

and does affect the kind of discussion that you'll have with them.

So, worldviews have an evangelistic purpose. They also serve in discipleship as well.

But how does one thoughtfully and comprehensively form a worldview or decide if a worldview is true or even plausible? A well-thought-out, intentional... Bettering 100%.

A well-thought-out, intentionally formed worldview must answer ultimate concerns that philosophers often call the big questions of life.

Here are five. The first one, ultimate reality.

Does your worldview say that God is ultimate reality? Is that God personal? Is that God impersonal? Or does your worldview say there is no God, and in fact, this universe, this cosmos is ultimate reality? like some worldviews do say. As you could imagine, the answer to that

question would radically affect your ideas and how you behave in this world. And I'll provide some examples.

External reality. Does your world say that there's something transcendent, something beyond? This physical world, something supernatural? Or does your worldview say, no, there's nothing beyond this physical world? Knowledge. What does knowledge come from? Is it revealed to us by our God or if there is no God in your worldview, is it based solely on autonomous ability to reason and based largely on science? Origin, where as humans do we come from? Identity, who are we? Are we unique? Six more big life questions. The first two are big life questions directly related to morality, the values and beliefs people hold.

and in ethics, the prescribed codes or principles governing conduct.

Let me share some examples of how different worldviews and their associated values can radically affect one's behavior.

The Muslim who flies a plane into the US World Trade Tower based on his worldview That is based on certain Quranic interpretations.

one of which says regarding non-Muslims, kill them wherever you find them, or verses about fighting disbelievers.

Now, some would argue, some Muslims would argue that they misinterpreted what the Quran actually says. But the fact is that those folks believed that's what it told them to do.

And their behavior was a direct result of what they thought the Quran was telling them. Another example.

The upper caste Hindu, for example, the Brahmin priest who refuses to help the poor and disadvantage Dalit untouchable class, because his pantheistic world belief in karma and reincarnation The Dalits in his mind, according to his worldview, should not be held because they are where they are because of bad decisions and behavior in previous lives and must, on their own, correct this so that they can live better in the next reincarnated life.

So he walks by the poor and the underprivileged and doesn't help them because his worldview says he shouldn't.

how very different from the Christian worldview.

or the atheist or naturalist who does not believe in God or anything supernatural and thus believes that he has no soul that his existence is simply an accident of nature and whose existence ends upon death.

In this worldview, abortion, suicide, euthanasia are morally okay.

In fact, naturalists cannot logically claim anything is right or wrong because they have no objective basis for morality in their worldview.

We don't have to look very far. Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Idi Amin, and many others like them who held power.

to see the effects of godless worldviews. The value driving such ethical behavior is often power, and the powerful have the right to devour the weak and decide what the cultural and society values are.

The brilliant atheist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre even said this, now he's an atheist, He said the existentialist, essentially the atheist, finds it extremely embarrassing that God does not exist: because there disappears with him all possibility of finding values in an intelligible fashion.

Even atheists have to admit this.

Now, everybody has a worldview, but most people do not intentionally or thoughtfully formulate one.

Instead, most worldviews are subconsciously formed by ideas absorbed from family, friends, school, the government, the church if it's part of one's life, and the culture in general.

And where does the culture influence our worldview? Through social media, movies, music, you name it. We, our kids, my son, bombarded by non-Christian values through all of these pathways and all of these forums.

In fact, my experience is that most people, certainly non-Christian, but also many Christians, do not know what a worldview is.

They don't know what the big life questions are, and then obviously have never thought through them seriously.

And these, as you just saw, are fundamental questions about reality, including their place and role in this world.

Now, I've had many worldview discussions with believers and non-believers. While true believers will generally know the answers to these questions because they implicitly at least have a biblical worldview.

Most non-believers stumble.

However, and this is good news, nonbelievers recognize the importance of these questions and attempt to answer them consistently and coherently.

But the further their worldview is from the truth, the more difficulty they have giving reasonable, plausible answers.

Like I said, I've had many worldview discussions with nonbelievers, and every one of them has been a positive discussion. Again, because...

They find that worldview is new to them, and these questions are new, but they find these questions fascinating, and believe that there must be answers to them, and they struggle with these, but they make for very positive questions that hopefully eventually leads to the biblical worldview in the gospel.

Here's a book, an excellent book on worldviews.

This book had a significant impact on my faith, both reinforcing my faith and giving me confidence in sharing my faith.

It's the first book I read that just from an intellectual perspective firmly shows why the biblical worldview is true.

or at the very least why the Christian worldview is far more plausible than any other.

James Sire, the author, wrote six editions of what's becoming really a classic worldview book.

before he died in 2018. He was an American Christian philosopher, author and editor.

who originally wrote the book for Christian students in the 1970s.

However, and amazingly so, it was quickly adopted as a textbook in many secular universities, including at Stanford.

I bet if he was still alive today that he would write a seventh edition and add another worldview to the list that he compared. And it would probably be something addressing the worldview that embraces critical theory and DEI worldviews.

But here are the worldviews as well as others that he examines and what he does and what I would like to do in the class for our MCS and interns and chaplains is to examine and compare some of these worldviews by using the questions, the big live questions, as James Sire does in this book.

Now allow me to finish here by outlining the introductory worldview class that we're talking about.

And the outline really is kind of a summary of what I just talked about just now.

So, what do we want our students, our interns to understand? Well, we want them to understand what worldviews are, why they matter, understand their own worldview. When I

teach a worldview class, and we teach this in our ministry, we start with a biblical worldview to be sure that we all understand the answers to those questions. And generally, as I said, believers really know the answer to those questions, even if they have not examined them prior.

but they need to understand their own worldview and those around them and their relationship to ethical behavior.

So here's what I would propose that we put in that first class.

talk about what a worldview is, much the way I have here, why they matter, particularly with the relationship to ethical behavior, examine some of those big life questions, and then spend a considerable portion of that class doing these worldview comparisons.

Now, in the process of doing that, not only does one immediately recognize the inconsistency and incoherence and non-livability of non-biblical worldviews, but one also gets a sense of how and why others behave the way they do, which is critical to our students.

All right, some references. I think talk a little bit about two of these. Ken Samples, I quoted Ken Samples in his book, a world of difference, putting Christian truth claims to the worldview test. And then I just got through saying something about the universe next door.

But the two others here, the Christian worldview handbook and the worldview study Bible, let me say a little bit about those.

Here's a Christian worldview handbook.

Many, over 100 of the worldview-related topics discussed here are like we saw earlier with the Apologetics Study Bible, are at a high or summary level. But again, you get a sense of the breadth of topics that world views cover. And you can see here, I just listed five, but then at the bottom, there are articles on leadership and biblical ethics and ethics of personal evangelism.

Highly recommend this as a reference to anybody.

And second, the Worldview Study Bible. Again, like the other one, based on the Christian Standard Bible, version, which is not the one I regularly use, but what I find interesting is that these 125 short worldview articles are placed in Scripture next to the related passages. So you get a direct sense of the applicability of worldviews when reading scripture and then seeing what the topics are that are the current apologetic cultural issues and challenges.

Well, I think that's all I really wanted to talk about today. But let me just say, I'm grateful to both acts particularly Jeff and Terry Wickert, and also Phil Exner, the previous acts director, and I'm also grateful to Doug Lee for their interest in apologetics and AOM and allowing me to share some of what I've learned with you all. It's a privilege to speak in forums like this.