

TAKING CAPTIVES

Introduction to Worldview Matters

We are either taking ideas *captive*,
or they are taking us *captive*.

Why Worldview Matters

Before we dive into worldview matters, I would like to explain my reasons for choosing this topic. I have been praying about a series like this for a long time, and I believe that now is the time. We are living in unprecedented times (at least in America), some might even say perilous times. The topic is right, and the timing is right, for several reasons.

First, *this topic is relevant to every person*, as every person has a worldview. What exactly is a worldview? A worldview is the lens through which we observe, interpret, and understand the world around us. Our worldview helps us answer the big questions about life, such as where did we come from, why are we here, who or what is in control, what is truth or what is right and wrong, what’s wrong with us, how can we fix ourselves, and what happens to us when we die? We can discover a person’s worldview by asking some of these questions. Our worldview stems from our beliefs, primarily about God. Our view of God affects our view of everything else.

Second, this series will be helpful to us because *we are in a battle of worldviews*. Whether we realize it or not, the enemy bombards us daily with ideas. Every show we watch, every book we read, every newscast, every website, every person on social media, every person we talk to expresses a worldview. What we do with those ideas will have consequences in our lives. This world is constantly trying to mold us into its image, and its success largely depends on our ability to discern its lies with a biblical filter. Personally, I don’t want to become a casualty of this war, nor do I want church members to become casualties. A casualty is a believer who claims to know Christ but who thinks and acts like the world and is compromised by its lies. How many Christians do we know who do not think Christianly? Those are the “casualties” of the war of worldviews.

These “casualties” of the worldview war relate to my third reason for this series. It is *an extension of the calling God has placed on my life as an Elder* of this church. Biblically, Elders are charged with leading, feeding or teaching, caring for, and protecting the church. Part of protecting the church is to watch carefully for the unbiblical theologies and philosophies that might creep into the church and influence us to think or act in unbiblical ways (*Acts 20:28*). The lion is “prowling about seeking someone to devour” (*1 Pet. 5:8*), and we (Elders) are charged to stand on the wall and warn others where he is and what he’s doing.

The fourth reason I chose this topic is a personal one. *I need wisdom, and I desire to pursue wisdom*, that is to view the world as God does. Repeatedly in Scripture, we are encouraged to pursue wisdom, but what does that mean? What is wisdom, where do we find it, and how do we practice wisdom in our daily lives? Developing a biblical worldview is just another way of pursuing the wisdom of God. Pursuing wisdom will be the topic of our second session.

Finally, I chose this series *to help us understand the times* in which we are living. When the Old Testament described the men of the tribe of Issachar, the writer said they were men who “understood the times and knew what Israel should do” (*1 Chron. 12:32*). Do we understand the times? Or would we rather put our heads in the sand and ignore what’s happening around us? Ideas have consequences. Do we understand the causes of these ideas or their effects? We should.

The world is loud and quite convincing when it expresses its views. The world’s views are talked about at school, at work. in our entertainment, on social media, in the sports world, in advertisements, in government, everywhere we turn. Shouldn’t we talk about these things at church? Where are we supposed to hear God’s views on the issues if not at church?

Those are the reasons why I chose this topic. For the next several weeks we will be considering various worldview matters or issues. The goal of this series is to build a solid biblical worldview, a lens through which we can rightly observe, interpret, and understand the world around us, from God’s perspective. At the same time, we will avoid the pitfalls of the enemy.

Mind Renewal

Where should we start? First, let's answer a question. Does the Bible even address the topic of worldview? Yes. While the word "worldview" is relatively new (1990s) and is not found in the Bible, God has much to say about our minds and how His people should think. The word "worldview" is like the word "trinity" and "providence." While these words are not found in the Bible, the concept of the trinity or providence is all over Scripture. The same is true for the concept of a worldview. God cares about how we think, and He provides a great deal of instruction about protecting our minds. Why?

God has much to say about our mind because that is the primary target of the enemy. Because of Christ, Satan lost the battle for our destiny. God "rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son..." (*Col. 1:13, 14; 1 Cor. 3:16*). However, Satan has not "thrown in the towel." His goal for followers of Christ is to keep them from following Christ, living like Christ, and sharing Christ with others. The battlefield is the mind.

What does the battle look like? Satan's weapons are lies. Satan is a deceiver, a liar (*John 8:44; Rev. 12:9*). He deceives and blinds the minds of the people of the world, so that they won't see the Gospel (*2 Cor. 4:4*), but he also deceives believers to keep them ineffective in the battle. Paul wrote, "I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of the devotion to Christ" (*2 Cor. 11:3*).

God's people must not be a "casualty" of His deceptions. Again, Paul wrote, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds..." (*Rom. 12:2*). Satan is trying to squeeze us into his mold, to make us look like the world, think like the world, and act like the world. The "world" here is better translated "this present age," with its views and values.

Paul challenges believers not to be squeezed into the world's mold but to be formed into the image of Christ (*Rom. 8:29*). We are to be transformed (the word is "metamorphosis"), so that what is on the inside will appear on the outside. That occurs as our minds are

influenced by the Holy Spirit. Our minds are renewed when they are absorbed with God's Word. Paul calls us to be non-conformists! To separate from the world begins in our thinking, to have the "mind of Christ."

Here are other passages regarding our worldview.

"Love the Lord with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind." *Mark 12:30*

"In reference to your former manner of life, lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self..." *Eph. 4:22-25*

"Set your mind on things above, not on the things that are on earth... [for you] have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him..." *Col. 3:2, 10*

"Whatever is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and of good repute... think on these things." *Phil. 4:8*

"Those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." *Rom. 8:5*

"He who is spiritual appraises (evaluates) all things... for we have the mind of Christ." *1 Cor. 2:15, 16*

After salvation, the primary battle for believers is in the mind. That's why Paul warns us to "put on the helmet of salvation" every day, to protect our minds from the schemes of the devil (*Eph. 6*). Every follower of Christ is in a process of mind renewal, but we are not all in the same place of that process. Typically, the more mature a Christian is, the more he or she will think like Christ. A new believer will not be at the same level of mind renewal. What about you? Do you think differently today than you did when you were first saved?

Now, just because we have the Spirit of God within us does not mean that our thinking immediately changes to become more like His, but it does mean that we now have the capacity to think like Him about all things. *Scripture is the mind of God. To think like God, we must think like Scripture.* It is the responsibility of the believer to be disciplined enough to read and study the Bible regularly. To have the mind of Christ, we must meditate on the words of Christ.

If we do not renew our minds through regular intake of and meditation on the Scriptures, then our minds are unprotected and become vulnerable to the lies and warped philosophies of this world. What is sad, what I refer to as a “casualty,” is someone who claims to be Christian yet who still thinks like the world.

Why do some Christians not have a biblical worldview? If the Spirit indwells them, then they have the capacity for the mind of Christ, but either they do not know the Bible (they are not reading it), they do not believe what the Bible says (they reject it), they fear man more than God, or they favor the world’s views, having been deceived by its lies (*2 Cor. 11:3*).

Worldview Warnings

When it comes to the world of ideas, the Apostle Paul offered two warnings that Christians should heed. The first warning is found in *Colossians 2:8*, and the second warning is found in *2 Corinthians 10:3-5*.

“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the traditions of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.” Colossians 2:8

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

The first warning is that we should “see to it that no one takes us captive through deceptive philosophies” or ideas (*Col. 2:8*). The second warning Paul issued is that we should “take every thought or idea captive to the obedience of Christ” (*2 Cor. 10:3-5*). The fact is that all ideas have consequences. Good ideas have good consequences, and bad ideas have bad consequences. Paul’s warnings suggest that we can either take ideas captive, or they will take us captive.

Christian captives are a lot like hostages or prisoners of war (POWs). An American soldier who has been captured by the enemy is still American, but he is no longer participating or effective in the battle. As captives of the world’s philosophies and ideas, we remain Christian, but we remain “locked up” by the lies we believe and are disqualified, detached, distracted, or disabled, therefore making us ineffective in the battle. Are you a Christian hostage or POW?

The Secular-Sacred Divide

One idea, lie, or misconception that has crept into the church and taken us captive is that of the secular-sacred divide. What does that mean? We have been deceived into thinking that our lives are divided or compartmentalized into two worlds, two realities, one that exists inside the walls of the church (sacred) and one that exists outside the walls of the church (secular). In other words, we have the religious side of our lives, how we think and what we do on Sundays, and the irreligious side of our lives, how we think and what we do the rest of the week. The secular-sacred divide has also been described as private truth versus public truth. What we do regarding our religion is our private truth, but the rest of the world operates under public truth, and the two cannot overlap.

The “fortress of falsehood” that supports the secular-sacred deception is the lie of bias. We often hear it said that “religious people are biased, so they must stay inside the church. Everyone else is unbiased.” That is a lie. Remember, everyone has a worldview, a way to interpret the issues, meaning that everyone is biased. There is no such thing as an unbiased opinion or view. We are told that in the secular world everything is neutral, uninfluenced by religious thought. Lie! Every worldview is religious in nature. People may not worship the God of the Bible, but they are still

worshiping something (*Rom. 1*, creator or creature). We are being deceived. The argument is not about who is religious or irreligious but what is true and false.

The lie of the secular-sacred divide has had two devastating results. The first result has been that Christianity has been sidelined into the private sphere and has little effect now on the public square. So long as we can continue to have church services and Bible studies, we have handed over the world to the “irreligious.” We must now keep our faith private. We must see this argument for what it is, a satanic scheme meant to squelch the propagation of the Gospel. We have a great commission, to tell others about the liberating truths of the Gospel, anytime, anywhere.

The second result of the secular-sacred deception is that there are topics that the church is not allowed to discuss. Christians can talk about spiritual matters but not cultural issues. Those are somehow out of bounds. Therefore, the American church has been largely silent when it comes to applying the Bible to the issues of our day. The implication is that God has nothing to say about these things, therefore they belong to the secular world. At that point, our faith has become irrelevant.

Notice what is happening. The enemy has used the secular-sacred lie not just to take individuals captive but also to take whole churches captive. We are not just one soldier sitting in captivity, but we are an entire army of soldiers sitting in a prison.

So how do we take this idea – the secular-sacred divide -- captive “according to Christ”? Remember, we start with God and His Word, and we ask the question, “What does the Bible say about this?” Here are some verses that speak to this lie.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” *Gen. 1:1*

“The earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it.” *Ps. 24:1*

“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible... all things have been created through Him and for

Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” *Col. 1:16, 17*

“There is one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” *Eph. 4:6*

“In Him are hidden all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom...” *Col. 2:3*

“Whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God.” *1 Cor. 10:31*

What do we see in these verses? All things (except sin) find their origin with God. He is the Creator, the Sovereign, the Ruler of everything and everyone. No one exists outside of his authority, outside His will. All things exist for Him and for His glory.

So then, what is the truth about the secular-sacred divide? The “divide” is false. It does not exist in reality; rather it is only a lie to stunt the growth of Christians and halt the advance of the church. As the Creator and Sovereign of all, nothing falls outside of His authority. All things are sacred. God retains the right to speak into any topic, because all things are to operate the way He intended.

Paul’s Example

So, what does it look like to take ideas captive “according to the Christ”? The Apostle Paul is a great example of how to take ideas captive. During his visit to Athens in *Acts 17:16-31*, he confronted the secular ideas of that culture.

First, he took notice of the ideas in the culture by “observing the city full of idols” (*v.16*). Rather than to remain silent, he was prompted by the Lord to confront the culture, for “his spirit was provoked within him” (*v.16*). Second, Paul began reasoning in the synagogue with the religious people and in the marketplace or public square (*v.17*). Paul also reasoned with the philosophers of the city (*v.18*). Notice that he didn’t stay in the church. Paul must not have been aware of the secular-sacred divide!

Eventually, the philosophers gave Paul a platform to share his worldview, a biblical worldview, with them (*v.19-21*), which leads to our third observation. Paul

took that opportunity to take captive the lies of that culture according to the truths of the Gospel. Immediately, Paul noted how religious the Athenians were, because the city was full of statues to their gods (v.22, 23). Remember, all worldviews are religious in nature. People with secular worldviews may claim to be “irreligious” or unbiased, but that is a lie.

Fourth, Paul filters the Athenian worldview and philosophies through the truths of God. He starts with creation, the truth that God created everything and is much too big to be represented by a statue or to live in a temple (v.24-31). He shared that all things depend on God for existence, “For in Him we live and move and have our being” (v.28). In his presentation of the biblical worldview, Paul even shared the Gospel of Christ.

The example that Paul gives in this account is still true today. Christianity is not just truth for Christ’s followers, for the church, or even for “religious” people. Christianity, the Gospel, is truth for everyone, for the entire world, because it all belongs to God. There is no such thing as a secular-sacred divide! The world is entirely “sacred,” meaning under God’s authority, God’s reign, and therefore God’s rules.

In her book *Total Truth*, apologist Nancy Pearcey wrote, “Christianity is not just religious truth. It is total truth, truth about the whole of reality.” There is no such thing as a secular-sacred divide. Christianity is not just a religion that you exercise or practice on Sunday at church. Christianity is a worldview that affects every area of your life. The church is not just a social club that meets on Sunday. The church is “the pillar and support for the truth,” the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the greatest change agent in history (*1 Tim. 3:15*). There is no autonomous or independent identity, separate from the Creator. All creation must be interpreted in light of its Creator God.

Therefore, since God is the Lord of all creation, to view the world rightly, we must begin with Him. There is no divide. He has authority over it all. “We must be utterly convinced that there is a biblical perspective on everything” (Pearcey). Therefore, the Lord has the authority and the right to speak into any issue of life. There is no subject that is “out of bounds.”

Conclusion

So then, God has much to say about how we think. We must learn to take ideas captive, according to Scripture, or they will take us captive. Worldview matters. Ideas have consequences. What we believe affects how we live. Rather than be naïve, even foolish, let us be wise and discerning and always ask the question, “What does God say about this?”