

Apologetics & Worldview Equip Class

Introduction to the Season

Introduce the twelve classes and their four teachers.

Apologetics: From the Greek “apologia - The act of making a defense” – “The discipline of providing arguments and evidences in favor of Christianity”

Wordview: “A comprehensive philosophy of life.”

Wordview: “A network of control beliefs about the nature of reality, how and what we know, and our moral obligations that function as the lens through which life is interpreted and lived.”

Control Beliefs: Fundamental assumptions or convictions that function as standards by which life is interpreted and lived.

Question: Why study apologetics and worldview?

- 1) To rightly interpret the world and our responsibilities to God in it,
- 2) To give a well-reasoned defense of Christianity to unbelievers,
- 3) To answer our personal doubts about Christianity.

“But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear them or be intimidated, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.” (1 Pet 3:14-15).

Illustration: My own struggle with unbelief after my graduation from college.

Introduction to the Christian Worldview

Adam was only a few seconds old when he took his first breath in the Garden of Eden. He stood in this paradise and surveyed the magnificent flora and fauna surrounding him.

He had no experiences from which to draw wisdom. He had no history of thinking about the world. He stood nakedly before God in the world God designed.

Adam was hardwired with the ability to understand words, because God spoke to him. We read about this in Genesis 3. It's very unlikely this passage records everything God said to Adam at that time, but it reveals everything we need to know to live a life pleasing to God.

Think about this unique time in human history: Adam was literally dependent on God's word—in this case, his actual voice—to take his first steps rightly in God's world. Adam learned from God that he could eat from every tree in the Garden except from the one tree in the middle of it, lest he die.

God knew what was best for Adam and made him a suitable helper, Eve, to be his wife. But God made Eve only after he brought all the animals before Adam so Adam could name them. Adam learned things both by experiencing them and by reasoning about them, but he learned under the direction of God's voice of authority, His Word.

“[Jesus] answered [the Devil], ‘It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Matt 4:4)

God revealed to our first parents their purpose and dignity when he commanded them (and us!) to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. This gave them purpose and dignity.

But Adam and Eve turned off the path of righteousness. A serpent commandeered by a fallen angel approached Eve and openly challenged God's authority and goodness with regard to the tree in the middle of the Garden: “No! You will certainly not die. In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Eve listened to this creature's interpretation of the Tree rather than her Creator's'. Adam listened to his wife rather than to his God, and as a result the whole universe was corrupted, and the human race descended into a

state of sin and misery. Adam and Eve had received their worldview from God, but they exchanged it for a lie.

For the Christian today, the word of God in the Bible most clearly reveals the worldview by which we are to understand his world and live in it. God wants us to “think His thoughts after him,” espouse this worldview, and live in the light of it.

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

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

“*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 10:4C-5).

Wordview: “A network of control beliefs about the nature of reality, how and what we know, and our moral obligations that function as the lens through which life is interpreted and lived.”

Illustration: Duck – Rabbit –Is it a duck or is it a rabbit? Would it make a difference if the artist responsible for the drawing told us he drew a rabbit, not a duck?

How many of you have taken a class or read a book about western philosophy? Unbelieving philosophers have created elaborate and sophisticated worldviews that often contradict one another. They start off living in the world but end up thinking radically different about it.

What if the Creator responsible for the world revealed and/or confirmed basic truths to function as control beliefs so we can make sense of the world? He has. He has spoken to us in creation, our consciences, and most clearly in His written word.

The Nature of Reality (Metaphysics)

⇒ The way things really are!

⇒ **Monism:** Everything is one kind of thing, either material or mental (non-material)

- **Materialistic Monism:** All reality is the same kind of impersonal physical objects
 - ✓ Larger objects are collections of the same kind of physical things.
 - ✓ Laws of logic are meaningless if ultimate reality is matter in motion.
 - ✓ Moral obligations are meaningless if ultimate reality is matter in motion.
 - ✓ Consciousness and free-will are meaningless if thoughts are reducible to matter in motion, either random or moving in patterns.
- **Idealistic Monism:** All reality is mental, perhaps “God,” but how can it be personal if it’s all there is?
 - ✓ Destroys ethics because the one mind or spirit is both “the good” and “the evil”
 - ✓ Destroys logic because there are no distinctions within the one – Hindu “maya”

⇒ **Dualism:** reality consists of mind (or spirit) and matter – two different kinds of things

- **Platonists** propose reality consists of the world of abstract forms and material particulars.

- The **Bible** affirms that reality consists of immaterial spirits (abstractions?) and material things, but God is the ultimate reality, and God is **Spirit** and **Personal**.

The Possibility and Methods of Knowledge (Epistemology)

⇒ “What counts as knowledge and how do we know things?”

⇒ Knowledge is justified true belief. Not unjustified belief that happen to be true.

⇒ Epistemology is dependent on Metaphysics: God is the ultimate reality, and he created man in his own image in the world he governs. God designed the mind and senses of man to access this world genuinely, and God holds man accountable to learn how this world works. Man is responsible to learn through his five senses and through his mind using induction, deduction, and other laws of logic. This whole enterprise is to be worked out under the authority of God’s revelation, both natural and special.

⇒ **Rationalism**

- Chief concern is certainty (doesn’t trust sense experience or subjectivity)
- A Priori knowledge of “criteria” or “standards”; generally have argued that our “knowledge is built up by a deductive process” because this preserves certainty: “I think therefore I am”
- Just as fallible as sense experience: Parmenides
- Few persuasive areas in which knowledge is a priori: laws of logic, our own mental states, and the existence of objective truth; but we cannot “deduce the whole fabric of human knowledge from these or even enough knowledge for a meaningful philosophy”

⇒ **Empiricism**

- Get away from arbitrary ideas of rationalists and ground our knowledge in the **FACTS** of our experience
- Not certainty but as close as we can get
- But our senses sometimes deceive us
- Our perception of facts are conditioned by our expectations
- Too limited: Cannot justify a general proposition such as “all men are mortal”; Cannot justify “laws of logic”; Cannot justify any statements about the future (induction)
- Cannot justify itself: “All knowledge must be justified by sense experience” cannot itself be justified by sense experience.

⇒ **Subjectivism**: Can't entirely escape problem of criteria and of “facts”

The Ground of Moral Obligation? (Metaethics)

⇒ Asks, “What is ‘The Good’?” “What is the nature of moral obligations?”

⇒ The Nature of Moral Law or Obligation

- Laws of behaving rightly—doing the good thing
- Not material entities
- Universal in application
- Unchanging over time
- Made aware in relationship to other Persons

⇒ **God's Character the ground of Moral Law**

- God is an absolute Person whose character is the standard of goodness
- God reveals Himself—including his moral character—in nature, our consciences, and most clearly in his Word.
- The good life is imitation of God's character:

“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, ‘YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.’” (1 Peter 1:14-16)

⇒ **Three Principles in Ethics:** Non-Christian Worldviews Hold These Principles in Tension, consequently, they tend to polarize to one of these three principles; but this brings serious criticisms as well

- **Deontological:** From the Greek verb translated “owe, ought, or must.” A good act is a response to duty, even at the price of self-sacrifice. Emphasizes duty and obligation.
 - ✓ Obligations are transcendent and have universal application
 - ✓ Obligations seem “godlike”
 - ✓ Not established by observation
 - ✓ **Deontological Problems:** How do you prove that such universal obligations exist? Also, how do universal moral obligations apply to the real world—**too abstract**? Do universal obligations make sense without God?
- **Teleological:** From the Greek word translated “goal, end.” A good act maximizes the happiness of living creatures. “A good act does good.”

- ✓ The “good” is inferred from observation of consequences
- ✓ Often the choice of empiricists
- ✓ **Teleological** Problems: Whose happiness should determine what is good? How do you measure or quantify “units” of happiness in order to determine what is good—**requires superhuman knowledge**? If teleological ethics is true, then there are no moral principles that are universal in their application and unchangeable in their duration. The teleological principle itself needs a transcendent norm to be obligatory.
- **Existential**: A good act comes from a good inner character
 - ✓ It’s important not to be hypocritical
 - ✓ **Existential** Problems: Cannot avoid making reference to norms and situations.

⇒ **The Christian Worldview Harmonizes the Three Principles of Ethics**

- “In general, ethical judgment always involves the application of a norm to a situation by a person”
- Norm (criteria or standards): God’s Law = Love
- Situation (facts of our experience): God’s Law applied with our chief end in view: Glorify God and Enjoy Him
- Existential: God’s Law internalized
- “Christians can gladly accept all three of the principles, insights or intuitions listed above. The God of Scripture is the author of the situation, the Word, and the moral self, so that the three are fully consistent with one another. He ordains history so that people will find their ultimate blessing in doing their duty. He has made us in his image,

so that our greatest personal fulfillment occurs in seeking his glory in history, as his word declares.”