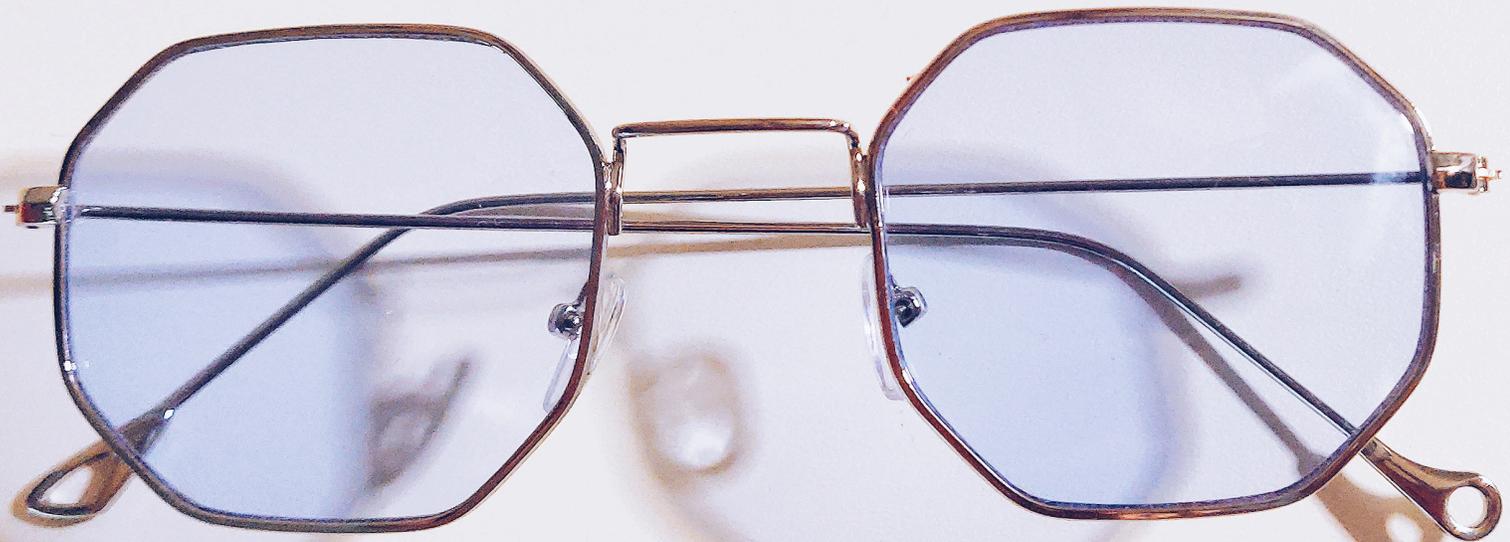


CULTIVATING A CHRISTIAN
WORLDVIEW



TWO PART CLASS

SEPTEMBER 21 | 9AM - 11:30AM

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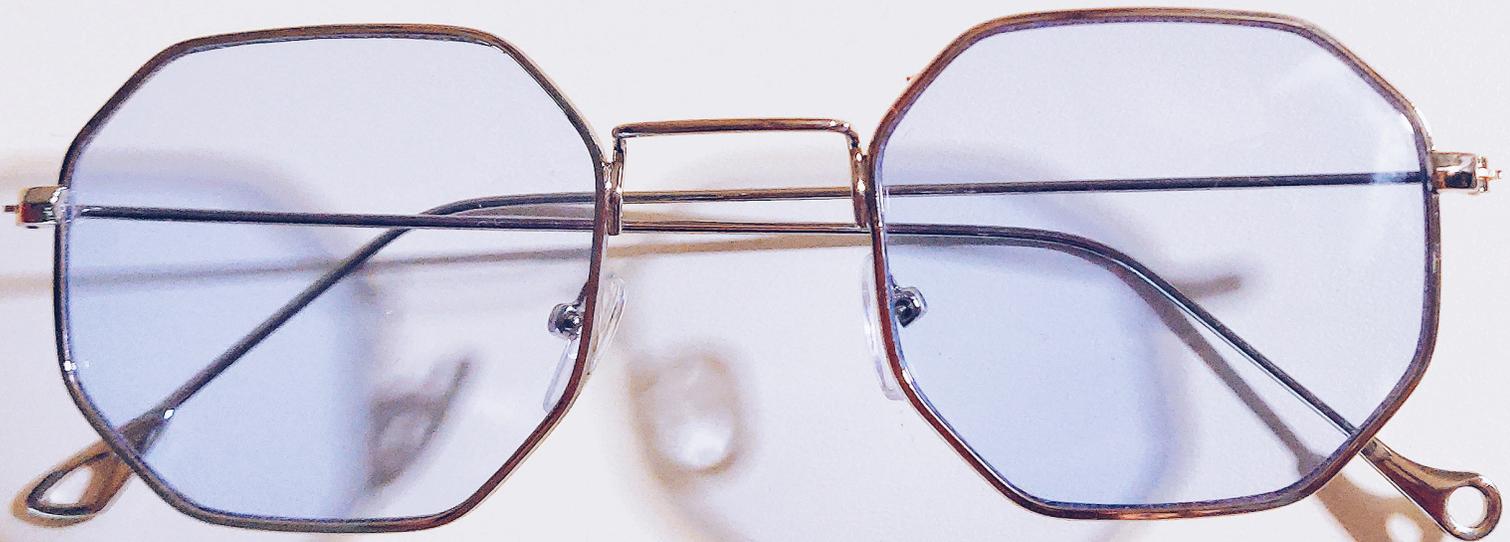


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CULTIVATING A CHRISTIAN
WORLDVIEW



CLASS #1

SEPTEMBER 21 | 9AM - 11:30AM

SESSION I

INTRODUCTION

“What is a worldview?” you may be asking. And why is it important to form a Christian worldview? If I am a Christian, don’t I have a Christian worldview? Isn’t that just how it works?

Well, no. That’s not how it works, at least not for most of us. But let’s start with the first question.

A **worldview** is the sum total of our beliefs about the world, it’s the big picture that directs our daily decisions and actions.

“[A worldview] is your gut-level, instinctive response to the basic philosophical questions, such as ‘What is real?’ (**metaphysics**), ‘What can I know and how can I know it?’ (**epistemology**), and ‘Are there such things as right and wrong, and if so, how do I know what they are?’ (**ethics**)” *Why You Think The Way You Do*, Glenn S. Sunshine, Zondervan, 2022; 13-14.

How do we know what our worldview is, and if we need to change it?

Chuck Colson put it this way:

[E]very worldview can be analyzed by the way it answers three basic questions:

- Where did we come from and who are we (creation)
- What has gone wrong with the world (fall)
- What can we do to fix it (redemption) *How Now Shall We Live*, Chuck Colson, Tyndale, 1999; 14

All worldviews are inherently confrontational with all other worldviews. But there is a cosmic struggle between the Christian worldview and all other worldviews are arrayed against it.

When we say “cosmic struggle” we mean a struggle taking place outside the natural

realm that directly impacts the natural, physical world in which we presently live. It's a real universe where truth and love are waging war with falsehood and apathy, where the Lord of Hosts encounters and demolishes the fortresses of Satan. Everyone has a worldview, but few people think about it or form their worldview intentionally. Failing to think about it leaves us open to adopting a worldview based on feelings or one that does not stand up to scrutiny. "God is love; He saved me from hell; I love Him" is not a worldview. It might work for a while, but when challenges hit or there are decisions to be made, this statement alone may not be enough.

Jesus instructed us to: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' Mt. 22:37. Pastor Tom has preached on this command to love God with our minds. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that **you may prove** what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Rom.12:2

There is a purpose to intentionally forming a Christian worldview. It is so we won't be conformed to this world but will be **equipped to prove** what the will of God is. That's what I hope to share with you over the course of these 4 lessons.

FROM AND FOR

Genuine Christianity is more than being saved. Many people know what they are saved **from** – hell – but far fewer understand what they are saved **for**. The Christian faith should never be limited to just an experience of salvation in Christ Jesus. It is that but it is also more. Christianity contains and is all-encompassing truth, and the root of everything else. It is the ultimate reality (metaphysics). **The purpose of Christianity, and therefore the ultimate purpose of every Christian, is to restore creation to God's intended reality.**

"Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

At the dawn of creation, before the fall, God gave mankind work to do.

This work was not part of the consequences for the Fall. It was the purpose of our creation before the Fall. Now we are living in a fallen world. We look around and see the rise of Islamofascism and antisemitism, abortion up to and including the time of

birth, unlimited immigration all over Europe and now open borders in the US. Men, particularly Caucasian, heterosexual males, are marginalized and branded as oppressors.

We see men identifying as women and vice versa, with so-called scientists cutting up and rearranging body parts to conform to these lies. Truth isn't a rallying point. Rather, it's "my truth" or "your truth." Not "The Truth." Expressive individualism is the norm. I can express my identity any way I want to and if you don't go along, you are a "hater." This is the worldview that dominates now, not the Christian worldview. The differences between the dominant worldview and the Christian worldview are stunning and pose an existential threat to our faith, our country and the world at large. The world we live in is in dire need of restoration and we all have a part in the work.

THE BEGINNING

Before intentionally forming a Christian worldview, it's good to know why it's so important.

Cultures Have Worldviews, Not Just People.

- What people *believe* is **real**, determines what is taught and studied in their culture.
- Questions of **ethics** shape laws
- Concepts of humanness influence everything from family structure to slavery to marriage and justice and who has what rights
- As we go through this introductory section, be thinking of our current culture. Christianity is a story from creation to the end of the world. Each of us has a part of this story and God has placed each of us here at this time and in this place to fulfill our part of that story. This is what we are saved **for**.

How does a culture get a worldview? Primarily through religion and philosophy.

RELIGION

Religion influences cultural worldviews in different ways depending on the beliefs of the dominant religion, for example:

- **Taliban bans the sound of women's voices singing or reading in public** *CNN* headline, August 22, 2024
- **In the name of protecting cows, members of extremist outfits affiliated to India's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are attacking Muslims.** *The Diplomat*, July 2017
- **'Face of Buddhist terror' monk Wirathu honoured by Myanmar junta for 'outstanding work'.** *Agence France-Presse*, Jan. 04, 2023
- **US rightly declares China committing 'genocide' against Uighurs** *Washington Examiner*, Jan. 19, 2021
- **Israel recovers bodies of six Gaza hostages** *BBC.com*, Sept. 01, 2024

Islam does not teach that man is made in the image and likeness of God. This biblical truth is abhorrent to Islam. It therefore does not value human life per se, but only in the vacuum of what the ones in power believe is useful to Allah. Human life is pretty much expendable in service to their deity, to the point of honor killings, wiping out Christian villages, and the recent horrors committed by Hamas. Women are not equal to men and must be covered, the extent of the covering determined by the men in power. In Afghanistan, the Taliban has now ordered that not only must women be covered in public but also must not be heard.

Hinduism employs a caste system where some human life has little to no value and cows are sacred. Many Hindus do not believe life is real, but only a dream in the mind of a god.

Buddhism denies that there is any permanent and absolute significance of life.

Communism values life only insofar as it serves the needs of the state.

In contrast to all of these, the concept of **universal human rights and equality** come exclusively from the biblical idea that all people are created in the image of God. The *Imago Dei*, which we will get to in greater depth, but first just keep that in mind as we

continue. You can easily see how religious views shape the cultures that embrace them. Take a look at this sentence from the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

This belief is uniquely Christian. Yet, in our place and time, the Christian worldview has been largely rejected by a significant segment of the cultural and intellectual elites. Our world has moved away from a Christian worldview. What has been lost can be restored.

To restore, it helps to understand not only WHAT has been lost but also WHY and HOW. The worldviews in the Pre-Christian world were mostly pagan.

- **Ancient Rome** is instructive, both for the past and the present. We need to start there as it spanned the time immediately before the first coming of Christ and held the worldview into which Jesus sent the disciples. As we look at ancient Rome, we see so many parallels with the way our current culture is going. So we will start there but quickly jump over the centuries to see how the world changed, first positively and now negatively. The point being, when Christians hold fast to a Christian worldview, it is world changing, both in the past and in the present.
- Ancient Rome enjoyed peace and prosperity, with literature and arts, efficient government that impressed our Founding Fathers, great feats of engineering and the rule of law. But there was a significant dark side.
 - Slave labor was the most important component of the economy.
 - Slave to free ratio was at least 2:1, making it easy for free men to avoid work.
 - Roman decadence, gluttony, cruelty, torture and sexual perversion are legendary.

THE WORLDVIEW OF ANCIENT ROME

"Imagine a world simultaneously obsessed with sex and opposed to having children, in which girls are forced to marry before puberty and abortion is an acceptable means of ending embarrassing pregnancies, but often results in the sterilization or death of the mother. In this world, infanticide, especially of babies born female or disabled, is both

legal and common, and those lucky enough to be rescued are forced into prostitution. And due to this legalized "gendercide," there are about 131 and 140 men for every 100 women. Imagine how brutal that world would be for women and children. This was the Roman Empire."

Now imagine that an unpopular minority religious group emerges. Its adherents see women as spiritual and moral equals and treat them with respect and honor. Young girls are cared for, not forced to marry, and only do so when of age. This group not only rescues victims of attempted infanticide but adopts them, raising them in their own homes. In this group, extra-marital sex is prohibited, for husbands and not just wives, as is divorce, abortion, and infanticide. Widows with nowhere else to go are also taken in and cared for.

Imagine how popular this group would be, especially with women and children. This was the early Christian Church. Christians had far more children than pagans. In large measure, this was because Christians didn't kill their babies. Christians even had more children than Jews, who also rejected abortion and infanticide. Christianity was the best thing that happened to women and children in that culture. In fact, from its beginning, Christianity was a pro-natalist religion in an anti-natalist world. Our culture is not unlike that of the Roman Empire, an era obsessed with sex but indifferent or opposed to children, who are increasingly seen as optional lifestyle accessories to suit the desires of adults." (Stonestreet)

How did ancient Rome develop a worldview that was so treacherous to women and children and anyone else not a part of the ruling class?

In answer to the question of what is real (metaphysics), they believed:

- Most pagan gods were connected to the forces of nature (Jupiter, the chief god of ancient Rome is pictured with lightning bolts).
- There were many gods and the job of the pagans was to keep their gods happy so they didn't destroy people, and to encourage them to help people (temple prostitutes to encourage gods to have sex with each other so something good would happen (Baal sex with Asherah meant rain so crops would grow).
- Gods were feared, not loved. Sacrifices were to appease, not please them.

- Gods did not demand exclusivity in devotion outside of their own spheres (rain, fire, famine, sex, etc) so people worshipped many deities.
- Emperors were considered gods and had to be worshipped.
- Jews were given special dispensation because they worshipped only one God and did not proselytize.
- Fathers attained a semi-god like status in ancient Rome. Roman law did not include family law because fathers were the supreme religious authority in the home. They could do whatever they wanted to do, became objects of worship when they died, and had total say so over all members of the household, such as condemning girl babies to death.

PLATONISM

Platonism, a Greek philosophy based primarily on the writings of Plato, was the most common form of paganism of the educated Romans after Rome conquered Greece between 3rd and 2nd C, BC. It was at first a philosophy then it became a religion the 3rd century AD.

- Addresses 3 questions a worldview asks: What is real? (**metaphysics**), what can we know and how can we know it? (**epistemology**).
- To the first question, "what is real", Plato argued that reality must be built on something that is **unchanging and unchangeable**. Since he believed the material world changes all the time, reality had to be based on the **non-physical** world of ideas. In Plato's mind, ideas don't change. This approach is called idealism and it de-emphasizes the material, including human bodies.
- In Platonism, "God", also called "the One" is the standard by which we judge what is **true and good and beautiful**.
 - This god is impersonal and does nothing on the basis of will or desires, because it has none.
 - It merely casts shadows called "emanations" and these shadows cast other shadows which cast other shadows and on and on, all the while becoming less true and less good and less beautiful. The "One" casts shadows of

pagan deities that are less than the One, these in turn cast shadows of nymphs which are mainly spirit and part material and are less than the pure spirit deities; people are rational, which is spirit, and material b/c they have bodies and so are lesser than nymphs or deities, until finally we get to "dirt" at the very end of a long hierarchy of being.

- Value was highest at the spiritual level, and lowest at the material level.
- Everything in the universe is connected to everything else and ultimately finds its origin in the fundamental nature of "God."
- This religion allowed for pagan deity worship and emperor worship as these were considered lesser "emanations" of the "One" and so did not detract from it.
- Platonism or Neoplatonism as it was later named, is similar to Buddhism in that both preach the interconnectedness of things and a hierarchy of beings, both have a goal of a mystical experience of fundamental reality achieved through contemplation or meditation of the spirit world, both permit worship of many lesser gods, and both see ultimate reality as impersonal. Both are basically, philosophies that were converted into religions.

IMPACT OF PLATONISM ON ROMAN LIFE

Hierarchy of being laid the foundation for epistemology and ethics.

- The higher up you are in the emanations, the more you know and so the more authority you have over what is below you.
- Since we know what is superior and what is inferior, we can determine what is right and wrong (humans can kill animals and plants; animals can kill other animals and eat plants).
- The highest goal for a human being was to seek oneness with the One through contemplation and meditation on the spiritual.

VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE IN ANCIENT ROME

Most pagan religions practiced human sacrifice. In their eyes, it was okay to sacrifice slaves because they were lower on the hierarchy of beings than free people. Same with lower classes and babies of any class. Romans eventually stopped sacrificing people to gods, but still did not value human life. People had to fight to death in games set up to honor the dead instead of funerals. These often devolved into orgies. Slaves were made to fight to the death in arenas as a form of entertainment.

- Humans were not in equal positions on the hierarchy of being.
 - Men were believed to be intrinsically more rational than women and obviously physically superior to women. Thus men had authority over women. This is important in understanding Biblical teachings on the roles of men and women. Bible makes clear that both men and women are equal, being made in the image and likeness of God. But Platonism was the prevailing worldview into which the disciples were sent to spread the gospel.
 - Even amongst men there was a hierarchy. Wealth, bloodline and power were the criteria for determining who was superior to whom.
 - The word "aristocracy" literally translates as "rule by the best." These concepts prevailed even into the centuries of a dominant Christian worldview in the west.
- Slaves were considered intrinsically inferior to free people. Aristotle described them as "living tools."
 - This was also true of prisoners of war and people who fell into debt as they demonstrated they were not capable of taking care of themselves or their families.
 - If a slave proved worthy, he could be freed as he had demonstrated he was superior to the average slave.
 - The "material" was not valued, only the "immaterial." Work was a source of material things, so it was relegated to slaves. 2:1 ratio.
- Highest goal of life was to spend time contemplating the spiritual or immaterial world. (see Acts 17:21)

- Impact of all this on economy and lifestyle: the elite stopped working and gave themselves over to meditation which devolved into idleness and lusts of the flesh while slaves did all the work. Small family farms went out of business as they could not afford slaves. The great engineering feats of ancient Rome – roads, buildings, sewers, the aqueducts and temples – all were built by slaves and the lower classes, partly to expand the empire and partly to keep the masses busy so they wouldn't revolt against the elites. The masses lived in squalor in disease-ridden tenements with a life expectancy of 30 years. Ruins of some of those old tenements are still in Rome and you can visit them.

ANTI-NATALISM IN THE ROMAN WORLD

An anti-natal outlook resulted from the hierarchy of being's devaluation of the material world. Humans being mostly flesh, or material, which held very little value to the elites thus having babies became opposite to the higher goal of meditation. Augustus Caesar became so concerned about the failure of Rome's elite to marry and have kids, he passed laws to try to pressure young elites to marry and have kids. It didn't work.

- Sex was looked upon as being for pleasure and pregnancy was deliberately avoided, no matter the costs.
- They used herbal concoctions for contraception and when those failed turned to surgical abortions.
- No anesthetic, no concept of germs, not even soap. Many women died or became sterile from infections.
- *Infanticide was an approved option.*
 - Families kept all healthy male kids but only one daughter (hierarchy of being).
 - The earliest codification of Roman law, the 12 Tables, made it mandatory for fathers to kill any physically deformed baby at birth.
- *Consequences were exponential.*

- As the Empire stopped expanding, the supply of slaves from prisoners of war dried up.
- With declining birthrates and lack of slave labor, Romans were forced to let in Germanic immigrants from beyond Rome's borders.
- These immigrants were attracted by the wealth and "good life" of Rome.
- The Roman army became increasingly Germanized and the general population as well, ultimately making it possible for the invasion of barbarian tribes in the 4th and 5th centuries.

If this all sounds too familiar to what we have read and seen in the news today, remember there is nothing new under the sun. The purpose of Christianity is redemption and restoration. The story doesn't end here. There was hope for the Roman people. While Rome devolved into debauchery and infanticide, an obscure Jewish sect began to arise in the 1st century that transformed the fundamental worldview of the Roman Empire. This sect valued every human being as having been made in the image and likeness of God, preached the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus, and laid the groundwork for what we now call Western Civilization.

Like the early Christians, our faithfulness requires being counter-cultural in our attitudes about sex and children, an insistence that sex be confined within its God-given scope of monogamous marriage, honoring its God-given purpose, and welcoming all children who result into our families and into the community of faith, including those discarded by pagan parents.

We need to infuse the value of every human being into every aspect of our lives and into our culture, where justice and mercy, and laws that apply to every image bearer equally should be the goal, even if the practice is not perfect.

We should do these things because they are right and good, true to who we are. Even so, through this kind of faithfulness, the early Christians ultimately won over a Roman Empire that was hostile to the Gospel. As we face a world that looks more and more like that one, we have much to learn from their example.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do people search for meaning in their lives? What was it about paganism and Neoplatonism that provided answers to the ancient Greeks and Romans?
- CS Lewis once described pagan mythology as, “gleams of celestial strength and beauty falling on a jungle of filth and imbecility.” *Perelandra*, ch. 16, p. 201. What do you think he meant?
- What is happening now in our culture that shows a search for meaning in either a positive or negative way?
- Do you see any recollections of Neoplatonism in our culture today?
- Hierarchy of being. Oppressor v. oppressed. Compare the two ideologies.
- Philosopher and eventual convert to Christianity Mortimer Adler said, “More consequences for thought and action follow the affirmation or denial of God than from answering any other basic question.” What do you think?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I posed this question to ChatGPT: how does transgenderism fit within the neoplatonic worldview?

Transgenderism, as a modern concept that addresses gender identity and expression, introduces a complex dynamic when examined through the lens of Neoplatonism. While Neoplatonism itself does not have explicit teachings on contemporary gender identity issues, some principles can be explored in relation to these topics:

1. Dualism of Body and Soul

Neoplatonism emphasizes the distinction between the body and the soul, with the soul considered more real and significant than the body. This perspective might suggest that one's true identity is rooted in the spiritual essence of the soul rather than the physical body. Thus, from a Neoplatonic viewpoint, the soul's understanding of itself could transcend traditional notions of gender.

2. The Nature of the Soul

Neoplatonism posits that the soul is an eternal and divine entity that can seek to reach higher truths and unity with The One. This idea may support the view that individuals can have a profound understanding of their identity that aligns with their inner sense of self, regardless of societal or physical gender norms.

3. Emanation and Individuality

Neoplatonists believe that all individuals emanate from The One, which suggests a fundamental unity among all beings. Each person's unique characteristics, including gender identity, can be seen as part of the diverse expression of the divine. This perspective may foster an acceptance of various identities as manifestations of the same source.

4. Transcendence and Ascent

The Neoplatonic emphasis on transcending the material realm to achieve spiritual unity may resonate with the experiences of individuals navigating gender identity. The journey of self-discovery and alignment with one's authentic self could be viewed as a form of spiritual ascent, where individuals seek to reconcile their inner truth with their external reality.

5. Ethical Living and Authenticity

Neoplatonism advocates for living in accordance with one's true nature and engaging in virtuous behavior. For many, embracing one's gender identity can be seen as an authentic expression of the self, which aligns with the Neoplatonic ideal of seeking truth and virtue.

6. Reinterpretation of Gender

Given that Neoplatonism allows for the exploration of higher realities beyond the material world, it may provide a framework for reinterpreting traditional notions of gender. The fluidity of identity could be seen as an expression of the soul's complexity and its journey toward understanding itself.

CONCLUSION

While Neoplatonism does not provide direct commentary on transgenderism, its principles offer a philosophical framework that can accommodate discussions about identity, the nature of the soul, and the importance of authenticity. In this context,

individuals exploring their gender identity may find resonance with Neoplatonic ideas concerning the transcendence of the material and the pursuit of a deeper understanding of the self. However, interpretations may vary, and individual Neoplatonists might hold different views based on their understanding of these complex issues.

SESSION II

DEVELOPING A WORLDVIEW

A **worldview** is the sum total of our beliefs about the world, it's the big picture that directs our daily decisions and actions. It is your gut-level, instinctive response to the basic philosophical questions, such as "what is real?" (**metaphysics**), "what can I know and how can I know it?" (**epistemology**), and "are there such things as right and wrong, and if so, how do I know what they are?" (**ethics**)

Confronting 3 foundational issues:

- **Confront God (what is real)**
 - Who is God? Even the atheist must confront God.
 - If I conclude He exists I must figure out what kind of a Being He is. Personal or impersonal?
 - Is He a moral Being who will judge me?
 - Does He communicate with us?
- **Confront humanity (epistemology and ethics)**
 - Forms the foundation for my worldview as it answers the question of humanity's place in the world as a whole.
 - Answer Tolstoy's questions:
 - Why am I alive?
 - What is the cause of my existence and that of everyone else?
 - Why do I continue to exist?
 - Why is there a division of good and evil inside me?
 - How must I live?

- What is death and can I save myself?
- **Confront Nature (epistemology and ethics)**
 - How am I related to the physical universe?
 - Am I the master of nature or its slave?
 - Is the natural world friendly, hostile or indifferent to humans?

First foundational question:

- Answered by Platonists: god is impersonal, has no will, and simply throws off emanations by virtue of its own existence.
- Answered by atheists: there is no god.
- The God of Israel, on the other hand, is personal and created the world as a voluntary act.

Second foundational question:

- Platonists: believed humans were mere lower emanations from spirits that had emanated from “the One”. There is an order, called “hierarchy of being” that placed a higher value on the spiritual than on the material. Even classes of humans were ranked with females and babies at the bottom, thus human sacrifice and infanticide were common. They ranked everything from the highest all the way down to dirt.
- Atheists: most believe we are products of evolution. Our brains developed by mere chance and consist of atoms bouncing around in our skulls.

Watch how Christians answer that question:

<https://whatwouldyousay.org/videos/religious-freedom-or-privilege>

SO HOW DO WE CULTIVATE/DEVELOP A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW?

The idea of 'developing' involves more than merely 'accepting', 'believing', or even 'knowing' the teachings of a biblical worldview. It is an intentional, dynamic two-step process that is constantly being refined. It involves both a 'mindset' and 'willset.'

- Understand the biblical worldview. Knowing the content and teachings of the Bible is an imperative first step. Theological, philosophical and practical implications of both the facts and the teachings of the Bible.
- Apply a biblical worldview consistently. If the biblical worldview is true, and we agree that it is, it cannot be applied in a vacuum but must be active in changing both the individual and the larger culture.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

Confronting God:

- Acknowledges the existence of God (theism).
- Real things exist beyond the physical realm i.e., God, angels, the human spirit and soul, immortality and more.
- The universe is a work of art from our Creator.
- Humanity is in rebellion against God (Jewish, Islam, and Christianity all agree).
- Christianity adds:
 - God reveals Himself to His creation.
 - He is a Person with emotions such as love, anger, and sorrow.
 - He relates personally to humans, and humans relate personally to Him. He communicates with us, and we with Him.
 - He is Trinity: Father/Creator; Jesus is God Incarnate as man and is our savior; Indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer. God is active in believers and draws mankind to Him.

Confronting humanity:

- Each person has been called into existence by an intelligent Being – God.
- Not a product of evolution.
- Not a result of chance.
- Created in the image and likeness of God.
- Redeemable in Christ Jesus (the most important thing but not the only thing).
- We are called by God for a purpose to participate with Him and other believers in the restoration of creation.

Confronting nature:

- The created world reflects the person and character of God.
- Everything created by God is “good.” Gen. 1:31
- The created world is ordered and purposeful. Jer.31:35
- The world is dependent upon God for its continued existence. Col. 1:17. Heb. 1:3.
- The created world is to be cared for by man. Gen. 1:31.
- Because God is a Person who is reasonable and personable, humans can learn and know the workings of His creation.

SCIENCE

The biblical worldview is all-encompassing, and its application has paved the way for education, art, law, and science. The Christian worldview holds that God is a rational God who created a rational universe that could be studied and understood. Contrary to modern objections, science as we know it today has its roots in this Christian worldview. Here are a few examples:

- Carolus Linnaeus, 1700s, inventor of the Linnaean taxonomy, was a devout Christian. His work in taxonomy was an attempt to fathom creation by noting

the regular order of things. Follows on God's command to Adam to name all the animals in creation.

- Isaac Newton, born 1642 said, "Gravity explains the motions of the planets, but it cannot explain who set the planets in motion. God governs all things and knows all that is or can be done."
- Gregor Mendel was a monk; his work in the garden monasteries led him to discover laws of genetics.
- Blaise Pascal was a devout Christian whose work on probability also led him to a proof of the existence of God.
- William of Ockham was a Franciscan friar. "Occam's Razor" (the simplest of competing theories be preferred to the more complex or that explanations of unknown phenomena be sought first in terms of known quantities)
- Chemistry - Antoine Lavoisier
- Calculus - Gottfried Leibniz/Sir Isaac Newton
- Vaccines - Louis Pasteur
- Heliocentric model of the solar system - Galileo Galilei
- Over 300 uses for the peanut - George Washington Carver

ETHICS/LAW

An increase in understanding of God's design of creation through the study of science, led to or at least coincided with development of the law from a Christian worldview. Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780), the great English jurist, believed that slavery was "repugnant to reason, and the principles of natural law" and thus had no standing under English law.

He wrote "Commentaries on the Laws of England" in 1753 which were a huge influence on development of laws in America. He observed that just as God created matter and made it subject to certain "laws of nature" such as motion, so too He created man with freewill that was also subject to certain "natural laws."

- Live honestly (no lying).
- Hurt no one (all are equal under God).

- Render unto everyone his due (love justice).

Because these natural laws were created by God, they were superior to manmade laws, and no manmade law that was contrary to natural law, could be valid.

Christian worldview holds that law is something more than a convention or command from a governmental power:

- Governments get their power to make laws from a higher power – God.
- Laws must reflect the facts and teachings of the Bible or they are not laws at all. Rom. 2:14-15
- Imago Dei. If we are made in God's image, offending another human is an offense against God.
- We get our modern concepts of justice from the Judeo-Christian worldview.
- Equality of all people under the law = Human rights.
- Contract rights also as each party to a contract had a right to be treated equally and fairly. This is called the "covenant of good faith and fair dealing." It does not have to be explicitly written into any US contract. It simply exists.
- Property rights: because all men are created equal, and because the earth and everything in it was created by God, everyone should have the right to own property.

ARTS

Renaissance Art magnificently portrays the glory of God as well as can be done by human hands and minds. View this link for more: <https://fpatheatre.com>.

(SHAMELESS PLUG: Founded by award-winning actor Max McLean, FPA is a not-for-profit New York City-based production company producing theatre and film from a Christian worldview to engage a diverse audience.)

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

Eph. 5:31-32 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church."

- Marriage between one man and one woman, then sex = kids, in that order.
- Stable structure for raising children, also stability for government.
- More than that, marriage in the Christian worldview refers to Christ and the church:
 - Christ gave us His body **freely**. "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father." John 10:18
 - He gave His body **totally**, without reservation or condition. "Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." John 13:1
 - He gave us His body **faithfully**. "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matt. 28:20
 - He gave us His body **fruitfully**. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10

Marriage in the Christian worldview is a commitment to strive to express this kind of love, that Christ's love for us expresses. We renew our commitment to Christ in the Lord's Supper.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

What now and what if anything does *Imago Dei* still mean for us today?

If we look around outside the confines of our families and friends and church, panic can easily set in. Thoughts of "Alice in Wonderland" or "Through the looking glass" come

to mind. It's as though we have found ourselves in an alternate universe and nothing that was real, is real any longer:

- Marriage is no longer between one man and one woman; divorce is rampant even in the church. Having children is viewed as a right, regardless of marital status, sex has been separated from marriage and sex between a man and a woman is no longer necessary to conceive a child.
- Sex has been uncoupled from marriage, and children have been uncoupled from sex. Traditional, Christ-reflecting families are incidental to marriage, not the reason for it. The Supreme court said so in the infamous *Obergefell* decision, finding that same sex couples have a constitutional right to marriage.

"The cultural calculus goes like this... In order to create "same-sex marriage," it must be argued that marriage and children have nothing *really* to do with each other. Technologies, such as egg and sperm donation, in vitro fertilization, and surrogacy, make it possible for people who are not in a procreative heterosexual union to procure children. After these two conditions are secured, the argument is now made that marriage and children really do go together, that children are one of the "trappings" of marriage. Once same-sex relationships are legally called marriage and technology is available to make children outside of a heterosexual union, those who have deliberately chosen a sterile same-sex relationship now claim the *right* to children or else, you know, discrimination." Stonestreet, Breakpoint, 11/3/22.

In other news:

- The Olympics now features men boxing against women.
- Supreme Court justices profess to not know what a woman is, even though the justice being questioned would have called herself a woman not so long ago.
- Presidential candidates disavow having made declarative announcements even though video exists proving the statements were made.
- Rioters engaging in burning down edifices are declared to be mostly peaceful.
- One of the current VP candidates even called that particular behavior "exciting."
- And the list goes on.

These things shock us as they should, but they spring from a worldview quite different from a Christian worldview.

Economics and politics were built on common worldview ideas about relationships between people. In a Christian worldview, relationships between people flow from Imago Dei, amid personal responsibility where “liberty and justice for all” was the ideal and hard work brought increased wealth.

During and after WWII, however, western culture began turning towards a materialistic worldview that minimized personal responsibility and liberty towards an ideology that believes government’s role is not so much to protect its citizens and keep them safe as it is to take care of people and redistribute wealth, which was a drift towards socialism. Keynesian economics basically holds that governments should intervene in markets to stabilize the economy. Every president since FDR except for Trump and Ronald Reagan has followed this school of thought and has sought to “do something”.

Language has also been “deconstructed.” Some philosophers now believe that all language is arbitrary and words have no inherent meaning. Thus there is no ability to say anything that is objectively true. Communication always involves a speaker and a hearer. The speaker may mean one thing but the hearer interprets it as something else. But of course, by this view, the statement itself cannot be objectively true.

The prevailing worldview does not totally reject absolute truth, but instead accepts some scientific truths, like gravity, but where morality is concerned it follows the notion that what is true for one person may not be true for another. This is a “value”, and it leads to a worldview of other values:

- Oppression, hate crimes, and other top-down evils can only be perpetrated by those in power, i.e., white heterosexual men, especially such men who hold to a traditional or Christian worldview.
- Those seen as victims of those in power are granted moral authority to speak on issues, whether or not their background and education would otherwise equip them to do so. Supposedly their “lived experience” gives them a platform from which to speak “their truth” to the rest of the populace. This elevation of victimhood leads to more people claiming victim status to enhance their own standing in society.

- “Tolerance” takes on new meaning. Where once we could value a person and at the same time strongly disagree with the ideas they held, now we are told we must not only tolerate ideas and moral choices we disagree with but also affirm and celebrate them. To do so means others will not “tolerate” us but assail us as “haters” and claim we are devaluing the person.
- Christianity understands that a person is a creature of God, whose purpose is to seek to conform himself to the truth, to live up to objectively definable moral standards, in pursuit of eternal life. Now, terms like “personal autonomy” and “expressive individualism” are terms used to describe the preferred worldview of our culture. For example, “expressive individualism” is a worldview where each of us seeks to give expression to our individual inner lives rather than seeing ourselves as embedded in communities and bound by natural and supernatural laws. Authenticity to inner feelings rather than adherence to transcendent truths, becomes the norm. *Strange New World*, Carl R. Truman, Crossway, 2022; foreward by Ryan Anderson at 13.
- Freedom of speech is limited to only approved messages. Ironically in this view, the stated primary value of personal autonomy and freedom takes second place to a political and cultural agenda with its own set of values and ethics. People are then trapped by the very ideology they turned to for freedom. Continuing the irony, very few realize they are in captivity. For example, feminists sought freedom from procreation. Arguably what they got was captivity to male sexual desires.
- Laws are twisted to require adherence to approved messages:
 - Elaine Photography.
 - Jack Phillips.
 - Parental non-notification laws.
 - Requiring crisis pregnancy centers to display contact information for abortion clinics.
 - Shutting down churches during the pandemic.
 - Enforced vaccinations.

- Requiring medical professionals to give vaccinations, participate in abortions, provide “gender affirming care”.

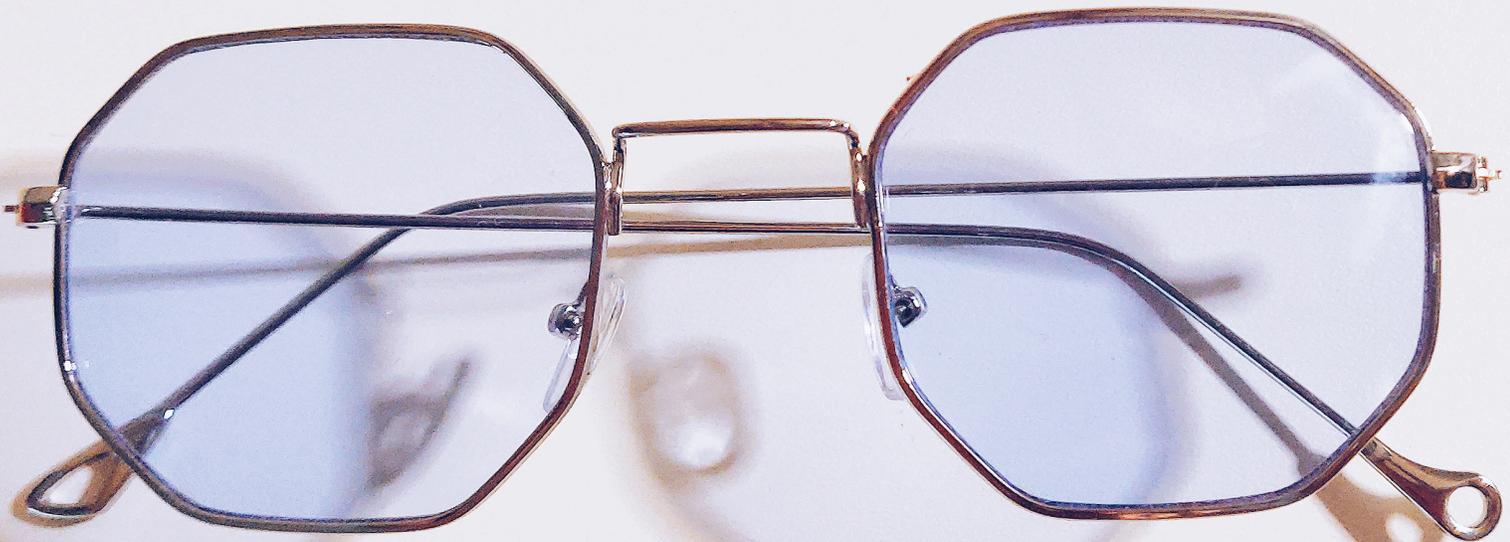
Once we have formed our Christian worldview or “mindset”, we can proceed to the second step “willset”, which is the application. We will take on hot topics next time we meet.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

<https://whatwouldyousay.org/videos/definitions-matter-rights>

- Why is an unjust law not a law at all?
- Martin Luther King, Jr. in his “letters from a Birmingham jail” said much the same thing as did Blackstone when he defended breaking the segregationist laws of the 1960s.
 - *“There are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that ‘an unjust law is no law at all.’”*
- What does “unjust” mean to Martin Luther King, Jr.?
- Unjust laws “degrade human personality” according to King. How does that make them unjust?
- Some well known atheists now call themselves “cultural Christians.”
 - Elon Musk
 - Richard Dawkins
- What is meant by a “Cultural Christian”?
- Can a Christian culture survive if faith in Christ is removed?
- What should be our response to cultural Christians?
- Can you think of any examples where “cultural Christians” have proclaimed Jesus as Savior and Lord?

CULTIVATING A CHRISTIAN
WORLDVIEW



CLASS #2

OCTOBER 5 | 9AM - 11:30AM

SESSION III

HOT TOPICS I

Application of a Christian worldview in the culture of our time.

In the Christian worldview, “rights” come from God and the precept that all are created equal in His image and likeness, the *Imago Dei*.

INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL THEORY: A PREVAILING WORLDVIEW OF OUR TIME

Bear in mind that a worldview consists of **metaphysics** (what is real), **epistemology** (what can we know), and **ethics** (what is right and wrong).

The worldview of a culture determines its laws, its educational systems, family structures, and who has what rights.

We are most familiar with the term “critical theory (CT)” when used in the phrase, “critical race theory.” This phrase became part of our cultural vocabulary only a few years ago, as the death of George Floyd captured the headlines and split our country apart.

- Critical Theory descends from European and North American philosophical traditions, particularly Marxism and Postmodernism.
- “Marxism” according to The Economic Times, is “a social, economic and political philosophy that analyzes the impact of the ruling class on the laborers, leading to uneven distribution of wealth and privileges in the society. It stimulates the workers to protest the injustice. The theory was formulated by Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels in their work, ‘The Communist Manifesto’ which was published in 1848.
- Marxism leads directly to communism, which Marx believed would come as the masses revolted against capitalism in order to form a “classless” society where everyone has equal wealth.

- When you hear politicians argue that their opponents are engaging in redistribution of wealth, this is where those ideas come from and where they lead if followed to the conclusion advocated by Marx and Engels.

<https://whatwouldyousay.org/videos/should-we-try-to-erase-economic-inequality>

ORIGINS

- Scholars typically link the first use of the phrase “*critical theory*” to the Frankfurt School, a group of intellectuals whose work derived from Marxist thought.
- Critical theory first arose at the Institute for Social Research, which was founded in Germany in the early 20th C, around 1923. Scholars there argued for the capacity of theory to reveal and intervene against structures of domination.
- More than aiming to generate new knowledge, critical theory strives to produce theoretical frameworks that may allow for the emancipation of humanity from various forms of oppression. In particular, the Frankfurt School focused on class-based forms of domination in capitalist societies.
- “Postmodernism” joined the party in the late 20th century. It’s general claims are:
 - There is no objective reality;
 - There is no scientific or historical truth (objective truth);
 - Science and technology (and even reason and logic) are not vehicles of human progress but suspect instruments of established power;
 - Reason and logic are not universally valid;
 - There is no such thing as human nature (human behavior and psychology are socially determined or constructed);
 - Language does not refer to a reality outside itself;
 - There is no certain knowledge; and
 - No general theory of the natural or social world can be valid or true (all are illegitimate “metanarratives”). <https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy>.

- **Power Dynamics:** Like these worldviews of its intellectual ancestry, CT sees the world in terms of **power dynamics**. In this way of thinking, social evils such as poverty, crime, or oppression result not from universal human frailties but from Euro-Americans intent on securing and increasing their economic and social power. Based on this metanarrative, equality and justice demand privileging the stories of those kept out of power. CT sees members of the oppressed group as morally right, and members of the oppressor group as morally wrong.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY V. CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

One of my favorite CS Lewis quotes, from "The Weight of Glory"

"It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long, we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealing with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics."

- The Christian worldview requires us to see each other in this light, and of course, to focus on helping each other to the right eternal destination, without regard for the temporary characteristics that diversify us.
- Every country has a problem with racism - USA is not unique. Every country where more than one race resides has a problem with racism. This is not to minimize what we deal with here. It's just the truth.
 - Racism teaches that because racial identity is innate and unalterable, our identity is found in our ethnicity.
 - Truth is that science has revealed that a mere 1/10th of 1% of our external appearance comes from our genes. Outward appearance is the basis on which we talk about race, so remember it is only 1/10th of 1% of our outward appearance.

- Does racism still exist? Ask a neighbor of a different race, or a fellow 2RC attendee, if they have experienced racism.
 - Racism is detestable, it is real, and it is sin.
 - Only by acknowledging it can we confront it.
- Racism is not happening everywhere all the time.
 - As early as 1958, 37% of Americans expressed a willingness to elect a Black person president.
 - By 1999, that figure rose to 95%.
 - Barack Obama was elected in 2008 and again in 2012.
 - In 2013, Gallup recorded one of the largest shifts in public opinion in its history when 87% of those polled approved of interracial marriage. In contrast, in 1958 only 4% had expressed approval.
 - The USA has a better record of legal protection of minorities than any other society. Source: Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson, NY Times, 1991.

But that's not what CRT teaches.

“The problem with Critical Race Theory is not that it isn’t found in the Bible; it’s that it offers a very different explanation of humanity, sin, and redemption than the Bible does. Like the postmodernism that birthed it, Critical Race Theory can be considered a worldview. It does more than just offer a handful of specific ideas about race and society; CRT offers a complete framework of beliefs, a universalizing story of the world. CRT describes who we are, what’s wrong with the world, and prescribes how to fix it and what “better” would be. In other words, like Christianity, CRT answers the basic questions any worldview does. Except, the answers CRT provides are very different than those Christianity offers, even if both worldviews recognize the world is broken by evils such as racism and injustice.” John Stonestreet, “Breakpoint”, 2/11/21

- The Christian worldview as applied to race relations must begin and end with God’s Word

Acts 17:26,28 “²⁶From one man (Adam) he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries. ²⁸For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’”

- The Word began with human oneness.
- We didn’t just inherit Adam’s origin, we got his sin nature as well.

Rom. 5:12 “¹²When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.”

- Every generation since Adam, and every country inhabited by more than one race, has needed racial reconciliation.
- God’s heart was to bless all the people of the world through the Chosen People.

Gen.12: 1-3. “The Lord said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. ²I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

- Old Testament shows how Israel continually rejected God and was judged, punished, forgiven and loved in cycle after cycle.
- In the gospel of Luke more than any others, there is a focus on racism amongst the Jews towards the Samaritans, treating them as 3rd class citizens, even lower than the Gentiles. Jesus shattered this viewpoint, with the parable of the Good Samaritan and the story of the woman at the well.
- In the great commission, Jesus commanded in Acts. 1:8 that the gospel be preached to Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
- **Gal. 3:28.** “There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

ETHICS COMPONENT OF CT, ITS ORIGIN AND IMPACT ON LAW

- Broad idea of critical theory was revived and found its way into law schools in the 80s and 90s. It took off rapidly from there.
- Critical theory rejects the idea that the law was grounded in abstract, universal principles (think 10 Commandments), and instead views the law as a mechanism of coercion. Law is viewed as a means for the ruling class (oppressors) to justify social dominance and to perpetuate its control of society.
- Critical race theory insists that race be a part of our understanding of all laws, and enforcement of all of our laws, since those that hold to the theory believe all our laws protect racial privilege and act as tools of racial discrimination.
- Each segment of critical theory, whether it be race or sexual preferences aka "queer theory", or feminism, insist its own characteristic be included in understanding of each and every law.
- It also adds an activist component, the end goal of which is to bring change that will provide social justice. It accepts protest and violence as justifiable means to this end.
- Critical race theory consists of a "social binary" which teaches that "racism is normal, permanent, and pervasive and that it is one of many interlocking systems of oppression, which fits perfectly into contemporary critical theory's identification of the social binary." *Critical Dilemma*, Neil Shenvi and Pat Sawyer, Harvest House 2023.
- While critical race theory first captured the imagination of the general public, the social binary foundation of critical theory applies to whatever "identity markers" its proponents uphold as being critical
- This social binary is the oppressor v. oppressed construct, and it has been made to apply not only to race but also to class, gender, gender identity, sexuality, physical ability, age, nationality, immigration status and many other "identity markers."
- The term "intersectionality" applies when a person or group has more than one of the "oppressed" characteristics. The intersection of two or more of these identity markers places one higher or lower on the scale of those whose "lived

experiences” make their worldview more valuable or more truthful, than that of someone who has none or fewer of such markers.

CRITICAL “QUEER THEORY” CHALLENGES THE IDEA THAT HETEROSEXUALITY IS NORMAL

- Criticizes traditional views of marriage, sexuality and gender as being mere social constructs, i.e., an idea that has been created by and accepted by people in a society.
- Stands in direct opposition to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God is the one who created the sexes and gave us marriage. Sex and marriage are not products of “acceptance” by people in a society.
- Queer theory grew out of feminism and gender studies.
- In the 1990s, those studies began to be criticized as being concerned with rights for only middle-class white women.
- Black feminist leaders advocated for rights based on the interlocking of race with feminism. Similar criticisms emerged from what we now call the LGBTQ community.
- Impact of queer theory on transgender alteration of the body. It argues that the more “marginalized” and “subordinated” a person feels, the more they feel identified as bodies, and so the more pressure they feel to modify their body to mitigate their deviance from the normal. In other words, one way to escape the feeling of not belonging is to change the body so it conforms to the feeling.
- It demands society question “body norms” and how they came to exist and by whose authority they are enforced. The answer the theory requires is that “body norms” are a social construct, each individual is in control of what their body is or can be, and society must recognize and affirm whatever the individual does.
- Critical theory with its broad social binary of oppressed and oppressor, easily absorbs all these classifications. Even its proponents, however, have a hard time defining queer theory. One scholar stated, “Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular

to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence." *Critical Dilemma* at 182.

- How incredibly sad is that? What does the Christian worldview hold:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV) "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

"Like Marxism, Critical Theory is something of a Christian heresy, taking the Christian themes of human dignity and justice and a world remade, and re-orienting these causes under new management. Most pertinently, CT is slipping into the space where the Church belongs but is too often absent.

If we don't want unbiblical explanations of life and justice sweeping through the Church or culture, we'd better make sure we communicate and embrace the full ramifications of Christian truth for society, and then act justly and love mercy. If we rob our Faith of its social implications, we are no longer talking about Christianity. Such a personalized, privatized moral system may make us feel better, but it will never stand up to the rival worldviews of our day." Stonestreet, *Breakpoint* podcast.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If he is right that the church is too often absent, what can we do to make it more relevant and impactful?

Here is a real-life situation that many of us have faced, including my family:

<https://whatwouldyousay.org/videos/should-a-christian-attend-a-same-sex-wedding>

Here is a real-life current example from CBS news earlier this year: A former employee of NYC and his male partner are suing the city for refusing to pay for IVF so the two men can have a child. They claim discrimination because they have been denied the same IVF benefits that the city offers female city employees and male city employees who have female partners. "What we're fighting for is equality in the context of a human right as we see it," Briskin said. CBS News.com, May 10, 2024.

- What does the prevailing worldview say to this?

- What does the Christian worldview say?

PRACTICAL STEPS

“Examine your own views. Followers of Jesus don’t have the option of tolerating racial or ethnic barriers. It’s sin. We take our cues from Scripture, not culture. And yet we don’t downplay ethnicity. We can be thankful for our unique ethnic identities while recognizing that the gospel has deeper, broader aims.”

- Should I (you) be understood primarily in terms of my obligations toward, and dependence upon, others?
- Does education consist in training me in the demands and expectations of the wider culture and forming me, shaping me into that which will serve the community at large?
- Is “growing up” a process by which I learn to control my feelings, to act with restraint, and sacrifice my desires to those of the community around me? Or am I to understand myself as born free and able to create my own identity?
- Does education consist in enabling me to express outwardly that which I feel inwardly?
- Is growing up a process not of learning restraint but rather on capitalizing on opportunities to perform?
- Don’t let culture control the conversation on race, sex, family or morality. The Scriptures must do that.

Here’s another real-life issue we are all facing right now:

<https://whatwouldyousay.org/videos/my-vote-wont-matter>

Contrast this with the *Imago Dei* and we can see the problem, but can we see the solution?

HOT TOPICS II

- Black Lives Matter!
- Love is Love!
- The Gay Rights Movement is the New Civil Rights Movement!
- Women's Rights Are Human Rights!
- Transgender Women Are Women!

Many people around us care deeply about diversity, equity and inclusion, and many think Christians stand against those values. But there is truth underlying some of these claims. In *"The Secular Creed"*, author Rebecca McLaughlin explains,

"To our 21st Century, Western ears, love across racial and cultural differences, the equality of men and women, and the idea that the poor, oppressed, and marginalized can make moral claims on the strong, rich and powerful sound like basic moral common sense. But they are not. These truths have come to us from Christianity. Rip that foundation out, and you won't uncover a better basis for human equality and rights. You'll uncover an abyss that cannot even tell you what a human being is. Like cartoon characters running off a cliff, we may continue a short way before we realize that the ground has gone from underneath our feet. But it has gone. Without Christian beliefs about humanity, the yard sign claims aren't worth the cardboard on which they are written."

As much as secular human rights activists hate to admit it, the ground on which they stand is ground established through the Christian worldview. We need to reclaim that ground. But before we can do that, we have to untangle our Christian beliefs from the worldview of the times in which we live so we can sort out the facets of each claim into that which we must affirm, and that which we must not.

- If there is no God who created us in His image, there is no basis for human equality.
- Atheism and its attendant theory of evolution, does not provide a foundation for treating each other as equals.

- In his book, "*Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*", Yuval Noah Harari said, "belief in the unique worth and rights of human beings... has embarrassingly little in common with the scientific study of *Homo Sapiens*." *Sapiens* at 253.
- In fact, in the context of evolution, humans would only ever sacrifice and work for the betterment of members of their own genetic group, and would seek destruction of those outside their genetic group for perceived benefit.
- Atheists and adherents of non-Abrahamic religions, can of course, believe in human rights and do good stuff and treat people nicely.
 - But they do so with an unanchored worldview.
 - Atheists in particular cannot point to any rational ground for saying that everyone should believe in human rights.
 - In the modern worldview, "the modern person considers himself to be something he can create for himself, so he tends to extend that same notion to his relationship to the world in general. We no longer think of ourselves as subject to the world's fixed nature, or of it as having an objective authority or meaning. We are the ones with the power, and we are the ones who give the world significance." *Strange New World*, Trueman at 96.
- Tom Holland in his book "*Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World*", explained that the basic moral beliefs of Western Civilization regarding human rights came to us from Christianity but now they have been rebranded as secular.
 - As we saw in our earlier sessions, culture began to turn away from the Christian worldview after WWII.
 - Eleanor Roosevelt convened leaders from around the world to establish a universal declaration of human rights to apply in all cultures, including those where Christianity was not dominant.
 - Thus, ideas of human rights had to be rebranded in non-religious terms.
 - Holland said, "A doctrine such as that of human rights was far likelier to be signed up for" if its Christian origins could be concealed. Holland, *Dominion* 521.

- This rebranding has been so successful that even some atheists believe human rights are self-evident.
- “Without Christianity, belief in human rights, in racial equality and in the responsibility of the powerful toward the victimized becomes blind faith.” *The Secular Creed* at 22.

What about same sex equality?

Funeral Blues by W.H. Auden (on mourning the death of a beloved)

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message 'He is Dead'.
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now; put out every one,
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun,
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

It was read during the movie, *Three Weddings and a Funeral*, by a gay man at the funeral of the man he loved. The scene was deeply moving. How can a love felt this deeply be wrong?

- We are made in God's image, Gen. 1:26. An image is a picture. You can't make a picture without lines.
- Without boundary lines, there is no image.
- God gives us boundary lines so we know what it means to be made in His image.
- In Rom. 1:21-23, idolatry is laid out as an abomination and in 24-27, God abandons idolators to "whatever shameful thing their hearts desired." Both male and female homosexuality are specifically identified as forbidden and a result of idolatry (idolatry is anything that is exalted above God).

Rom. 1:28-32 "28 Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. 29 Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. 30 They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. 31 They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. 32 They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too."

- Sex and marriage between a man and a woman is a picture of God's love for us. Take away the lines of that picture and you have perversion. A lemon is a good fruit and useful for certain purposes. Milk is also a good thing. Put lemon in milk and both are spoiled.
- We all struggle at times with attractions that, if followed would lead to sinful behavior. Whether same-sex, hetero-sex outside of marriage, drugs, gambling, lying. All these things can be attractive. All are outside of the lines that form our image. But - God's "lines" are drawn with love.

Ephesians 5:25-31 "For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her 26 to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word.[a] 27 He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. 28 In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. 29 No one hates

his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church.³⁰ And we are members of his body.”

Throughout Scripture, God’s relationship with humanity is pictured as a marriage between one man and one woman. Statistics show that children growing up in a home where their parents are married fare far better than any other setting.

<https://whatwouldyousay.org/videos/doesnt-love-make-a-family>

This is not just any kind of love. Husbands are to love their wives with the love that Christ has for the church.

Rev. 19:6-7. ⁶ Then I heard again what sounded like the shout of a vast crowd or the roar of mighty ocean waves or the crash of loud thunder: “Praise the Lord! For the Lord our God,^[a] the Almighty, reigns. ⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honor to him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself. ⁸ She has been given the finest of pure white linen to wear.” For the fine linen represents the good deeds of God’s holy people.”

Rev. 21:1-3. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.^[a] ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”

“This is the lifetime of love into which we are eagerly invited. This is why Jesus says there will be no human marriage in his new world. It’s not because human marriage isn’t good, but because it will have been fulfilled.” *Secular Creed* at 32.

Mt. 22:30 ³⁰ For when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. In this respect they will be like the angels in heaven.”

CONSPIRACY THEORY, ANYONE?

- In 1987, an essay was published entitled “The Overhauling of Straight America” by Marshall Kirk, a neuropsychiatrist and Hunter Madsen, a PR consultant

- By 1989 it had grown into an almost 400-page book entitled “*After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s.*”
- Laid out a 6-point strategy:
 - First, talk about gays and gayness as loudly and as often as possible because almost any behavior will begin to look normal if you are repeatedly exposed to it, especially in a neutral or normal way.
 - Second, portray gays as victims, not as aggressive or challenging.
 - Third, show protecting gays and gay rights as a just cause. “Our campaign should not demand direct support for homosexual practices [but] should instead take anti-discrimination as its theme.”
 - Fourth, make gays look good. Show them as attractive, productive members of society, occupying superior positions with superior attitudes.
 - Fifth, make the “victimizers” look bad. They explain:
 - At a later stage of the media campaign for gay rights...it will be time to get tough with remaining opponents. To be blunt, they must be vilified...Our goal here is twofold. First, we seek to replace the mainstream’s self-righteous pride about its homophobia with shame and guilt. Second, we intend to make the anti-gay look so nasty that average Americans will want to dissociate themselves from such types.. The public should be shown images of ranting homophobes whose secondary traits and beliefs disgust middle America...[Show them as] bigoted southern ministers drooling such hysterical hatred.
 - Sixth and final, “Solicit funds. The buck stops here.”
 - Quotes taken from *Confronting Injustice Without Compromising Truth* by Thaddeus J. Williams, 196-197.
- Williams then presents six questions to help us understand if our own view of homosexuality is influenced more by Jesus, or by Kirk and Madsen.
 - Is our view of human sexuality an expression of Creator – or creation – worship?

- Does our view of sexuality redefine love and hate?
- Does our view of sexuality resort to worldview coercion disguised as courtesy?
- Does our view of sexuality include self-deification?
- Does our vision of sexuality promote the kind of authenticity and freedom that leaves people confused and enslaved?
- Does our vision of sexuality undermine the best news anyone could ever hear?

IDENTITY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN AND WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Identity: dictionary says it is the distinguishing character or personality of an individual:

- As a member of a family
- A country
- A religion
- A segment of society
- A sports team
- A political party
- A race
- A culture
- A gender

All kinds of distinguishing characteristics. All point to “belonging.” Humans are relational, and as Christians we believe this is due to being created by a God who is relational and wants relationship with each of us. But regardless of religious beliefs, every human naturally wants relationships.

- Every society or community has its own set of values or rules for membership, whether stated or implied.
- Rejection by a community is painful as any kid picked last for a team can tell you.

- Families have values and kids are expected to act accordingly.
 - Churches excommunicate those who refuse to conform to standards of belief and action.
 - Countries expel noncitizens who violate the rules and imprison citizens who commit crimes.
- Nations get their identities from shared experiences, especially difficult ones such as wars and revolutions. This is the stuff about which poems and songs are written, movies and operas are born. Holidays are proclaimed and flags are flown.
 - What happens when the narratives that hold people together in community and “provide us with our traditional identities lose their authority and become highly contested? When the ways in which we belong start to fall apart?” *Strange New World*, Trueman at 118-119.
 - “Religious institutions, family, and nation have even in the recent past been the three fundamental external anchors for identity.” *Id.* at 99.
 - As Protestants, we think of the Reformation as being a positive cultural and religious point in history. Trueman identifies it as also having the negative effect of diluting the Church as an institutional authority. Now the Catholic church had competitors. People and countries could now choose their religion. As countries allowed religious freedom, churches became competitors in a religious marketplace. “This fundamentally transformed the dynamics of power between church authorities and congregants.” *Id.* at 97.
 - The family is under attack as being repressive and tyrannical:
 - No-fault divorce has lowered the bar for the dissolution of marriage to nothing more than an emotional response that one would be happier single. Courts call this “irreconcilable differences.”
 - The widespread existence of single-parent families has led to the notion that a mother and father united in marriage are not necessary, which further erodes the institution of marriage.
 - Advances in medical science separate children from sex, via contraception and abortion and thus weaken the perceived need for a traditional family.

- Idea of a nation as an anchor for identity is also under severe strain:
 - “Was the United States founded in 1776, with the Declaration of Independence, or in 1619 with the arrival of the first slaves? That the question is even asked speaks, at the very minimum, of a basic challenge to the traditional notion of America as a nation.” Id.at 98.
 - Unregulated immigration means thousands, if not millions of people breach our borders, bringing with them values and systems that might not coexist with the laws and traditions of the country in which they find themselves. This is a problem all over the western world, not just the US.
- Technology further separates community:
 - People can “do church” without ever leaving home. A true blessing for some but a weakening of community for those who use technology to avoid relationships.
 - Music is no longer necessarily a shared experience. Just ask Alexa and you can have a symphony in your kitchen and listen by yourself. Same with movies.
 - Cannot really compare with going to church, going to the theatre, going to the symphony and sharing the experience with others.
 - Isolates us and makes “expressive individualism” and self-autonomy all the more attractive.
- Trueman argues that, “the plastic conception of human identity to which expressive individualism tilts and the liquefaction of the world around us with regard to the traditional frameworks (national, religious, familial, geographical, even physiological) by which human beings have previously defined themselves” makes this time in which we live “singularly challenging and potentially sinister[.]” Id. at 126.

“Today the self is entirely plastic, and the external world – right down to our bodies – is liquid, something that offers no firm ground upon which to build an identity. That no doubt helps to explain, for example, the catastrophic levels of depression and anxiety in the West which, on the whole, enjoys greater material prosperity and security than has been typical throughout human history...But we don’t know who we are anymore.”

In my opinion, we bear responsibility for this loss of true identity in Western culture. Our God has given us an identity made in His own image. I highly recommend the book, *Our Bodies Tell God's Story* by Christopher West. The subtitle is "Discovering the Divine Plan for Love, Sex, and Gender". He loves us so much that not only did he create us in his image, he took on flesh, the same flesh of which we are made, and showed us the way to true belonging, the kind we all crave but look for in the wrong places.

Be encouraged. As we said in the first session, there is nothing new under the sun. Our culture has many touchpoints with that of ancient Rome. Ancient Rome was transformed by followers of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is still working and the winds and waves still obey the Word of the Lord.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- As always, the first step is knowledge. Hopefully you now have the beginning of understanding how our culture has been manipulated. In fact, some of the quotes from *After the Ball*, sound to me like they could have been taken straight from *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis.
- Check your own worldview and make sure you are clear in your own mind about the Christian worldview and its answers to the current culture.
- Take the 6 points of *After the Ball* and turn them around. Get familiar with stories of Christians who have recognized same sex lifestyles as being in conflict with Imago Dei and been delivered or learned to live within the lines. Rebecca McLaughlin, Rosaria Butterfield, Christopher Yuan and so many others. They are many, not few.
- Emphasize the beauty of Christ's love for the church.
- Be intentional about reaching out to singles in the church, helping them properly understand and pursue chastity, and teach them a robust theology of sexuality and love.
- Be intentional about forming trusting and loving relationships with those in your life who identify as LGBT.

- What would you say to someone who says, “This is my truth”?
 - <https://whatwouldyousay.org/videos/definitions-matter-truth>
- What would you say if your child or neighbor, or anyone for that matter, accused you of being intolerant because of your Christian worldview on homosexuality
 - <https://whatwouldyousay.org/videos/definitions-matter-tolerance>

A closing thought from *Pilgrim’s Progress*:

“A man may have the knowledge of an angel and yet not be a Christian at all. Therefore, your evidence is not true. “Indeed, to possess knowledge pleases talkers and braggers, but to act on that knowledge pleases God. That’s not to say that the heart can be without knowledge, for without knowledge, the heart is nothing. In fact, there are two types of knowledge. The first type of knowledge is based in the mere study of the world and serves just the student. The second type of knowledge combines grace with faith and love and leads a man to act on the will of God from his heart, providing him contentment. As it is written, ‘Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart.’” *Pilgrim’s Progress*, speech of Faithful to Talkative.

DISCUSSION

How has the media portrayal of the homosexual lifestyle changed over the years?”[T]he modern person considers himself to be something he can create for himself, so he tends to extend that same notion to his relationship to the world in general. We no longer think of ourselves as subject to the world’s fixed nature, or of it as having an objective authority or meaning. We are the ones with the power, and we are the ones who give the world significance.” *Strange New World*, Trueman at 96.

What are some consequences that would naturally flow from this emphasis on self?

Consider this: “[O]n the negative side, one of the most important factors in the rising authority of the self and of our inner feelings, and of the idea that all reality has a plastic quality, is the collapse of traditional external sources of authority and identity.” *Strange New Word*, Trueman at 97.

Question: What are some traditional external sources of authority and identity that no longer hold influence on our culture?

As Protestants, we think of the Reformation as being a positive cultural and religious point in history. Trueman identifies it as also having the negative effect of diluting the Church as an institutional authority. Now the Catholic church had competitors. People and countries could now choose their religion. As countries allowed religious freedom, churches became competitors in a religious marketplace. "This fundamentally transformed the dynamics of power between church authorities and congregants."

- Agree or disagree? Does the good outweigh the bad and what can be done about it at this point?
- How has our culture's view of the traditional family changed over time? What can we do about it?
- How has social media changed the concept of "country" and "patriotism"? What can we do about it?

