

## WAR OF THE WORLDVIEWS #32

### “The Heart of the Matter”

#### VIDEO

#### What is Confirmation Bias? (1:35)

### I. Introduction

#### A. Secular Prophets

1. In the biblical worldview, “all truth is God’s truth”. So when the world discovers truth in any field, science or psychology, believers should know it has its basis in our great God and in Jesus Christ, who is “the truth”. (John 14:6)

2. There are “secular prophets”; those who are not Christian, but still stumble across a truth; the video quotes singer/songwriter Paul Simon...

**“I am just a poor boy, Though my story's seldom told  
I have squandered my resistance, For a pocketful of mumbles  
such are promises; All lies and jest-  
Still, a man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest...”  
Paul Simon, “The Boxer”**

3. Here is a profound truth! A man ‘hears what he wants to hear, and disregards the rest’!

a. This means that we all tend to see and hear what fits our expectations. Almost 200 years ago, the great American poet/philosopher said...

**“A man receives only what he is ready to receive, whether physically,  
emotionally, or morally.”  
Henry David Thoreau**

4. There is a name for this. Psychologists call it “Confirmation Bias”; it is very real and it affects every one of us!

**Confirmation bias is the tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms one's preexisting beliefs or hypotheses.**

## Wikipedia

5. This is how we, as human beings, all of us, Christian or non-Christian, tend to function!

**Confirmation bias refers to a type of selective thinking, whereby one tends to notice and to look for what confirms one's beliefs, and to ignore, not look for, or undervalue the relevance of what contradicts one's beliefs.**

## Quora.com

6. Here's another video that helps explain what we mean:

### VIDEO

#### How Does It Work? (3:50)

- We all tend to look for evidence that supports what we already believe
- Take the debate over global warming. Joe believes in it. Josephine doesn't. Both go on the internet to look for evidence that supports what they have already chosen to believe; "and disregard the rest".

## B. Other Examples of Confirmation Basis

1. One of the dangerous things about confirmation basis is how it moves people to believe what they believe even when confronted with contradictory facts.

**a. I found this cartoon of a man on the psychiatrist's couch: "That's right Doc, My family just won't accept the fact that I'm dead".**

b. There's the story of another man who was sure he was dead. So the Doctor says, "Wait. Do you agree that dead men don't bleed?" The patient agrees. So the Doctor pricks his finger and the blood runs. The man says, "Well what do you know? Dead men DO bleed"!

c. As Christian theologian K.B. Napier says...

**"Confirmation bias searches for, and interprets information in such ways that the findings confirm one's own preconceptions."**

**Christian Theologian K.B. Napier**

- **Take astrology:** So many intelligent people believe that the positions of stars, planets, the sun, and the moon affect or determine such things as personality traits or personal fates. You believe it. You can quote many examples of how people born under certain signs display the characteristics of the sign. But then someone shows you multiple examples of people whose personalities do not match their sign. But you cling to your charts. Why? Because you want to believe astrology is true!
- **Take atheism:** The atheist believes that there is no God. He spends his life looking for things that confirm his belief that there is no God. You use every world war, every natural disaster, and every atrocity of man to man to confirm what you have chosen to believe. So someone points you to consider the amazing order of the universe; someone else gives you their testimony of answered prayer or how God changed their lives. But all this means nothing to you. Why? Because you want atheism to be true!

d. Atheistic author and philosopher Thomas Nagel puts it this way:

**“I want atheism to be true. It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God...it’s that I hope there is no God. I don’t want there to be a God.”**

**Thomas Nagel**

2. The same thing is going on in politics today with the people who have chosen to hate Donald Trump! Have you ever seen anything like it? It borders on the irrational!

**a. Some see the President on TV and see a Leader. But the “Trump haters” spend their days and nights looking for evidence to support their hatred; what he says, what he didn’t say; what he did what he didn’t do. (And he certainly is far from perfect). But these same people ignore or refuse to acknowledge all the good things he has done and is doing.**

b. This is a perfect example of conformation bias.

3. But let me switch gears and tell you a story...

## II. My Personal Introduction to Confirmation Bias

### A. 8 Words That Rocked My World

1. Back in the late 80's the Lord brought Dennis Peacocke into our lives; and what a friend and Pastor he has been to us since then. In one of his messages, he said these 8 words that rocked my world...

**“The mind justifies what the heart has chosen.”**

**Dennis Peacocke**

2. I don't know how you react to profound truth when you hear it; but for me it's kind of like a spiritual explosion! There's a powerful immediate impact. Then there are expanding “tremors” that blow through my soul.

3. When I hear truth, my first instinct is to find that truth expressed in the Bible; and I found it here...

**As a man thinks in his heart so is he.**

**Proverbs 23:7**

4. We think we think with our mind! And we do. But God's word tells us it is the thinking that we do in our hearts that determines the kind of person we really are! It doesn't say “as a man thinks in his mind so is he”; it says as a man thinks in his heart so is he”.

5. We tend to think that it our minds are where our choices are made; and it is true that our minds gather information and data; but God's word tells us that it our heart that makes the choices.

**“The mind justifies what the heart has chosen.”**

**Dennis Peacocke**

## **B. Getting to the Heart of the Matter**

1. God is concerned with the whole man: spirit, soul, and body. But He is most concerned about the human heart!

2. Depending on the Bible version you use, the term “heart” is found over 1000 times in the Bible! And it is almost never used to describe the physical organ (the blood pump). “Heart” in the Bible refers to the very core of man; the essence of his being; his disposition; the thing that governs everything in his life!

3. The Bible teaches that man apart from God has a heart problem!

**The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?**

**Jeremiah 17:9**

In Romans 1, Paul says those who deny God have their foolish hearts darkened...

**The fool has said in his heart, 'there is no God'.**

**Psalm 14:1**

- Years ago, a man was complaining to me about Christian holidays and said there should be a holiday for atheists. I reminded him that we do have "April Fool's Day". (Not recommended)

4. The heart of the matter is the heart of the issue; so David cried out...

**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.**

**Psalm 51:10**

**Solomon said...**

**Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it flow the issues of life.**

**Proverbs 4:23**

**Jesus said...**

**For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**

**Matthew 6:23**

a. **The heart of the matter is the heart; this is why God spoke to the prophet Ezekiel...**

**A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you:**

**Ezekiel 36:26**

5. Men can change their minds; but only God can change their hearts. And until God changes their hearts men will not change their minds! No matter the facts.

**III. Conclusion**

## **A. Fatherly Counsel on Confirmation Bias**

1. Confirmation bias is real; it affects us all. Perhaps more than we know.

### **FOX NEWS OR CNN?**

- Most political conservatives watch FOX news; most political liberals watch CNN; Rush Limbaugh listeners are called “ditto-heads”  
The choice is determined by confirmation bias; we are looking for voices that confirm what we have already chosen to believe.

### **IS CLIMATE CHANGE REAL?**

The majority of people today believe man-caused climate change is real and must be stopped or we will destroy the planet. Some of us believe it is a hoax. I’m not here to argue either side; just to point out that whichever side you pick, you will be looking for voices, research data and information that supports what your heart has chosen to believe and dismiss voices, data and information presented by the other side.

### **FACEBOOK ‘LIKES’**

And now you know why we click “like” on a Facebook page. It’s a voice we agree with.

2. I’m not giving you these examples to argue which news network you watch, or what you think about climate change, or who you should follow on Facebook...I’m trying to show you how confirmation bias affects these things: your mind will justify what your heart has chosen. And it has a downside!

3. Confirmation bias can shut you down spiritually and block your ability to grow.

## **B. The Downside of Confirmation Bias**

### **1. First: Confirmation bias can trap you in a spiritual “silo”.**

- When we got saved, we joined a Southern Baptist church; we sang Baptist songs, read Baptist books and listened to Baptist sermons about a Jesus who was certainly a Southern Baptist Himself. (Smile). Of itself, this was not a bad thing. The downside was that it was a rather “closed” environment; listening to preaching and teaching and reading books from other streams was discouraged. It was a spiritual silo that isolated us from truth and teaching not marked “Baptist”. We had to go outside the silo to find out about the mighty Baptism in the Holy Spirit; which got us kicked out of the church and into another problem with confirmation bias.

## **2. Second: Confirmation bias can lock you in an “echo chamber”.**

**An “echo chamber” is a group situation where information, ideas and beliefs are amplified or reinforced by repetition, while different or competing views are censored, disallowed, or otherwise underrepresented.”**

a. When we came out of the Baptist church we entered into a series of experiences with Pentecostal or charismatic groups; some of which were “echo chambers”.

**b. As long as you could “groupthink”-learn the buzzwords and catch phrases of the group, you were fine; but if you differed you got into trouble.**

c. For example: If the confirmation bias of the group was committed to the concept of “faith”, you couldn’t talk much about the sovereignty of God; if the confirmation bias of the group was committed to the sovereignty of God you couldn’t talk much about faith; if the confirmation bias of the group was healing and miracles, good luck with speaking up about the importance of theology.

d. My problem was that I got saved in a Baptist church; baptized in the Holy Spirit in a Pentecostal church; learned to live by faith through the teachings of the faith movement, and came to understand the sovereignty of God through the works of the Presbyterians!

3. By now you would think I’d a spiritual schizophrenic! But instead you see the mature, well-rounded man that I am. (PLEASE SMILE HERE) But let me close on this note...

## **C. Confirmation Bias Killed Jesus**

1. The Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees were spiritual silos and echo chambers; their hearts were programmed with confirmation bias that could not receive the Truth in Jesus Christ.

2. They had a “heart problem”-and they missed their Messiah.

3. When we go to war to win the lost, we need to know what we’re dealing with...

**“Researchers discovered that once formed, impressions are remarkably perseverant. People who were once merely told that they were right, started believing it, and persisted in believing it, even after they were shown facts to the contrary.”**

**Joel McDurmon**

#### **D. Final Thoughts**

1. The only safe confirmation bias is the Word of God.

a. Everything it says is true

b. Nothing that contradicts it can possibly be true

2. Never be afraid of the truth! (No matter how or through whom God brings it to you). We have the weapons we need to win.

**“A cogently presented, comprehensive, and consistent Christian worldview can stand up to any hostile belief system. But it takes work to understand how skeptics think, believe, and behave.”**

**Gary DeMar**

3. We can never argue people into the Kingdom of God because we’re only dealing with their minds. And the mind justifies what the heart has chosen. Only God can deal with...

**The Heart of the Matter**