

FOUNDATIONS  
FOR CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW  
THE LAW OF GOD (2): FIRST THINGS



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A REVISION STUDY FROM  
THE FELLOWSHIP OF AILBE

Foundations for Christian Worldview: The Law of God (2): First Things  
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Welcome to *Foundations for Christian Worldview:  
The Law of God (2): First Things*

Every worldview has some shape, some outline or framework that defines it. No matter how you load that worldview with information and ideas, it has to come together into a solid whole if it is to make sense and be livable.

There are many ways to frame out a worldview, and the one we will be following as we search through the Law of God is defined by three parameters: vision, disciplines, and outcomes.

All worldviews include some vision of the good life, regimens for how we use our time to attain that life, and benchmarks to tell us whether and how we're making progress. This is true for the Christian worldview as well. In this study we will be looking in an introductory manner at the distinctive vision, disciplines, and outcomes that make up the Christian worldview.

*ReVision* studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore  
Principal

## 1 Worldview Framework

*Forever, O LORD,  
Your word is settled in heaven.  
Your faithfulness endures to all generations;  
You established the earth, and it abides.  
They continue this day according to Your ordinances,  
For all are Your servants. Psalm 119:89-91*

### *The inevitability of worldview*

In this study we are putting down a footprint for a Christian worldview. A worldview is just what it sounds like, a way of *looking at* or *thinking about* the world, together with the hopes and aspirations we cherish, and the practices and projects we undertake in an effort to know and live the good life as we understand it.

The *Christian* worldview is an outlook on life grounded in the Scriptures, focused on Jesus Christ, lived toward the promises of God, and committed to increasing in the Kingdom of God and its presence, promise, and power. That worldview is settled in heaven and endures forever. Everyone has a worldview, and every *Christian* has a worldview. But not every Christian has a *Christian* worldview, at least, not the worldview outlined in the Scriptures, beginning with the Law of God.

If we want our worldview to be a *Christian* worldview, then we shall have to think about our lives, our world, and our callings in line with the teaching of God's Word. And we'll need to recognize that, because we have been learning and living *some* worldview all our lives, we'll have to work hard to learn instead those distinct perspectives and practices that constitute a *Christian* worldview.

As we take up the study of Christian worldview, we must be willing to lay aside any worldview ideas that do not fit that footprint, even though we may have learned them early in life and practiced them faithfully for many years.

### *From early on*

Worldview thinking begins at a very early age. Children learn by many means and from various sources to think about what's good for them – what they should want out of their daily experience, what will give them enjoyment: the good life. As they learn, they interact with people and their environment to achieve the goal taking shape in their minds, even if that goal is only vaguely understood.

Now this doesn't happen consciously, at least, not *fully* so. Kids aren't thinking in terms of worldview as they settle on a notion of what's good for them and what's the best way to achieve that. But they know what they want, or at least, they think they know. They clap hands and smile when they get it, and they whine or fuss or cry when they don't. They maneuver around the playroom, acquire the skills of eating, make the best of bath time, and grudgingly go off to bed when led to do so. They learn, if only implicitly, that life is not all play or eating. There are times for resting and times for sitting still and times for doing chores, and that, like it or not, they must accept parental authority and try to get along with other children. Keeping their own greatest desires at all times in mind, or, at least, very near to the surface of their thinking, children acquire disciplines, submit to protocols, and settle into ways of getting along that enable them to get what they want much of the time, and to put up with what they have to the rest of it.

As children grow, they are reinforced in their choices and behaviors by loving parents and others, who condone and applaud certain ways of being-in-the-world and discourage and perhaps punish those which are not in line with the *larger* worldview within which the child is trying to carve out his own.

As long as they are children, certain things will be expected of them which, the older they get, will no longer be necessary, and will be replaced by values and priorities more consciously chosen. Children learn *principles* – such as eating well, obeying mom and dad, getting along with others, accepting the necessity of work – that take certain forms while they’re crawling around the playroom, but which will be differently adapted as they go off to school or get a job or begin families of their own.

But the basics of worldview thinking and living are set down from the earliest years. Everything we learn and do in life simply builds on the outlook and skills we began to acquire as children. Over the years, an outlook on life settles in, and certain practices, habits, and routines develop in conformity with that outlook, in the pursuit of which people hope to achieve a satisfactory measure of the good life.

To learn and live a Christian worldview, we will need to examine all our acquired habits, and be ready to set aside any that do not fit the footprint that walks in the path of Jesus.

*The necessity of a framework*

The worldview presented in the Bible also begins in the infancy of God’s people, in the rules and promises and protocols given through Moses. These can sometimes seem harsh, but they were intended for a people in the infancy of being God’s people, and they encode truths and principles that do not change, even though they must be adapted as the children of God mature into the Body of Christ. The focus of the Law is always the same – on the coming Seed of the woman, Offspring of Abraham, and dynastic Heir of Judah, Who is also the Lamb of sacrifice, the Tabernacle of dwelling and glory, and the very Promised Land of God. The principles set down in the Law of God focus our attention on God and His Word, and direct us how to walk in the path where His truth illuminates the way, His power fills and enables us, and His presence goes with us to protect us from the always alluring and ever-present insinuations of the lie: “Yea, hath God said?”

But before we begin to mine and arrange those principles, let’s establish a framework for thinking about Christian worldview, one that will house all the principles and protocols related to Christian worldview that are found in the Law of God and all His Word, and will enable us to build meaningfully on the first words of Christian worldview from this point forward.

In this part of our study, therefore, we will consider a way of outlining the *dimensions* of a worldview, so we can set our worldview footprint on solid ground and in a path that we can continue to follow through all the counsel of God.

*For reflection*

1. What influences *other* than the Christian worldview affect and shape the thinking of Christians today? What about you?
2. What do you think it will take for you to learn and begin living a more consistent Christian worldview?
3. What obstacles will you have to overcome to gain the most from this effort?

*Next steps – Preparation: Write out your answers to the three questions above. Take your answers to the Lord in prayer, and review them with Him. Listen for any specific next steps as He leads.*

## 2 Dimensions of a Worldview: Vision

*There is a way that seems right to a man...* Proverbs 14.12

### *Embracing a big idea*

In our text, Solomon uses the word *way* like we're using the word *worldview*. He says, in effect, that every person has a worldview, and that worldview seems right for their purposes. They may not have thought too deeply about their worldview, but they have one nonetheless. Their *way* consists of a repertoire of priorities, hopes, aspirations, desires, routines, goals, and standards – more or less consciously embraced – which serves to guide their daily life through the Scylla and Charybdis and the flotsam and jetsam of everyday existence.

Every human being has a worldview, a *way* that seems right to them, and every worldview consists of similar features, components, or dimensions.

It's a good idea to try to understand these components; otherwise, the *way* (worldview) that *seems right* to us at any moment may end up being a dead end, and we won't know why. In that case, we'll need to make adjustments, and perhaps redirect our thinking and agenda. Unless we understand the parameters or dimensions that comprise a worldview, we'll be lost at sea and vulnerable to repeated disappointments in trying to navigate the often stormy waters and hidden currents of our life.

We need to understand the wheelhouse of a worldview, the primary components and parameters to which we can apply thinking and action to keep the coracle of our lives on a steady course toward our hopes. If we don't know where to "grab hold" of a worldview, how will we be able to identify where our way has gone wrong and where it needs to be improved?

So we need a way of getting our arms around, and our hands on, the very big idea of "worldview". Doing so will enable us to monitor our worldview and to make adjustments or corrections as indicated.

### *Dimensions of a worldview*

There are, of course, many ways of looking at the idea of worldview, and many of those can seem abstract and arcane – the sort of stuff best left to academics. But since everyone has a worldview, and everyone wants a worldview that seems right for their needs and aspirations, everyone needs some way to embrace and lay hold on the idea of worldview, so as to make the most of this important concept.

Before we begin looking specifically into the writings of Moses, to see what God has to say through him about the Christian worldview, I want to simplify the *idea* of worldview by defining its primary dimensions. Every worldview consists of three primary dimensions. Think of them as the legs of an equilateral triangle.

Let's start with the left leg of our triangle, which will stand for our worldview *vision*. A worldview vision describes what we see as our ultimate desired state – that which we reckon to be ultimately true and good, and which commands our imagination and energies. We need to have a view of what is ultimate in *truth* because we can't be content, in a hard-knocks world, merely with what *seems* right to us. We need to know, as much as is possible, what is *really* right, that is, what is *true*. It may *seem* like a good idea to fly off the roof of a building, assisted only by our arms. But we know that that way leads, following several exhilarating moments, to unpleasant consequences, because the *truth* is something other than what *seems right* to us.

We need to know what is *true*, because if we persist in ignorantly banging our heads up against things that are *not* true, whatever those not true things are will get the best of us every time.

We also must connect our understanding of ultimate truth with what we consider to be ultimate *good*, because our souls will settle for nothing less than as much as we can get of whatever we perceive to be our ultimate good.

So, for example, in the secular and materialistic worldview, the ultimate *truth* is matter, and science and technology are the ways to make matter work for us. The ultimate *good* is possessing matter in forms agreeable to us – whether goods, money, properties, or other people’s bodies (whether to command or enjoy). People wedded to a vision of the good life as grounded in and comprised of material goods and experiences will bring everything in their lives into the task of realizing that vision. They will feed and nurture that vision through education, or have it nurtured in them by pop culture or advertising.

The same is true for every worldview, including the Christian worldview: our vision of truth and goodness will define and drive everything else in our lives.

*The main thing*

In worldview, therefore, *vision* is the main thing. Worldview visions are frequently reduced to slogans, to help those who hold them to remember and focus on what matters most. Some slogans are catchy and wry: “He who dies with the most toys wins.” Some are well-meaning but ominous: “From each according to his ability to each according to his need.” “*Liberté, égalité, fraternité.*” Other vision slogans can be reduced to a word or two: “Retirement.” “Paradise.” “Nirvana.” “Just a little more.”

A worldview vision is like Polaris, the North Star. We find it, fix on it, and sail according to it in everything we do. If we get the vision wrong – if we mistake some other star for Polaris – no amount of anything we do within the three dimensions of our worldview will get us where we hope to be. At best, we’ll just get by. At worst, we’ll find that what seemed so right to us is, in the end, disastrously wrong.

For every person there is a way, a worldview vision, that seems right to them. Vision is the first and most important leg of the worldview triangle. As Christians, we need to make sure that our worldview vision – our *way* – is true and good not merely to us, but to God, and to our Lord Jesus Christ.

And to do that, we need to begin at the beginning of Christian worldview thinking, with the Law of God in the books of Moses.

*For reflection*

1. What do we mean by “worldview vision”? If you had to reduce your worldview vision to a slogan, what would it be?
2. Why is it so important that we get our worldview vision right – as close to truth and goodness as we can?
3. What sorts of things should be included in the vision of a Christian worldview?

*Next steps – Preparation: Draw a triangle and label the left leg “Vision.” On the line of that left leg, list, in hierarchical order (top to bottom) what you consider to be the most important truths and goods of the Christian worldview. Use this exercise as an opportunity for solitude, meditation, and prayer.*

### 3 Dimensions of a Worldview: Disciplines

*What profit has the worker from that in which he labors?* Ecclesiastes 3.9

#### *A worldview framework*

We're considering a framework for thinking about worldview that will allow us to get our hands around this very big concept and begin to shape and live it more purposefully and fruitfully. Once we have established a framework, we can begin looking into the Law of Moses to discover what it reveals about the footprint of a Christian worldview.

We're using a triangle to guide this part of our study, and we said we would allow the left leg of the triangle to serve for the idea of *vision*. Every worldview unfolds toward some vision of ultimate truth and goodness. The clearer and more compelling our worldview vision, the more likely we will be to live passionately toward it. Put in Solomon's terms, the vision of what we hope to gain as *profit* will guide our *labors* each day.

Living toward our worldview is a matter of time, and what we do with it. Time is a gift from God, and Christians are called to make the best use of this gift (Eph. 5.15-17), to live in the wisdom of God. Making good use of our time involves such things as making plans, setting goals, mastering certain skills, monitoring our activities, reviewing our work, and so forth.

Effective use of the time of our lives comes down to discipline. Many people go through life like a pinball, shot on to the gameboard at some point in the past, they careen through experiences with no particular focus, except to try to rack up a good score before finally going down the hole. People who live this way often feel as though their lives are out of control, or that making progress is not as important as just getting by.

But Christians cannot live this way. Making the best use of the gift of time requires that we apply ourselves diligently to each moment of our time and whatever fills it, to seek the wisdom and glory of God in all we do.

And this means having in place the kind of *disciplines* that will allow us to make steady progress toward our worldview vision.

#### *Worldview progress*

As our vision of the good life becomes firmly fixed in our minds, we will take up whatever disciplines are necessary in order to gain that vision. *Disciplines* constitute the second (right) leg of our worldview triangle.

We must not make the mistake of thinking of discipline as somehow only referring to punishment. Living a *disciplined* life is what *disciples* do, and the disciplines by which you live will reveal the focus of your discipleship, what you're living for or toward, what sort of *profit* you're seeking, or what you're hoping to achieve. Every worldview prescribes a raft of disciplines which adherents must master in order to make progress toward their vision of the good life. Those disciplines are of various kinds. What disciplines do for us, in essence, is enable us to structure the time of our lives to that we are always oriented toward and (hopefully) making progress toward realizing the good life we seek, through the various *labors* we undertake.

So, for example, in the secular and materialist worldview, the most important disciplines might be something like get an education and get a job. Finishing a course toward a diploma, certificate, or degree, and then getting the job we want, and doing well in it, require mastery of certain disciplines. We have to work for what we want, and education helps to prepare us for the best possible job, which will allow us to gain more of the

material benefits we seek. Profit (vision): material wellbeing; Labors (disciplines): learning and work.

*Christians and disciplines*

Christians are disciples of Jesus Christ. He calls us to His Kingdom and glory, to seek these as the commanding goal and perspective in everything we do (1 Thess. 2.12). The Christian's hope is that we might realize more of the glory of God – *experience* more of it and *express* more of it in our daily lives (Rom. 5.1, 2; 2 Cor. 3.12-18; 1 Cor. 10.31), so that the knowledge of God and His glory increases throughout our sphere of influence.

Thus, Christians need to have in place a repertoire of disciplines that will allow us to lay hold on our time, our eye firmly fixed on some aspect of our worldview vision, and make the most of that time for making progress toward that vision (cf. Ps. 90.12, 16, 17). The *labors* we embrace are the disciplines that will allow us consistently to gain the *profit* of knowing Christ and His Kingdom and glory.

In the Christian life, a wide variety of disciplines are necessary, disciplines that will enable us to keep up a vibrant spiritual life, to show the love of God to the people around us, do all our work as unto the Lord and not men, fulfill our role in the Christian community, and deal with temptations and trials that might interrupt or set us back in our progress within and toward the Kingdom.

If you're not a person who likes disciplines, you're going to have a difficult time fulfilling your Kingdom-and-glory calling in the Lord. Making the most of our time is full time work, and we must be prepared to seek the wisdom of God for *all* the time of our lives by learning and mastering the disciplines that will allow us to glorify God and dwell in His joy at all times. The profit of a joyful Kingdom life only comes through the labor of Christian disciplines.

Every worldview has *disciplines*, and the particular raft of disciplines we take up will depend on our *vision* of the good life, what and how clear and compelling it is. Like that vision, *disciplines* can be acquired, assessed, and adjusted as necessary to keep us on track for the good life as we envision it.

But we need to have some benchmarks by which to determine that our disciplines are actually helping us make progress in our worldview. And here is where we need to be clear about the day-by-day *outcomes* which indicate progress in living our Christian worldview.

*For reflection*

1. Everyone lives by certain disciplines – routines, practices, ways of working and relating, and so forth. But how can we know which disciplines are the ones we need to live a *Christian* worldview?
2. How are disciplines related to time? What do we mean by the idea of “wasting” time? How can proper discipline help us to avoid that?
3. Meditate on Psalm 90.12, 16, 17. How do these verses from Moses teach us to think about time and discipline? What is the ultimate objective?

*Next steps – Preparation: Make a list of all the disciplines you consciously engage in each day. Are these sufficient to help you make progress in the Kingdom of God?*

## 4 Dimensions of a Worldview: Outcomes

“Therefore by their fruits you will know them.” Matthew 7.20

“You Are Here”

We see those signs in many places. Airports, large shopping malls, university campuses, even on our GPS. They tell us where we are at any given time, and from that, we can determine where we need to go.

Put another way, those “You Are Here” signs represent the *outcomes* of our efforts or journey thus far. And, since in large places like airports, malls, and university campuses – not to mention cross-country treks – we can sometimes become lost or disoriented, those signs can be most helpful and reassuring.

Every worldview has its own set of “You Are Here” indicators. They tell us where we are in our worldview – whether we are realizing any of our vision; how well our disciplines are working; and even what we need to do next to keep making progress in life.

These “You Are Here” signs are the various *outcomes* that serve as benchmarks in our daily lives, to let us know whether and to what extent we are moving any closer to those ultimate truths and goods by which we are laboring to gain the profit we seek. Every worldview has such indicators, and everyone who hopes to make progress in living a consistent and profitable worldview will keep one eye on those outcomes at all times.

The third (bottom) leg of our worldview triangle represents the *outcomes* evident in our lives as indicators that we are or are not making progress toward our vision of the good life.

The outcomes by which we measure progress in our lives will differ according to our worldview vision and the disciplines we embrace for daily living. The benchmarks of a successful day for a secularist will not be the same as those of a consistent Hindu. They may overlap in some ways, but the real definition of them will differ markedly.

The same is true of the Christian worldview. If we hope to measure our progress in realizing our Kingdom-and-glory calling by the benchmarks of a secular worldview – or any other worldview – we’re going to be disappointed. We may feel happy about the benchmarks we have achieved each day, but if they’re not the kind of outcomes prescribed by a *Christian* vision, they’re not going to help us much in our calling as disciples.

*Vision, disciplines, outcomes*

For our worldview to be consistent, we need to have a clear vision, to take up the right disciplines, and to look for those appropriate daily indicators that will assure us we’re on the right path.

*Vision* prescribes the *disciplines* we embrace, and those *disciplines* generate the *outcomes* that bring our worldview to life, and show we’re on track toward our *vision*. As we discipline our lives in various ways, that discipline shapes the way we think, how we feel, what we value as top priorities, and what we determine to say or do. The actions that come out in our lives – what we’re calling *outcomes* – are the product of the disciplines to which we have submitted over time. If the outcomes are not what we expect, we can adjust our disciplines or sharpen the focus of our vision, or both. But the outcomes are all-important if worldview is to be anything other than a merely intellectual exercise. By the fruits that come out in our lives, we can determine the worldview by which we are living.

We demonstrate what matters to us – our *vision* – by the ways, for example, we spend our money and use our time, as well as the things we talk about with most interest and enthusiasm. The outcomes a secular or

materialist seeks relate to acquiring and enjoying material possessions and experiences. In a narcissistic age such as ours, these tend to be rather self-centered outcomes, answering the question, “What’s in it for me?” Of course, the person holding to this worldview is not averse to sharing his outcomes with others, especially those he loves, because this increases the material happiness he seeks. In the main, such a person’s goal in life, and the indicators that tell him he is reaching his goal, are realized in terms of things and circumstances.

*Words and deeds*

Outcomes take the form of words and deeds. How and what we talk about, what we do and how we do it: These are the “profit” – the overflow – that issues from our worldview vision and the disciplines we labor at in pursuit of that vision. The outcomes allow us to realize a measure of our vision, and they tell us whether we are on track for a greater measure of that vision in the days to come.

Thus, it is pretty important that we determine *which* outcomes we should be expecting to see in our lives each day. If we don’t know what the outcomes of our worldview should be, then any old outcomes will do, but we won’t make any progress toward our vision. If we embrace outcomes that are too small for our vision, we may make progress, but it will be tortoise-like and unsatisfactory, and we may be tempted to ratchet down our vision or compromise our disciplines in response. The effect of this may well be to stymie our outcomes even more.

Outcomes take many forms and expressions. Ultimately, as I have said, they boil down to what we do and what we say, deeds and words. Thus, we should be able to *plan* and *prepare* for certain outcomes each day – what we will say and do, and how we will say and do it; and we should be able to *reflect* on or *review* those activities, once they are complete, to determine the extent to which what we said or did actually fulfilled what we had planned. This is what the apostle Paul describes as walking “circumspectly” (Eph. 5.15).

And to make sure those outcomes are in line with our vision, we’ll need to do some serious thinking and – for the Christian at least – searching of Scripture, praying, and learning about the outcomes that are consistent with our vision of Christ and His Kingdom.

The outcomes of our worldview are visible in everything we do, since everything we do is the result of what we seek and how we seek it. Christian outcomes are those that tend to bring out the glory of God, even in the small stuff and everyday situations of our lives (1 Cor. 10.31). And as we shall see, these outcomes can be summarized in two categories: love for God and love for our neighbors.

*For reflection*

1. How important are outcomes to worldview living? Explain.
2. How should a Christian pray and prepare for outcomes consistent with a Christian vision?
3. Can we achieve consistent and fruitful Christian outcomes apart from consistent and fruitful Christian disciplines? Explain.

*Next steps – Transformation: How do you pray and prepare for daily outcomes consistent with your calling to the Kingdom and glory of God? Can you see any way to improve in this?*

## 5 Christian Worldview: Vision

*In the beginning God...* Genesis 1.1

### *Worldview framework*

We have been considering a framework for understanding the idea of worldview. Everyone has a worldview. By *worldview*, we mean the way people understand the world and make their way in it. We may approach the task of understanding worldview from a variety of perspectives. For our purposes, we are investigating this important and inescapable concept according to a framework comprised of three facets, like a triangle: vision, disciplines, and outcomes.

Our worldview *vision* (the left leg of our triangle) describes that which we see as ultimately true and good. This is what we desire, and what we hope to realize at some point, at least to some extent.

To make progress toward our vision, we adopt *disciplines* (the right leg of our triangle) that help us make the best use of our time. These are the daily routines, practices, obligations, and duties we accept because we believe that, by doing these particular things over and over, we will be more likely to realize our vision of the good life.

To measure our progress in worldview living, we identify certain *outcomes* (the bottom leg of the triangle) that can tell us whether, and to what extent, we're on track toward our vision; or where we may need to adjust or improve our disciplines so that we can realize more progress toward the good life.

We have briefly noted how the secular and materialist worldview understands these components, and have thought a bit about how they function in a secular person's life. As Charles Taylor has so ably demonstrated (*A Secular Age*), the larger world framework in which we live is, in general, delineated by a *secular* vision of life, together with the disciplines and outcomes appropriate to such a vision.

But although we live within a world framework defined by a secular view of life, Christians do not hold to a secular and materialist worldview. Our worldview is *Biblical*. That is, it starts with the Bible, not with the best ideas of fallible men, or molded by the spirit of the times. The Christian worldview develops its vision, disciplines, and outcomes "under the heavens", as Solomon would say, rather than "under the sun".

And the Christian worldview begins with a *Biblical* and *Christian* vision of that which is ultimately true and good.

### *Unseen things*

The worldview taught in Scripture presents a vision of *unseen things* as that which is ultimately true and good, and therefore most to be desired by human beings. This is just another way of saying that the Biblical worldview offers a *spiritual vision* as the defining motif and principle of the good life. The worldview that has its footings in the Law of God unfolds toward a vision of *spiritual* realities and truths, for a life that is designed to be, in the first instance, spiritual in all things.

Because what we understand to be ultimately good and true is spiritual, we cannot see it with our eyes. Instead, we must embrace the vision of unseen things by faith, with the "eyes of the heart" (Eph. 1.18). The vision of unseen things that begins in God's Law unfolds throughout the Scriptures, and includes God Himself; His Kingdom and promises; a spiritual understanding of human life, as made in God's image. The Christian vision also includes the reality of other spiritual powers; the great salvation of the Lord; a spiritual understanding of the times in which we live, and of the course of future history and the world to come.

In His Word, God gives us glimpses and metaphors and flashes of insight, as well as thorough instruction concerning the unseen world. With our imaginations submitted to the defining and guiding light of the Scripture, we can assemble the outline of a vision of what is ultimately true and good: that God is; that He should be known and loved; His Word should be received and obeyed; and His wisdom, justice, goodness, love, and glory should guide and shape all aspects of our lives in this world.

That outline of a vision will begin to take on more specifics as we continue studying the Word of God and thinking through the implications and applications of its teaching for our lives and callings. Each believer in Jesus, therefore, will share a common vision of unseen things, but will flesh out the specific parameters of that common vision relative to his or her calling and circumstances in life.

#### *Unseen, but real*

Of course, we cannot see these spiritual realities with physical eyes. They are *unseen* things. But just because they are unseen does not mean they aren't *real*. In fact, the spiritual realities of the world are, if anything, more real than those we can see, feel, hear, taste, or smell. The unseen things of the world actually define the meaning and purpose of everything else; so if we want to have a clear and correct understanding of the world in which we live, and how best to make our way in this world, we have to work hard at nurturing a vision of the unseen things that overarch, pervade, sustain, and support everything else.

Indeed, Christian faith is the *assurance* of such unseen realities, together with the evidence they produce in the way of disciplines and outcomes in our life (Heb. 11.1).

The unseen things taught in Scripture are the *true end* of Christian faith. If we ignore or neglect devoting the eyes of our heart to nurturing this vision, we are only cheating ourselves of the truth and goodness God intends, simply because we are too easily content with whatever diverts or amuses or satisfies us at present. As C. S. Lewis wrote in *The Weight of Glory*, “We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

May it please the Lord that we should be pleased with nothing less than a full and glorious and expansive and radiant vision of the ultimate truth and goodness God has in store for us in the Christian vision of the world. And the place to begin nurturing that vision is the Law of God, the five books of Moses.

#### *Questions for reflection*

1. Why are vision, discipline, and outcomes a useful way of thinking about the idea of worldview?
2. What do we mean by the “eyes of the heart” (Eph. 1.15-23; v. 18, NKJV: “eyes of your understanding”)? How did Paul seem to think these operate in our lives?
3. What would you suggest as an effective way to nurture a vision of unseen things?

*Next steps – Preparation: Draw a triangle, and label the left leg “Christian Vision.” On that leg, list as many things as you can think of that constitute the unseen things of a Christian worldview. Where do you see a need for growth in understanding these?*

## 6 Christian Worldview: Disciplines

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart,  
And lean not on your own understanding;  
In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
And He shall direct your paths.* Proverbs 3.5, 6

### *What we love*

The Biblical worldview is grounded in a vision of unseen spiritual realities, beginning in God and the various ways God has, in time, revealed Himself and His will. God is revealed to us most clearly in Jesus Christ (Heb. 1.3; Jn. 14.9), Who is now exalted in glory and seated at the right hand of the Father. From there, by His Word and Spirit, King Jesus administers the divine economy and advances His rule on earth as it is in heaven.

On the left leg of our worldview triangle, the various unseen and yet-to-be-realized components of our life in Christ line up for the purpose of advancing His rule and glorifying the Father. Above all, we would see *Jesus*, exalted in glory (Col. 3.1-3). Jesus commands us to see and seek His *Kingdom* (Matt. 6.33). This we do from within His Body, the *Church* (Matt. 16.18; 1 Cor. 12.7-11; Eph. 4.11-16), where we learn to lay hold on all the broad scope of our *great salvation*, and to identify and take up our individual *calling and legacy* (Jn. 20.21; Ps. 45.17). And we must understand *the times* in which we live if we would know what to do for Christ and His Kingdom (1 Chron. 12.32) to redeem our times for His glory.

Each of these aspects of our Christian worldview vision exists as both an unseen ideal and an unfolding reality. The clearer our vision of these entities, the more we will comprehend their beauty and fitness for our lives, and the more we will desire and pursue them.

For our Christian worldview vision must focus on those things we are created for and called to love above all: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; His coming Kingdom and the people who populate it; the gift of salvation and the calling to serve; and the world of our own times, which God loves so much that He gave His Son for its redemption (Jn. 3.16).

The good life unfolds toward these unseen realities, which we hope to make real, tangible, and actual in our daily lives. Yet always there is more to learn and more to love of this glorious life and vision which God has created for us. We who would realize this vision must study to learn it, meditate to love it, and devote all our energies to achieving it more fully day by day.

This brings us to the matter of time and how we use our time in pursuit of Christ, His Kingdom, and our calling as His people.

### *The life of discipline*

The Christian receives the time of his life as a gift from God, and he resolves to use that time, acknowledging and serving God in all his ways, so that he may express the wisdom of God and live for His glory in even the smallest, most everyday aspects of his life (Eph. 5.15-17; 1 Cor. 10.31).

What do we do in the time of our lives? We seek the Lord; participate in a variety of relationships; do our work (and not just our job); contribute to the health and growth of the Lord's Church; and stand our ground in the spiritual warfare. In each of these areas of life – all our relationships, roles, and responsibilities – we hope to realize the vision of righteousness, peace, joy, goodness, beauty, truth, power, and blessing which beckons us as the vision of Christian life, life in which God is acknowledged, served, known, loved, enjoyed, and glorified *in all our ways*.

Achieving this vision requires a disciplined approach to seeking the Lord and discovering His will. The right leg of our triangle organizes the different kinds of discipline by which we devote all our ways to the Lord and redeem the time He gives us each day. We're using the term *discipline* in a broad and edifying way – like an athlete in training and competition, rather than in a narrow and punitive way – to define what we actually do in the time of our lives to make progress toward our vision of the good and true life.

The disciplined life begins in the *soul*, which we seek to improve in knowing and loving God through such disciplines as worship, prayer, and the reading and study of Scripture. The various *relationships* in which we engage – as parent, spouse, friend, colleague, or neighbor – also require us to master certain ways of loving others that reflect how we want to be loved ourselves. All the *work* we do each day requires skills, knowledge, expertise, consistency, and diligence, all of which must be learned and mastered as daily disciplines in this particular arena of our time. As Christians we are part of a larger family of the *community of believers*, and this requires us to learn and practice those disciplines – worship, fellowship, collaboration, and so forth – that make for strong communities. And we must also be ready to engage those disciplines that will keep us on top in the *spiritual warfare*. These include recognizing and resisting temptation, giving thanks in all things, trusting the Lord in times of trial, and bearing one another's burdens.

The Word of God, beginning in His Law, speaks abundantly to all these areas, that we might be equipped for every good work in all our ways (2 Tim. 3.15-17).

#### *Time for discipline*

All the time of life – *all* our ways – must be daily devoted to the Lord, taken in hand, and used so that we redeem the time for achieving the vision of what we love. We must pay attention to our time, plan it well, work it diligently, and review our use of it, so that we may offer our time back to the Lord confidently and joyfully (cf. Ps. 90.12, 16, 17; Prov. 4.20-27).

The Christian vision – Christ and His Kingdom unfolding as our great salvation and calling in life – is what we love, but we will have to work hard to achieve it. The entire current of our times flows against us. Together we are rowing upstream against the rushing waters of secularism, naturalism, narcissism, materialism, and sensualism. Making progress can seem an impossible task, but we have strength beyond our own strength to empower and sustain us (Phil. 2.13; Eph. 3.20). If we think we can coast in this flood (Rev. 12.13-15), trying merely to keep afloat in our faith and enjoy whatever cheap thrills we may encounter along the way, we deceive ourselves. A great cataclysm awaits all those who merely go with the flow of our age in flight from God, rather than strive to overcome it (Rom. 1.18-32). If we do not apply ourselves with *all diligence in all our ways*, the vision of Christ and His Kingdom will recede ever further away, and our love for that vision will grow increasingly cold. We will comfort ourselves that we have believed in Jesus, and hope that we can just hold on until He returns. But unless we embrace His calling to self-denying, sacrificial good works and good words, we will be sorely disappointed when we stand before Him (Jn. 20.21; Phil. 2.5-11).

As followers of Christ, our lives are not our own. We have been bought with the high price of Jesus' blood and righteousness (1 Cor. 6.19, 20), and we owe all that we are and have, and all the time of our lives, to Him. Let us resolve to focus continuously on Christ and His Kingdom, and to strive and struggle and strain to make progress toward that glorious vision at every moment, in every situation, in all our ways, with all our soul and strength.

#### *Questions for reflection*

1. What is your approach to making the most of the time God gives you each day? Can you see any ways you might improve in this?
2. We should not think of discipline as punitive, merely. *Discipline* is what *disciples* embrace so that they can

acknowledge and follow the Lord in all their ways. How would you explain the benefits of a disciplined life to a new believer?

3. We mentioned several areas of life where disciplines are required. In which of these do you most need to improve?

*Next steps – Preparation: Meditate on Psalm 90.12, 16, 17. As you meditate, make notes about areas of discipline where you would like to improve. Lay out a plan for improvement, and begin working it right away.*

## 7 Christian Worldview: Outcomes

*Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”* Matthew 22.37-40

### *Aiming too low?*

How do we measure progress in living our Christian worldview? Proponents of worldview have measures by which they determine the ways and extent to which their *labors* (disciplines) are enabling them to achieve their *vision* of the good and true life. The same must be true for those who hold a Christian worldview.

What outcomes does your church seek as a result of its efforts in your community? What about the other ministries you support? How do they measure their contribution to advancing a Christian worldview? And what do you look to in your church and the ministries you support, to assure you that your contribution is helping to advance the vision of God’s Kingdom coming on earth, as it is in heaven?

There is a danger here, that we aim too low, or aim wrongly in measuring our progress, and thus deceive ourselves about making any progress at all. We make two major mistakes in this regard, taking as barometers of the state of our worldview, false notions about what indicates progress in the good and true life.

Jesus has told us what the Christian worldview looks like as it unfolds, spreads, and advances in the Kingdom of God. And what Jesus holds out as the true measure of Christian worldview living, is love.

### *Love*

Two general and very significant outcomes define the ways the Christian worldview must be expressed: love for God and love for the people around us. Without love as motive and goal and manifestation of our vision and disciplines, all our numbers and programs and broadcasts and publications are nothing more than clanging cymbals, giving us great satisfaction in the crash and clash, but irritating the ears of all who are exposed to our empty bombast (1 Corinthians 13.1).

Love for God and for our neighbors are the indicators that we are on course in our Biblical worldview. These two outcomes are expressed in a wide range of ways, in all our relationships, roles, and responsibilities. In God’s Word, beginning in His Law, the true nature of love, and the powerful effects it has on people and their societies and cultures, are spelled out in many clear and compelling ways. Jesus insisted that we must begin in God’s Law and remain firmly rooted there in our desire to understand and practice the true nature of love. For when we lose contact with the Law of God – by neglect or outright dismissal, as is becoming increasingly fashionable among certain evangelical preachers and lay people – our love will grow cold (Matt. 24.12). And where love is cold, or non-existent, or merely a feeling we talk about but do not act on in sacrificial ways, then our faith has become ineffectual, and we need to examine ourselves and our worldview to get back on a proper course (2 Cor. 13.5).

We deceive ourselves if we think that making progress in the Christian worldview is merely a matter of numbers or ideas. Anyone can generate a large following, if he tells the people what they most want to hear, or satisfies their itches of one kind or another through activities and programs and other kinds of religious diversions. And the fact that some people have large followings, reach thousands on the radio or via the Internet, and distribute all kinds of books and pamphlets and speak out on every current issue or topic – this is no guarantee that a *Christian* worldview is operating as Jesus intends. And to the extent that we allow ourselves to become caught up in, or to contribute to and support such thinking, we siphon off energies and resources that could be fruitfully invested in growing in love for God and our neighbors within the

framework of the Kingdom of God.

*The first thing on love*

Love is not simply an emotion, and, within the parameters of the Christian worldview, we are not free to define love merely in terms agreeable to us or the temper of our times. The true nature of love is defined by our Biblical vision – what *God* says love is – and how love is to be expressed in the Kingdom and Church of our Lord, as well as in our daily lives and callings. Love is not learned by sighing through smarmy sermons, tearing-up during syrupy praise songs, or jabbering away about Gospel stuff at endless meetings for study or fellowship. Love is developed and expressed through the disciplines prescribed in God’s Word, lived in all the time and situations of our lives, and proven in all our words and deeds.

And God’s Law, as Jesus indicated, is the starting-point for learning about true love.

The Law of God puts down the footprint for our Christian *vision*. It outlines the *disciplines* we require in order to lay hold on the vision. And it guides us in *outcomes* that vision and those disciplines should engender as love in our everyday lives. If we want to have a true Christian worldview we must begin where God and His Word do, at the beginning.

And the beginning of the Christian worldview is found in the writings of Moses, the Law of God.

*Questions for reflection*

1. Why are the “numbers game” and the “head trip” game not sufficient measures of Christian worldview progress?
2. How does your church measure its impact on your local community? How do love for God and neighbors impact into that measurement?
3. Why did Jesus put so much emphasis on the Law as the starting-point for learning to love God and our neighbors? Why do we tend to put so *little* stock in it?

*Next steps – Preparation: Review the Ten Commandments. Beside each one, in your Bible margin or on a separate sheet, indicate one way you can increase in love for God and neighbor this week.*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. Why must we have a framework for thinking about worldview? What does having a framework do for us?
2. How would you explain the ideas of vision, disciplines, and outcomes?
3. How do the disciplines we pursue relate to our vision of the good life?
4. What outcomes are the true measure of progress in living the Christian worldview? What do these actually look like? Can you give some examples?
5. What's the most important lesson you've gained from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*Prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the contribute button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.