

Engaging God's World<sup>1</sup> – Part 1:  
**Your Life, Your Culture & Your Worldview!**

Introduction: Brain Teasers!

1. Should vegetarians eat animal crackers?
2. Why do they lock gas station restrooms? Are they afraid someone will clean them?
3. Why is the word "abbreviation" so long (5 syllables in fact!)?
4. If you're cross-eyed and have dyslexia, can you read all right?
5. Why doesn't glue stick to the inside of the glue bottle?
6. How can there be interstate highways in Hawaii?
7. Why is it that when you transport something by car is called a "shipment," but when you transport something by ship it's called "cargo?"
8. Why does your nose run, and your feet smell?
9. What is the speed of dark?
10. How come you park on a driveway, and drive on a parkway?
11. Did Adam and Eve have a belly button?
12. When a cow laughs, does milk come out of its nose?
13. When you choke a smurf, what color does it turn?
14. What's the difference between **shampoo** and **realpoo**?
15. Why do you sink so slowly in quicksand?
16. Aren't boxing rings really square?
17. If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?
18. Why do people go to Burger King and order a double Whopper with fries and insist on getting a Diet coke?
19. Why is the alphabet in the order that it's in? Who said so?
20. What happens if you get scared half to death ... twice?
21. How can you tell when you have run out of invisible ink?
22. If your toast always lands jelly side down and a cat always lands on its feet, what would happen if you attached a piece of jelly toast on the back of a cat and dropped it?
23. If at first you don't succeed, then skydiving definitely isn't for you!
24. Is it really true that the sooner you fall behind, the more time you will have to catch up?
25. Can God create a rock so big that He can't lift it?

**I. You Incurable Romantics!**

A. Søren Kierkegaard:

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<sup>1</sup> This part of the title is taken from Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning and Living* (Eerdmans 2002).

“The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really wants me to do; the thing is to find a truth that is true for me, **to find the idea for which I can live and die.**”

B. Matthew Arnold, “The Buried Life”

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,  
But often, in the din of strife,  
There rises an unspeakable desire  
After the knowledge of our buried life;  
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force  
In tracking out our true original course;  
A longing to inquire into the mystery of this heart  
Which beats so wild, so deep in us —  
To know whence our lives come and where they go

C. John Knowles, *A Separate Peace*

One summer day after another broke with cool [radiance] ... and there was a breath of widening life in the morning air, something hard to describe — an oxygen intoxicant... some odor, some feeling so hopelessly promising that I would fall back in my bed on guard against it... I wanted to break out crying from stabs of hopeless joy, or intolerable promise, or because those mornings were too full of beauty for me?

D. Avril Lavigne, “Anything But Ordinary” in *Let Go*

Sometimes I get so weird  
I even freak myself out  
I laugh myself to sleep  
It's my lullaby  
Sometimes I drive so fast  
Just to feel the danger  
I wanna scream  
It makes me feel alive

Chorus: Is it enough to love  
Is it enough to breathe  
Somebody rip my heart out  
And leave me here to bleed  
Is it enough to die  
Somebody save my life  
I'd rather be anything but ordinary please

To walk within the lines

Would make my life so boring  
I want to know that I  
Have been to the extreme  
So knock me off my feet  
Come on now give it to me  
Anything to make me feel alive

**Let down your defences  
Use no common sense  
If you look you will see  
that this world is a beautiful  
accident turbulent succulent  
opulent permanent, no way  
I wanna taste it  
Don't wanna waste it away**

E. Greatest good (*Summum Bonum*)

1. Bono, U2 "I still haven't found what I am looking for"
2. St. Augustine, "O Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our spirits are restless until they rest in You!"

F. Switchfoot, "Meant to Live," in *The Beautiful Letdown*

Fumbling his confidence  
And wondering why the world has passed him by  
Hoping that he's bent for more than arguments  
And failed attempts to fly, fly

[Chorus]

We were meant to live for so much more  
Have we lost ourselves?  
Somewhere we live inside  
Somewhere we live inside  
We were meant to live for so much more  
Have we lost ourselves?  
Somewhere we live inside

Dreaming about Providence  
And whether mice or men have second tries  
Maybe we've been livin' with our eyes half open  
Maybe we're bent and broken, broken

[Chorus]

We want more than this world's got to offer

We want more than this world's got to offer  
We want more than the wars of our fathers  
And everything inside screams for second life, yeah

## II. WHAT IS A WORLDVIEW?

- A. A worldview is your view-of-the-world!
- B. Your essential philosophy of life or system of basic beliefs by which you make sense of the world and your place and way of life within it.
- C. It is your rock bottom answers to life's deepest questions: Who is God? What is real? What can I know? Who am I? Why am I here? What is the purpose of life? Why is there evil? Is there life after death? Etc.
- D. "All-embracing life system" — Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*
- E. "The comprehensive framework of your basic beliefs about things." — Albert Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*
- F. "A world view is a set of presuppositions and assumptions held consciously or unconsciously about God (or his absence) and the basic make-up of the universe, our world, and ourselves." —James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*
- G. A collection of one's presuppositions or convictions about reality which constitute one's total outlook on life. —Andrew Hofferker, *Building a Christian World View*
- H. Vision of God, the universe, our world and ourselves as the basis for an accompanying way of life that is rooted and grounded in the human heart." David Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*

"Guard over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." Proverbs 4: 23

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."  
Matthew 6:21

Life proceeds "kardiopically" out of a vision of your heart!

## III. WHY A WORLDVIEW SO IMPORTANT

- A. Everyone has a worldview whether they realize it or not.
- B. A worldview guides our thoughts and ideas.

- C. A worldview determines our loves and affections.
- D. A worldview provides guidance and direction.
- E. A worldview shapes our values and behavior.
- F. A worldview identifies the good life (*summum bonum*) and provides meaning and hope.

### **NATALIE'S STORY**

**Conclusion:** Audio Adrenaline, "My World View" in *Don't Censor Me*

I want to see the world through Jesus' eyes  
 See through Jesus tears  
 I want to see the world through Jesus' eyes  
 My vision's not as clear  
 I want to feel the world with the hands that made it  
 Know the pain and appreciate it  
 Hear their cries and hope to understand

#### CHORUS

My world view  
 It's how I see the world  
 It's how I look at you  
 My world view  
 It's how I see the world  
 Would you like to see it to?  
 My world view

I want to place my foot upon the rock  
 The rock that doesn't move  
 For upon the rock the Kingdom's built  
 And here's the Kingdom view  
 I see creation and I see Adam's fall  
 I see through the years and I can see it all  
 All things come together for the good



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Engaging God's World – Part 2:  
 Your Life, **Your Culture** & Your Worldview!

## Introduction: Teenagers and Their Beliefs

### Scary Statistics

64% or almost two-thirds of teens describe themselves as “religious,” three out of every five call themselves “spiritual” (60%), and three out of five say they are “committed Christians” (60%). (1999)

Of teens who call themselves Christians, 26% said they are “absolutely committed” and 57% said that they were “moderately committed” to the Christian faith. (1999)

53% or slightly more than half of all teens say that Jesus committed sins while He was on earth. (2000)

51% of professing teenagers say the bodily resurrection of Jesus never occurred.

65% or two out of three teens say that the Devil or Satan is not a real being but is only a symbol of evil. (2000)

59% of Christian teens believe that all religions teach equally valid truths.

61% or three out of five teens agree that if a person is generally good, they will earn a place in heaven. (2000)

9% of born again teens believe in moral absolutes (91% don't), and just 4% of the non-born again teens believe that there are moral absolutes (96% don't). (2001)

90% of Christian teens believe that copying CDs for friends and unauthorized music downloading is morally acceptable (10% say it's wrong), compared to 94% of non-Christians (6% say it's wrong).

Sources: <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=Topic&TopicID=37>  
Dale Buss, *Wall Street Journal*, Op-ed, July 9, 2004

Three problems with hypocrisy:

1. First, hypocrisy is simply wrong and it dishonors God.
2. Second, hypocrisy undermines your integrity, and keeps you from becoming a whole, complete person in Jesus Christ and finding your ultimate fulfillment in Him.

3. Third, hypocrisy will destroy your aspirations to leadership and will thwart your attempts to be an agent of transformation in the church and culture through your various callings.

The deeper purpose of our discussion:

I want you to be affected at the deepest level of your being in how you think, in what you love, and in the way you live. We live out of our ideas, affections, and desires, and so I would like to put you on the road toward a Christian transformation of your minds, your hearts, and your wills. I don't just want you to know the truth, but to be enflamed with it. I don't want you to be just told about God's wisdom, but to fall in love with it. I don't want to just tell you what to do, but somehow to cause you to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

"Insofar as it is possible to divide people up into categories, the surest criterion is the deep-seated desires that orient them to one or another lifelong activity."

— Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*,

## I. Your Culture and Its Worldviews

### A. Deism:

Deists believe in a transcendent God as a First Cause who created the universe but then left it to run on its own.

God is not with us, not fully personal, not sovereign over human affairs, and not providential.

In this outlook, neither miracles, an inspired Bible, or the incarnation of Jesus as God's Son are possible.

God is watching us from a distance (Bette Midler)!

For more on deism, go to <http://www.deism.com/>

### B. Naturalism:

- Only physical matter exists and is all there is, ever was, or ever will be. God does not exist. Hence, naturalism is also atheism.
- Human beings have evolved from the lower primates and are complex, physical "machines" functioning as an interrelation of chemical and physical properties without natures or souls.

- Death results in the total extinction of the individual human being without the possibility of eternal life.
- Ethics is created by human beings and are relative to each person and situation.
- For more on naturalism, go to <http://naturalism.org/>

### C. Nihilism

Nihilism, coming from the Latin root for nothing, is the natural child of naturalism and is more of a **feeling** of despair and hopelessness than an actual worldview.

If God does not exist, then nothing has meaning.

Nihilism is the negation of everything — reality, knowledge, ethics, beauty, persons, and meaning.

For more on nihilism, go to <http://www.geocities.com/liudegast/nihilism.html>

“There is no point to any of this. It’s all just a random lottery of meaningless tragedy and a series of near escapes.”  
— Troy in the film, *Reality Bites*

“Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun.”  
— Ecclesiastes 2: 11

### D. Atheistic Existentialism

In its atheistic form, existentialism, derived from the term "existence" recognizes that naturalism/atheism breeds nihilism and that nihilism is unlivable.

Life without meaning is impossible.

In the face of recognized meaninglessness and in a revolt against it, existentialism seeks to go beyond nihilism by creating meaning and significance through personal choices and actions.

For more on existentialism, go to <http://www.connect.net/ron/exist.html>

“See...this is all we need. A couple of smokes, a cup of coffee, and a little bit of conversation. You and me and five bucks.”

— Troy in *Reality Bites*

## E. Pantheism and the New Age Movement

Pantheism (pan = all; theos = God) is a worldview which identifies God with all there is: God is all; all is God. Everything that exists is one and this unity is divine.

The apparent infinity and eternity of the universe are divine qualities, and all things, including human beings, animals, and inanimate objects like rocks and dirt are divine in nature.

The New Age Movement, which is based on pantheism, encourages people through mystical experience to develop a new cosmic consciousness in which they recognize their own divinity, the unity of all things, and become one with the universe.

For more on pantheism and new age spirituality, go to <http://www.pantheism.net/>

“Size matters not, look at me! Judge me by my size, do you? Huh! And well you should not, for my ally is the Force and a powerful ally it is. Life creates it, makes it grow. Its energy surrounds us and binds us. Luminous beings are we and not this crude matter. You must feel the Force around you and between you and me and the tree, the rock, everywhere, yes, even between the land and the ship.”

— Yoda in *Star Wars*

## F. Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a critical response to modernism which trusted in human reason and science as the way to truth, and it rejects worldviews of any and every kind because they rest on untrustworthy foundations.

A postmodern person must seek to live in the presence of uncertainty and relativity with no absolutes, recognizing the frailty of language and our inability to ever know the truth, that there is no final meaning, and how all of life is determined by politics and power.

## II. The Worldview of Secularism

Definition: secularism is a worldview or system of thought that seeks to understand and order life on the basis of ideas taken solely from this world and it excludes God and His Word and Kingdom from the real business of daily life.

Some secularists are deists who believe in God but don't think He is involved in human life.

Other secularists are naturalists or atheists who don't believe in God at all.

Even some may be Christians, but they limit God's role in their lives to the church and to their private spiritual experiences.

Secularism leaves out or keeps God out of these areas:

Government: wall of separation between church and state

Education: no prayer or religious studies in public schools

Science: everything must be explained by evolution

Technology: nothing should stop our conquest of nature or human nature (cloning)

Law: no place for the 10 Commandments in a courthouse

Business and economics: leave your religion at home when you go to work where the "law of the jungle" (cut-throat competition) prevails

Arts and Entertainment: God rarely stars in, except when ridiculed.

Eight ways secularism can affect you negatively:

1. Compartmentalization (dualism): if you are religious, then limit God to the private, sacred compartment of your life like church or bible studies, and keep Him out of everything else (public things like work, school, relationships, family, fun, etc).
2. Secular Humanism: making people supreme and the measure of all things. Human standards rule everything things.
3. Relativism: believing that there is no final truth or correct views about important issues in life. Nothing is really right or wrong.

4. Tolerance: every point of view (no matter how crazy) and every way of life (no matter how corrupt) is equally valid and should not be criticized.
5. Pragmatism: do what works rather than do what is right. Success, not principles, should be your chief concern.
6. Hedonism: living life for pleasure, especially in the areas of sex and food. Indulging in lust and gluttony as ways of life.
7. Materialism: making money, wealth and possessions the most important things in your life. "Things, things, things and more things" is your motto.
8. Egotism: becoming well-known or a famous celebrity (actor, rock star, athlete!) is your primary goal in life and will make you happy.

Conclusion: What we need is a ...

### **New Way To Be Human — Switchfoot**

Everyday it's the same thing  
Another trend has begun  
Hey kids, this might be the one  
It's a race to be noticed  
And it's leaving us numb  
Hey kids, we can be the ones  
With all of our fashion  
We're still incomplete  
The God of redemption  
Could break our routine

There's a new way to be human  
It's nothing we've ever been  
There's a new way to be human  
New way to be human

And where is our inspiration?  
When all the heroes are gone  
Hey kids, could we be the ones?  
Cause nobody's famous  
And nobody's fine  
We all need forgiveness  
We're longing inside

There's a new way to be human  
It's nothing we've ever been  
There's a new way to be human  
It's spreadin' under my skin  
There's a new way to be human  
Where divinity blends  
With a new way to be human  
New way to be human

You're throwing your love across my impossible space  
You've created me  
Take me out of me into...

A new way to be human  
To a new way to be human  
You're a new way to be human  
Where my humanity blends  
To a new way to be human  
Redemption begins  
You're a new way to be human  
You're a new way to be human  
You're the only way to be human  
You're a new way to be human

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Engaging God's World – Part 3:  
Your Life, Your Culture & **Your Worldview!**

Introduction:

Bits and pieces  
New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs Christians  
Dualism (sacred-secular split)

I. An Overview of a Christian/Biblical Worldview

A. As easy as 1 2 3!

1. Creation

2. Fall (of humanity into sin)
3. Redemption

#### B. Where in Scripture

1. Creation: Genesis 1-2
2. Fall: Genesis 3
3. Redemption: Genesis 3: 15-Revelation 22: 21

#### C. Biblical worldview and God

1. Creation: God's power and wisdom
2. Fall: God's holiness and justice
3. Redemption: God's mercy and grace

#### D. Biblical worldview and big questions

1. Creation: Where are we? Who are we? Why are we here?
2. Fall: What's gone wrong?
3. Redemption: What's the remedy?

#### E. A final look

1. Creation: formation of all things, paradise established, peace, good news
2. Fall: deformation of all things, paradise lost, disturbed peace, bad news
3. Redemption: reformation of all things, paradise regained, peace renewed, good news

### **I. Creation: Genesis 1-2**

#### A. Creation decree (Genesis 1: 26-28)

Gen. 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the

earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Gen. 1:27 And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Gen. 1:28 And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

#### B. God's three basic purposes for our lives

1. *Spiritual purpose*: we were made to love and worship God with all that we are and all that we have. Greatest commandment
2. *Social purpose*: we were made to love and serve others, especially in the context of marriage, family and friendship. Second greatest commandment
3. *Cultural purpose*: we were made for joyful, fruitful work in the world (Colossians 3: 23)

This means that we plant gardens, form relationships, determine manners and create forms of worship. We harness animals and the forces of nature. We develop ideas and traditions. We create technological devices like computers and space shuttles and cell phones. We construct communities and build institutions. As workers with callings, we serve as artists, musicians, teachers, bankers, lawyers, homemakers, and so on. It means that areas such as economics, politics, sport and play, the media, marriage and family, advertising, entertainment, etc. are a part of God's plan for human life. Our cultural purpose is central to our humanity as God's image.

#### C. God's evaluation and application

1. "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good."
2. Make the wonderful re/discovery of the world as God's very good creation
3. Recognize and pursue the spiritual, social, and cultural purposes that God has established at creation

## II. The Fall of Humanity into Sin (Genesis 3)

#### A. An illustration of the fall

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the kings' horses and all the kings' men haven't been able to put Humpty Dumpty back together again.

#### B. Five consequences of sin

##### 1. The alienation/separation of man from God (Gen. 3: 8)

"The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden."

##### 2. The alienation/separation of man from himself (Gen. 3: 10)

"I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid (fear) because I was naked (shame); so I hid myself (guilt)."

##### 3. The alienation/separation of man from woman (Gen. 3: 12)

"The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."

##### 4. The alienation/separation of man from the earth (Gen. 3: 17-19)

"Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; ... By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

##### 5. The separation/alienation of man from the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3: 23-24)

"Therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, so He drove the man out."

#### C. St. Augustine on sin

1. Ignorance: we are extremely ignorant spiritually, and we have no idea who God is, who we are, where we are, why we are here, what our problem is, or how to fix it.
2. Wrong desire: we seek happiness by loving the wrong things in the wrong way with wrong results. Our disordered love produces disordered lives and we reap miserable consequences daily.

#### D. Application

The *real root cause* of our broken and tragic human condition is not biological or economic or cultural or social or educational.

Rather the *real root cause* of our trouble is theological: human sin separated us from God brought death into the world and all our woe!

### **III. Redemption (Genesis 3: 15 — Revelation 22: 21)**

#### A. Redemptive history

1. Old Testament: promise of redemption for the world through Israel
2. New Testament: fulfillment and completion of redemption promise in Jesus Christ
  - a. Already: redemption started at Christ's first coming
  - b. Not Yet: redemption completed at Christ's second coming

#### B. The cosmic Christ of Colossians

Col. 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created by Him and for Him. Col. 1:17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. Col. 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. Col. 1:19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, Col. 1:20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

#### C. The consequences of redemption

1. Spiritually, we are being restored to God
2. Socially, we are being restored to each other
3. Culturally, we are being restored to our work and vocation
4. Psychologically, we are being healed

5. Existentially, we find our ultimate fulfillment and happiness in God

#### D. Application

1. God is putting Humpty Dumpty back together again
2. He is teaching us a new way to be human
3. Recognize Jesus' redemption as the true source of your happiness and hope and you grow deep in your knowledge and faithful in your practice of this gospel in every sphere of life

#### Conclusion:

##### "God, All Nature Sings Thy Glory" by David Clowney

God, all nature sings Thy glory, and Thy works proclaim Thy might;  
Ordered vastness in the heavens, ordered course of day and night;  
Beauty in the changing seasons, beauty in the storming sea;  
All the changing moods of nature praise the changeless Trinity.

Clearer still we see Thy hand in man whom Thou hast made for Thee;  
Ruler of creation's glory, image of Thy majesty.  
Music, art, the fruitful garden, all the labor of his days;  
Are the calling of His Maker, to the harvest feast of praise.

But our sins have spoiled Thine image; nature, conscience only serve,  
As unceasing, grim reminders of the wrath which we deserve.  
Yet Thy grace and saving mercy in Thy Word of truth revealed.  
Claim the praise of all who know Thee, in the blood of Jesus sealed.

God of glory, power, and mercy, all creation praises Thee;  
We, Thy creatures, would adore Thee, now and through eternity.  
Saved to magnify Thy goodness, grant us strength to do Thy will;  
With our acts as with our voices Thy commandments to fulfill.