

The Significance of a
Biblical Worldview
from the eyes of an ordinary believer

Dr. Lee Bee Teik

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August 2022

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eBook Edition: August 2022

Author: Lee Bee Teik

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Note: The author, Lee Bee Teik, was taken home to the Lord on 11-June-2022. She was not able to proof read this final formatted digital book. To ensure that the text represents what she intended as far as possible, the manuscript is published “as-is”.

Acknowledgement

I count it a great privilege to have lived and experienced humanity in all its diversity both in the church worldwide and society in general since my childhood. For the publication of this work, I would like to specifically thank:

- Cornerstone Corporation Sdn Bhd, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia (KL Lam) for preparing this work for digital publication.
- The Lee side of the author's family, her husband, children, in-laws, teachers, including Sunday school teachers, university lecturers and peers, colleagues, neighbours and the wider society for unintentionally showing me the difference between a Biblical and a non-Biblical worldview.
- Intercessors
- Crescentia Morais for patiently and professionally editing the draft of ***The Significance of a Biblical Worldview From the Eyes of an Ordinary Believer.***

CONTENTS

Preface	6
Introduction	13
1. In Search of a Biblical Worldview From the Eyes of an Ordinary Believer	29
2. The Biblical Worldview is God’s Worldview	39
3. Childhood Influences Affect Our Worldview and Decisions	58
4. Developing a Biblical Worldview is Renewal of the Mind	65
5. Be Silent Before God and Listen to Him	78
Epilogue	94
Notes	105

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Here are suggestions how to use this book to best help you:

1. Read Scripture passages relevant to the point made in each chapter. Read slowly and take your time. Ponder at length on what you have read to discern and understand God's Word.
2. Be patient as you wait for God to show you what His word means. Avoid making presumptions about God and His word. He is probably not what you thought. God is so patient with impatient us who often prefer to speed read. He gives us time to discover Him a little at a time, as He did, for example, with Job. He walked Job through his dilemma of suffering in the Old Testament by asking him questions about Himself. Of course, Job could not answer, and in the end, the wonders of His ways humbled Job. His problems seemed so small compared to God's much bigger universe! So, put off the temptation to try to figure God out and see instead through prayerful reflection on His Word, what He has to say about Himself and His ways.
3. Journal your thoughts to stay focused and to help you conclude each trend of thinking.

4. It may also help you to read the Book of Job and consider Job's earthly pilgrimage. Job passed the test of faith in God's character, and God valued Job's faith in Him as precious. How was Job able to do this? As you read the story of Job's life, bring your questions to Him as Job did and wait to hear the answers. Ask Him to lead you to the place of certainty of belief in Him and what He is trying to accomplish in and through you.

Trust that He will guide you as you meditate on Him, His people and the world He created for us to enjoy.

PREFACE

TIME DOES NOT WAIT FOR US

I am writing this manuscript at my own risk. Why do I say so? It is because I am fully aware that I may be misunderstood or ridiculed or both. As a lay-person, I may be seen as one who has no right to pick a theme commonly handled by, for example, philosophers, academicians, social scientists, researchers and theologians.

I have no answer for those who might question my right to write this volume since this is not a matter of rights. It is a matter of one orphan showing another where to find a welcoming home that provides some warm food. I can only attest that it is through this type of quiet endeavour that God shows me that He does actually take up soft, raw clay, ugly as it may be, for His purposes, moulding it into a vessel for His use.

Therefore, it is an obligation on my part, I feel, to share what I have learnt and am still learning about God so that others may also know that God loves His children and actively participates in their journey along the path of redemption.

I used to share my thoughts through seminars and retreats where retreatants were given time to listen to teachings in the context of a silent retreat or a prolonged Quiet Time. They then reflected on the message and responded from their heart to God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth and of them as well. I am now attempting to do the same for you through this book.

God the Creator is also our Friend of friends (John 15). His worldview is therefore worthy of our consideration as He created the world and everything in it, including us. More importantly, He created everything with love. It would be a shame if we did not find out more about Him and get to know Him during our time on His earth.

The focus, as you read this book, should be on Him. As you ponder on your worldview and His perspective, allow His tender persuasion to lead you to clear focus of His plan for you and creation. Learn to lean on Him as Teacher and Father. See that His worldview of the world is the best. It is the worldview which will actually work for all creation. Learning to see as God views creation is a journey, a pilgrimage to discovering the Creator's vision for His universe!

Pause to Ponder

Each person has his own view of what is happening around him. We have views and opinions on everything, for instance, the food we eat, how it should be eaten and whether it satisfies our taste or not. Having a view or opinion is part of being human. Our view of everything is shaped by our deeply held beliefs, which we acquire from the influences that acted upon us since early childhood. As we grow older and learn more of the world and ourselves, new knowledge and understanding become part of our belief system, leading us to change or moderate our earlier views.

As disciples of Jesus, who came to show us the Father and how He would do things, we who have been made in the likeness of the Father naturally want to consider Jesus' views of God and how this Father God views His creation. We want to learn what He thinks should be the basis of our relationship with one another, the environment and most importantly, with Him. As children of God, shouldn't we adopt His worldview and live by it?

I believe that when a disciple of Jesus adopts His view of daily life each day, no matter how trivial the subject

matter may be or how imperfectly he may understand what He meant, the disciple will be transformed. He will shift his position from an existence trapped in the misery of day-to-day monotony to life celebrated with purpose and abundance through Christ. After all, didn't Jesus declare, "*I come that you may have life and have it more abundantly*" (John 10:10)?

True, this is only a short consideration of God's worldview; I have not pretended to cover every aspect of God's worldview. What I have tried to do is to lay out a framework for readers to launch out on their personal discovery of God's worldview in order to think like the Father. Then as a body of Christ, we may feel like Him and eventually behave like Him. We need to hurry to correct our worldview for our Bridegroom is coming very soon to claim His bride. Don't we want to be prepared for Him?

Pause to Ponder

We live in a world and nation where the schizophrenic worldview is becoming more prominent. Men and women seem to be getting more and more morally lost. White lies, double standards, disguised prejudices clothed in political correctness and religiosity, deafening

silence that causes anxiety and outright injustice in the nations of the world are confusing people. When right is viewed as wrong and wrong is viewed as right by ruthlessly bold but confused people, how do we focus on God's views? We are like Don Quixote in Cervantes' novel, caught up in aimless fights for causes that are not even clear to ourselves. Like him, we often end up only throwing punches at the air! Actually, it may be that most of the time, we are only fighting ourselves. How do we come out of this mental and emotional vertigo to fix our eyes firmly on Jesus, the solid Rock?

FINDING DIRECTION IN A CONFUSED WORLD



A deep-sea diver, caught in weightless vertigo, can become unsure of his direction. *Is he going up or down, to the surface or to the bottom of the ocean? Where is*

he relative to the land where his feet will be planted solidly on dry ground? Giving in to panic will cost him his life! If he had been properly trained and if he had been paying careful attention to his instructor's instructions, he would remember to follow the bubbles, which always float towards the surface of water. Bubbles do not float towards the bottom of the ocean because air always moves from an area of higher to lower pressure. Air movement follows this basic law of physics, and knowing it would save the life of a diver in such a predicament!

If we were wise, we would learn to do the same when in spiritual vertigo: follow God's spiritual principles, found in His Word, to find our way out of every predicament. This is what living from a Biblical perspective can do for us as believers.

Let us pray for one another as we journey on, that we may acquire that godly perspective quickly for truly, we live in perilous times. Let us pray for one another, like missionary Andrew van der Bijl (known widely as Brother Andrew of *"God's Smuggler"*) exhorts in his booklet, *"Prayer: The Real Battle"* (2010), *"Pray for the real battles."* Yes, let us do so, knowing that these battles can only be won if we view and respond to the world as God does. Let us quickly acquire His mind! As

Paul has advised, let us *“in thinking, be mature”* (1 Corinthians 14:20).

Let us listen, ponder and watch with the Master of the world so that we will discover His worldview as He has expressed in the Bible.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT STIMULATED ME TO WRITE ABOUT THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW?

Since I left my childhood home in Penang, Malaysia, as a teenager in January 1971, I have felt like a wanderer on earth. Before I could feel really at home in one place, it was time to move to another, not by my own choice but God's as I chose to do His will. Like Abraham, I chose to obey God and go where He was sending me although I did not know the details of His plan.

This nomadic lifestyle opened my eyes to the various cultures and lifestyles of diverse peoples from different parts of the world. Mingling with people of different cultures was a rich moulding experience for me. Exposure to various cultures and languages taught me that two persons may be looking at the same issues and yet see very different things. Hence, I learnt to be open-minded; I saw the justness of accepting that each person is entitled to a personal opinion. I understood that opinion was based on perspective, and perspective was shaped largely by experience. For instance, if I came from a culture that defined prosperity as having an entourage of children, I might see infertility as a curse. On the other hand, if I lived in a nation that struggled to

feed her large population, then I might think it a blessing to have fewer mouths to feed. I also saw the rightness of causing no harm to people just because their opinion or perspective might differ from mine. Being able to do this is a sign of maturity. Gradually, as age catches on, I have begun to understand and accept the reality of a complex world!

Much harmony is achieved through old-fashioned negotiation or the give-and-take process. Of course, how this is achieved depends on many factors, including our early childhood nurture, personality and education, be it formal or informal. This leads me to desire to learn from the views of others. In particular, being a student of the Bible since pre-school days, I have wanted to know the implications of having a Biblical worldview: how would it affect me, for instance, in my self-image, vocation, choice of life partner, among others?

In 2001, just as I finally sent my manuscript of *“Behold, Your Pastor”* to the publisher, the Lord, knowing my desire to see Australia again after over 22 years, said to me, *“You can visit Melbourne now.”*

I did not know then that it was the start of my many journeys away from home, of meeting various groups of people and of teaching and training His people. Being an introvert, I had always enjoyed reading biographies at

home. This initial permission to go for a break from home duties took me away from the confines of home and freed me from the limitation of thinking that I could not travel to destinations outside of Malaysia and neighbouring Singapore. Later, I realised that He had wanted to heal me from the subconscious wound of having had to leave Melbourne in a rush many years ago in 1979. Now, He was allowing me to experience Melbourne again because He recognised that I had to go through a proper, unhurried farewell. It also gave me the opportunity to renew friendships.

This permission to retrace my steps freed me from assuming I could not reach out to the present generation of youth because I had forgotten how to be young and energetic. However, He had to heal me emotionally first and help me understand why I was emotionally trapped in certain areas of my life. That came after I was able to finally experience a proper goodbye to the place and culture to which I had grown attached in the formative years of my young adult life, although it was a delayed leave-taking. God must have deemed it time for the next level of emotional healing before I could be used in His service in the church and wider society! The timing was indeed right. Middle-aged, with three teenagers undergoing metamorphosis

and a busy husband, I was ready to rest, reflect and listen to God.

Melbourne, however, as I discovered, had changed. The suburb of Glen Waverly, for example, was home to so many mainland Chinese immigrants, in addition to the usual Malaysian ones, that it looked and sounded like a Chinese town with colourful lion dances and the noise of fire crackers during Chinese New Year!

While the overall population of Australia was about the same, the demography had changed significantly. Asian immigrants seemed to have caught up with the European ones in several areas. For instance, who ran the neighbourhood shops patronised by local residents? When I opened the door of a milk bar or fish-and-chips shop in the 70s, I was usually greeted by a friendly Greek or Italian face. Now, in the 21st century, an original Canton, Fujian or Beijing Chinese owner who spoke little English greeted me instead. Wealthy foreign students filled the local churches near the Universities of Monash and Melbourne. Some churches once filled with Caucasian worshippers now catered for mainly Asian congregations. Chinese-educated pastors were imported from countries in Southeast Asia to meet the needs of migrant mainland Chinese families as the local seminaries could not train enough ministers to meet the

needs of growing first and second-generation immigrant congregations. It looked like an invasion of immigrants. I wondered what the newly-arrived foreign students were thinking. Were they planning to buy property here and stay on after graduation? To many Asian fresh graduates, returning to their motherland was not the first option.

My former South Yarra white Australian landlady had liked the Chinese and had been in an organisation that dealt with Australia-China relations in the 70's. By the early part of the 21st century, the Chinese had arrived in Australia in full force! In 2011, when I returned to Melbourne a second time, I imagined she would be rejoicing that they had come. However, her former house was silent and appeared abandoned when I rang the doorbell. Her garden was covered with overgrown bushes; I wondered if she were still living.

In 2013, I returned to Melbourne again to visit my older daughter who was in her final year at Latrobe University. My younger daughter came along as I felt she too needed to know the place where God had led me through the struggles of life as a young adult. Both were at a similar stage of life.

Pause to Ponder... on your own pilgrimage on earth.

The concept of a global church is not new to those who read the Bible. After all, it originated from God, who sent His only begotten Son to die for the sins of the whole world and not just part of it. Further, our spiritual lenses seem to be getting more focused on world events as we approach His second advent to take us home. Gradual changes like international conflicts, a global economy and climate change are becoming more meaningful as God's worldview is increasingly clarified in the study of His written Word.

- What are some implications of a globalised world and church in your daily life?

WHAT IS A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW?

Generally, in layman's terms, a worldview is a summary of one's core beliefs of what is happening in the world. It is unique to each person. Members of a community usually share a similar worldview. The individual's personal worldview influences how he runs his daily life.

GLOBAL WORLDVIEW

A worldview is a comprehensive (especially personal) philosophy or concept of the world and of human life (1). A global worldview sees the nations of the world functioning as a whole community rather than as individual entities.

The man in the street does not usually consider how he views people, daily relationships and private or public issues. A crisis usually causes him to evaluate his situation. Only then does he begin to wonder:

- How and why did I start getting into trouble?
- Who was responsible for causing my trouble? Others or I or neither or both?
- If I get out of this trouble, who is it for? Others or me or both?

Forced to think, he stretches his mind, growing in maturity as he begins to understand the world he lives in. He sees that he has been created to function within community. He cannot ignore his neighbour anymore. He recognises that for a community to mature and thrive, each unit, be it the individual or the family, must be connected to other units so that society and beyond

that, the nation, may also thrive. He then strives to do his best to connect with these other units of his immediate and wider community. *That no man is an island is biblically true, indeed.*

It will be a journey of discovery and joy for me as I continue to ponder and write this book for current and future church generations in Malaysia, and maybe the world. Unlike my generation, born after WWII, many of today's youth appear to desire to live in perpetual adolescence. Perhaps they will allow people like me to guide them with our experience and insight and, in the process, discover the freedom and wisdom that can come with hindsight and not only foresight.

GOD'S PEOPLE NEED HIS WORLDVIEW

The Bible reveals the worldview of the One who created the world (Proverbs 8:30-31), so it offers a worldview that is trustworthy, useful and successful. He is also the One who will one day bring world history to an end (Matthew 24). Hence, it would be appropriate to locate the rest of our discussion in this book within the beginning and end of world history as God has planned. We can learn something of this plan from reading Genesis 1-3 and Revelation 21:1-7. We will also consider

the hope of joyful eternal life that is revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

THE EFFECT OF WRONG VIEWS OF THE GOD OF THE BIBLE

Many ordinary Christians want to love and serve God through obedience to Him but they are often hindered by wrong views of God, personal emotional baggage and sins. Their confusion leads to disappointment, frustration and a sense of unfulfillment that prevent them from enjoying God's friendship. They end up giving up their first love for God and do their own thing instead.

Losing our first love for God can happen when we become too busy. Then, we limp along in life, too tired and stressed to search for solutions to our problems. This can happen to churches as well. Churches can seem active and 'successful', and, though wanting to share the Kingdom of God with the community, may not be realising Kingdom objectives.

Assessing our worldview as individuals and churches can bring us back to the truths of the Bible as Jesus taught them. If we understand and believe that, as He clearly and simply said, He has gone ahead to prepare a place for us in His Father's house, we would be able to abide in His joy and peace and not fall victim to stress and worry

that rob us of our first love. However, we should not use that assurance as a licence to do what we want or like. That too can rob us of our first love.

HINT OF OUR DISTORTED THINKING

If our heavenly Father and Creator sent His only begotten Son into the world to take us home to Him, why do many of us seem to be so afraid of death? Why aren't we eager to go home as soon as possible? Generally, when we fall ill, most of us prolong physical life with much effort and money, which mainly goes to medical commercial entities. Shouldn't going home to Father God be the most joyfully anticipated event for us? Of course, I am not thinking of suicide or euthanasia to bring about death through our own manipulation, but the ending of life as it happens. Is this a hint of confusion in our minds about what we believe of God and of our time on earth?

Another tendency that hints of some confusion in understanding God's worldview is our practice of leaving too much material inheritance to our middle-class adult children who are already loaded financially. Have we thought of using what God placed in our hands to turn earthly treasure into eternal treasure? I believe that the eternal, heavenly treasures that Jesus mentioned in

Scripture are human beings who have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb (Deuteronomy 7:6; Isaiah 53; Matthew 6:19-21).

How are we to prepare for the new heavens and the new earth? We may find out by studying God's worldview as revealed in the Bible. We will discover that it is by loving our neighbours on His behalf so that they may know that God loves them and is not out to extort, manipulate or use them. We need to check our worldview and conform our lifestyle to it while we still have time in this world to do so.

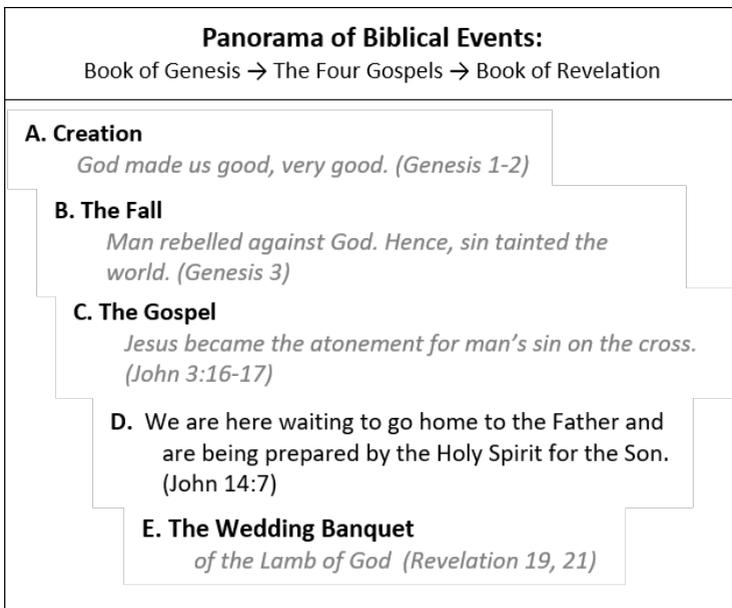
A poor understanding of the biblical worldview of our purpose in life will lead to disobedience to the Lord of all. Is it not time to take stock of our behaviour? For that purpose, even though I am not trained as a theologian or a philosopher, I feel burdened to try my best to help believers acquire a biblical worldview. A correct worldview based on God's view of the world He has meticulously created and moulded will have a bearing on how we prepare for His return.

As ordinary Christians, we need a simple but authentic worldview to ensure we lead our lives on earth as His stewards in the way He expects. I believe people of my generation, now in our 60s and 70's, are equipped to see both the old and the new way of thinking and

functioning. If we do not share what we have learnt i.e. His broader view of the world, with younger generations, we may leave them in spiritual poverty!

GOD'S WORLDVIEW IS THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

Let's take a look at the Biblical perspective.



THE HUMAN EXISTENTIAL JOURNEY

Genesis 1-2

God's plan for Paradise was complete. He saw His creation as good, very good. Man and woman were ready to live a life of marriage and parenthood (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:19-25). Sexuality was a gift from God to enable man and woman to initiate the task of parenthood. Sexual pleasure was a tool to bring them together for the work of populating the world. It was not an end in itself.

Parenthood was also to enable His people to teach their children to live as God's children as well as to teach them how to parent their own children. These are truths we pass on until His Son comes to take us home.

In Deuteronomy 6 (NIV), we read that we are to **love the LORD our God** above all else. Let's read together:

These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, ² so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. ³ Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey

so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

¹⁰ When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, ¹¹ houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, ¹² be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

¹³ Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. ¹⁴ Do not follow other gods, the gods

of the peoples around you; ¹⁵ for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land. ¹⁶ Do not put the LORD your God to the test as you did at Massah. ¹⁷ Be sure to keep the commands of the LORD your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. ¹⁸ Do what is right and good in the LORD's sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land the Lord promised you on oath to your ancestors, ¹⁹ thrusting out all your enemies before you, as the LORD said.

²⁰ In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?" ²¹ tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²² Before our eyes the LORD sent signs and wonders—great and terrible—on Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. ²³ But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land he promised on oath to our ancestors. ²⁴ The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. ²⁵ And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness."

As fallen men and women could not fulfil God's perfect requirement to be reconciled with Him, He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, into the world to fulfil this holy command for them through His incarnation, death and resurrection. Therefore, Jesus is called the Lamb of God sent to be the atonement for our sins.

REFLECTION

1. What is my view of the world in which I live e.g. how did it come to exist and why?
2. If God sends me on an errand of reporting to Him what I view of His world, what would I tell Him?
3. How does what I think of this world affect my earthly plans?

CHAPTER 1: IN SEARCH OF A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW From the Eyes of an Ordinary Believer

While sifting through the shifting sands of various worldviews, I pondered on the worldview of Christ from the creation of the world (Proverbs 8). It does not contradict world events, but frames them in meaning and purpose like no other worldview does. Let us take a look at that worldview.

The Creator of the heavens and the earth made the whole universe and deemed it as being good, very good.

Proverbs 8 reveals to us that:

- God is personified by wisdom.
- God speaks to all mankind.
- God speaks the truth.
- Mankind is instructed to choose wisdom and to fear God but to hate pride, arrogance, evil behaviour and perverse speech.
- God has power and controls earthly rulers.

- God has counsel and sound judgement.
- Kings and princes who follow God’s advice make just laws.
- God is not silent and those who look for Him will find Him; He loves all who love Him because they desire to follow Him. His desire is to give His people a comfortable life in His creation and to rule them with justice and righteousness.

Jesus, His Son created the world with Him.

“Then He was the craftsman at His side, filled with delight day by day, always rejoicing in His presence, rejoicing in His whole world and delighting in mankind.”
(Proverbs 8:30-31)

How wonderful was God’s plan for us before we sinned! Thankfully, mankind is still more precious to Him than gems.

Pause to Ponder

Now, let us contrast that with what we know of the present world. Does our world reflect God’s desires and views? Definitely not!

The worldview of Christ stands the test of time; it brings hope to sinful mankind trapped in our recurring tragedies and fills us with joy because He is perfect yet gracious and forgiving. This Creator has the best interests of His creation at heart. I would rather follow Him than any other world leader.

I would rather believe what He has explained and promised than what the world says it is planning for my benefit. I would rather follow His plan to bring me home to His house, His Father's house, than arrive at any other destination promised by anyone with a worldly view of life that limits goodness to what we know on planet earth only.

WHY MUST WE KNOW AND UNDERSTAND OUR WORLDVIEW?

We need to know and understand our worldview because it affects the decisions we make and will, in turn, lead us to or away from our destiny according to our Father's plan. Knowing our worldview will also help us understand ourselves and our neighbours. This will, of course, help us serve God more fruitfully. Indeed, as believers, it is crucial that our worldview is aligned with His. In addition, by considering our worldview, we may be able to correct any flaws in what we think about

God, the world, others and ourselves so as to follow more closely in Jesus' footsteps.

Pause to Ponder

Take some time to consider your beliefs as a disciple of Jesus:

- What do you believe about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit?
- What do you believe about the world in general?
- What do you believe about the world that does not consider the Bible as God's manual for life on this planet?
- What do you believe should be the basis of your interactions with other believers and with non-believers?
- What do you believe about yourself?
- Finally, do you think your answers to the above questions are in line with God's desire and plan as revealed in His Word?

You probably will not be able to answer all these heavy questions in one sitting. That is fine. Keep them in your heart as you go about your day and as you continue to read this little book. Reflect on them. When you are ready, you might find it helpful to put your thoughts down on paper.

In 2014, I suffered a stroke. It was a profound setback for me, to say the least, but God controlled my mind and heart and changed bad into good by giving me a lot of time for reflection. I have spent time thinking of God, His ways and my life. The topic of worldviews also surfaced. I had time during my recovery to rethink and refine my thoughts and ideas on matters important to Christ's church. Let me share two of my journal entries during that time on the issues we face as humans. I hope my thoughts will help you arrive at some kind of understanding on these subjects.

30 May 2016 - I believe that Christ is coming soon to bring world events, as we know them, to a close. The signs that Jesus asked His first disciples to watch out for, about 2000 years ago, are appearing more often than before (Matthew 24). Almost daily, we read about them

in the news; we see children and adults suffering as never before. These tragedies may move us to plead with Him to come sooner if not for the sake of those yet to enter God's Kingdom of light, love, truth, justice and righteousness.

16 June 2016 - Many events are happening so fast that we need God's worldview to stabilise our thinking; we need His worldview indeed! All over the world, the plight of suffering humanity can be seen at the tap of our fingers on the keys of our computers, tablets or handphones. We need determined effort to shut out what we see such as pain, suffering, cruelty, injustice and immorality...the consequences of our fallenness.

If the above sharing seem prophetic, then we need to more urgently consider God's view of the world. We need to think, feel and act like Him in these end times. We want to flow with His thoughts and decisions so that we will not be caught by surprise when He comes again to take His people home. His view of creation is essential. However, many people on earth form their own worldviews. For example:

Gender differences were more acceptable to people at one time in human history. Today, we seem to have lost our first love and honour of God who created us to fulfill His purposes on earth. The Creator of the universe is no

longer deemed to be in control of the world. Whereas He meant a married couple to reflect the relationship between Christ and His church, currently, what feels good is right for the individual. Men want to be like women and women want to be like men. (I am not referring to those born with anatomical or biochemical differences.) Homosexuality is also just another alternative lifestyle. It is not the business of others to interfere in the individual's preferred lifestyle, whether hidden or openly expressed. After many interactions with male and female homosexuals, I have come to the conclusion that if a person has an urge to have a same-sex relationship, abstinence and celibacy is the only option, not homosexuality (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Singlehood is acceptable in an imperfect world despite its difficulties. Not all needs can be met in any lifestyle. The guidance is whether the Creator has ordained such a lifestyle.

God's creation is a community where together, we reflect His image, whether married or single. We do not have to marry in an imperfect world when not everyone can pair up as man and wife. Someone will definitely be left out of marriage due to, for instance, war and natural disasters.

THE ROLE OF THE GIFT OF THE IMAGINATION IN FORMULATING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

The imagination is a wonderful gift from God. To those who may feel that the imagination is not a resource that Christians may use, let me assure you that this faculty is a gift from the Creator. Don't be troubled – He is a scientist, not a magician! As long as we centre our imagination on Christ, so that every image seen and every scene built in the mind's eye begins and ends in Christ, we are free to use our imagination to learn about the world, ourselves, one another and God. To formulate a worldview, we need to think forwards and backwards until our minds grasp a concept and we are able to express it in words by verbalising our thoughts or writing them down.

Pause to Ponder

Is your imagination centred on Jesus?

If necessary:

- Confess and repent of any abuse, misuse, overuse, underuse of your imagination.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to cleanse, sanctify and guard your imagination.
- Ask Him to teach you how to use it to magnify Jesus in everything you say, do and believe.

I have focused on relationship with God in this chapter because this is a fundamental message of the Bible. God intended a love relationship with the people He created. A biblical worldview must rest on this quality of love between Him and the people who worship Him. Out of this intimacy will flow love among His people for one another. Jesus said to His disciples:

“Love one another as I have loved you that the world will know that you are my disciples.” (John 13:34 & 35)

John, His disciple, exhorts us:

“We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.” (1 John 3:16)

The Biblical worldview is one guided and controlled by His Truth and filled with His Love. Without submission to such truth and sacrificial love, there is no Biblical worldview.

REFLECTION

1. Have I found the Biblical worldview? Is it guiding my life?
2. If so, how may I use it to honour God?

If not, why is this so and what am I going to do about it?

CHAPTER 2: THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW IS GOD'S WORLDVIEW

GOD'S WORLDVIEW AS RECORDED IN THE BIBLE

God is not a man. Therefore, His view of the world, from the time He created the heavens and the earth, is different from ours. He is omniscient (all-knowing) but we are not. Our worldview is limited because we do not know everything and often, our knowledge tends to be distorted by our subjectivity. We have absorbed much erroneous thinking or ideas about God and the world since the time of Genesis 3! Hence, the worldview we should have, that is, God's worldview, has become distorted beyond recognition by the enemy's lies that are disguised as modern, post-modern, freethinking, forward-looking, advanced ideas.

Let us take a look at the worldview of marriage as an example.

In a number of countries today, marriage has been redefined from a *one man:one woman* permanent relationship of commitment and love to a *one man:more than one woman* relationship as long as no one in the marriage complains. This, of course, blatantly

ignores God's symbol of marriage to express the relationship He always intended for His people, *the church and His Son*, the Lamb of God (Ephesians 5 and Revelation 19).

Marriage as the Biblical symbol of a male + a female commitment in a temporal relationship, to represent the eternal relationship of commitment between Jesus and the church, has not been considered seriously or taught systematically from early childhood among His ambassadors in local churches today. Yet we react strongly when homosexuals publicly demand that their lifestyle be accepted as normal human behaviour. By adulthood, it may be too late to present them God's worldview because their own belief of marriage has become ingrained in their psyche.

We need to humbly repent from our failure to portray His purpose for the human marriage relationship to those under our care at home or in the church. In fact, if a person refuses to humbly come to Him with a contrite heart and tremble at His Word, what difference does it make which sin he has committed? The world does not bother about God's point of view even though He patiently waits for us to consider it (Isaiah 1:18-20).

We need to ask Him to enable us to think in His way and His logic.

Those of you who assess yourselves as thinkers in personality, please work hard to help your brothers and sisters in Christ to think after God's mind. To be mature in thinking is a responsibility we dare not neglect. We are not only called to be witnesses before a watching world but to strengthen our brethren in Christ (Luke 22:31-32).

With the assumption that you have read the Bible at least once through, I summarise the result of my search for God's worldview with the Bible as my guide:

1. God's kingdom is God's family and is not a political community.

Before Adam and Eve were corrupted by sin, they lived in harmony with God as their Creator Father. Mankind was to take care of the world and enjoy God's covering as Father in the Garden of Eden. Conflict did not exist between God and mankind. We do not know the exact length of that period in human history. However, after Eve and then Adam succumbed to Satan's temptation and therefore disobeyed God, sin entered the world. Every part of the world became spoilt, like a piece of white cloth is spoilt by just one stain. The world has not been the same since. Fallen man's culture has absorbed much nonsense! Mankind's culture used to exist according to God's Kingdom rules in a peaceful environment.

Since Genesis 3, God's worldview has become tainted by the enemy's worldview. Satan has influenced the world with lies about God's relationship with His creation.

Adam and Eve, once loving and contented in the roles God had appointed for them as equals, began to live in conflict with each other. Adam blamed Eve for his mistake in disobeying God, while Eve blamed the serpent for her disobedience. Lies, blame and fear of punishment had entered the world. Insecurity arose in mankind. Marriage was damaged; disloyalty to spouse and to God surfaced in family and society. We are still experiencing sin's consequences in every sphere of human life.

2. Take marriage as an example. Marriage was and still is a covenant relationship established by God:
 - between one man and one woman and
 - between the couple and God.

Where marriage was once a unique, permanent and exclusive relationship between one man and one woman, with God as the trusted Father of both, it has now become an arrangement of a temporary partnership of convenience for many couples. Therefore, it is open to the whims and fancies of

those involved. Since the late 20th century, marriage has deteriorated to the extent that it no longer resembles anything God had in mind when He instituted it in Eden as described in Genesis 1 and 2. In addition, sex has become a facility for selfish entertainment and satisfaction rather than a precious gift to bring forth the next generation.

In many countries, marriage has been redefined to include partnerships between those of the same gender, literally breaking God's image into half as He has given part of His image to man and the other part to woman. Two of the same half do not make one whole!

Paul the apostle refers to this in Romans 1 in the Bible. This is not to criticise believers (for whom this book is written) with gender difficulties, but to suggest to them that celibacy may be the answer for them rather than homosexuality. The latter cannot portray the relationship between Christ and His church.

God intended equal and mutual submission between the genders but the dynamic between them has become a fight for one-upmanship by both. Instead of sharing their lives in mutual submission to each other and working for the common good of mankind, men and women seem to be locked in battle with one another to see which gender is better, more

useful or more needed for the good of themselves only. The man, who once treated the woman with gentleness, now tends to rule over the woman at home or in society. The woman, on the other hand, out of anger, intentionally or unintentionally reacts to the attempt to curb her spirit to the extent that small growing children are often neglected. This is especially common when her pursuit for personal freedom takes precedence over her children's welfare. However, women at times also mistreat men, though less frequently. Sadly, their children are most affected by marital discord.

While a sense of security in earthly life has been lost since the fall of man, there is still hope that man and woman will live in bliss and harmony with God again. However, the price had to be paid for men and women to resume the freedom to live according to God's ordained will. Jesus came to pay that price. He paid the ransom for us through the perfect sacrifice of Himself. He alone could and did fulfil the Father's just demand for sin. He also came to show us how to treat one another with respect and compassion, for instance, through His encounter with the Samaritan woman by Jacob's well (John 4:4-42) and to the widow who had lost her only son to an untimely death (Luke 7:11-17). (However, women also at times mistreat men, though less frequently.

The compassion and decency with which Jesus treated women during His time on earth models for us how men should be treating women today. More significantly, let us keep in mind that human marriage, imperfect though it may be, is a pattern of the marriage that is to come between the Lamb of God and His church.

It is God who initiates redemption from His enemy's suggested alternative lifestyles. The enemy has provided distractions from the tragedy of our predicament and prevented us from searching for God's worldview.

Pause to Ponder

1. What is your view of marriage?
2. What is your view of the roles of a husband and a wife in the marriage relationship?
3. What is your source of the above views?
4. What are the sources of the world's beliefs about marriage?

5. What is your response to the world's beliefs regarding marriage?

Marriage is just one important issue for God's people to seriously consider. There are many other issues that we need to consider personally and corporately. We must not and dare not take for granted His endurance. Jesus encourages us to look out for the signs of His second coming and to prepare accordingly. Time is running out!

OTHER COMMON ISSUES THAT ARE STILL TROUBLING HUMANITY

The truth of a matter is seldom defined in today's world in the courts or society.

For example, is the legendary Robin Hood correct when he robs the rich to help the poor? We would agree that:

1. To steal is incorrect
2. To help the poor is correct

However, if the end justifies the means, stealing in this situation, is correct too.

What is our worldview of this dilemma?

If we love someone, we will want to be truthful to that person. Viewing the socio-political-legal circumstances in the world today seems to have brought forth this reality dramatically. We accept that a lie does not pay as it hurts individuals, families, society and the nation. It causes a deep distortion of life at various levels. We recognise it as evil and therefore, we do not desire it. However, the problem is: Is a lie evil? The answer depends on our worldview of truth and also that of accountability. Just like Pilate in Roman times, we ask, *“What is truth?”* (John 18:38) but then leave the question unanswered and walk away. We seem unable to handle its definition. Is it because we know the obvious answer in real life and therefore fear the responsibility and inconvenience of the answer? The worldwide scenario seems to illustrate this problem well. That is why our global citizens are astounded and confused, whether in the West or the East.

Pause to Ponder

In contrast, God’s response to sin provides for repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation with Him and one another.

Having a Biblical worldview does not make us righteous but it points those we are in relationship with to Him who alone is righteous. It also helps us to be renewed to please Him. I have come to realise how deeply unrighteous this old self is and how incapable I am of getting out of sinning. It is by grace alone that I can be of any use to Him at all!

God has written His law in the hearts of mankind irrespective of belief, nationality and race or genetics. Our conscience bears witness to us, defending or accusing us when we disobey Him. Read also *Eternity in Their Hearts* by Don Richardson (2). When God's judgement comes, it will be universally applied; men and women have no say in how God will judge the world, unlike in our present world order, which allows laws to be changed according to the decisions of man.

"What a wretched man (or woman) I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24-25)

"If God had not sent His Son to pay for the punishment of our sin, we would have been eternally condemned for sure. Thanks be to God that it is by grace that we have been saved!" (Ephesians 2:5)

Gratefully, though man's worldview changes as we discover more of life, God's worldview remains the same. He is patiently waiting for us to reason with Him and choose to come home to Him and be loved.

REFLECTION I

A.

- Who is God as revealed in the Bible? (e.g. Psalms 100 & 139, Deuteronomy 32:3-4, 1 Timothy 6:17)
- Who rules the world? (e.g. Job 38-42)
- What is His relationship with mankind? (e.g. Hebrews 12:9, Luke 15:11-31)

B.

- What was the world like up to Genesis 2?
- What was the world like after Genesis 2? (e.g. Romans 1)

REFLECTION II

"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever." (Westminster Shorter Catechism)

- Think of the implication to you if the above is true.
- Pilate asked, *“What is truth?”* but never waited for an answer. Do you ever wonder what happened to him? Maybe he believed in Jesus the Christ before he died, maybe not.
- *“One of the criminals, who hung on the cross beside Jesus, hurled insults at Him: ‘Are you the Christ? Save yourself and us!’ But the other criminal rebuked him. ‘Don’t you fear God,’ he said, ‘since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.’*

Then he said, *‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’*

Jesus answered him, *‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise.’”* (Luke 23:39-43)

Pause to Ponder

If you believe God is speaking to you, continue with the exercise below:

- Read the Book of Genesis slowly to see the utter fallenness of man and the loving intention of God in his plan of redemption. Watch how He gently persuades fallen men and women to return to Him.
- Read the four Gospels meditatively to feel God's grace and compassion in and through Christ on fallen humanity.
- Read Paul's letter to the Romans with understanding of God's persistent grace.
- Read the Book of Revelation diligently even if you do not understand everything yet.

If this is all you can do by way of reading the Bible at this stage of your life, do it all the same. It will benefit your soul greatly.

If you are submissive and obedient to the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will lead you into understanding the details. Be humble and ask Him to be your Guide in this endeavour and adventure!

REFLECTION III

Assess your view of:

- God
- People, starting with your loved ones
- Yourself
- Nature

REFLECTION IV

Go through the Gospels and pick out issues that highlight God's views of human relationships as reflected in the various stages of human life on earth:

- Childhood (e.g. Matthew 11:25, 18:2-5; Colossians 3:20-21)
- Marriage (e.g. Genesis 2; Matthew 19:1-12)
- Life in the womb (Psalm 139)
- Old age (Proverbs 17:6)

RENEWAL OF THE MIND IN A SMALL GROUP

1. Read Scriptures and current news of God's world. Slowly and in details, discuss and understand God's world.
2. Why is it necessary to renew your mind as soon as possible than later?
3. How relevant is this statement to you: "*Procrastination is the thief of time*"? If you are sorry to have presumptions about God's ways, consider whether it is because you only listen and are too impatient to read the Bible carefully with understanding? Are you reading Scriptures too fast?
4. Consider a few stumbling blocks to transformation at the different stages of our life:
 - Lifestyle of the young: Enjoying life to the neglect of important responsibilities e.g. caring for parents. Jesus, on the other hand, cared for His earthly mother, Mary, even while He was on the cross.
 - Lifestyle of the middle-age: This is normally when it dawns on many that something is missing in their life in spite of all the hard work of previous years. Is it time to review priorities?

- Lifestyle of the old-age: At this stage of life, anger may surface if it has been left hidden in the heart. Suppressed hatred builds up and affects us. Disappointment intensifies when friends let us down, while our health is deteriorating. Whether we like it or not, it is time to review our life.
5. God is so patient with impatient us. He gives us time on earth to learn, change and to discover and obey Him. He knows that we are made of dust. Further, God is ageless and therefore can take care of us eternally.
 6. But one day, we will have run out of time. Are you ignoring Him even as time is running out for you?

DO NOT GIVE UP

- To believe that there is no certainty of joy and peace with God is a LIE!
- Trusting God's truth brings freedom from the trap of performance.
- Certainty by faith in God must be unshakeable. Read examples of the lives of those who applied faith even in difficult times e.g. Job, Ruth, Esther, Rahab and 20th Century persecuted believers like Corrie ten Boom.

- Homecoming is real; a change of address is coming and Revelation 21 will happen!

The truth of the Gospel is short and simple; this is why it is accessible to anyone, even those who think they are uneducated, simple-minded or poor.

RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORLDVIEW – THE CHALLENGE

Be still and ask yourself:

- How great is my God?
- How unknown is my God?
- How different is my God?

Jehovah is above all 'gods' or idols.

Read Job and trace how he arrived at: *"once I heard of you but now I see You."*

We do not know much about the identity of Elihu. The Old Testament records that his fourth and final speech points to God's truth, **God's worldview**.

God finally breaks the silence and reveals Himself to Job (chapter 38). Elihu's words enabled Job to grasp a fairly good understanding of the living God...

*"At this also my heart trembles,
And leaps from its place..."*

*...God thunders with His voice wondrously,
Doing great things which we cannot comprehend."
(Job 37:1-5)*

God is prominent and preeminent. He is majestic in His power, magnificent in His person and marvellous in His purpose. How refreshing to step back into the shadows of our own insignificance and give full attention to the greatness of our God! *It's all about Him!* We take a major step toward maturity when we finally realise it's not about us and/or our significance. It's all about God's significance: His holiness, His greatness and His glory.

*"In whirlwind and storm is His way,
And clouds are the dust beneath His feet.
The Lord is good,
A stronghold in the days of trouble,
And He knows those who take refuge in Him."
(Nahum 1:3,7)*

Like Job, after a series of trials, we realise that God is transcendent. He is magnificent. He is mighty. He alone is awesome! He is all around us, above us and within us. Without Him there is no righteousness. Without Him there is no holiness. Without Him there is no promise of forgiveness, no source of absolute truth, no reason to endure, no hope beyond the grave. Elihu turns Job's attention to this awesome God as he says,

"Therefore men fear Him;

He does not regard those who are wise in heart.'

(Job 37:24)

Nothing compares to Him. Let us never forget that! Let us worship and bow down before Him and exalt His name in words, in silence, and in song.

The Lord spoke to Job in the whirlwind!

That's Elihu's message:

"He is here, Job! Our awesome God – all glorious above. Job, listen. He's here. He's not always silent. When He speaks there is no voice like His."

Adapted from Job by Charles Swindoll p. 260-262
(W Publishing Group)

CHAPTER 3: CHILDHOOD INFLUENCES AFFECT OUR WORLDVIEW AND DECISIONS

Let me illustrate how my upbringing affected my worldview and decisions in life.

As a primary and secondary student in Penang, I was influenced in my worldview, unknowingly, by my three oldest siblings. We were a large Hokkien (a dialect group from China) family consisting of my maternal grandma, parents and seven living children. Pa came from a poor background in China. Immigrating to the British Malaya of the early 20th century in his teenage years as an orphan, Pa found work there.

Ma had no opportunity to attend school at all as she was a girl in the Singapore of the early 20th century. It was only in her early 50s that she learnt the alphabet by heart while the children were being tutored at home by a teacher who came weekly to provide extra lessons. We were so proud of her when she was confident enough to recognise and memorise traffic signs and rules, passing her driving test in the Malay language on her first attempt!

Pa saved enough from his labours to educate his three older children in the hope that they, in turn, would help

their younger siblings when they needed funds for their tertiary education. These three older siblings were transferred from Chinese to English medium schools during the latter part of the British era in Malaya. They were blessed to be encouraged by local church friends and Western missionary pastors who saw their potential for leadership roles even though their parents were illiterate or self-taught to read and write.

The following three siblings, born after WWII, were enrolled in Chinese schools again as Pa hoped that one of them would inherit the import and export business that he had founded. As the youngest child, I had no say in major family decisions. When it was time for me to go to school, I was enrolled in the Methodist Girls School, Penang by my eldest brother who was allowed to override father's choice. He had hope of my joining him in the United States of America. He believed that there would be more opportunities for me in the US and the first step towards that dream was for me to know the English language well. Those small steps led me in the direction that my life eventually took though I ended up in Australia instead.

Thus, I grew up with a Western social outlook and an overseas Chinese culture. My family life at home and in the local Hokkien church instilled in me the beliefs and

teachings of the Bible. At the same time, traditional Chinese culture had a strong influence on me in my childhood. However, I was also impacted by the Western culture of the few Western missionaries in schools and churches then. Most of my schoolmates were also impacted by the Western mindset socially. At that time, I was not aware of these social influences. I only realised it much later in middle-age as I reflected on my life thus far. During my younger days, life was to be enjoyed, not analysed!

But what exactly was the worldview I developed as a result of these three strong influences: traditional Chinese, Western and Biblical on my early life?

HOW MY CHILDHOOD WORLDVIEW SHAPED MY LIFE AS AN ADULT

What I eventually learnt from my traditional Chinese background was submission to authority, human or divine, while from Western influence I learnt freedom of expression and from the Biblical worldview, that God is sovereign and in charge of history.

The result of childhood influences may be a blessing or a curse depending on how we handle the issues that arise in daily life. However, the Creator God knows and engineers all things so that His purposes are fulfilled.

That is why I am writing a book on worldviews to leave behind for you though I am only an amateur. It is my hope that others will do the same and do it better than I so that young minds may understand history and be shaped positively by it. We are freed from bondages not to do anything we like, but to serve God without fear (Luke 1:74-75).

My mother was right to have insisted on a good education for us so to avoid poverty and being bullied by others. It has enabled us to think more logically and objectively. I am thankful to God that through having a solid Biblical worldview, I am able to help others understand concepts that will equip them in their decision-making in some direct or indirect way. Having to take Philosophy 101 in Medical School helped to make me more systematic in my thinking as I was born intuitive and feeling in my temperament. Further, what a joy to have the creation gift of writing; it is valuable and free, to be used with accountability to Him, even today as a semi-invalid!

How did my late parents' and living siblings' worldview shape me without my realising it, guiding my choices and decisions?? Let me try to list it down as points.

1. My parents set the precedence of *caring for the needy* by helping school dropouts whenever they

could. I grew up observing them take in teenagers, at their parents' request, to work in my father's shop. Father provided them with work, a salary, food and lodging. After they learnt the trade, they left us for better job opportunities. Moreover, the more valuable asset they gained was the care that my mother provided through her *caring and giving heart*. Being younger than our father's workers, we were taught to respect them as brothers or uncles. Even the household maids were to be accepted as aunts. If we were rude to any of them, we were punished. In this way, politeness towards others was ingrained in us.

2. From a very young age, maybe since kindergarten, I had wanted to be like my eldest brother who was an efficient doctor. I also wanted to be a missionary like my eldest sister. Hence, I prayed that whoever I married had to have a combination of both vocations. Consequently, I rejected attractive suitors who were like one or the other of my siblings but not both. Finally, the right candidate appeared and I accepted his proposal, even though I knew that we had to be separated for at least five years before we could be married. From this experience, *I learned to trust God in my choice of vocation even though I could not see the future*. Thankfully, though it was a difficult waiting period, God kept us faithful to each other all those years in spite of temptations and trials on the way. However, on hindsight, those were the

most fruitful years of my involvement in fellow student ministry of His choice as I had the time and space to serve Him when my fiancé was thousands of miles away! This experience taught me that God is not in a hurry to fulfil His will and *that God's way is the best and only way.*

3. From such discipline, *God, my heavenly Father, taught me to be patient.* I could not have had a better Teacher though it was painful during the process (Hebrew 12:7-11)! Later, when my children and I had to endure long and frequent periods of separation from their father and my husband as he had to travel, locally and overseas, for the sake of His ministry, I understood why I had to go through the earlier years of discipline. If God had not been so clear in showing me His worldview of redemption and His call to serve Him full-time, I do not think I could have endured such loneliness for so long. I could have suffered a mental breakdown during my medical course or brought up my children grudgingly. Praise be to God our Father for He does all things well and in His time!

I have focused on relationships and vocations in this chapter because this is the fundamental message of the Bible. God intends an intimate relationship with His children that permeates all of His new creation. The Biblical worldview, therefore, must rest upon a Biblical

understanding of relationships. It must also lead to biblically based vocations.

REFLECTION

- Retrace your childhood experiences from the view point of an adult. You may like to invite a close friend to pray and walk with you. Seek a pastoral counsellor's help if necessary.
- What in my childhood experiences have influenced my subconscious and conscious worldview as an adult?
- Ask the Good Shepherd to show you what, where, when and how to review your life with Him by Your side. He is ever so gentle, patient and wise. He will heal and renew you deeply; He wants to give you His authentic and new Biblical worldview to prepare you as a bride for Himself (Revelation 19). There is nothing to fear if you are His child.
- Cry or laugh as you journal your thoughts that you may recall what He has done for you; give thanks and rejoice!

CHAPTER 4: DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW IS RENEWAL OF THE MIND

TEASING THE STRANDS

During the course of helping counselees function better, I have found that renewing or changing one's mind about an issue takes time and deliberate effort. Of course, God can and does perform miracles. But most of the time He uses the agricultural model of the seed. We know that a seed must die before a shoot can emerge. Yes, growth in the kingdom of God is a process. So, we need to be patient and follow His rules if we want to renew our worldview. If we do that, we will be surprised by joy when we see the shoots emerging from our seeds.

EXAMPLE OF A CHANGE OF WORLDVIEW AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Our worldview affects our actions in life. Let's consider the life of one person to see how her worldview shaped her life.

Dr. Ida Scudder (MD) was a young white American woman whose worldview was changed by a call to care

for women in India. She grew up in India as her parents were missionaries there. However, although she had her dream of being married to a rich and successful professional in America, she changed her mind and remained single all her life. When her suitor, an American doctor, proposed to her, she rejected him as he did not feel called to India. Stuck in a male-dominated India which desperately needed women doctors to care of women more effectively, she was called by God to be a doctor there. Her former priorities were changed when she saw first-hand how families suffered due to the harmful worldviews they held.

She subsequently not only helped Indian women to live a more fulfilled life of equality with men, but also encouraged them to reject harmful traditional and religious beliefs. She helped them accept healthier medical initiatives. That battle, which started in the early 20th century, continues into the 21st. This is how a change of worldviews liberates people to live in the hope of redemption from harmful cultural and religious practices. The result was the establishment of a world-class Christian hospital and medical school that serve Indian men and women up to today. What a witness to the power of the love of God!

Dr. Ida's old worldview of 'self first' that espoused worldly values was replaced with the Biblical worldview of placing God first, others second and self last. God subsequently used her to break spiritual-physical-mental, emotional and social bondages in India such as gender prejudice, fear of the social stigma of being regarded of less value than men and being emotionally trapped under male domination. What joy and freedom she has brought to Indian girls, wives and mothers up to today! I am sure even men have been blessed by Dr. Ida's new Biblical worldview! You may read her biography in *Dr. Ida Passing On the Torch of Life* by Dorothy Clark Wilson (3).

Dr. Ida's story teaches that:

- The less noticeable person can be built up with dignity and become noticed
- The shy person can become gently brave and relational
- People imprisoned for crimes can be renewed through repentance to live with restored self-respect and dignity
- The outcast person can acquire new ambitions and desire for God

- The jobless person can be employed and independent, discarding disappointment for hope
- Social outcasts can become agents of social transformation right before our eyes
- The sorrowful person can become joyful
- Hopelessness in a person can be replaced by inner fulfillment
- The depressed person can become full of thanksgiving and rejoicing!

Pause to Ponder

REFLECTION

1. What would your question to yourself be at the end of your life? Would you, like St. Augustin, ask yourself the following?

*“Have I left anything behind of significance?
Will there be any enduring evidence that I’ve been
here?”*

It needs a change of worldview to touch people with God's love through the kindness and compassion we show. Is the reward of such action worthy of our renewal of our minds?

(Consider what the psalmist declared in Psalm 112:4, 6 that...*“Even in darkness, light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man...a righteous man will be remembered forever.”*)

2. When we see a friend bed-ridden and helpless, burdened with an active mind in a useless body, if we ask, *“Why does God not take him home?”* we are still operating through our old worldview. However, if we encouraged and gave hope to that person, we would be working within the understanding that God can change bad into good, and that He has His ways of doing things, difficult as they may be for us to understand. We could become God's channels of change and be the positive factor that encourages a brother or sister to claim God's power and promises in His Word...to transform weakness into strength and death into life.

3. Consider this saying:

“We are immortal until our work on earth is done.”
George Whitefield

This saying encourages us to live with a sense of purpose and dignity instead of wallow in self-pity when disease or setbacks afflict us or age catches up with us. Since only God determines the time of our death, until then, let's work (Acts 13:36 and John 9:4)! As long as it is day, we are to make visible the invisible Christ and to touch men and women, boys and girls with His love! If we have done these things, we would have done our part and laboured not in vain! Let us therefore run with perseverance the race marked out for us, whatever the world says!

St. Benedict, an ancient saint in the Catholic church, urges us:

"...We must haste to do now what will profit us for eternity."

This means that, as a result of our new worldview, we are to focus on laying treasures in heaven, not on earth. Luke 12:13-21 means that though we may save wisely, we must be rich towards God by giving to those whom He especially cares for i.e. the needy! In this manner, others will be touched by God's love and some will repent while there is time! If we do not practise our new worldview of sharing what we have, we are not really taking Him seriously. We must not be short-sighted, even while we are active in church. We need to be passionate for Him NOW by

being willing to change our worldview of wealth while we still can (Luke 16:25-31).

Many ordinary Christians want to love and serve God through obedience to Him but are hindered by wrong views of God. This is often caused by poor understanding of the Word of God and by much debilitating baggage from past as well as present sins. Many become confused or lost and end up giving up their first love for God. Instead, they do their own thing and do not enjoy His abundant life and eternal friendship.

Where this is true, not only do we limp along in our Christian walk, we also dishonour Him before a watching world because we are not living as salt and light. To know how to be salt and light, we need to return to the Word of God and diligently study it. Of course, we also need to live it!

Sometimes, a church may seem active and ‘successful’, but it may not believe in the Kingdom of God. Instead, it seems to be building its own kingdom, seeking pleasure, comfort, pursuing worldly investments and its own vision of economical, educational, political plans, etc. To know what the principles of God’s Kingdom are and

how to be citizens of such a kingdom, we need to know the Word of God and be prepared to live by it.

LEARNING FROM ADAM AND EVE'S MISTAKES IN THE RENEWAL OF OUR MIND

How did Eve fall to the enemy's temptation? She was tempted to believe a distortion of the truth which God had already revealed. The enemy maligned the character of God. His words created doubt in Eve's mind about God's character. By holding on to and considering a temptation for too long, the distortion was magnified e.g. Eve began to see the forbidden fruit as "*good and desirable.*" (Genesis 3:6).

If we dawdle and listen to deceptive words for too long, doubt can become real and believable e.g. Eve listened too long to the serpent's words, "*Did God say that you cannot eat?*" Eventually, the above question created doubt in her mind and led her to gross disobedience.

The doubting of God's instruction was introduced as a question stemming from curiosity, presenting the matter in the guise of a desire to be open-minded. This slant on what God had expressly said led to the need to search for another way of life. Eve was urged to explore further and to try and experience for herself the tastiness of the forbidden fruit. She began to question

the logic of God's words. She may have pondered in her mind, *"Why must it be that this fruit is forbidden; why not the other fruits?"*

Eve was tempted into questioning God's intentions. She questioned God's integrity. She succumbed to pride, believing that she knew better than the God who had created her in wisdom and love. She wanted to follow the path of her own will in order to enjoy life her way, apart from what her Creator had planned for her when He placed Adam and her in the Garden of Eden.

Satan had managed to entice Eve to shift gears with lies like these:

"Eve, God is afraid of your knowing His secret; He is afraid that you will know how to live in the Garden another way; He keeps the best fruit for Himself. Don't fear Him, don't believe Him. You may know better...try and see..."

Pause to Ponder

But WHY did Eve fall into the enemy's trap?

She was not on guard and was flattered by the sweet talk of the tempter who was and is God's enemy. She

became greedy. Content gave way to discontent. By listening too long and too intensely, she eventually strayed from the path God had put her on:

Think → Look → Feel desirable (Trapped) → Take (Action) → Smell → Taste

From not being alert and by accepting an external temptation, Eve allowed herself to fall headlong into the temptation to disobey God, her sovereign Creator. Satan won that battle...and laughed!

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF CHARACTERS WHO TEACH US TO LIVE BY FAITH (NEW WORLDVIEW) AND NOT BY SIGHT (OLD WORLDVIEW):

1. Although Abraham was rushed by Sarah to have a child by her slave, he passed the test of faith in God later when Sarah did conceive and gave birth to Isaac, according to God's promise (Genesis 16 and 17:18-21).
2. Gideon was allowed by God to strengthen his faith. God allowed him his need to be doubly confirmed. God commanded him to lay a fleece twice and he saw God's answer twice (Judges 6:36-39).
3. Esther risked her life to approach King Xerxes after fasting and praying, waiting upon the living God. Her

action was not due to blind faith in an unknown God but due to faith in the living God who controls history (Esther 3-4; 7-9).

4. Deborah was a woman in a man's world yet she was wise and firm enough not to consider her gender as a hindrance to her leadership role when Israel needed her. She eventually fulfilled a role usually reserved for men *because God had called her* to that position of leadership (Judges 4-5).

REFLECTION

1. Do I have confidence in God's view of the world?

If yes, why?

If no, why not?

2. How do I adopt God's worldview?

Some tips to help you along:

- Read, learn, set priorities
- Make the effort and take the time to put off the old worldview and put on God's worldview

- Learn in a small group with a guide (a mature follower of Jesus who is a little ahead in his pilgrimage)
3. Practise the lifestyle of the newly learnt worldview.
This includes:
- Regular repentance. Keep short accounts with God. If you have not experienced repentance from sin since your conversion, pray for it and wait for God's response!
 - Regularly ask, *"Who else do I have to forgive?"*
 - Reconciliation with God and with fellow man will help us follow Christ more closely as He is for friendship, not enmity.
 - Be joyful in the Lord as He is good to you and has gone ahead to prepare a place for you in His Father's house!
 - Help the needy as well as those who are younger in faith than you.

Before long, those around you will notice that your views of God, self, others and environment are different i.e. your worldview is changing as you are being

renewed by the grace and truth of God (Romans 12:1-2). Go and enjoy His values and His lifestyle for His children until you are called home one day. Then, you will see Him face to face at the wedding banquet with all your brothers and sisters in Christ (Rev 19:1-9)!

CHAPTER 5: BE SILENT BEFORE GOD AND LISTEN TO HIM

From Old Testament times, God has been calling to man. Before the fall in Genesis 3, it was natural for Him to appear in the Garden of Eden and talk to our forefather, Adam. After sin entered creation, however, our attention is taken up by a lot of unnecessary noise so much so that we cannot hear God or simply ignore Him. In a noisy world, we have to be intentional to shut out noise in order to hear God speaking to us accurately. We cannot know and adopt God's worldview if we do not listen to what He is saying carefully. In addition, to know, accept and understand what He likes and dislikes is often not our choice.

Consider Samuel. He learnt to hear God's voice from early childhood (1 Samuel 3:10). He was in a quiet place, about to go to sleep at night. At first, he did not know that it was God who was calling him; he assumed that it was Eli. Eli the High Priest realised it was God, and taught the little boy how to respond. When God called him, Samuel was to reply: *"Speak, for Your servant is listening."*

God called Samuel to be a leader of Israel when he was a little boy. The little boy was innocent and obedient,

and he knew how to be still. So, when God called him, he heard God. Because he was obedient, God could use him powerfully in the shaping of Israel. To hear God in order to know His worldview, we need to first be silent and still.

CALL TO SILENCE, REFLECTION AND ACTION

Jesus said: *“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). Do we accept the fact that there are troubles and tribulations in the world? Jesus is not asking us to be negative in our worldview. He is calling us to accept certain realities of earthly life. Many people today are extremely discouraged because of life’s circumstances. They have tried to work hard to achieve happiness, peace and success. However, they have not been able to get anywhere. Perhaps living life God’s way is what they need. His worldview will give them meaning in life, hope and joy in spite of the problems they face. Further, some problems are simply part and parcel of earthly life to be endured in a broken world. Remember, *“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones”* (Proverbs 17:22). Therefore, let us *“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Pause and Reflect

What were you like when you were in your early 30s, the same stage of growth as Jesus was during His years of ministry on earth?

Do you believe that Jesus' words, spoken more than 2000 years ago, apply today for us in the 21st century? Is He worth listening to today?

It took me years to accept that I cannot change the world by my own effort! It took me decades to accept that though I can achieve some things, I cannot achieve everything I want to accomplish in life. I need to be realistic in my view of myself in this world. Looking at the news about climate change alone would depress me if I do not know how the Lord of the earth views this subject. Because He is in charge and loves me, I know that I am safe in His hands!

People have often reckoned that I could do a lot of things because I have a medical degree, am a mother, had to nurse a very sick child and had to raise three kids with different personalities. On top of that vast, varied experience, I had to get used to not having my busy husband at home since day one of our marriage. On Sundays, I often felt like a widow, having to go to church alone, towing three young children along. I could not

have had, by my own strength, done His will at all! God's enemy wanted 'to push me over the cliff' several times. Christ took me through those trying years, and that is why I did not collapse emotionally!

When the Lord asked me to obey Him by marrying a future pastor who later turned theologian and I obeyed, I did not know that it would involve severe hardship even though friends think it was and is glamorous. I had thought God would call me to Africa as a missionary doctor when I was in secondary school. But He saw it fit for me to serve Him as a homemaker in my homeland, Malaysia. His call also required us to live in the unknown e.g. while waiting for the *Seminari Theologi Malaysia* to be built as a permanent place to accommodate more staff and students, I had to pack and unpack each time we needed to move house on an average of once in three years between 1980 and 2001.

Then I misunderstood His plan and thought we need not move house any more. But in 2006, we had to shift again due to my arthritic knees. A single-storey rather than a four-storey house was more suitable for my arthritic joints. Meanwhile, my husband's work continued to involve much travelling and I was alone with the children or, in old age, by myself. When I calculate the years, I find that I had had to move about

ten times in Australia and England from 1971-1980, and another ten times in Malaysia since 1981 (including shift of Reconre ministry venue). I really felt like Sarah following Abraham, going out not knowing where she was going with her husband. Abundant life was head knowledge to me then, something good but unattainable and definitely not practical...until I turned 40. (You may read about my pilgrimage in *Deepening Joy*, 2nd Edition (4), available as a free ebook on the website www.reconre.org)

The truth is that Jesus asks us to live with Him and with what He gives us. This lesson on submission is non-negotiable if we love Him. Due to resistance to His ways in us, He seems to us a very hard taskmaster sometimes. Therefore, we do not always have good cheer. It needs Someone to give it to us, to give it freely and totally to us! We need to know that He is ready to give good cheer. However, the real question is, are we ready to receive His good cheer by faith in His word?

The way forward, however, is *not* to stop caring, hoping and trying but to start believing in His worldview and to start obeying Him seriously, desperately and consistently until He is known to us intimately.

But many do not follow and love Him first, for fear of having to give up what they have come to cherish

although those things may not be good for them. We may also fear the problems we think will crop up as a result of following God. This fear may cause:

- our daily lives to be lived in the unhealthy tension of submission to Christ vs rebellion
- an increase in our blood adrenalin level even while sleeping, which will affect our health negatively
- faulty thinking to take root such as, for instance, that we must not care of others anymore in order to save our own skins.

Therefore, few have the discipline to bring an end to a hectic lifestyle. Let me tell you a story to illustrate my point.

There was once a primary school teacher and his eight-year-old student, Raja, with whom he had an interesting conversation.

Teacher: Raja, you must study hard.

Raja: Why, Teacher?

Teacher: So that you will pass your primary school examinations well.

Raja: Why must I pass my primary examinations well, Teacher?

Teacher: So that you may be sent to a good secondary school when you reach Form 1.

Raja looked puzzled and scratched his head.

Raja: Why must I go to a good secondary school, Teacher?

Teacher: So that you will be taught to be hardworking, mix with the best students with good results and be encouraged to get the best Form 5 government examination results.

Raja: But why do I have to get the best Form 5 government examination results, Teacher?

Teacher: So that you may enter a university to get a degree that will enable you to get a good job.

Raja: Why must I get a good job, Teacher?

Teacher: So that you can support your parents and eventually support a wife and children.

Raja: But why must I have children, Teacher?

Teacher: So that when you are old, they can take care of you when you retire.

Raja: (Tired and exasperated after the long conversation) O Teacher, I want to retire NOW!

Raja's worldview was that of a child. He was not wrong to express his impatience with the life goals of an adult. In fact, he was as honest and straightforward in his conceptualisation and perception of the world as he could be. However, as adults, we have formulated a worldview gathered from years of having experienced life first-hand. We may think that Raja's worldview is narrow and humorously childish. But he is right in his own eyes i.e. if the purpose of life is to retire happily ever after, why work so hard and for so long? It would be better to retire now!

Raja may be short-sighted, but he is right to want to retire immediately if there is nothing more to look forward to than a happy retirement at the end of life's journey.

Among the problems that trouble us today in the 21st century are natural disasters such as earthquakes and

typhoons; climate changes resulting in floods and increasing world temperatures; and changes to long-established social institutions such as marriage, the family and to personal identity (so that gender roles and gender itself are being redefined, among other changes). These problems have resulted in tumult in our personal, family and social life that affects all levels of interaction including politics and economies.

What does the Lord and Lover of the church and world have to say about all this? Well, we would have to ask Him first.

“Lord, help us have Your worldview, we plea, for You are the only true and loving God and Father of all mankind!”

However, are we ready to listen to Him and then to obey Him when we hear Him?

WHY DO WE NEED SILENCE TO LISTEN TO HIM?

If we keep ourselves in the place of noise, we will not be able to hear what God has to say to us. We would be listening to the noise coming from the physical world including our subconscious mind, which often goes unnoticed. Inner noise is more often a sign of negative rather than positive thoughts in us. God speaks beyond all that noise, but to hear Him, we have to be silent

because most of the time, He speaks in a still small voice. We need to give Him our attention to be able to hear Him.

Noise that interferes with our ability to hear God may be removed by physically shifting to a quieter place. However, the noise inside of us is not easily controlled. Therefore, we tend to grow accustomed to ignoring it and live with it as a flaw that we think we must put up with for the rest of our lives. But that is not true. Everything takes time to turn into a habit, and somehow good habits take more effort and more time to become routine. We have to start getting into the habit of practising stillness and quietness.

We need to start being aware of the Presence of God and bring ourselves to stillness so that we can hear Him. We may start with meditating on His Word. We need to go deeper and deeper to eke out the meaning of the verses of Scripture as we read them and we need to keep our focus on Him and what He is saying to us. We have to intentionally shut out the noise of worry, things to do, entertainment, earning a living etc. and simply be hooked to the Word of God that is in front of us. It will be difficult at first but if we keep at it, being still before God will eventually become second nature.

In Old Testament times, Samuel, Moses, Elijah and Esther, for example, learnt to hear God's voice 'naturally' as they wanted God to talk to them. Yet they too needed space to be alone with Him. They had to discipline themselves, sharpen their ears and intentionally wait for Him. Jesus once invited His 12 disciples, after their 'internship' of sharing the good news of God:

- to come with Him
- by themselves
- to a quiet place and
- get some rest.

(Mark 6:31)

He did this to get them away from the noise and distraction that they encountered everywhere; He wanted to teach them, in private, the deeper revelations of His heart. This was necessary to get them prepared for the work that was coming once He returned to His Father.

There are other examples in the New Testament of people going into solitude before they could hear God:

- Paul was in Arabia for three years to listen to God's voice as he needed to renew his mind, which was steeped in a distorted Jewish worldview, to bring it to operate according to Jesus' worldview. Paul had to isolate himself from his former friends and environment in order for this renewal to happen.
- John was on the island of Patmos in old age, near the end of his life and ministry, before he could receive God's vision and prophecy of the end times.

There is a need to be sensitive to His voice,
to rest in Him and
to enjoy His warm embrace and direction.

What then shall we do?

To regain God's perspective of the past, present and future when we are troubled by the harshness of this world's existence, we need to listen to Him speaking to us through His Word...

REFLECTION

Meditate on the following passages of the Bible:

Isaiah 65:17-25

*“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth.
The former things will not be remembered, nor will they
come to mind.*

*But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create,
I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a
joy.*

*I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in My
people;*

*The sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no
more.*

*Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a
few days,*

Or an old man who does not live out his years;

*He who dies a hundred will be thought but a mere
youth;*

*He who fails to reach a hundred will be considered
accursed.*

They will build houses and dwell in them;

They will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

No longer will they build houses and others live in them,

Or plant and others eat.

*For as the days of a tree,
So will be the days of My people;
My chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands.
They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to
misfortune;
For they will be a people blessed by the Lord,
And their descendants with them.*

*Before they call I will answer; while they are still
speaking I will hear.*

*The wolf and the lamb will feed together,
And the lion will eat straw like the ox,
But dust will be the serpent's food.
They will neither harm nor destroy all My holy
mountain," says the Lord*

(P.S. In the New Testament, Jerusalem is His people saved by His precious blood, not a geographical location.)

The above verses remind us of His sovereignty over creation.

The verses below give us confidence of His new heaven and earth.

Revelation 21:1-8

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, and the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

‘Now the dwelling place of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’

He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’

Then He said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’

He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him that is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, and the vile, the murderers, the sexually

immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars - their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.”

EPILOGUE

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...” (Genesis 1:1)

Ponder on the greatness and sovereignty of God!

Scientists have discovered that planet earth exists with other galaxies!

On Sunday of 8 May in 2016 at 1:30 am, I was surprised to discover from my reading that there are other far away galaxies. I had not paid any attention to them before! I was amazed at the vast millions of stars in the distant galaxies. Taken by NASA in 2000 AD, the pictures I was looking at made the idea of a black hole (an unknown physical gap in the universe) seem so insignificant. God created galaxies to be discovered by mankind that they may show forth His praise! Truly, what are human beings that He should care for us?

A hymn writer had once exclaimed:

“Lord, how can we give thanks for the things You have done for us?”

Things we don't deserve and are unable to earn, we give them all back to Him! To God be the glory...to God alone be the glory indeed!!



Jesus, personified as Wisdom, speaks...

*"I was there when He set the heavens in place,
when He marked out the horizon on the face of the
deep, when He established the clouds above
And fixed securely the fountains of the deep,
When He gave the sea its boundary
So the waves would not overstep His command,
And when He marked out the foundations of the earth.*

*Then I was the craftsman by His side.
I was filled with delight day after day,
rejoicing always in His presence,
rejoicing in His whole world
And delighting in mankind.*

(Proverbs 8:27-30)

The galaxies show forth the glory of God! No wonder the psalmist declares in Psalm 100...

“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness; come to Him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God.

*It is He who made us, and we are His;
we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.*

Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise;

give thanks to Him and praise His Name.

*For the Lord is good and His love endures forever;
His faithfulness continues through all generations.*

The Biblical worldview is realistic because it reminds us that this world is not our home as we are just passing through on our way to our real eternal home. We are all on pilgrimage here; no matter how luxurious a lifestyle we live, all temporal things will pass away. Material possessions, degrees and worldly honour will end one day. So will sorrows, illnesses and death. If we trust Him, we shall all be at the great homecoming, where there will be nothing to complain about, as described in Revelation 21. There will only be joy and grateful thanksgiving when we see the Son of God, Jesus our Redeemer and Lord. Laughter and generosity will be

everlasting. Dissatisfaction will fly out of the heavenly window while content will be all that remains. It is hard to imagine, but the scenario will be real! God will keep His word to mankind!

However, till then, we need the Holy Spirit's lens, not an artificial man-made one, in order to see with the eyes of faith what God has prepared for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. His Word reminds us that...

*"No eye has seen,
nor ear has heard,
no mind has conceived
what God has prepared for those who love Him.*

(1 Corinthians 2:9)

If we choose to doubt the Father's steadfast love, it is inevitable that we will be miserable in this world. It is better and wiser to obey Him in love and live by faith in His goodness. Eyes of faith will enable us to see our Beloved without blinking. What we need is to bear the fruit of the Spirit, which is love and out of that love will unceasingly flow joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

We may think it too difficult to love always because we are still imperfect, but as another hymn writer has expressed:

1. Sometimes the day seems long, our trials hard to bear.
We're tempted to complain, to murmur and despair.
But Christ will soon appear to catch His bride away!
All tears forever over in God's eternal day!

Chorus:

*It will be worth it all when we see Jesus!
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ.
One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrow will erase.
So, bravely run the race till we see Christ.*

2. At times the sky seems dark, with not a ray of light;
We're tossed and driven on, no human help in sight.
But there is One in heaven, who knows our deepest care;
Let Jesus solve our problems, just go to Him in prayer.
3. Life's day will soon be o're, all storms forever past;
We'll cross the great divide to Glory, safe at last!
We'll share the joys of heaven: a harp, a home, a crown;
The tempter will be banished, we'll lay our burdens down.

The Biblical worldview reminds us that:

- We have a Good Father
- We have a Faithful Husband
- We belong to a Benevolent God, not to a selfish world.

Pause to Ponder

Ask yourself:

How big is my God?

Big enough to intervene?

Big enough to be trusted?

Big enough to be held in awe and ultimate respect?

Big enough to erase my worries and replace them with His peace?

When our view of God is too small, our problems are magnified and we retreat in fear and insecurity. When our view of God is great, our problems pale into insignificance as we stand in awe to worship Jesus Christ the King of kings!

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

How then shall we live?

- With Purpose in Christ Jesus ...John 13
- In the Prince of Peace ...John 14
- With Joy in the Son's friendship ...John 15
- In Oneness with God and His family ...John 17

As we are being transformed by Him, we are being changed into Christlikeness. This requires us to go through the process of spiritual formation, which is *not* meant to be boring or easy!

- It is ongoing and ordained to form us into Christlikeness after entering into His family by grace. We may not be aware of it consciously until the fruits of the Holy Spirit in us are seen by others.
- It happens in private and in public.
- It is personal and in the context of the church family.

- It is cross-cultural, of every tribe and nation, as shown in the vision given to John the apostle in Revelation 5:9...

*“And they sang a new song:
‘You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
Because You were slain,
and with Your blood You purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.’”*

The following are examples of characters who rejected change and opted out of the process of spiritual formation:

- Judas, because he was self-condemned
- The rich ruler, because of his love of money
- King Saul, because of his pride

Here are three examples of characters who were weak but willing to change and were, therefore, included in God’s process of spiritual formation:

- Zechariah, the doubting father of John the Baptist
- Peter, the fisherman turned apostle

- Martha, the transformed perfectionist

Now consider these three examples of characters willing to listen and accept change through struggles and suffering:

- Joseph, the forgiving teenager who became Prime Minister of ancient Egypt
- Ruth, the poor but loyal daughter-in-law who became the ancestor of the Saviour, Jesus
- Zacchaeus, the hated tax-collector who became Jesus' friend

REFLECTION

We yearn for two eternal relationships that take us from the temporal to the eternal.

- The first is God's new Eternal Family.

"When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. ... "

(Romans 8:15-17)

- The second is the marriage of Christ to His church...

*"...Hallelujah!
For our Lord God Almighty reigns.
Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and His bride has made herself ready.
Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear."
(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)*

(Revelation 19:6-8)

Pause to Ponder. Rise to Worship.

CONCLUSION

The imperfect world will one day disappear
while the new and perfect heaven and earth will come.
(Revelation 21)

No wonder we are called by Paul the apostle to:
Rejoice always
Pray constantly
and
Give thanks in all circumstances...
(a continuous lifestyle)
knowing that it is God's will for us in Christ Jesus.
(I Thessalonians 5:16-18)

The best is yet to come!

*"Then I was the craftsman at His side.
I was filled with delight day after day,
Rejoicing always in His presence,
And delighting in mankind."*
Proverbs 8:30-31

Let us ponder...
on God's delight with mankind.

Let us dwell...
on His worldview till Jesus comes to take us home
to His Father's house!

NOTES

1. *Webster's New World Dictionary* (3rd Edition, 1988)
2. *Eternity in Their Hearts* by Don Richardson (3rd Edition, Bethany House Publishers 2006)
3. *Dr. Ida Passing On The Torch of Life* by Dorothy Clarke (Medical Friendship Press for the Vellore Christian Medical College Board [USA] Inc. 1976)
4. *Deepening Joy* by Lee Bee Teik (2nd Edition, Reconre Sdn Bhd 2015)