

WEEK OF JUNE 4



DAY

1

THE BIG QUESTIONS THAT MATTER THE MOST Matthew 22:37; Phil. 4:8-9

For each daily devotional, read the passages first, then work through the material. When there are other biblical references, look them up and read them.

The Great Commandment tells us to love the Lord our God with all our mind. The Apostle Paul gives us instructions on how to think well. Christians should love to learn and be diligent in pursuing knowledge, truth, and wisdom—especially about the great questions (and answers) of life.

You have a worldview. Everyone does. A worldview is how we ask and answer the biggest questions about life. Another way to describe this is that you have a BIG story about life. Everyone finds themselves in a story, or a way in which we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28).

Christians have a worldview/story. There are other, alternative stories that dominate American culture. Worldviews collide and clash. To love God with all our mind and to think well is to do worldview thinking. These questions shape how we live:

- **About God:** Is there a God? If there is a God, what is God like? How do I know what God is like?
- **About Origins:** How did it all begin? Where do we come from? Why is there something instead of nothing? What is reality like?
- **About Truth:** Is there absolute truth? How do I know what is true and not true? Why are there so many very different “truths” out there?
- **About Life:** Is there a purpose to be found in life? Does my life have purpose and meaning? How do I discover purpose and meaning?
- **About Evil and Suffering:** Is this world the way it is supposed to be? Why are there bad things? What is evil? Why is there suffering? Why is life like this?
- **About Solutions:** What can be done about what is wrong? Can I have any hope that things will get better?

How you answer these questions will shape your daily life. To follow Jesus fully, you must love him with all your best thinking. Are you ready and willing to do that?

DAY

2

THE WORLDVIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH Eph. 4:17–24; Col. 1:15–20

What is the BIG NARRATIVE of the Bible? What is the overarching framework that sums up the entire Bible?

ONE TWO THREE FOUR
Creation – Fall/Sin – Redemption – Consummation/Renewal

These are the four major movements that advance the entire message of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. This is the foundation and the structure that holds all the big questions and provides the essential answers of the Christian faith.

One: Everything begins with an eternal Creator God who makes a flourishing creation teeming with life, culminating in the pinnacle of creation—humanity made in the image of God. It was very good.

Two: Then there is a tragic, horrific loss. There is a diabolical evil, a terrible rebellion, a painful alienation—and useless attempts to fix what has gone wrong.

Three: There is a gracious rescue, undeserved. It is pure gift. And yet, rescue is resisted. At first, it is only partially implemented and received, then God does the unthinkable: Incarnation (God with us in Jesus), crucifixion, and resurrection. We receive grace, forgiveness, redemption, and so much more. We already experience it and we long for the fullness.

Four: The best is yet to come. It will be the renewal of all things. The purging of evil from existence. The restoration of all that has been taken away. Shalom, flourishing, and they lived joyfully ever after, in glory and grace, forever and ever, world without end. Amen.

This is the Christian way of viewing our world that Paul speaks of in the passages for today. Most of it is contained in Genesis 1–3. We are to have the eyes of our heart enlightened about God’s Big Story and our place in it (Ephesians 1:17-23). This is how you will truly understand your own story.

DAY 3

CLASHING WORLDVIEWS

Colossians 2:6–8

Today’s reading is a massive oversimplification of a vast topic. There are many worldviews in our culture. Every one of them is an alternative to Christianity. Each one gives radically different answers to the big questions. Occasionally, there is some compatibility. Usually there is clash and conflict.

Right now, the Christian worldview is in sharp decline and secular worldviews are dominant in our cultural season of life. Every religion, philosophy, political theory, economic system, (and any other intellectual framework) is a worldview.

James Sire (*The Universe Next Door*, IVP) identifies many current prevailing worldviews that exist alongside Christian Theism.

- Secular Humanism/Radical Individualism
- Scientific Materialism
- Eastern Monism (Buddhist and some Hinduism)
- Political, Economic, and Cultural Ideologies
- Spiritualism (astrology, horoscopes, nature worship, etc.)

Of special concern is the BIG WORLDVIEW that says there is no God, there is only matter, science, reason, and logic. Everything is relative, there are no absolutes unless they are the absolutes of science and logic. The individual person is supreme. You are free to self-determine your values, beliefs, commitments, desires, goals, identity, etc. You have no obligations to tradition, history, convention, religion, family, or anything. You, as a sovereign individual, can (if you wish) join with others for temporary and mutual interests. This is the dominant story in our culture.

This story shapes everyone, including every Christian. This mindset shapes you more than you know. The practices of Colossians 2:6–8 and 2 Corinthians 10:1–5 (tomorrow’s text) are more necessary than ever.

IN THE WORLD BUT NOT OF THE WORLD

2 Corinthians 10:1–5; John 17:13–19; 1 John 2:15–17

Christians live **IN** the world, but we are not to be **OF** the world. It is very difficult not to be of or like the world, especially in our thinking. Why is it so hard? It is hard because we live in a world that is in direct opposition to the biblical story.

Christians are constantly bombarded by the messages of the world. We are in danger of being shaped by the world and its non-stop flow of information, ideas, beliefs, values, priorities, and desires. We never get away from that constant misinformation and deformation. Paul told the Romans they were to resist conformity to the world and be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:1–2). Resistance is harder and more important than ever. Transformation is slower and more fragmented than ever.

Missionaries in other cultures understand what syncretism is. Syncretism is when Christian beliefs mingle with the existing and established beliefs in a non-Christian culture. The Christian message is thus weakened and diminished. It is there but in an altered form. That is what happens every day for every Christian in our country. We live with a hybrid of worldviews, and in some cases the secular worldviews are stronger for many Christians than the biblical worldview. It is hard to see this syncretism when we are shaped by it.

Therefore, we do not live fully formed by the framework described in Day 2. We then make many decisions that are shaped more by our culture than by the scriptures. That way of life doesn't work, and we conclude that Christianity isn't working for us. In fact, what isn't working is the watered down and weakened version of our faith.

For example, if radical, expressive individualism is how you live your life, your Christian discipleship will be distorted and deficient. The renewing of the mind for transformed living is the challenge of being mature disciples of Jesus in our 21st-century world. Where does your mind need some renewing?

PERSONAL REFLECTION & LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION

You can always pick any idea from the sermon or the daily readings and biblical passages and talk about those ideas. A good format is to have each LifeGroup member share one idea from the sermon that was most powerful for them.

DAY 1: How are you doing with loving God with all your mind? What are your regular practices of careful reading, learning, studying, and thinking?

Look back over the list of questions and ask: Do I have a good answer for each question? How confident am I in my answer? Is my personal story a demonstration of the biblical story?

DAY 2: How familiar are you with the Bible's framework: Creation-Fall-Redemption-Renewal? See if you can explain it without looking back at the explanation.

DAY 3: There are few ideas that are more prevalent and powerful in our culture than radical, expressive individualism: self-interests, self-determination, self-defined identity, self as the decider of what is true and good for me. As you look around in our culture, what examples do you see of this worldview? What is the inevitable result of everyone living according to this way of thinking?

DAY 4: Syncretism is the mingling and merging of cultural beliefs with biblical faith. Here are two examples to think about:

- In what ways is the prosperity gospel (the belief that God rewards faith with good health and financial success) a syncretism of Christian faith and American standards of success?
- In what ways is Christian partisanship likely to be a "mashup mixture" of a political ideology and biblical faith?