



BY CHRIS PARKER

SO WHAT
IS IT
REALLY?

CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

SERIES: PART 1

If you have bounced around in a Christian school community for more than 5 minutes, you will have probably heard the term ‘worldview’—specifically, Christian worldview or biblical worldview (or even Christ-centred worldview). So, what is this beast, and, how is having a biblical worldview different to simply being a Christian who approaches God’s world as a faithful disciple? This is the first in a series where we will explore this question.

The first step is to define what we mean by a “worldview”. It’s a term that is becoming more widely used, and at the same time, therefore, having its meaning become more diverse. In Christian education, we tend to mean the view or understanding that a person has about life before they even have a chance to think about it. It’s the rubber-hits-the-road view of the things that you will express, or act on, when the very raw things of life happen to you. It is not so much shown in your considered answer to a question like, “what is the nature of a human being?”; but more clearly seen when you are wronged by someone, or faced with a decision of life and death. To say that you believe in the Bible, and that you therefore agree to a certain statement of beliefs, is not necessarily the same as saying that you have a biblical worldview.

One image that has been used to helpfully explain a worldview is that of a set of

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glasses. You see the world through the lens of your glasses, and it therefore shapes and changes your view of the things that you see, and the things that happen to you. Francis Schaeffer helpfully explained that everyone has a worldview, “and nobody, whether ditch digger or professional thinker, can live without one”. It is not really possible to get out of bed in the morning without a default, gut-informed way of processing the world around you—a worldview.

So what? What’s all this got to do with education? Well to answer this question we need to explore how a worldview gets formed. Fundamentally, our worldview is shaped by the stories that are told to us. Not the once-upon-a-time stories of our early childhood, but the cultural stories that are both shouted and subtly whispered to us as we swim around in the water of our culture. These stories come from a variety of sources ranging from; how news is reported; to song lyrics; to all forms of media; to political campaigns; to the school curriculum where we learn about the world and life within it.

So, when Christian education speaks of being concerned with a biblical worldview, it is acknowledging that a young person’s worldview—their ‘gut’ way of seeing life, others, purpose, etc.—is constantly being

shaped by alternative stories. This includes the stories being whispered through the government curriculum. Christian education attempts to not only unfold the world through the lens of the cross-centred story of the Bible, but to also teach young people how to discern where and when they are having their worldview shaped by alternative cultural stories. This is an important task and is the rationale for why the founding parents of our schools sacrificed so much to set them up.

In the next article we will explore how the biblical worldview is distinctively different from other worldviews—especially that of the dominant culture that our students are ‘listening’ to every day. 🍃

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Chris is passionate about helping children to see the world through the gospel of the Lord Jesus. He is currently a lecturer and speaker with the National Institute for Christian Education and on the executive team of CEN. Chris and his wife, Coco, live in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. They have two children and a growing collection of ukuleles.





CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

REFLECT ON YOUR CHILDREN FOR A MOMENT; WHAT 'STORIES' WOULD YOU SUGGEST HAVE BEEN SHAPING THEIR VIEW OF LIFE, WORLD, AND OTHERS AS THEY DEVELOP AND GROW IN UNDERSTANDING?

By God's good creational design, humans are shaped by stories—cultural narratives. The question for us is not *whether* I am shaped by a story, but *which* story am I being shaped by? Cultural story-telling is powerful, as it forms our 'worldview'. In Part 1 of this series we learnt that our worldview is like a lens in which we both see, and understand, life and the world around us (before we even think about it). This is why we often speak of worldview in the context of Christian education. We want to develop in our children a lens that enables them to see all of life as shaped by the Bible's big story that centres on the cross—to see the world how God sees it. If our students are not shaped by this story, which story/stories *will* be shaping them?

Advertising, music, social media technologies, political campaigns, literature, government mandated curriculum—and the list goes on—all tell a story about life, what a human is, where truth can be found (or if it can be found), where life began, what we can hope in, why we work, what is success, what brings happiness (and the importance of happiness) and whether there is any good news amidst all the yuck in the world. It would be easier to parent if there was one obvious alternative story; however, it seems that there is a mesh of powerful stories all woven together—some shouted some whispered—but all of them seductive. Some stories might read like this.

BUDDHIST STORY

Everyone has had a previous life before this present one, and will be reincarnated into another one. The nature of the next life is dependent on how noble this life is lived. Happiness is found in denying all material things and human desires and this is more noble. Hope is found in one's ability to follow the noble path through life.

THE NEW AGE STORY

Life is spiritual and Oprah is a prophetic goddess! The purpose of life is to be happy above all else. We are free to keep trying 'spiritual' and lifestyle solutions until we find what works for us in our pursuit of happiness.

THE VOICE STORY

Fame and becoming a celebrity bring true happiness. You can be whoever you want to be—you just have to dig deep and find your inner 'voice'. Trying harder and claiming what you want brings meaning and purpose. Without fame you are another nobody. See the recent Instagram post from a 21 year old ex-student of mine that sums this up well.



DIGITAL DISCIPLE STORY

This is a world of mass information and unlimited connection. Relationship and social connection are important but digital technologies provide the means by which I control my interaction so that I do not need to commit more than what is comfortable. Truth and understanding are found by peering into everybody else's lives.

THE MAD SCIENTIST STORY

Only that which we can measure and experiment on is real—nothing else exists. Love, virtue, and meaning are simply made up and agreed upon by culture groups. Life and the world are only improved by further scientific and technological development.

SO WHAT
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SERIES: PART 2

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THE ECONOMIC GROWTH STORY

The ultimate purpose in life is comfort, security, and material abundance. This is achieved through economic growth. Human value is at one end linked to being units of labour in the cogs of industry and at the other linked to your level of economic gain. Science, technology, and economics are gods to be worshipped as they will provide ultimate happiness and security.

Are your children being subtly shaped by these stories? Can you recognise that you may have been shaped by these, and other, narratives from time to time? Christian education seeks to teach our students to be discerning of these alternative stories and to have them see the world through the beautiful true story of life and world found in the Bible. The next article in this series will unfold for us the richness of the biblical worldview. 🍷

THEREFORE, I URGE YOU, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, IN VIEW OF GOD'S MERCY, TO OFFER YOUR BODIES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY AND PLEASING TO GOD—THIS IS YOUR TRUE AND PROPER WORSHIP. DO NOT CONFORM TO THE PATTERN (STORIES) OF THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND. ROMANS 12:1-2A

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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NATIONAL news



By Michelle Dempsey

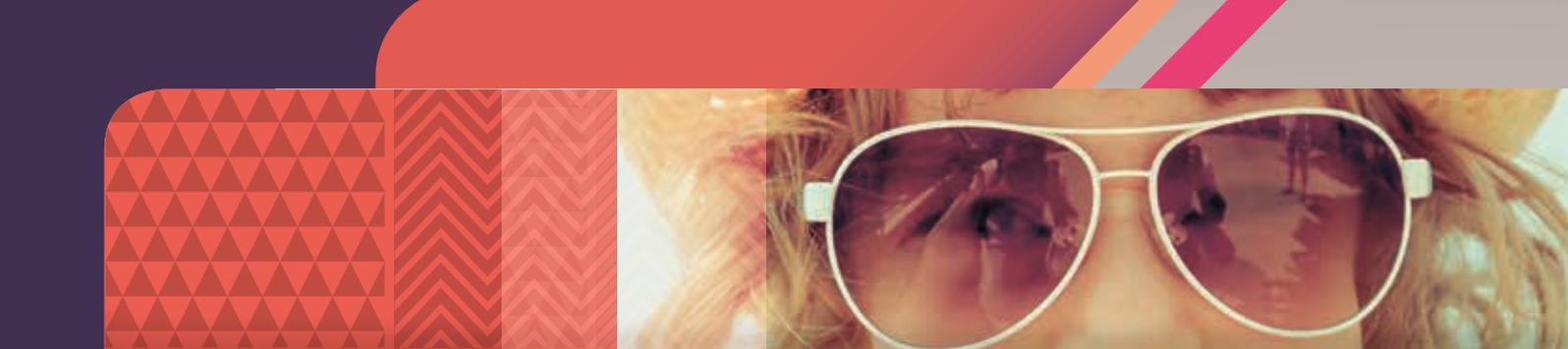
May is a busy month for Christian schools as this is when our AGMs are held, including our national AGM and conference. This is a great time to get together and share news on what is happening nationally and to hear some stories of what is happening in schools across the country. This year at the AGM and CEN National Conference we will be hearing of the progress of Wellington Christian School which captured our hearts at the last AGM. It will be great to hear how things have gone over the past year. Also, we will be hearing from students who have experienced Christian education and how that has impacted their lives so far. I am particularly excited as we will be launching our new strategic plan for CEN which is entitled 'Stronger Together'. Christian education in this country is regularly critiqued and questioned. We face challenges of being seen as discriminatory when all we want to do is maintain our freedom to employ Christian teachers who can openly embrace the vision and mission of our schools. By being 'stronger together', I believe we can imagine together a very positive and influential way forward for Christian education in this country without compromising that which we hold dear. I also believe that the best way to strengthen our schools is to strengthen the associations which govern our schools. Have you explored being an association member with your school?

You may be aware that as part of CEN we have a teacher education arm which delivers all sorts of courses to staff across our schools. This includes masters courses in Christian education day long professional development courses like teaching maths from a Christian perspective, or inclusive education. Recently, the Board of Studies in NSW has given CEN accreditation to our existing board training course which means that all boards can access accredited board training as part of compliance, through CEN. This is something to celebrate!

We were saddened recently to hear of the sudden death of a member of the Illawarra Christian School staff. Mr Graeme Best who was the coordinator of the school's "Bike for Bibles" annual fundraiser, died whilst on the bike ride. Please continue to pray for Graeme's family and for the school community who will miss him dearly. These things are tough for schools to go through, but we are so thankful for the comfort that the Lord brings, and for the way that communities grow together through these times.

That's all from me for now. Have a great week ahead!

Cheers, Michelle



CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

In the previous two articles in this series we learnt what a worldview is—a culturally-shaped ‘story’ that shapes how we understand the world around us—and that there are many cultural ‘stories’ that are constantly shaping our (and our children’s) worldview.

In this article we will see how immersing ourselves in the big picture story of the Bible brings transformation of our culturally-shaped worldviews towards a Christian worldview.

Let’s start by acknowledging that the big picture story of the Bible has the power to shape both heart and mind (worldview). Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, are the culminating and defining events of the Bible—and for those that acknowledge this, we anticipate a profound heart transformation toward faithful and passionate discipleship. However, the truth of the cross is found within a big picture story—a story that shapes our worldview. It’s a story of God and His world; a story of God and His people. The Bible narrative tells us what happened at the beginning of time, what will ultimately happen at the end of time, and the central pivot point of all history—the cross. It is this narrative that ought transform our mind and shape for us a biblical way of understanding *all things*—a Christian worldview. The Christian school seeks to transform hearts and minds. Minds are transformed as the government curriculum is unfolded through the lens of the Bible’s view of the world. At the same time the alternative stories that shape our culture and its desires (including its government ‘curriculum’) are critiqued and exposed, as students hearts are transformed. The Christian worldview is so beautiful, hopeful, and full of intellectual depth that it is hard to sum up in a few short words. However, the answers to a few key questions can be really helpful in beginning to unfold its riches:

WHAT IS A HUMAN BEING?

A human is not a random biological phenomenon. Humans are more than biology and have been designed, made (and loved) by the supreme creator—God. Humans have a ‘soul’ and will not simply rot away to nothing when they die. Humans have been made in God’s likeness and have been given the role of caretaking and cultivating the creation—humanity is profoundly purposeful.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE WORLD?

The world is not random. It has been created, and is continually sustained, by God as creator. The creation is deeply beautiful and good—this not only includes gas nebulae and pandas but also the cultural truths like family, language, reason, leadership, innovation, justice, etc.

One of the deep riches of this worldview is that it invites a confident response of the heart, head, and hands. Seeing the world through this lens inspires young people to partake as disciples of the hero of the story, Jesus, and invites them into a story of transformation.

SO WHAT IS IT REALLY?

SERIES: PART 3
BY CHRIS PARKER

WHY DOES LIFE (AND THE WORLD) OFTEN SEEM BROKEN AND MESSED UP?

The biblical worldview is plain speaking on this question. The pinnacle of God's good creation—humans—have rejected the creator and not trusted in His goodness and provision. This has resulted in the relationship between God and His people being messed up and the whole world being broken and its 'goodness' sometimes hidden and waiting to be transformed.

On the cross, God has begun to transform all things back to perfection and we as His people are invited into this grand project.

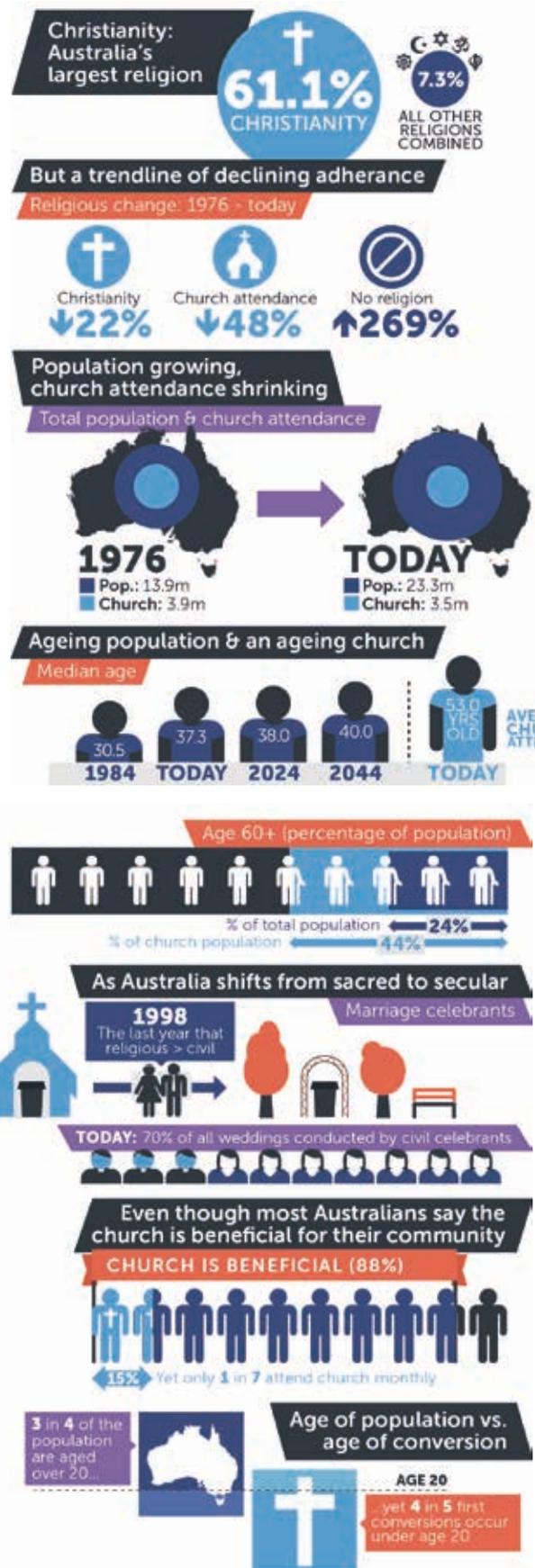
IS THERE A REMEDY OR SOLUTION TO THE MESS IN THE WORLD?

God has entered the creation and acted to bring transformation to the effects of the rebellion—first to the relationship with His people, and then to the creation itself. This is the power and the purpose of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Minds are transformed as the government curriculum is unfolded through the lense of the Bible's view of the world. 🍃

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CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

SERIES: PART 4
BY CHRIS PARKER

In the first article in this four part series we learned that our worldview is like a lens through which we ‘see’ the world—how we understand meaning and purpose. We learned that everyone has a worldview and that they are formed—commonly without us even realising—by the ‘storytelling’ of our culture.

We are constantly being shaped by the “patterns” or stories of our world (Rom 12:2). Movies, advertising, political debate, music videos, public ceremonies, government curriculums (to name a few), are all giving a shaping message about: where happiness can be found, the purpose of life, the role of the individual, the meaning of work, how we should treat the Earth, where hope can be found, etc.

The Christian worldview, anchored in the Bible and centred on the gospel of Jesus Christ, is beautiful, life-giving, and full of hope. It provides an explanation for the struggles of life and an intellectual consistency that can sometimes be deceptively lacking in other readily embraced worldviews. It

is not old-fashioned and from another time; it is timeless. It flows from the truth about the nature of nature and the purpose of people. Truth does not need to be new to be true.

HOW DO WE RESPOND?

All worldviews by their very nature will prescribe a response—a way of living out the view of life that is held. The Christian worldview is no exception. Christian education not only seeks to unfold an understanding of this world via a Christian lens but also seeks to provide opportunity for heart transformation such that students are invited, and inspired, to respond to their world in a way that is shaped by the Christian worldview. The life and message of Jesus Christ is central and provides profound hope, purpose, and meaning to respond to.

Examples of responses that are shaped by Christian worldview (and woven into Christian curriculum) might be:

- **Love God and others** Students respond to God's love by loving God in return and their neighbour as themselves.
- **Care for the Earth** Students respond to God's call to carefully manage all of creation.
- **Shape culture** Students respond by discerning the distortions within their culture and to engage as cultural transformers.
- **Embrace diversity** Students respond by respecting and celebrating the God-designed differences between cultures and people groups.
- **Invent and innovate** Students respond by inventing and innovating technologies that serve the common good and seek human flourishing.
- **Practise hospitality** Students respond by welcoming and accepting others and to embrace community over individualism.
- **Pursue peace** Students respond by bringing healing and restoration to people and places of brokenness.
- **Seek justice** Students respond as agents of change by identifying and responding to injustice.

These responses have been adapted from *Transformation by Design*, a new curriculum development resource published by the National Institute for Christian Education.

The Christian worldview is transformative, hopeful, and purposeful. It provides a wonderful opportunity for God to be glorified and for humans to flourish. This view of the world is at the heart of Christian education. Christian education seeks much more than a transfer of information through a lifeless worldview. It seeks faithful, passionate, resilient, self-sacrificing disciples of the good news that God is reigning, and it seeks disciples of His son Jesus who has acted to bring a restoration to all things and the fulfilment of God's promised Kingdom. 🕊

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WORLDVIEWS CAN SOMETIMES BE REPRESENTED (SIMPLISTICALLY) BY 'ISMS:

Individualism – a worldview that has the needs and desires of the individual as a central aim. Understanding of the world tends to be viewed through this lens.

Secularism – a worldview that suggests that the physical or non-'spiritual' aspects of the world and life are the only ones that have importance in public life. Understanding of the world tends to be viewed through this lens.*

Nihilism – a worldview that suggests that there are no values, morals, or beliefs that we can rely on. Understanding of the world tends to be viewed through this lens.

Naturalism – a worldview based on the idea that all that can be known is what can be measured. Physical laws and forces are all there is. Understanding of the world tends to be viewed through this lens.

Scientism – a worldview that suggests that science and rationality are ultimate; meaning and truth can only come from science. Understanding of the world tends to be viewed through this lens.

Environmentalism – a worldview that places meaning and hope on 'saving' the environment. Understanding of the world tends to be viewed through this lens.

Consumerism – a worldview that pursues happiness, meaning, and self-worth through the consumption of goods and experiences. Understanding of the world tends to be viewed through this lens.

Humanism – a worldview that acknowledges that humans and humanity have the capacity to solve the problems of the world and to rationalise and build a better one. Understanding of the world tends to be viewed through this lens.

Economic rationalism – a worldview that suggests that money and the open market are the ultimate considerations in building society. Understanding of the world tends to be viewed through this lens.

Christian education teaches discernment of these views while presenting the beautiful, hope filled true view of life and world found in the Bible and anchored in the cross of Jesus.

** It could be suggested that we are seeing a more militant form of secularism growing in Australia where not only is anything related to the 'spiritual' or the 'religious' deemed irrelevant for public life but is not to be tolerated for individuals or communities of individuals to adhere to all.*

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