

Biblical Worldview Scope for *Biblical Worldview Beyond the Basics*, 2nd ed.

A worldview is an orienting narrative. People use their worldview to make sense of reality. Without a worldview, a person cannot find meaning in life. With the wrong worldview, a person will find the wrong meaning in life. God has given us the Bible as our guiding narrative. Scripture enables us to view the world as God intends us to see it. The goal of this course is to teach students to view the world in this way, enabling them to live in the world as God intends. *Biblical Worldview Beyond the Basics* emphasizes the following themes: the big story, gender, marriage and the family, science and technology, government, and the arts.

1. The Big Story

God's activity by which He governs everything in His world is His *creational law*. God not only made the planets, animals, and photosynthesis (Ps. 33:6), but He also created marriage and government. The New Testament affirms this teaching (see 1 Tim. 4:3–5, Rom. 13:1–2, and 2 Pet. 2:13–14). Those who are wise discern God's creational law, particularly His creational norms. *Creational norms* are God's ordinances governing how humans are to live. Wisdom is the ability to discern these norms and live in accordance with them. People find wisdom as they examine God's world in the light of God's Word (Isa. 28:23–29; Ps. 119:105).

The human race, however, has fallen into sin. The world suffers under God's curse, and humanity is depraved. The term *total depravity* refers to the fact that the corruption of sin extends to every part of a person's inner being (Jer. 17:9; Eph. 4:17–18). This fallenness accounts for mankind's disregard for creational norms (Prov. 14:12; 2 Tim. 3:1–5). People attempt to throw off creational norms regarding marriage, family, and work but act surprised when they encounter the difficulties that result from this attempt. This rejection of God's good creational order manifests itself in all human institutions, from government to family.

In the wake of the Fall, God promised to win the battle against sin and Satan (Gen. 3:15) and restore His creation (Col. 1:20). Because God is at work to redeem His world back to Himself, believers need discernment to live in God's world. *Structure* refers to what something is supposed to be according to God's original design. God made marriage to be between one man and one woman for life. This statement expresses the structure that holds for marriage. *Direction* refers to any displacement from structure. Direction can be fallen. Failure to fulfill the creational roles God has designed for the husband or the wife is evidence of fallen direction. However, there is also a redemptive direction. When a believer attempts to bend some aspect of life back toward structure, that believer is engaging in redemptive direction. Pursuing redemptive direction is what it means to be busy "redeeming the time" (Eph. 5:16). This is how believers are to spend their days as they look forward to the full coming of the kingdom of God (for more on *structure and direction*, see Al Wolters, *Creation Regained*, pp. 59–63).

2. Gender

Creation

Nature reveals that there are biological and psychological differences between men and women. These patterned differences are interpreted by Scripture's teaching about gender. When we look at gender in the light of Scripture, we discern the following creational norms:

1. God has created two genders—male and female—and each is based on a person's biological sex.
2. Both genders equally bear God's image.
3. A woman is an image-bearer of God created with the potential to be a mother.

4. A man is an image-bearer of God created with the potential to be a father.
5. Cultures express masculinity and femininity differently, but each expression must still be within the bounds of creational norms 1–4.

Fall

The fall has damaged gender. God told the woman that she would struggle under the leadership of her husband (Gen. 3:16). Distortions of gender have arisen since then. Men exhibit male chauvinism instead of loving leadership. Instead of protecting women, men use and abuse them or fall back into passivity and laziness. More recently, women have promoted feminism instead of godly femininity. People also distort gender by claiming that some are transgender, somehow born in the wrong body. Various passages directly address issues related to fallenness and gender, including Genesis 3:16–17, Deuteronomy 22:5, 28:56–57, Judges 4:8–9, Romans 1:26–28, and 1 Corinthians 11:14–15. In each case, the distortions of gender resulting from the fall deviate from the creational norms for gender, causing confusion, pain, and heartache.

Redemption

Gender, however, can be redeemed. But to experience this redemption, a person must trust God and obey His Word. God's grace can restore one's true identity (Eph. 1:3–11). This restoration starts with repentance, turning away from sin whether it be immorality, transgenderism, or passivity. Living out the freedom believers have in Christ enables them to put sin to death (Rom. 6:14). Women can live out a biblical vision of womanhood by paying close attention to creational norms and Scripture. Men have the same hope. Believers are not bound by cultural stereotypes and misconceptions. Christ provides transforming grace for every man and woman to live out his or her role as God designed.

3. Marriage and the Family

Creation

God is the Creator of marriage and the family (Gen. 1:28; 2:18, 24). When we look at this aspect of life from the perspective of the teachings of Scripture, we discern the creational norms below.

Marriage:

1. Marriage is a covenant of love between one man and one woman for life.
2. The purposes of marriage are procreation and companionship.
3. God has given the husband the responsibility to lead his wife and love her.
4. God has given the wife the responsibility to submit to her husband and respect him.
5. Marriage establishes a separate relational unit.

Family:

1. A family consists of a husband, his wife, and any children God gives them.
2. God has given the father the responsibility to lead his family.
3. God has given the mother the responsibility to nurture her family.
4. God has given the children the responsibility to obey and honor their parents.
5. God made the family to be the most basic building block for society.

Fall

Sin has twisted marriage and the family. Marriages often begin damaged due to premarital promiscuity. Marriages often end in divorce because of destructive conflict, infidelity, and lack of commitment. Individualism has led many men and women to end their marriages or not enter into them at all. Scripture documents assaults on marriage like polygamy (Gen. 16), infidelity (Prov. 7), divorce (Matt. 19:3–12), and homosexuality (Rom. 1:26–27). Modern families exhibit similar kinds of fraying under the strains of the fall. The distortion of marriage and the family leads to the violation of all the creational norms related to these God-given institutions.

Redemption

For marriage and the family to experience God's redemption, people must take a biblical view of love and authority. Contrary to our culture's view of love as a feeling, the Bible describes love as a disposition of delight in someone that produces a commitment to serve that person's best interests. While the world sees love as getting a sustained emotional high, Jesus demonstrates the true meaning of love through service and sacrifice. Contrary to our culture's suspicion of authority, the Bible teaches us to submit to authority and to use authority for the flourishing of others. Jesus is the perfect example of both submission to authority and godly use of authority (John 13:1–17; 1 Pet. 2:21–23). Christ commands men to lead, wives to submit, and children to obey, and He enables them to do so in love (Eph. 5:22–6:4).

4. Science and Technology

Creation

Science is a systematic process for studying the natural order, as well as the body of knowledge that results from this process. The Bible states that God created the universe (Gen. 1:1–3) and tasked humanity with pressing it towards its full potential (Gen. 1:27–28). Technology is the use of tools to alter creation in the interests of living out the Creation Mandate. When we examine science and technology in the light of biblical teaching, we can discern the creational norms below:

Science:

1. Science investigates nature through organized, empirical study.
2. There is more to reality than the domain given to science.
3. Science produces models rather than final answers.
4. Humans should use science to contribute to the flourishing of creation.
5. Scientific study should be undertaken to perceive and declare the glory of God.

Technology:

1. Technology amplifies our God-given physical and mental powers.
2. Technologies express values that lead to tendencies.
3. Every technology is a medium, and every medium has a message.
4. Technology contributes to human flourishing, but it is not central to human flourishing.
5. Human engagement with technology should glorify God.

Fall

Sin has damaged both science and technology. In science, this damage shows itself with the prevalence of pseudoscience, positivism, secularism, and scientism. Problems also plague technology. Some of the most significant problems include instrumentalism, techno-democratic optimism, and technicism.

Redemption

Christians, however, should resist these *-isms*. When it comes to the fall's effects on science, believers must remember that God has interpreted our world and revealed this interpretation in His Word. The foundation of our knowledge is Scripture, not science. We should use science and scientific modeling, but we should place the work of science on the foundation of biblical teaching. We should think scientifically about the world using the Bible as the foundation for that thinking. When it comes to technology, we should remember that technology is a blessing, enabling us to achieve incredible things. But it is also a burden that must be managed. In a fallen world, what technology amplifies it also numbs (see Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows*, pp. 210–12). The amplifications of technology are the blessings technology offers us. The numbing technology causes is the burden that must be managed. We can manage this burden by engaging in the following practices: valuation, experimentation, limitation, togetherness, and cultivation (see John Dyer, *From the Garden to the City*, pp. 207–16).

5. Government

Creation

A government is the structure of authority that rules over a country or a community. The human capacity for forming governments is the result of being made in the image of God and being called to the work of the Creation Mandate (Gen. 1:26–28). When we examine this aspect of life through the corrective lens of biblical teaching, the following creational norms can be discerned:

1. Government is an institution ordained by God to ensure that justice is upheld in society.
2. Government pursues justice as it gives to each what each is due, in accord with God's creational order.
3. God has granted government a measure of authority over other institutions, but each institution maintains its own sphere of authority.
4. Government functions best when its authority is distributed among various governing entities.
5. Leaders must be virtuous if government is to be good.
6. The governed are obligated to obey and honor their government.

Fall

Sin has distorted how people think about government. One way to describe the fall's effects on government is to evaluate the various political ideologies that influence governments. A political ideology is a set of ideas and values that characterizes a group's approach to politics and government. Every political ideology is driven by a narrative of redemption, a story of how the institution of government should deliver the world from all that ails it. Liberalism, conservatism, nationalism, democratism, and socialism are political ideologies that approach justice in different ways and propose distinct sets of solutions to problems in a fallen world. Each ideology, because it does not give God and His Word what they are due, has proved to be idolatrous. Each blames something within God's good creation for the problems of the world, and each elevates something else within creation to the level of a divine savior. Each ideology produces injustice, even as it seeks to ensure justice.

Redemption

A biblical worldview emphasizes the importance of *societal pluriformity* (see David Koyzis, *Political Visions and Illusions*, pp. 212–13). This means that society consists of distinct and separate spheres (church, state, family, business, etc.), and each sphere should be allowed to operate according to the creational norms that hold for it. Churches should operate differently from businesses, families, or militaries. The church and the state must also remain distinct spheres. However, religion must not be entirely separated from government, otherwise government will become godless, ideological, and idolatrous. God remains Lord of all. So, the church and the state exist in separate spheres, but the church does have a responsibility to influence the state. Churches serve as embassies of God's love in a community through the proclamation of the gospel and through acts of mercy. Christians also should endeavor to be salt and light in every sphere. Christians need to know how to cooperate with people of other worldviews to make government work. Christians should submit to the government while also utilizing avenues to

influence government policy. Christians press for change, realizing that God's kingdom on earth will fully come only with the return of the King of kings, Jesus Christ.

6. The Arts

Creation

The word *art* refers to the products of human creativity and skill that are meant to be contemplated for their beauty. The story of creation begins with a lavish description of the beautiful world God made (Gen. 1). God made humans in His own image and with a capacity to appreciate beauty (Gen. 2:15–23). When we examine beauty and the arts in the light of Scripture, we are able to discern the following creational norms:

1. God is the ultimate source for the arts, and He has made humans with a capacity for artistic expression and appreciation.
2. Artistic expression should be truthful.
3. Artistic expression should be good.
4. Artistic expression should be beautiful.
5. Artistic expression requires—and rewards—contemplation.

Fall

Art and human affections are linked. Artistic expression reveals what people love. In a fallen world, people create art that shows the effects sin has on the human heart. Fallenness in the arts appears in movements such as classicism, postmodernism, and popular culture. Each of the challenges facing the arts demonstrates some departure from the creational norms that hold for the arts.

Redemption

Beauty, in a biblical worldview, can be defined as “*the forms through which we recognize the nature and ways of God*” (Munson and Drake, *Art and Music: A Student's Guide*, p. 25). Beauty is possible because God has revealed His glory in this world. In this sense, God's glory is the objective standard of beauty. Beauty is objectively present as a quality of an object—if it is somehow confronting us with the nature and ways of God. However, God's glory is infinitely varied and multifaceted; so, there is also something subjective about beauty. No single artform or genre can capture all the glory of God. We need people with different perspectives and experiences to tell us what they find beautiful. Christians should regularly engage in artistic creation and cultivation. Making this a regular practice will greatly enrich their lives because it will confront them constantly with the nature and ways of God.