

Session 4 Handout

I. Narrative and Worldview:

A. Worldview Defined:

1. Briefly put – one's worldview is the framework through which an individual or a group of people views all of life.
2. "...the foundational cognitive, affective, and evaluative assumptions and frameworks a group of people makes about the nature of reality which they use to order their lives."¹
3. "A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being."²

B. Worldview FAQs:

1. There are major questions that are asked (and answered) by every major worldview. These are questions such as: (a) What is reality? (b) Who are we, (c) why are we here, (d) what's wrong, and (e) what is the remedy?
2. As humans seek to answer important questions regarding the nature, meaning, and purpose of life, they find answers those questions through the stories that they are told.

II. Transformative Nature of Narrative: *Ways in which Story is Powerful*

¹ Paul G. Hiebert. *Transforming Worldviews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 25-26.

² James W. Sire. *The Universe Next Door 4th Edition* (Downers Grove: InverVarsity Press, 2004), 17.

A. Persuasive character of narrative:

1. Narrative is disarming.
2. Narrative is an exercise in ethics.
3. Narrative influences values.
4. Narrative invites participation.
5. Stories translate abstract principles and propositions into concrete examples.
6. Narrative invites reflection, and in so doing, it either confirms or subverts our previously held beliefs.
7. Narrative is basic to human communication...and enculturation.
8. We gain our sense of meaning and purpose through the narratives that we embrace.

B. Stories as the basis of worldview:

1. The biblical story is the one true metanarrative that stands in authority over all other rival narratives.³

God's Story claims to be the true story and therefore stands in judgment over rival narratives.

2. Rival narratives are, "...overarching stories that give each member of a group of people the communally shared perception of reality. One's cultural metanarrative is the collectively held grand system of stories, which is learned and shared through social interaction and which serves as the foundation for interpreting all reality."⁴

³Michael Matthews. *Is There a Reader of This Text* (Unpublished Dissertation, Canterbury Christ Church University & Trinity Theological Seminary, 2016), 85-86.

⁴Michael Matthews. *Is There a Reader of This Text*, 86.

3. Scripture is filled with examples of people being brought to a place where they must choose which narrative they will believe and live out (e.g., Ruth, the contrasts in wisdom literature, the parables of Christ, etc.).

C. Primary ways that story calls for participation:

1. By highlighting trajectory. The biblical story shows us where God is taking history, thereby enabling us to find our place in His story.
2. By providing identity. The imperatives in Scripture are based on the indicatives of Scripture. As we come to see who we *are* as defined by God's Word, we gain a sense of purpose and direction in life.
3. By providing a sense of final expectation. *Telos* speaks of ultimate destiny. It is natural to align oneself with one's sense of final expectation.

D. Biblical Story and the Nature and Character of God:

1. God always keeps His promises.
2. God is at work in history to accomplish His purposes.
3. God is the main actor on the stage of time.
4. God is accomplishing His purposes through people just like us.
5. Not only is God at work on a grand scale, He is also at work on a personal level.
6. The coming of the Savior into the world was an act of God; salvation is of the LORD.
7. God alone is God. He is filled with glory, sovereign over history, and worthy of all worship.

E. Metanarrative and Personal Life Impact

1. Life is not about us and our program.
2. We have no reason to be proud.
3. We must keep our eyes on the big picture and not get distracted by the small things.
4. When we find our place in the biblical story, our lives can count for eternity.
5. We are motivated to be faithful stewards of God's word.
6. We are reminded that the end is in sight even if we can't see the end.