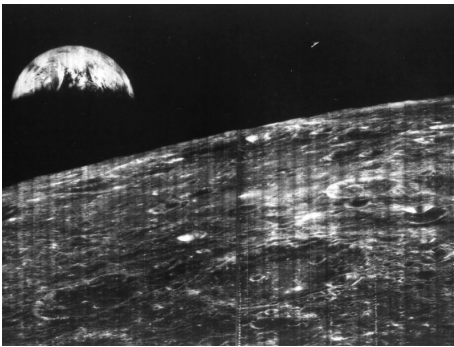


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Worldview Shapers for Jesus

In 1966 on August 23, fifty years ago, a NASA spacecraft captured this first-ever photograph of Earth from the moon!

This "worldview" could not be observed at sea level or even from the peak of Mt. Everest five-and-a-half miles above the sea. It could only be viewed from outside our orbit and typical frame of reference.

More and more, I am both convinced and convicted of the critical need for Christians to have a solid understanding of a different kind of worldview. This view cannot be seen in a photograph or with the human eye but everyone has one of these views. And just like the atmosphere around us it is unseen and often goes unnoticed. I asked a group of 25 students if they were able to explain what a worldview was, and their response was mostly silence. No one was quite sure what a worldview was or how it may have an impact on their actions, convictions and life decisions.

As I think about their response, I can't help but wonder if the same question were to be asked within some of our churches on any given Sunday...

would the same echo of silence and uncertainty be present? As you're reading this, you may even be thinking, what exactly is a worldview? If you're curious... I hope you'll take the time to keep reading. If you're not curious... perhaps you will be as I use Tom Brady (Quarterback for the New England Patriots) and the current Presidential election to help explain this idea of a worldview... are you curious now?

Campus Ambassadors is a national ministry. So I have the privilege of working with other great campus missionaries from across the country. When I talk with someone locally about the Patriots there is a consensus that the four game suspension Brady served was unjust or at the very least more than what was warranted. However if I were to talk to some of our staff in Buffalo NY... there is a different consensus. In fact I've even heard the unthinkable word "cheater" invoked! How is that possible?

In the current Presidential election I'm more concerned than ever at the number of people willing to overlook an issue involving their candidate, while condemning an action of impropriety involving the opposing candidate. And perhaps, what I find the most alarming... is that by and large I don't think there is an intentional double standard, the double standard is unnoticed from both sides! How is that possible?

A worldview is essentially a complex internal "point-of-view" system that either consciously or subconsciously is used to provide answers to life's fundamental questions. And at the same time these fundamental questions are used to create and develop the worldview. If that sounds confusing, you're

right, it is confusing. It's like the philosophical dilemma of which came first the chicken or the egg? For this discussion the initial cause is not important. What is important is to understand the cycle or loop in play. An egg produces a chicken and a chicken produces an egg. Or in our case the answers to the fundamental questions of life create the worldview, and the worldview is used to answer the same fundamental questions of life. Questions like: Is there a God? Why are we here? What is our purpose? What is right, wrong, good and bad?

To help us understand what a worldview is let's use Tom Brady's suspension as model for what I'll call a micro-worldview. In this case the fundamental questions that could be asked might look like this: Who is the best quarterback of all time? Why is he the best quarterback? And, what does this quarterback do when not on the field? Answering these questions from my own point-of-view as a Patriots fan looks like this: Brady has led the Patriots to four Super Bowl championships, and six Super Bowls (more than any other quarterback). He has led his team to more division titles (13) than any other quarterback. And he has appeared in more playoff games than any other player in any position. When not on the field during press conferences Brady does not talk smack or make excuses for lost games. And in our local area there is mostly positive coverage from the media often highlighting his involvement with numerous charities and causes. And so these answers create and develop my "Tom Brady worldview." In addition this worldview causes me to reject the idea that

he is a cheater or lying about the infamous deflate-gate scandal. In the same way... my Tom Brady worldview continues to cause me to answer the fundamental questions with Tom Brady as the answer. Meanwhile my friend in Buffalo has a different worldview based on different answers to the fundamental questions asked and answered.

So, think about it... what would it take for a New England Patriots fan to transfer loyalty and adopt a different favorite team? And let's not even mention a Red Sox fan becoming a Yankee fan! At another level what would it take for a committed voter to vote differently in the upcoming elections? If you can see these complexities perhaps you can see how much more difficult and complex it might be to unlock the vault of obstacles, doubts and skepticism currently preventing the Good-News from being heard, understood and accepted? More and more we no longer have a Christian worldview as the starting-point for evangelism and we need to understand and deconstruct someone's existing worldview.

Deconstructing someone's belief system in hopes of reconstructing it with Christ seated on its throne is a careful-prayerful process involving the work of the Holy Spirit, good listening, being prepared, and a believing community. In the same way this historic photograph of Earth had to be taken from outside our orbit. We must offer and invite others into a safe and authentic vantage point to examine their worldview from. And from that vantage point in unity with the Holy Spirit embrace areas of common-ground while revealing inconsistencies and obstacles that may stand in the way.

Living out faith on campus often results in uncommon connections and friendships. These friendships are not projects or potential trophies, even though it is my hope, desire and prayer to see them embrace Jesus as Lord and

Savior. My testimony (in word and deed) is rooted in love and sincerity.

One such friend is Wayne-Daniel, a Professor of English and Humanities. When we first met, I joined a meditation group he was leading on campus. By his admission he was very skeptical of me as an evangelical Christian. Over time we have become great friends and I am truly blessed by this friendship. I help him with computer and technology questions, we've gone for long walks in Boston, visited a monastery in Vermont, gone out to dinner, had coffee and many lunches - always mixed with great conversation about life and faith. I have helped his parents move and visited his Mom to pray over her when she was ill. I have been invited to speak in his classroom to talk about the buddhist practice of "right speech" and "right livelihood" only from a Christian perspective. I have shared about Jesus on a retreat in a Buddhist temple, and just last week I was invited to share for over an hour in yet another class answering the question, "What does it mean to be saved?" For years we have team-taught a three credit course along with a Muslim professor (sometimes a student intern). In this class Christianity, Islam and Judaism are explained, compared and contrasted openly in an environment where students can ask pointed questions of all three of us. We have traveled as far as San Diego to lead a workshop at a faculty development conference on how to team-teach a religion course and get along while doing it! The workshop description begins like this, "A Christian, a Muslim and a Jew walk into a classroom..." How cool is that!

It is just amazing the opportunities God has continued to provide as I strive to be prepared, while living and proclaiming the Gospel to everyone around me in the same way Jesus did, with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

As I was finishing this letter I sent Wayne-Daniel a text message explaining what I was doing and asked if he would send a quick note so I could share with you how his worldview of evangelicalism has been shaped by our relationship. Here is what he sent back a few minutes later:

It has been my great blessing to know and work with Joe on campus for a number of years. I have found him to always be "the real deal" -- one who lives and teaches Christianity in the openness and accepting heart of its founder. I must admit that my view of Evangelical Christianity was based mostly on what I had seen on television; I suspected that there was an intolerance and a forced nature to this form of Christianity. Joe has shown me that Evangelicalism has many more facets than I'd realized, and that it can be a force for incredible kindness, love, peace, and true joy -- especially when it is embodied by someone like him! In short, Joe is the most Christ-like person I know. If he is an Evangelical, then the movement must be doing something very right! Peace.

Thank you again for enabling me to be a worldview shaper for Jesus on campus, as well as an Area Director - recruiting, training and supporting a great staff of eighteen other worldview shapers across nine campuses in MA, CT and NY!

=== JOE ===

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