

life group' sermon guide

the christian life described



Small groups exist at Kingsway to provide authentic relationships for the life application of the CORE 4 elements of worship, grow, serve, and share

“By their fruit you will recognize them.” – Jesus (Matt. 7:16)

There is a true story about four young boys who had wanted to help their father plant a tree farm on their property. One morning, after the father had gone for the day, he left instructions for the boys to take the burlap sack filled with young saplings, go up to the meadow where the ground had been cleared, and begin planting trees into what was shaping up to be a very nice walnut grove.

Commissioned by their father, the boys took the bag of trees and worked diligently all day long in the hot summer sun. For hours they meticulously lined up row after row of trees, spaced them evenly apart, dug each hole, and hand planted each of the fifty trees.

When their father came home, the boys took him out to the field and showed him all of the hard work they had done. He praised their efforts, and only later, pointed out what had happened.

Today, over 20 years later, the evidence of their earnest, yet misguided, labor still stands—in the middle of the walnut grove, there is a cluster of fruit trees where rows of walnut trees were supposed to be. Unbeknownst to the boys, they had grabbed the wrong bag of trees that day.

How did this happen? The boys, for all their efforts, didn't pay attention to what kind of trees were being planted.

In the same way, we need to be aware of what kind of trees are being planted in our lives.

Discussion:

This morning's lesson comes out of Pastor Caldwell's sermon, in which he talks about Paul's use of metaphors in 2 Colossians 2:6-10 to describe the Christian life. One of those metaphors involved a tree. In fact, in vv. 6-7, Paul says that we are to “continue to live in [Christ], rooted and built up in him....” But, like the story above, we need to be aware of what kind of roots are ... in our life.

Q:: In Matthew 7:16, Jesus warns to His disciples against false prophets: “By their fruit you will recognize them.” What was the point Jesus making with analogy of the fruit?

Living Out One's Worldview:

A worldview is, simply, the way a person views the world. That is to say, depending on what someone believes about life will determine how they live. Because different people have

different views of the world, and because they can't all be equally right, there is bound to be a clash of worldviews—a clash that happens everyday.

Just as with any tree, the roots ultimately lead to the fruit. So it is with one's worldview. Or, as Tom Tarrants has said, "Ideas have consequences, because they lead to actions."¹

EXAMPLE: What most people fail to realize about Adolf Hitler is that he was only in power for 12 years, from 1933 to 1945. And yet, the advancing of his worldview brought the world to war, and is still being felt today.

Why do worldviews matter? Because people have staked their life on what they believe to be true or not true. The question is, "Is what they think is true really true?" If not, they are living with no hope, and often, they don't even know it.

People are living everyday without hope, and they are dying in that same hopeless condition. How concerned are we about that—about our friends, our neighbors...our families?

Worldview thinking is important for three main reasons:

1. It helps us better understand and empathize with the different perspectives of those around us.
2. It helps us hold a mirror to our own lives to identify our own worldview.
3. It helps us begin to recognize the key distinctions between Christianity and other counterfeit worldviews.

Vigilance Against Counterfeit Ideas:

2 Corinthians 10:5 – "...we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Colossians 2:8 – "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ."

Kerby Anderson gives us a compelling warning about the worldviews competing for our attention and allegiance. He reminds us, "When we consider these last two verses, we notice an interesting contrast. Either we take every thought captive (2 Cor. 10:5) or we run the risk of being taken captive (Col. 2:8) by false philosophies."

Q:: So how do we recognize the counterfeit worldviews around us?

The most effective way to become vigilant toward false ideas is the same way that law enforcement agents identify counterfeit money. In their training efforts to identify counterfeit bills, the agents do not focus their primary attention on the counterfeit bills themselves as much as they study an authentic bill. By coming to intimately know the

¹ Tom Tarrants, "What is Truth?" Lecture at Oxford University, RZIM Summer School, 29 June 2008.

design, details and nuances of the real bill, they are more quickly able to recognize the counterfeit bills that are being passed by criminals.²

The same is true when trying to recognize the counterfeit worldviews and ideas that are available to us. The more we intimately understand our own Christian worldview, the more quickly we are able to distinguish the other false ideas which run counter to the Truth.

Q:: Reread Col. 2:8. What is the contrast that Paul is making?

Q:: What is the source of Truth?

If we are to embrace biblical Christianity then, we must know God and His Word. Simply put, to be a biblical Christian requires studying the Bible. How, for example, will we be able to determine what is the proper course of action in an ethical situation at work if we do not know the biblical principles which would help us make that decision? The more we know God's Word, the clearer the path is before us. And we will come to discover this reality:

The Christian worldview, above any other, best synthesizes all of life, providing the most plausible, comprehensive explanation for the human experience.

The goal for those who profess to be Christians then is to begin to evaluate all of life through the lens of Scripture. In this way, we begin to "think Christianly". That is to say, our Christian faith should be more than just a compartmentalized religion (that we apply to our lives intermittently as the need arises). Rather, it is a comprehensive worldview that incorporates itself 24/7 into every part of our lives. As you reflect on that reality, consider this:

The Christian has Christ at the center of his or her view of the world. What is at the center of your view of the world?

Application:

When considering any worldview, Ravi Zacharias reminds us to ask ourselves two fundamental questions concerning its viability as a way of life: 1.) *Is it logical?*, and 2.) *Is it livable?*³

A competent worldview must be shown to be both *logical* and *livable* if it is to be adopted. And when we can demonstrate the Christianity is both logical and livable, then it can become prescriptive for all people.

Ultimately, as Paul told the Colossians, the trees that we plant with our lives should be rooted in Christ, the anchor for our soul (Hebrews 6:19). He alone is Truth (John 14:6).

² Information gathered by author from personal communication with a Secret Service agent.

³ These two basic worldview questions were shared by one of the presenters during Ravi Zacharias International Ministries' Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics 8-week program in 2008.

Q:: What examples do I see of other worldviews that people hold around me?

Q:: What would people say about the “fruit” of my worldview? Is it reflective of the Christian worldview, or not?

Q:: How does my worldview affect the way I go about my day? What changes might I need to make sure that my actions better align with what I say I believe?

Q:: Am I concerned about what others believe? Should I be? What can I do to develop a greater concern for the salvation of others?

“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”

– former atheist-turned-Christian, C.S. Lewis⁴

⁴ C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd., 1949; San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001), 140.