

Christian Worldview: A Comprehensive Guide

Understanding how we see the world shapes every decision we make, every relationship we build, and every value we hold dear. Our worldview is the lens through which we interpret reality, and for Christians, this lens must be grounded in the eternal truth of God's Word.





The Church Versus the World

Throughout history, an irreconcilable tension has existed between the Church and the world. Jesus himself warned his disciples: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). This fundamental incompatibility stems not from intellectual disagreement, but from moral opposition to God's truth.

Today's evangelical movement faces a dangerous temptation: courting the world's favor by diluting the gospel's exclusive claims. Churches design worship services for the "unchurched," Christian producers mimic worldly entertainment trends, and preachers carefully omit offensive truths to avoid rejection. Yet Scripture is clear—friendship with the world is spiritual adultery (James 4:4).

The Shifting Landscape of Modern Thought

Modernism's Challenge

A century ago, modernism threatened Christianity by claiming only science could explain reality. Everything supernatural was dismissed as myth. Churches that embraced modernism to remain "relevant" ultimately became irrelevant themselves—their grand stone buildings now stand mostly empty.

Postmodernism's Deception

Today's dominant worldview rejects absolute truth entirely. Postmodernism insists that reality is whatever individuals imagine it to be. Truth becomes merely personal opinion, best kept to oneself. This apparent tolerance masks a totalitarian intolerance for any worldview claiming universal truth—especially biblical Christianity.

Understanding Postmodernism's Impact

Postmodernism has infiltrated the Church. Many Christians have absorbed this cultural poison without realizing it, resulting in watered-down messages and reluctance to proclaim Christ as the only way to God. The biblical message remains clear and unchanging: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6).

What Postmodernism Teaches

No absolute truth exists or can be known. Reality is merely a mental construction. All perspectives are equally valid. Claiming to know truth is inherently intolerant.

What Scripture Teaches

God is truth itself (John 14:6). His Word is objective truth (John 17:17). Truth claims are exclusive by nature. Knowing and proclaiming truth is our calling (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The Tolerance Trap

Postmodern "tolerance" distorts a genuine virtue. Biblical tolerance means treating people with love and respect even when believing they are wrong—it extends to persons, not ideas. Modern tolerance demands we accept all beliefs as equally valid, which is no virtue at all.

Ironically, today's self-proclaimed champions of tolerance display remarkable intolerance toward biblical Christianity. Why? Because Christianity's truth claims directly contradict postmodernism's fundamental assumptions. The gospel represents a fatal blow to the postmodern worldview.

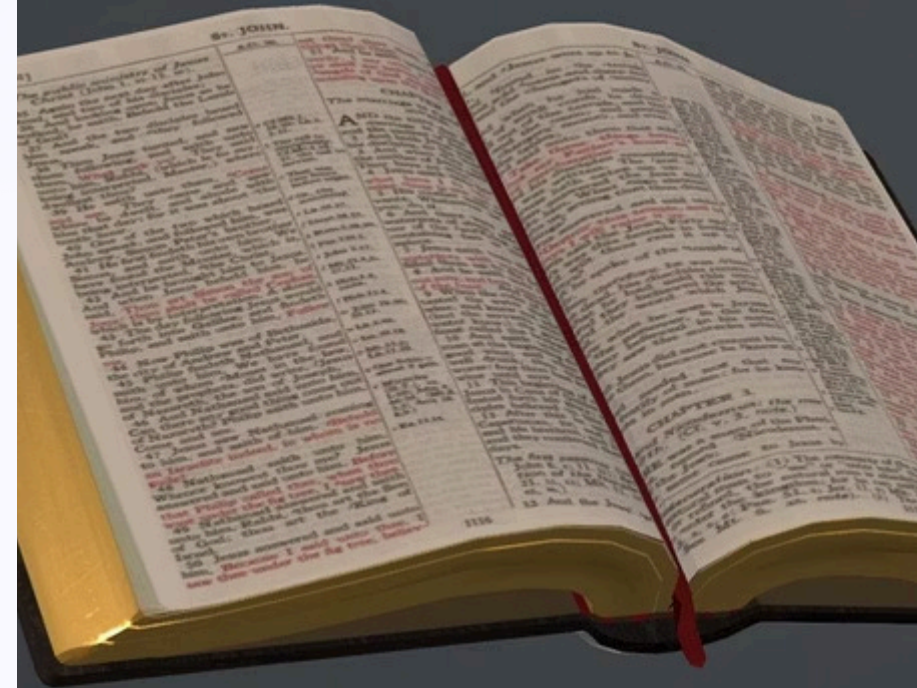
If Christians soften Christ's exclusive claims or broaden the narrow way, the Church makes no progress against postmodernism. We must recover the gospel's distinctiveness, regain confidence in God's truth, and boldly proclaim that Christ is humanity's only true hope.



The Truth of God's Word

Authentic Christianity begins with the premise that truth exists outside ourselves. Specifically, God's Word is truth (Psalm 119:151; John 17:17). It is objectively true—true whether it speaks to any individual or not, true regardless of feelings about it, true for everyone universally without exception, absolutely true.

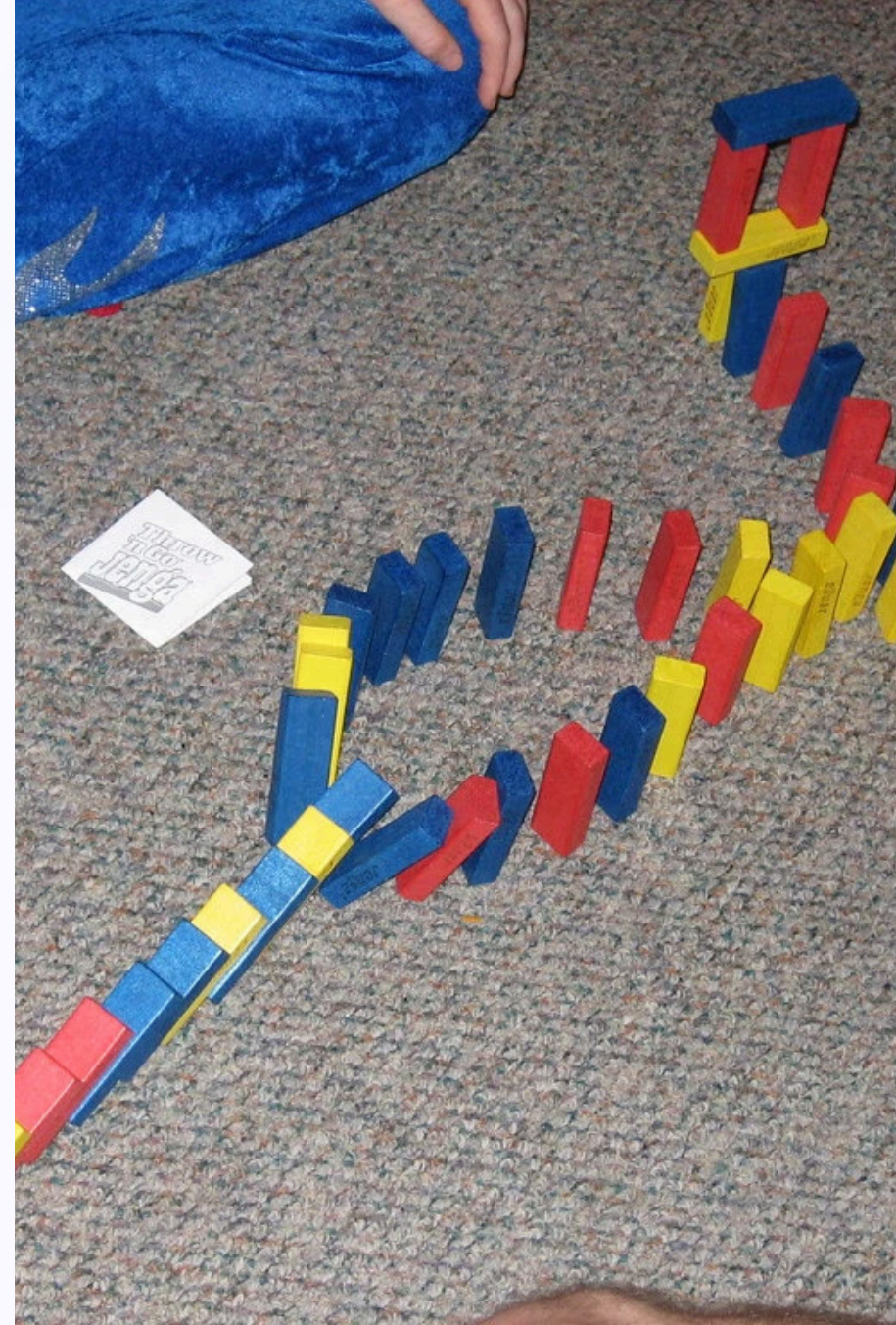
This contradicts the basic assumption governing most contemporary thought. Postmodern philosophy claims no absolute truth exists or, if it does, cannot be known. According to postmodernism, truth is merely a human mental creation; people determine their own reality; therefore, no one possesses the truth.



Ideas Have Consequences

Consider the historical consequences of worldviews. Adolf Hitler appealed to evolutionary naturalism, arguing that the strongest should dominate the weak. This "logical" application of his worldview led to Auschwitz and the systematic murder of millions. The children, pregnant women, and innocents tortured to death in concentration camps demonstrate the horrifying reality: worldviews lead to conclusions and consequences.

Understanding what different worldviews teach and their logical outcomes is crucial. Ideas shape societies. Thoughts mold cultures. Worldviews matter because they determine how we live, what we value, and how we treat others.





What Is a Worldview?

A worldview is the intellectual lens through which people view reality. It is a philosophical system seeking to explain how reality's facts relate and fit together. Your worldview provides the framework where life's smaller pieces harmonize. It shapes how you think and provides the interpretive condition for understanding and explaining your experiences.

Everyone has a worldview, whether they realize it or not. It may not be written or systematized like famous philosophers' works, but every adult necessarily and inescapably possesses a philosophical system of thought. Understanding your worldview—and others'—is essential for engaging effectively with the ideas shaping our culture.

Why Worldviews Matter

1

Worldviews Shape Judgments

How we see the world determines our conclusions about life's fundamental questions. The same facts can lead to opposite conclusions depending on one's worldview.

2

Worldviews Influence Actions

Our ideas influence emotions, reactions, and conduct. Knowing what you believe and why you believe it profoundly impacts how you live.

3

Worldviews Affect Society

Societies function based on unified systems of thought. The worldview dominating a culture determines its laws, values, and direction.



The Three Major Worldviews

While numerous worldviews exist, three have most influenced Western culture: atheism, pantheism, and theism. These fundamentally differ in their view of God's existence and nature. Understanding these differences is essential for effectively communicating biblical truth in our pluralistic society.

Atheism: A World Without God

Atheism believes no God exists, either in or beyond the universe. The cosmos is all that exists or ever will exist; it is self-sustaining. Famous atheists like Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Jean-Paul Sartre expressed their worldview differently, but all held the basic conviction that God does not exist.

Core Atheistic Beliefs:

- God does not exist; only the universe exists
- The universe is eternal or randomly came into being
- Humans evolved from molecules and are not immortal
- No eternal destiny exists; humans will be annihilated
- Evil originates from human ignorance and can be defeated through education
- Ethics are human creations, based on humanity itself
- Morality is relative, determined by situations



Pantheism: God Is Everything

Pantheism believes God is the universe. No creator exists beyond the universe; creator and creation are two different ways of viewing the same reality. Ultimately, only one reality exists, not many separate realities. God permeates all things and is found in everything. Nothing exists apart from God: God is the world and the world is God.

God

One, infinite, usually impersonal; God is the universe

Universe

An illusion, a manifestation of God who alone is real

Humanity

The true self (atman) of humans is God (Brahman); destiny determined by karma cycles

Evil

An illusion caused by mental errors; will be reabsorbed by God

Ethics

Based on inferior manifestations of God; relative, transcending the illusion of good and evil

Different types of pantheism are represented by certain streams of Hinduism, Zen Buddhism, and New Age movements.

Theism: The Christian Worldview

Theism teaches that one infinite, personal Being exists beyond this finite physical universe. Theists believe the God of the Bible's attributes can be partially known through nature, just as an artist's attributes can be recognized in his painting. Traditional religions—Judaism, Islam, and Christianity—represent theism, though with crucial differences.

Biblical Christianity affirms that God has deeply planted in every human heart and mind an indelible knowledge of some of His attributes, clearly perceptible in nature's observation: "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse" (Romans 1:19-20).

Core Theistic Beliefs



God

One, personal, moral, infinite in all attributes



Universe

Finite, created by the infinite God



Humanity (Origin)

Immortal, created and sustained by God in His image



Humanity (Destiny)

By choice, eternally separated from God or living eternally with Him



Evil (Origin)

Privation or imperfection caused by choice



Evil (Destiny)

Will be finally defeated by God



Ethics (Basis)

Principles based on God's nature



Ethics (Nature)

Absolute, objective, and prescriptive

Worldview Confusion

Our worldview judgments depend on how we see the world. Atheists examining life's evidence through naturalistic assumptions conclude God doesn't exist. Theists looking at the same evidence demonstrate that intelligent life's only answer is an intelligent First Cause (God). Same facts, irreconcilable conclusions—this is worldview confusion.

Since different worldviews reach essentially different answers to the same questions, how do we proceed? We must look more closely at the intellectual lens (worldview) structure used to interpret investigated data and gain knowledge of how this lens is constituted. Understanding the assumptions constituting worldviews' main structures is essential for learning to communicate our convictions across various worldviews without misinterpreting them through other-colored lenses.



Asking the Right Questions

Asking sincere questions in dialogue serves multiple purposes. Questions allow others to perceive genuine interest in their opinions. The ultimate apologetics goal is confirming and gently defending our convictions, hoping God will lead individuals to relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. Simply vomiting answers or unsympathetically challenging people with Christian faith won't help build relationships with those needing to know God.

A properly placed question, asked with love and concern, can be far more effective than merely trying to prove a point and win an argument. Someone can win an argument but lose the opponent in the process. The right kind of questions can help disarm potentially explosive dialogue and transform it into effective discussion.

Principle Questions

Shift from Specific to General

The essential principle for asking the right question involves shifting discussion focus from a particular issue to a general truth principle underlying the subject in question.

Apply First Principles

Making principle questions depends on our capacity to know and properly utilize general precepts (first principles) related to the specific problem being discussed.

1

2

3

4

Find Common Ground

Using this method, we can open listeners' minds by changing a simple question. Success depends not on asking just any questions, but asking the right questions.

Avoid Emotional Traps

When emotionally involved in an issue, following logical argument becomes increasingly difficult. The right question can catapult conversation from emotional/subjective level to rational/objective level.

Christian Worldview Foundations

In Colossians 2:8, Paul writes: "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ." This verse doesn't teach that philosophy itself is unworthy of Christian study—it teaches precisely the opposite.

Paul issues an imperative for pursuing the discipline. To guard against being captured by philosophy "according to human tradition," a person must be aware of such erroneous philosophy. More importantly, they must know the true one. Many Christians aren't aware of this fact and have neglected philosophy study generally. Sadly, these people are most likely to be captured by this world's false philosophies.



Biblical Presuppositions

All worldviews have foundational presuppositions. In a logically consistent Christian worldview, the first and absolutely essential presupposition is that the Bible alone is God's Word with a systematic monopoly on truth. This is the axiomatic starting point.

As Paul declares: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God's entire counsel concerning all things necessary for His glory and for human salvation, faith, and life is either expressly declared in Scripture or can be logically and clearly deduced from it.



**DIVINE
AUTHORITY**

Four Foundational Truths

O1

God's Word Is Truth

Scripture is the infallible, inerrant Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). The Holy Spirit produces this belief in minds (1 Corinthians 2:6-16). Scripture's authority depends solely on God (who is truth itself) as its author.

O3

God Is Sovereign

God, in His eternal decree, sovereignly preordained all things that would happen (Ephesians 1:11). He executes His sovereign purposes through creation works (Revelation 4:11) and providence (Daniel 4:35).

O2

God Is Triune

There is only one God, the living and true God. Three persons exist in the Divinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three are one God, of the same substance, equal in power and glory (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19).

O4

Humanity Bears God's Image

God created humans in His own image, both metaphysically and ethically (Genesis 1:26-28). Humans are spiritual, rational, moral, and immortal beings, created with innate propositional knowledge for spiritual relationship with their Creator.

Elements of a Worldview

Any well-formed worldview must adequately address philosophy's most basic elements or principles: epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and politics. These components form the framework for understanding reality and living coherently within it.

Epistemology

The branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge theory. How do we know what we know? What is the truth standard? Is truth relative? Can knowledge about God be obtained?

Metaphysics

Deals with reality theory. Why are things as they are? Why is there something rather than nothing? How can unity exist amid universe diversity? Is the world a creation or brute fact?

Ethics

Concerned with how one should live. The study of right and wrong thoughts, words, and deeds. What is the ethical standard? Is there absolute law to which all must conform?

Politics

The branch of philosophy dealing with government theory. What government type is correct? Should government be limited? What is the civil magistrate's function?



Christian Epistemology

Christian epistemology's starting point is the propositional revelation of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. To avoid pure rationalism's fallacies, empiricism's pitfalls, and irrationalism's skepticism, we need an authoritative truth source. That source is the Scripture God's propositional revelation, who "is truth itself."

Scripture passages like Job 11:7-9, Proverbs 20:24, Ecclesiastes 3:11, Matthew 16:17, and 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 make clear that apart from divine revelation, humans cannot truly know God or His creation. Modern philosophy rejected the biblical solution and sought answers from various other sources, all leading to the despairing conclusion that humans simply cannot know reality and no ultimate truth can be known.

Three False Epistemologies

Pure Rationalism

Affirms that reason, apart from revelation or sensory experience, provides the primary or sole truth source. Human reason, unaided, becomes the ultimate standard by which all beliefs are judged. Even revelation must be judged by reason. This assumes humans apart from revelation can arrive at true knowledge of at least some things, including God's knowledge.

Empiricism

Maintains that all knowledge originates in the senses. According to empiricism, ordinary experience from our physical senses produces knowledge. The scientific investigation method is emphasized. In consistent empirical epistemology, the mind is considered a blank slate at birth with no innate structure, forms, or ideas. Therefore, all knowledge comes through the senses.

Irrationalism

A form of skepticism promoted by thinkers like Søren Kierkegaard and Immanuel Kant. It is anti-rational and anti-intellectual. Real truth, skeptics say, can never be obtained. Rational attempts to explain the world leave us in despair. Reality cannot be communicated propositionally; it must be acquired "personally and passionately."

Knowledge Versus Opinion

There is an important philosophical distinction between "knowledge" and "opinion." Knowledge is not just possessing ideas or thoughts; it is possessing true ideas or thoughts. Knowledge is knowledge of truth—justified true belief. Opinions, on the other hand, can be true or false. Natural science is opinion; archaeology is opinion; history is opinion. Here there is no justification for true belief.

In the biblical view, a proposition is true because God thinks it is true. Since God is omniscient (knowing all things), if humans are to know truth, they must know what is in God's mind. The same truth existing in human minds exists first in God's mind. In coherence truth theory, mind and knowledge object are parts of a system where all parts are in perfect agreement because they are found in God's mind.

Christian Ethics

While people sometimes consider "ethics" and "morals" as synonymous virtues, technically there is a difference. Ethics is a normative discipline seeking to prescribe obligations for humanity. It deals with what a person "ought" to do. Ethics is an authority matter. Morals, on the other hand, describe individuals' and societies' standard behavior—what people actually do. One's ethics should determine their morals.

Christian ethics depends on revelation. Christianity maintains there is only one ethical standard for humanity: God's moral law forever obligates everyone to render obedience to Him, both justified persons and others. Sin is properly defined as any lack of conformity to God's law or any transgression of that law. If there were no God's law, there would be no sin. Our moral conduct, then, must be guided by God's Word's ethical standard.

False Ethical Systems

Legalism

In its most consistent form, claims that keeping the law, by itself, is both humanity's and society's savior. It concerns external conformity to a law standard, always in some form a human-created law. This was the error of the Pharisees in Jesus' days (Matthew 15:1-9; 23:1-39) and Pelagianism's error.

Antinomianism

"Anti-law" takes various forms: libertinism, gnostic spiritualism, and situation ethics. Libertinism denies that God's moral law is binding for humanity today. Gnostic spiritualism elevates senses and mystical experiences above God's law. Situation ethics denies any absolute truths exist; instead, "love's law" should dictate one's ethics in each specific situation.

All non-Christian ethical systems are fallible. They have no eternal standard to stand upon. Having rejected divine revelation, these systems provide no certain degree for any moral laws (Matthew 7:26-27).

The Cultural Mandate

When God determined to create the human race, He established purposes and parameters for good relationship between Creator and creature. These are described in the form of a covenant. God made a covenant with the creature and established at least three different mandates for humanity: the spiritual mandate (relationship with Creator), the social mandate (family relationship), and the cultural mandate (relationship with society).

The cultural mandate involves humanity's vice-regency over the cosmos. Humans were to develop and maintain everything created by God. Through this mandate, God placed humanity in a singular relationship with creation, to dominate and subdue (Genesis 1:28), guard and cultivate (Genesis 2:15). This justifies Christian work and involvement in areas like politics, education, arts, leisure, technology, industry, and any other areas.

Sphere Sovereignty

Sphere Sovereignty is an expression found in Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd's work. Simplified, it teaches that each God-created institution (family, school, state) possesses a specific area of authority and regency—well-delimited and specific spheres. This doesn't mean such spheres are autonomous. Though independent, each must answer to God, the authority giver.

Family

The primary biblical institution, first established (Genesis 1-2). Other institutions are founded upon the family in a sense.

Arts

The creative sphere where beauty, expression, and cultural enrichment flourish, reflecting God's creative nature in human endeavor.

Education

The sphere responsible for transmitting knowledge, recognizing the Creator in all areas of learning without usurping family authority.



Church

The second biblical institution. The visible Church consists of all who worldwide profess true religion with their children.

State

The third biblical institution. A "necessary evil" due to humanity's Fall, its primary purpose is punishing evildoers (Romans 13:1-7).

Work

The sphere of vocational calling and economic activity, where humans exercise dominion and develop creation's potential.

Living Out the Christian Worldview

Christians are citizens of heaven, but our tickets to get there haven't arrived yet, and while we're here we have much to do without forgetting we're from there. The problem is that besides being very similar to people on this side, we often let ourselves be influenced by the world's errors, disobeying the cultural mandate.

We're not defending any Christian isolationism—history has already proven monasteries don't work. But Christians need to better know the ground they're walking on. The great problem we face when confronting so-called "popular culture" is that we're actually molded by it, not only in what we think and feel but in how we think and feel.

As Paul writes in Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." We need to recover our conviction that Christ is the only way to heaven, or the evangelical movement will become increasingly weak and irrelevant.

Our Mission in the World

Christianity is a complete philosophical system founded on the axiomatic starting point of the Bible as God's Word. In this system, each part we've studied—epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and politics—is important. The ideas found in them are all arranged in a logical system, with each part mutually reinforcing the others.

If students are concerned with following Scripture's dictates, having their minds transformed by Scripture's teachings (Romans 12:1-2), and taking every thought captive to Christ's obedience (2 Corinthians 10:5), then they must learn to think as God's own Logos thinks: logically and systematically. Having done this, students will learn the only viable philosophy, a philosophy "according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8), founded upon God's Word.

1 Stand Firm on Scripture

Build your life on the solid rock of God's Word, not the shifting sands of cultural trends.

2 Engage Culture Redemptively

Live out the cultural mandate by bringing Christ's lordship into every sphere of life.

3 Proclaim Truth Boldly

Declare with confidence that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life—the only path to God.