

# You Cannot ENGAGE with What You Cannot SEE! Apologetic Refutation and Defence against Unbiblical Worldviews

TEASA 2025 – Workshop Session Notes  
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## Introductory Reflection and Discussion

What is “apologetics” and what are we preparing our students to DO?

Apologetics: training our students to see the unseen, and to offer Christ as the answer

What are the essential skills necessary for our students to engage apologetically? (Discuss.)

What is “an unbiblical worldview”?

Worldview is “1) a head-heart system that 2) tells a master story and 3) produces the group action we call culture.” (Mark Ward and Bryan Smith)

So then, an unbiblical worldview is either an element to one’s mental storyline (metanarrative) that contradicts God’s big story (e.g. a story that sees one gender as subservient to the other), OR a foundational assumption that conflicts with a biblical presupposition (e.g. the assumption that morality is defined by the collective community)

*Illustration of Engaging the Unseen:* The problem of submarines, and how WW2 Allied convoys had to move with air support to be able to engage with the German fleets of U-boats: The convoy (community) needed trained and equipped observers to see what they would otherwise be blind to, or they could not engage!

List some examples of unseen assumptions or powerful hidden narratives that shape belief or practice in your context, but often go unseen. (Discuss.)

How is an unbiblical worldview DIFFERENT from a false belief?

- *Risk of failing to distinguish assumption from belief:* e.g. continuationism vs cessationism, argued theologically or assumed culturally
- Biblical examples of broken underlying assumptions/narratives: Romans 1:18-23, John 7:17

How do we help our students distinguish an observable false belief from an invisible worldview narrative or presupposition?

- Theological Refutation: “Belief X is wrong. Scriptures A, B, C and Theological Argument D prove that it is wrong and show what you should believe instead.” (very common default for most)
- vs.
- Worldview Engagement: “Is it true that you believe X? Tell me how that relates to your belief Y and behaviour Z? It seems to me that these beliefs and practices all are built upon this foundational assumption A or storyline B. Have you noticed that assumption before? Can we discuss the soundness of that assumption or storyline and if there might be a better foundation to build your life on?”

## Goal #1: How do we teach our students to SEE unbiblical worldviews?

4 Frameworks for SEEING and Uncovering a Worldview System:

1. Directional Questions
  - Origin: “Where did I come from?”
  - Purpose: “Why am I here?”

- Destiny: “Where am I going?”
  - Meaning: “Do I have any worth or value?”
  - Morality: “How can I know right from wrong?”
2. Topical Questions
- God and Humanity
  - Physical and Spiritual Worlds
  - History, Culture, and Community
  - Knowledge and Authority
  - Ethics and Morality
- (“What do you believe to be true about...?” But caution, students can be tempted to simply “disprove the false beliefs,” rather than see them as lenses to uncover worldview foundations by making connection from the topical beliefs to the underlying story/assumptions.)
3. Philosophical Assumptions (cf. Jack Chalk for an excellent application to African worldviews)
- Metaphysics: assumptions about ultimate reality, the existence of the divine and origins of the non-divine, and about the nature, causes, and order of all that exists: “What is the nature of existence and what truly exists? What is the structure, order, and purpose of the material and immaterial worlds?”
  - Epistemology: assumptions about sources, limits, and accessibility of knowledge, authority, truth, revelation, certainty, etc.: “What can be known, how can it be known, by who?”
  - Axiology: assumptions about value (goodness, beauty, rightness, etc.), and values (heart commitments and priorities): “What is wrong with the world and how can it be fixed?”
4. Metanarrative Story Arcs
- Creation -> Fall -> Redemption -> Consummation
  - (“Tell me the story of the world and explain to me how you fit into that story?”)

*Major goal #1: Uncovering Foundational Interwoven Assumptions and Metanarratives*

## **Goal #2: How do we teach our students to ENGAGE with unbiblical worldviews?**

4 Tools to go deeper than belief/behaviour and ENGAGE with foundation worldview stories/assumptions:

1. *Transcendental Critique (Bahnsen)*
  - Step 1: Uncover foundational presuppositions of the target worldview
  - Step 2: Demonstrate that the unbiblical worldview either borrows from a biblical worldview (and thus is dependent on what it denies), or else is internally inconsistent and thus untenable
  - Step 3: Offer something better! (The ground you stand on seems unstable, come stand on Christ!)
2. *Expository Apologetic Waltz (Baucham)*
  - Step 1: Listen generously: Demonstrate the internal inconsistencies of the person's worldview
  - Step 2: Summarize fairly: Identify where they are borrowing from the Christian worldview
  - Step 3: Challenge graciously: Show how the Christian worldview provides the only consistent and coherent explanation for reality.
3. *Telling a Better Story: “Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation” vs. ??? (Ward)*
  - Step 1: Dialogue with an ear for metanarratives
  - Step 2: Listen for the stories the person uses to make sense of the world and of their experience
  - Step 3: Demonstrate the uniqueness and cohesiveness of the biblical metanarrative. Compare.
  - Step 4: Show how Christ is the centre of the biblical metanarrative and the answer to their needs and desires
4. *Subversive Fulfillment (Strange)*
  - Step 1: Uncover the foundational commitments, false worship, and problems and solutions that the worldview system is driven by
  - Step 2: Look for corrupted remnants of God’s revelation within the system. What do they worship?
  - Step 3: Show how Christ both subverts and fulfills the needs and desires of the unbiblical system

*Major goal #2: Demonstrate the brokenness of the unbiblical worldview and offer a better story*

## **Teaching Students to SEE and ENGAGE Worldviews: an example for the university degree level** (extract from Central Africa Baptist University's WDV 401 Apologetics course syllabus by Ben Straub)

### *Course Description*

Apologetics is a final year class designed to prepare students to defend, justify, and confirm the claims of Christianity before men. The course focuses on the awareness and evaluation of worldviews, both in oneself and in others, and prepares the student to demonstrate the superiority of and need for a Biblical worldview. A presuppositional approach is explained and defended.

### *Learning Goals (Intended Learning Outcomes)*

My desire for you this semester is that you will learn the skills necessary to be able “to be ready always to give an answer to him that asks reason of the hope that is within you” (1 Peter 3:15). To that end I have set the following goals:

1. My first goal is that you would be able to explain what a worldview is, list the kinds of questions that every worldview answers, give examples of how various worldviews seek to answer those questions in different ways, and become critically aware of both your own and other people's individual worldviews.
2. My second goal is that you would be able to explain the key components of the Biblical worldview and evaluate your own and other people's worldviews against the presuppositions and narrative of Scripture.
3. My third goal is that you would gain an appreciation for the value of presuppositional apologetics for the task of sharing your faith and become committed to using the skills learned in this class to be bolder and more effective in your witness for Christ.

### *Course Units (Essential Questions)*

1. What is apologetics?  
(Establishing the biblical requirement for Christians to defend their faith)
2. How has apologetics been done?  
(Tracing the historical and philosophical development of 5 different approaches to apologetics)
3. What is a worldview?  
(Examining how worldviews operate by unpacking a biblical worldview)
4. How do I SEE and uncover different worldviews?  
(Practicing worldview analysis by unpacking the predominant African worldview)
5. How do I effectively ENGAGE with someone who has an unbiblical worldview?  
(Planning a method for SEEING and ENGAGING with specific non-Christian worldviews prevalent in our context)

### *Assessment of Intended Learning Outcomes: Worldview Engagement Research and Teaching Project*

- You will write one research paper systematically uncovering and engaging with a worldview system of your choice that is prevalent in our African context. The required components of the paper will be: 1) to accurately describe the chosen worldview's major presuppositions about God, man, reality, etc., 2) to compare those to the presuppositions of the Biblical worldview, and 3) to apply one or more of the worldview engagement tools that you learned during the second half of the course to engage with the worldview. The goal of the paper will be to demonstrate how one might effectively share the gospel with a person who holds to such a worldview, in a way that answers their objections or points out their inconsistencies, and offers them a better story.
- Paper length: 6-8 pages of body text, carefully researched in original sources, including primary sources written by those who hold to your chosen worldview.
- After submission of your research paper, you will then develop the same material into a short lesson to teach the rest of the class how to SEE the major elements of the worldview, and to model to your classmates how we might effectively ENGAGE with someone who holds it.

## Recommended Resources

- Anderson, James N. *What's Your Worldview?: An Interactive Approach to Life's Big Questions*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2014.
- Bahnsen, Greg L. *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*. Nacogdoches, Texas: Covenant Media Press, 2009.
- Baucham, Voddie. *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2015.
- Chalk, Jack. *Making Disciples in Africa: Engaging Syncretism and the African Church through Philosophical Analysis of Worldviews*. Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Global Library, 2013.
- Georges, Jayson. *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures*. Timē Press, 2014. (www.honorshame.com)
- Kigame, Reuben. *Christian Apologetics through African Eyes*. Nairobi, Kenya: Posterity Publishers: 2018.
- Ndereba, Kevin Muriithi, ed. *Apologetics in Africa: An Introduction*. Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: HippoBooks, 2024.
- Strange, Daniel. *Their Rock is not Like Our Rock: A Theology of Religions*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2014.
- Turaki, Yusufu. *Engaging Religions and Worldviews in Africa: A Christian Theological Method*. Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: HippoBooks, 2020.
- Ward, Mark. ed. *Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption*. Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2016. (<https://byfaithweunderstand.com/2015/10/15/biblical-worldview-creation-fall-redemption/>)
- Wolters, Albert M. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005.