Worldview and Cross-Cultural Ministry

What are worldviews?

Note to facilitator: Before starting the worldview course, situate the overall subject matter of the course within the framework of the five-stage strategy for holistic ministry. Remember that at the beginning of this course we only want to demonstrate the need to think about worldview. We are not trying to provide detailed or complex answers at this early stage. Rather, we want to: (a) introduce the subject of worldviews and (b) enhunger the participants to learn. In some training settings, we may need to provide a little background in basic cultural anthropology, one of the disciplines from which the subject of worldview is derived.[1]

Note about facilitation: *TELL / SHOW* – Use these or other short stories to illustrate the need to think about worldview. Especially for concrete learners, support your stories with dramatic acting, photographs, props, and physical maps.

1. Introduction – The following two stories illustrate two components of worldview:

    a. Story: The death of Bawame in Papua New Guinea (see PPT slide)
        Worldview component: View of the nature of reality (the cause of sickness)

        God in His love sent missionaries to a remote part of Asia to proclaim the gospel of Christ. He led them to a village of the Bisorio people deep in the jungles of Papua New Guinea. The missionaries lived among the Bisorios, building loving relationships with them and learning their culture and language. They did these things first in order to be able to clearly share the Good News!

        During the days of culture and language learning, a Bisorio woman named Bawame was carried from a mountain location down to the village where the missionaries lived. She was thin and very weak. The hearts of the missionaries broke with sadness and concern. After consulting medical workers, they prayed and cared for her, treating her with anti-malarial medicine and providing food and fresh water. Bawame's family allowed her and two relatives to stay in the missionaries' home so they could provide her with the constant care she required. Praise God, she began to improve. The missionaries took hope in that she was going to recover. Then, unbeknownst to the missionaries, her uncle, Asebe, came and took Bawame away into the jungle to offer sacrifices to the ancestors to affect her healing. He took her in hopes that her illness was not caused by the *yama*, the evil spirit of death, for which no offering could be made. The missionaries heard people in the village shouting, "They're taking Bawame!

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[1]Basic cultural anthropology may include a definition of culture and a description of the institutions of culture (means of production, economics, kinship systems, marriage, social organization, political organization, and religion).

They're taking Bawame!" The missionaries ran down to the edge of the river only to see the dugout canoes pulling away with Bawame. Though she had clearly begun to improve, she was still frail and required more care and medicine. The missionaries called out, pleading, "Please, Asebe, please don't take Bawame yet. Please, wait. Please, let us help." Asebe did not look back. He just kept paddling upriver, deep into the jungle. Bawame died shortly thereafter in a lonely, remote place, without ever hearing the Gospel of Christ.

b. Story: Acid and an alligator in a swimming pool in FL
    Worldview component: View of mankind (race)

    A motel manager in the Southern USA was furious when he witnessed blacks swimming with whites in the motel swimming pool. "You can't do that. Get out!" screamed motel manager, James Brock. They didn't listen to him. Brock came back with a container of hydrochloric acid. "OK," he said, "this is acid. Acid! If you don't get out, I'll pour it in the water." Again, they refused to comply. So he poured the dangerous liquid into the pool (see PPT slide). The next day, Brock put an alligator in the pool to discourage the activists from coming back and continuing their "mixed" swimming in his pool (From "Civil Rights Chronicle: The African America Struggle for Freedom" by Clayborne Carson, 2003, p. 264).

Note to facilitator: Having heard the differences in the way people view life, we now want to explore what is underneath the observable behavior that is observed. The goal of this discussion is to go deeper, but comments will still be general rather than specific.

Note about facilitation: *REFLECT* – Ask the participants to reflect on the two stories. Lead a large group discussion about what is underneath the observable behavior of Asebei and the hotel manager. Have the group briefly reflect on what happened in each cultural situation. What were some of the tacit assumptions each person may have held? Record their feedback on the mark'n wipe board.

2. What is underneath the observable behavior?

    a. View of the nature of reality (the cause of sickness) from the perspective of Asebei versus the perspective of the missionaries

    b. View of mankind (race) from the perspective of the hotel manager

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Note to facilitator: At this early stage of the course, introduce a simple definition for the term *worldview*. Later in the course the definition will be expanded. No single definition or description captures all aspects of the concept.
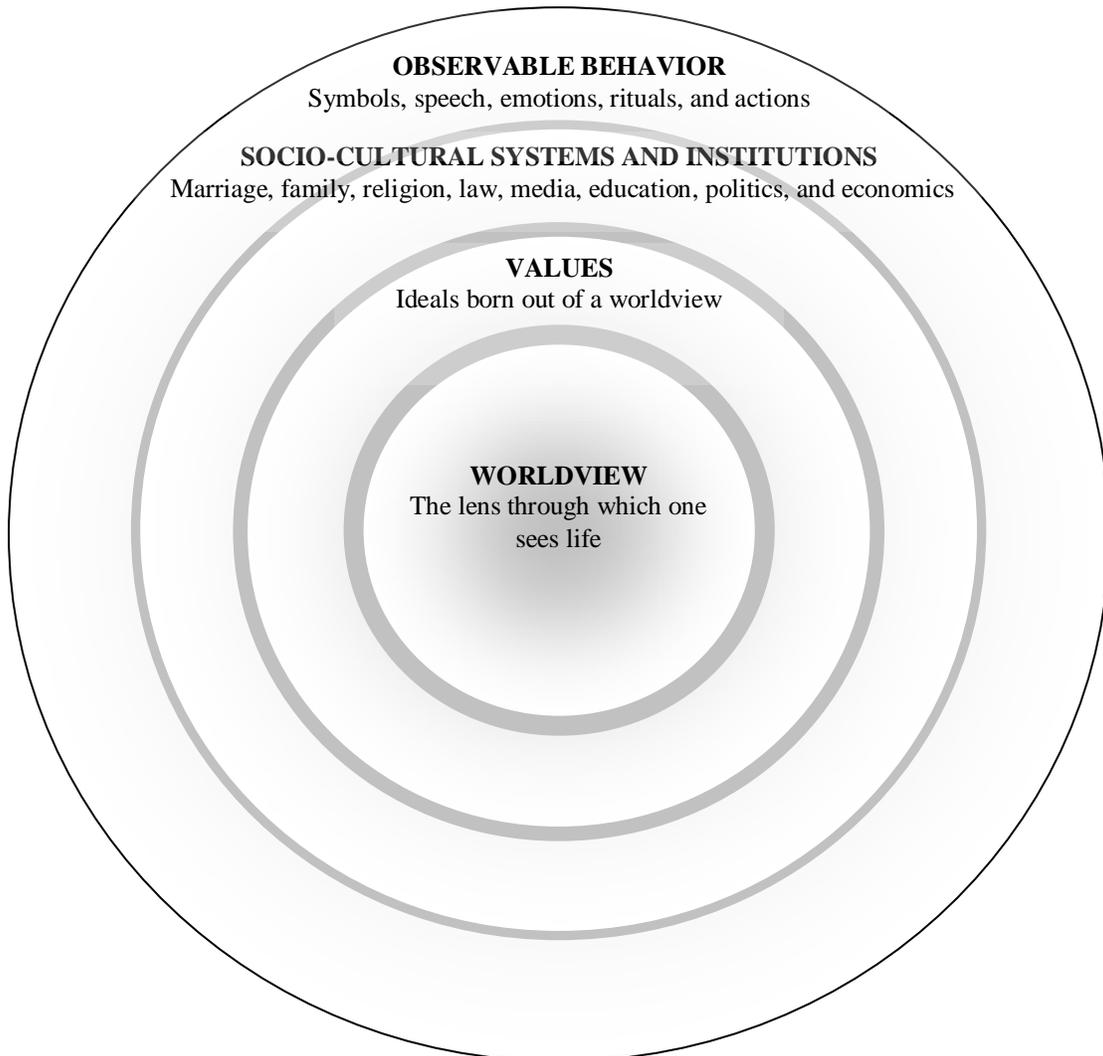
Note about facilitation: *TELL* – State definition and compare to Matthew 6:19-34 (note 22-23).

3.   A definition of the term *worldview*: The lens through which one sees life (see PPT slide).[2]

Note to facilitator: We will now introduce a simple model that illustrates worldview and its associated outcomes. Graphics always have limitations and cannot express the subtle nuances or the complexity of reality. Therefore, the concentric circles are not meant to infer watertight compartments of life with boundaries that cannot be crossed.

Note about facilitation: *SHOW* – Either use the PPT slide or draw the figure on the board and compare to Ephesians 4:17-24 and Isaiah 44:9-20.

4.   A model of the concept of worldview – a tool for analysis (see PPT slide)

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR
Symbols, speech, emotions, rituals, and actions

SOCIO-CULTURAL SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS
Marriage, family, religion, law, media, education, politics, and economics

VALUES
Ideals born out of a worldview

WORLDVIEW
The lens through which one sees life

Source: Adapted from G. Linwood Barney in Hesselgrave, 1994, p. 49

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[2]See Appendix A for more definitions and descriptions of the term *worldview*.

Note to facilitator: We will now analyze the key components of the worldview model, represented by the concentric circles. Take your time in this analysis. Clearly explain each component, supporting your analysis with illustrations from diverse cultures. Keep things simple. Do not try to explain everything. The difference between this section and the preceding section is simply that section 5 will separate the model into its component parts and will provide illustrations for each part. New content is not necessarily being added.

Note about facilitation: *TELL / SHOW* – Use the PPT slides or draw the concentric circles on the board; isolate the four concentric circles; explain what each represents in greater depth and illustrate the descriptions.

5.   An analysis of the worldview model – the four concentric circles

a.   Worldview – the starting point (see PPT slide)

A worldview contains core assumptions about the nature of reality, including who man is and how he sees himself relating to every aspect of life. These core assumptions are part of a network of interconnected assumptions primarily derived from stories that form the lens through which one sees life. For example:

1)   The secular western worldview can be called *materialistic evolution*. It assumes an impersonal beginning (big bang) and that man and non-man evolved through random chance (natural selection). Physical death ends all.

2)   The Bisorio worldview, which is animistic, assumes that the sun (a being) was the creator. Mankind, nature, spirit beings, and impersonal forces are all interconnected. Death is only a transition to another aspect of reality (similar to reincarnation).

b.   Values – emerge from worldview assumptions (see PPT slide)

Values are born out of one's worldview. They are expressions of ideals, that is, the way things ought to be in light of the accepted view of reality. For example:
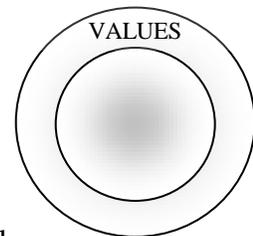
1)   In secular western values, man, having evolved, perceives himself to be autonomous. Personal choice is important. Morals are relative, with man himself deciding what is right and wrong.

2)   For the Bisorio all of life is interconnected. Mankind is one with nature. People tend to be group-oriented where choices are made with the community in mind. Values and morals are relative and pragmatic in order to: (a) maintain harmony (with the human and spirit world) and (b) survive.

c. Socio-cultural systems (see PPT slide)

Social and cultural systems and institutions develop from values and worldview. No orderly society can exist without them; only anarchy and chaos would rule. These systems and institutions involve marriage, family, religion, law, media, education, politics, means of production, and economics.

SOCIO-CULTURAL
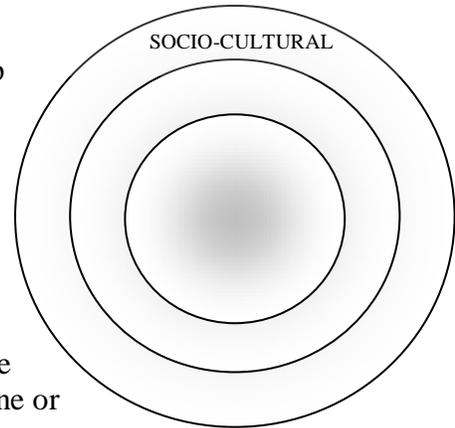
1) In the secular western institution of marriage, people marry the person of their choice; they are not forced to marry anyone. If they do marry, one or both parties may choose to divorce.

2) In the Bisorio institution of marriage, the marriage is pragmatic in nature, providing the following benefits: (a) survival is easier (e.g., gardening and hunting), (b) social status is increased (e.g., number of wives and number of children), and (c) social control. Divorce is discouraged due to complications in the interests of a wide network of supporting social relationships.

d. Observable behavior (see PPT slide)

The observable behavior of a society is seen through symbols (art, dress, and colors), speech, stories, emotions, rituals (rites of passage, ceremonies, and festivals), actions, and events. These activities help form and reinforce the worldview of a society.
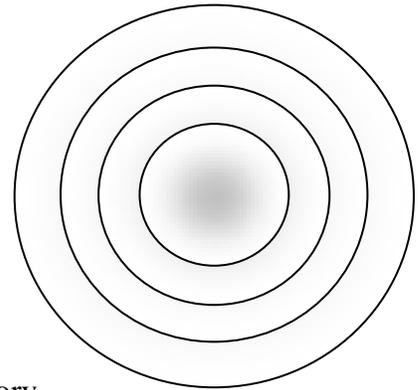
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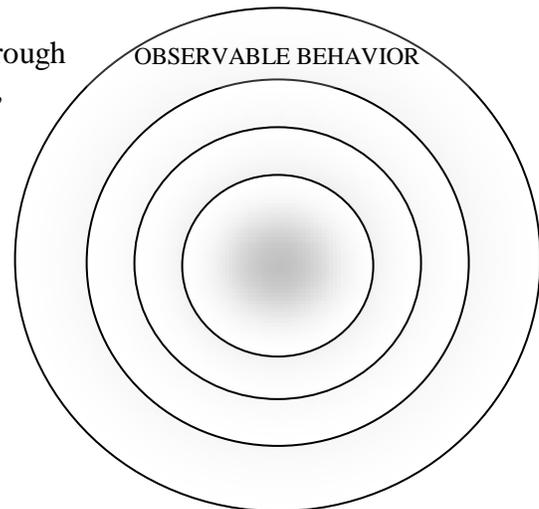
1) In a secular western society, marriage may or may not include a ceremony. If ceremonies are observed, they will vary greatly and may even borrow religious symbols. Often, couples will live together before marriage to test compatibility.

2) In a Bisorio marriage, one would see a tribal custom of ornamentation. A bride price payment is made (pigs, money, or shells). The couple is not married and cannot live together until the first, initial, public bride price payment is witnessed and accepted by all.

Note to facilitator: This analysis will serve as our basis of understanding as we move forward in the course. By necessity, each aspect was described individually, from worldview to outward observable behavior. While the solid lines of the graphic may imply four separate compartments, as we go on we will see that they are not separate at all, but rather intimately and inextricably interconnected.

Note to facilitator: Having introduced the four separate components (the concentric circles) of the worldview model, now we will put things back together or synthesize them using the two illustrative stories from the beginning of the course.

Note about facilitation: *TELL / SHOW* – Choose one of the stories below as an illustration for this synthesis exercise. Demonstrate to the large group of participants how to use the four component parts as a whole. Starting with the outward observable behavior, go deeper to identify: (a) the socio-cultural institutions that enable the behavior, (b) the values that provide an oughtness to the behavior, and (c) the core worldview assumptions that are likely the starting point. Use the template for the worldview model.

6.   A synthesis of the worldview components

    a. The death of Bawame in Papua New Guinea (see PPT slide)

    b. Acid and an alligator in a swimming pool in FL (see PPT slide)

Note to facilitator: After your demonstration, choose the second story above for a small group activity. The purpose of this activity is to reinforce the process of going deeper, underneath the outward observable behavior to the factors that are driving such behavior.

Note about facilitation: *DO* – Ask the small groups to analyze and synthesize the story using the worldview model. Address each of the four components in the model. Allow ample time. Go from group to group providing coaching.

Note about facilitation: *REFLECT* – After the small groups have completed their discussions, reassemble into a large group format for a time of reflection.

Note to facilitator: The purposes of the large group discussion to follow are three-fold: (a) to clarify the definition of the term *worldview*, (b) to use the worldview model as a tool for worldview analysis, and (c) to introduce the questions of where worldviews come from and how they are formed. Here are several key questions:

   -   What socio-cultural systems and institutions are in place and functioning that enable the outward observable behavior?
   -   What values and ideals are demonstrated through the behavior?
   -   What assumptions are the foundation for the values, assumptions about reality, man, the function and purpose of mankind, and God?
   -   What is the source of the worldview assumptions? This is the key question that transitions into the next section.

Note to facilitator: Based on the large group discussion from the previous section, we want to transition into the subject of where worldview assumptions originate. Who says so? Who or what is the authoritative source? Ultimately, this transition will lead to a consideration of the Bible as the authoritative source of worldview assumptions. The objective of this next section is to establish that the Bible itself, as a whole story, is the starting point for assumptions, values, institutions, and human behavior.

Everyone has an ultimate frame of reference by which they understand and relate to life. By the term *frame of reference* we are not referring to only one or two main assumptions or beliefs people have about life, but rather we are referring to an entire complex system of core beliefs in terms of which people interpret and relate to all the various aspects of life. Another way of referring to the ultimate frame of reference is to talk about the meta-narrative, the overarching story.

Note about facilitation: *TELL / REFLECT* - It may be helpful to call the participants' attention to the synonymous terms and phrases to be used in this section: *authoritative source, the starting point, ultimate frame of reference, an entire complex system,* and *meta-narrative*. Take time to discuss these terms and phrases as they emerge in the presentation and discussion.

7.   The Bible as the meta-narrative, our ultimate authority

    a.   The claims of Scripture itself:

        1)   "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" 2 Timothy 3:14-17 (see PPT slide).[3]

        2)   "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" Psalms 119:105.

Note to facilitator: Patiently address and emphasize this fundamental reality. The Bible is the starting point given by God for mankind. God's revelation in the Bible is the only framework by which man can correctly determine his identity, purpose, and relationships. Beginning with another ultimate frame of reference will not lead to truth and life. The whole of the biblical story is the meta-narrative. Doctrinal topics alone do not paint the full picture nor do isolated stories that are removed from the whole of the biblical narrative.

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[3]Regarding the inspiration of the Bible, also study 2 Peter 1:20-21

b. The statements of the Lord Jesus Christ:

    1) "He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" Matthew 4:4 (see PPT slide).

    2) "Now He said to them, These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the Scripture" Luke 24:35-49, note 44-45 (see PPT slide).

Note to facilitator: Carefully examine Luke 24:35-49, noting the way Jesus based his activity and statements on the written Scriptures of the Old Testament. This truth is also demonstrated in Luke 10:25-37. Jesus quoted from 24 of the books in the Old Testament and assumed that the books were authoritative. Over 90 times the New Testament writers and speakers used the formulaic quotation "it is written" to authenticate their comments by quoting from the Old Testament Scriptures.

Note to facilitator: Worldview and stories are inextricably bound together. Stories make up the content of the worldview. The worldview itself, as a collection of stories, is the meta-narrative.

Note about facilitation: *TELL / SHOW / REFLECT* – In this section we will teach, use stories to illustrate, include dramatic acting, and incorporate large group interactions and reflections. This is particularly important for section 8.c.

<p align="center">How are worldviews formed?</p>

8. The role of story in worldview formation[4] (see PPT slides)

a. David Hesselgrave notes, "Basically by the telling of a story (and stories within a story) and drawing inferences from it. That's why all people have their story (myth, legend, history – in one sense it makes little difference) and draw upon it to sustain their values, institutions and behavior patterns. So the Japanese build upon the Shinto myth of Izanagi and Izanami and the Sun Goddess. Hindus build upon one or another version of the Golden Egg myth. In one way or another, the Chinese build upon the story of Pan Ku. Post-Christian Westerners build upon the story of naturalistic evolution. Christians build upon the biblical story." (Hesselgrave, 1994, 50).

b. Why *story*?

Why is storytelling so fundamental to the formation and development of worldviews? First consider the Godhead as the model for life itself. The essence of God exists in the relationships between God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Also note the

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[4]We will discuss more fully the nature of story in the course on narrative.

nature of reality as God has made it. It is centered in the relational. Every person on earth, Christian or not, has been created by God primarily for loving relationships with Himself and with one another. Note Matt 22:37-40 and Mark 12:28-31 (see PPT slides). Human life is perceived through human stories. *Story* has the power it does because it reflects the relational nature of reality as intended by the eternal, personal God. Note that Jesus' description of eternal life is centered in the relational…"that they may know you" (John 17:3).

c. The nature and power of story (see PPT slide)

1) Though God employed various genres of literature in the Bible, it is no accident that the genre of narrative makes up approximately 70% of the Scripture text.

2) The use of story illuminates rather than standing in opposition to propositional truth.

3) Stories integrate the multidimensional nature of relationships. They weave characters, events, details, plots, and themes into an emotional comprehensive whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. As such they are the fabric of meta-narrative or worldview.

4) They capture imaginations, influence ideas, shape perceptions, communicate values, and invoke emotion. All of these elements are crucial to worldview formation. Stories stir deep reflection that can lead to new points of view. They open the doors to fresh conclusions; they affect understanding, meaning, and even the choices that are made.

5) The nature of narrative involves more than cognitive reasoning and the intellect. They contain more than just information. Story has the ability to make one hopeful, uncomfortable, angry, happy, sad, and empathetic – spanning the entire spectrum of human feeling.

6) Stories work at the relational and informal level, where most worldview formation takes place.

7) They form an emotional connection between its characters and the hearers. Stories woo or attract listeners rather than push or force themselves on them. This is crucial in worldview formation because God is the Creator of both the mind and the emotions. Too often the ever-important emotional or affective domain is overlooked in ministry and in conversations about worldviews.

8) Stories communicate the abstract in real-life, concrete terms, thus facilitating effective communication, understanding, learning and recall. Without these facets, worldview formation would be impossible.

9) Storytelling includes the storyteller. The use of body posture, hands, eyes, voice, emotions, and character all meld into the story itself.

10) They provide the necessary framework by which facts (all the separate, existential aspects of life) can be understood and infused with meaning and value. Mere facts do not having meaning in isolation. They must first fit into an understood framework in order to communicate a message. Therefore, the larger, overall story in which they are embedded is crucial if truth is to be communicated. Intelligibility depends on the larger comprehensive whole.

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9.   What is a meta-narrative?

In the context of worldviews we use the term *meta-narrative* in reference to the comprehensive whole, the overarching narrative. The meta-narrative forms the basis for an understanding of reality. The metanarrative is the framework by which other stories will be understood and interpreted, even as they reinforce the worldview metanarrative itself. We define metanarrative as an all-encompassing story of reality that provides an overall framework in terms of which people give meaning to and interact with all the various experiences of life.

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10.   The relationship between story and worldview

Worldview, then, is the metanarrative, formed by and through the powerful means of storytelling. Associated and supporting stories set forth an authoritative framework through which all of the experiences of life are viewed and interpreted. All people have such a worldview metanarrative. Even post-modern Westerners who ridicule the idea of meta-narratives, and who speak of everyone having local narratives are, in fact, tacitly agreeing to the existence of a metanarrative of local narratives!

Worldviews are not only initially formed and shaped by storytelling, but also are transmitted and reinforced or influenced by the power of story. "Stories are the mode in which worldviews are best transmitted from generation to generation and from one people to another" (Hesselgrave, 1994, p. 51).

Story is more than just oral communication, a means by which information is delivered. We also speak of *story* as a metanarrative, a worldview, that (a) transmits values and (b) provides a context for the subjective experiences of life within the socio-cultural systems and institutions. These reinforce and affirm the worldview metanarrative. Every aspect of life relates to the overall story.

Note to facilitator: Having considered the nature and power of story, we will now explore the nature of worldviews. The issue of ultimate authority is a critical component in worldview development. We have noted that worldviews are largely formed and shaped by story. They are rooted in an ultimate, authoritative source to which each person gives his allegiance (e.g. The Bible, Koran, science, authority figure/s, or ancestor spirits). It's important to note that this ultimate authority is itself an essential part of one's worldview. Likewise, one's ultimate authority will be that which contends with God and His Word. As we introduce a biblical worldview we will face the challenge of "Who said so?"

Note about facilitation: *TELL / SHOW* - As you discuss and interact, use the recent analysis of worldviews to demonstrate the deep emotions associated with worldview assumptions.

<div align="center">What is the nature of worldviews?</div>

11.   The nature of worldviews or meta-narratives

   a.   A meta-narrative is established by a meta-author – an ultimate authority (see PPT slide)

      1)   "By what authority?" Voiced or unvoiced, that basic question faces the churches and their missions today. It is not a new question. The Fathers and Reformers faced it. A century ago our forebears faced it. And now we face it in a world increasingly characterized by a cacophony of truth-competing claims" (Hesselgrave, 1994, p. 17).

      2)   "All religious debate will develop into a question of ultimate authority" (Bahnsen, 1996, p. 69).

      3)   There is only one ultimate authority

         -   The Lord Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and _____. Matthew 6:24[5] (see PPT slide)

         -   One cannot serve two ultimate authoritative claims about reality, two worldviews. One must commit to one or another.

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[5]Though the context of this verse addresses the issue of serving God or money / wealth, the principle remains the same – either God and His Word is ultimate authority or someone else and his/her word is ultimate authority. One cannot have it both ways; as the Lord Jesus Himself has said, "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters" Matt 12:30.

Note to facilitator: Therefore we note here that the issue of ultimate authority also speaks to ultimate commitment. This is more than a matter of the intellect. It involves the emotions, allegiance, and obedience of the worldview adherent.

Note about facilitation: Illustrate the following through story, video, or pictures.

b. A worldview addresses epistemology – the nature of knowledge

Worldviews also address the nature of knowledge—how we know, and how we know that we know. This helps determine the adherent's perception of what is real or fictional, what is possible or impossible. In other words, it touches all aspects of knowing.

c. A worldview determines metaphysics – the nature of reality

Worldviews establish, at a fundamental level, an understanding of the nature of being and reality, including the origin and structure of the universe. They provide explanations of who God (gods) is, who Man is, what non-Man is, and how these entities relate to one another. The concept of self and of others (community) is also part of one's understanding of reality. Because of this fundamental orientation to an accepted reality, these relational elements are held with deep emotion.

d. A worldview speaks to purpose and destiny

Given that worldviews address all of reality, it is out of worldview that one's assumed purpose and destiny emerge. Therefore, beliefs about death and the after-life are inextricably tied to worldview.

e. A worldview or meta-narrative is an entire system

1) Like a spider web, the important areas noted above are woven together to form an entire system. Worldviews should always be viewed as such—interconnected and held together as a unit. You cannot touch one strand without affecting the whole![6]

2) The fact that worldviews are entire systems of belief will guide our approach to evangelism and discipleship. A fragmented approach to ministry, using only isolated doctrinal topics or stories separated from the whole narrative of Scripture, will not significantly affect genuine worldview change. In fact, it will promote negative outcomes like syncretism.

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[6]In a worldview system there are those beliefs or assumptions that are more central than others, just as some strands of a spider web are closer to the center than others. In the Bisorio worldview, though the Sun was the Creator, it was not as important in the everyday life of the Bisorios as were the various spirit beings that the Sun created. This was due to the understood role the spirits played in the daily life of the Bisorios, and their perception that the Sun was less interested in his creation.
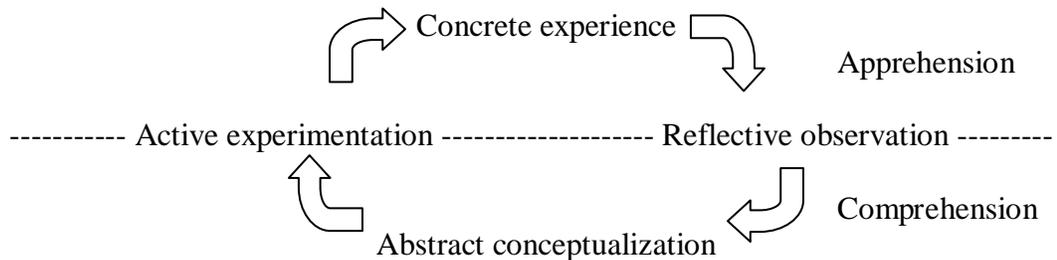
12. A deeper analysis of the worldview model

   a. The characteristics of worldview presuppositions

      1) They are tacitly assumed rather than the result of rational inquiry

         "Worldview assumptions are taken for granted and hardly ever examined; they are fundamental givens with which people think, not what they think about" (Hiebert, Shaw, & Tienou, 1999, p. 40). (see PPT slide)

         Note to facilitator: If you are familiar with Kolb, use the following model to show the difference between apprehension and comprehension.

         Use David Kolb's circle of experiential learning to demonstrate the difference between apprehension and comprehension. Compare to Luke 24:25-49.

         Concrete experience   Apprehension

         ----------- Active experimentation -------------------- Reflective observation ---------

                 Abstract conceptualization   Comprehension

      2) They are learned informally

         Worldviews are mostly developed and learned informally through observation of modeled behavior and through what is heard. (More on this in Section 14 – How does worldview change occur?) Because of this informal enculturation, people are not typically conscious of their own worldview assumptions anymore than a man wearing eyeglasses thinks about the fact he's wearing them! See Hall, 1959, p. 96 and Hesselgrave, 1991, p. 396.

      3) They are rarely examined

         The fact that worldviews are rarely examined by their adherents is part of sinful man's self-deception.[7] It is important to note that, as outsiders, we may have

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[7]Regarding a false worldview of idolatry, Isaiah wrote, "They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend. No one recalls, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, 'I have burned half of it in the fire and also have baked bread over its coals. I roast meat and eat it. Then I make the rest of it into an abomination, I fall down before a block of wood!' He feeds on ashes;

analyzed their worldview more than they have. Therefore as wise stewards of the Gospel we should use this analysis for lovingly ministering God's Word.

b. The characteristics of values (see PPT slide)

1) What is believed or assumed regarding how things ought to be (values/ideals) is grounded in what is perceived to be, that is, the nature of reality. In other words, values and ideals are born out of one's worldview and are understood in relation to the assumed and accepted relationships of reality.[8] Note also that people can and do act in conflict with their values and moral beliefs. This, too, is part of the sinfulness of man and his great neediness before God.

2) The degree of the perceived consequences or benefits to self and the community shape the depth and importance of a value.

3) People's emotions are intimately connected to their values. Their feelings even affect their daily choices. This is due to the deep bond emotions have with worldview assumptions about the nature of reality, and to the various socio-cultural institutions that form the platform to subjectively experience values.

c. The function of socio-cultural systems and institutions (see PPT slide)

1) In light of the above, we see that worldviews are the authoritative foundation from which values emerge, and also the foundation upon which the socio-cultural systems and institutions are built.

2) Socio-cultural institutions such as marriage, family, religion, law, media, education, politics, economics, art, music, and sports provide a real-world context of relationships through which one can subjectively experience the embraced values and worldview assumptions (even though perhaps not acknowledging or even consciously aware of all the assumptions).

3) Here, in this context of the socio-cultural realities, purpose of life is experienced and meaning is felt. By these, values, emotions and integration into society are deepened.

d. The role of observable behavior (see PPT slide)

1) Life behavior that is manifested within the socio-cultural systems and institutions serves to affirm and strengthen all that lies underneath as relationships and events are subjectively experienced.

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a deceived heart has turned him aside. And he cannot deliver himself, nor say, 'Is there not a lie in my right hand?'" Isaiah 44:18-20

[8]Values and worldview core assumptions about the nature of reality are inextricably bound together.

2) This deepened sense of identity and belonging, along with their associated emotions, also strengthens relationships, allegiances, loyalties, commitments, and worldview assumptions.

3) The building of history and collection of memories also deeply influence life's experiences.

4) All of the above works together to affirm the correctness of worldview assumptions, and thus the adherents' understanding of reality, including an affirmation of a people's cosmic story, group story, and personal stories.

5) Stories, the worldview metanarrative and associated stories, invest symbols and praxis with meaning (Wright, 1992, p. 124).

6) As the basis for contextualization, the cross-cultural worker must differentiate form (outward expression) and meaning (inward value).

Note about facilitation: *SHOW* – Demonstrate on the worldview model of concentric circles where form and meaning are located. (see PPT slide)

Note to facilitator: Having considered worldviews to this point, we will reflect on what we have learned and how it applies to our ministries.

Note about facilitation: DO – Break into small groups to consider the following two questions. Ask the small groups to be ready to share their reflections in the large group discussion that will follow. What specifically are you learning about worldviews? Describe the way this will change the way you do ministry?

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR
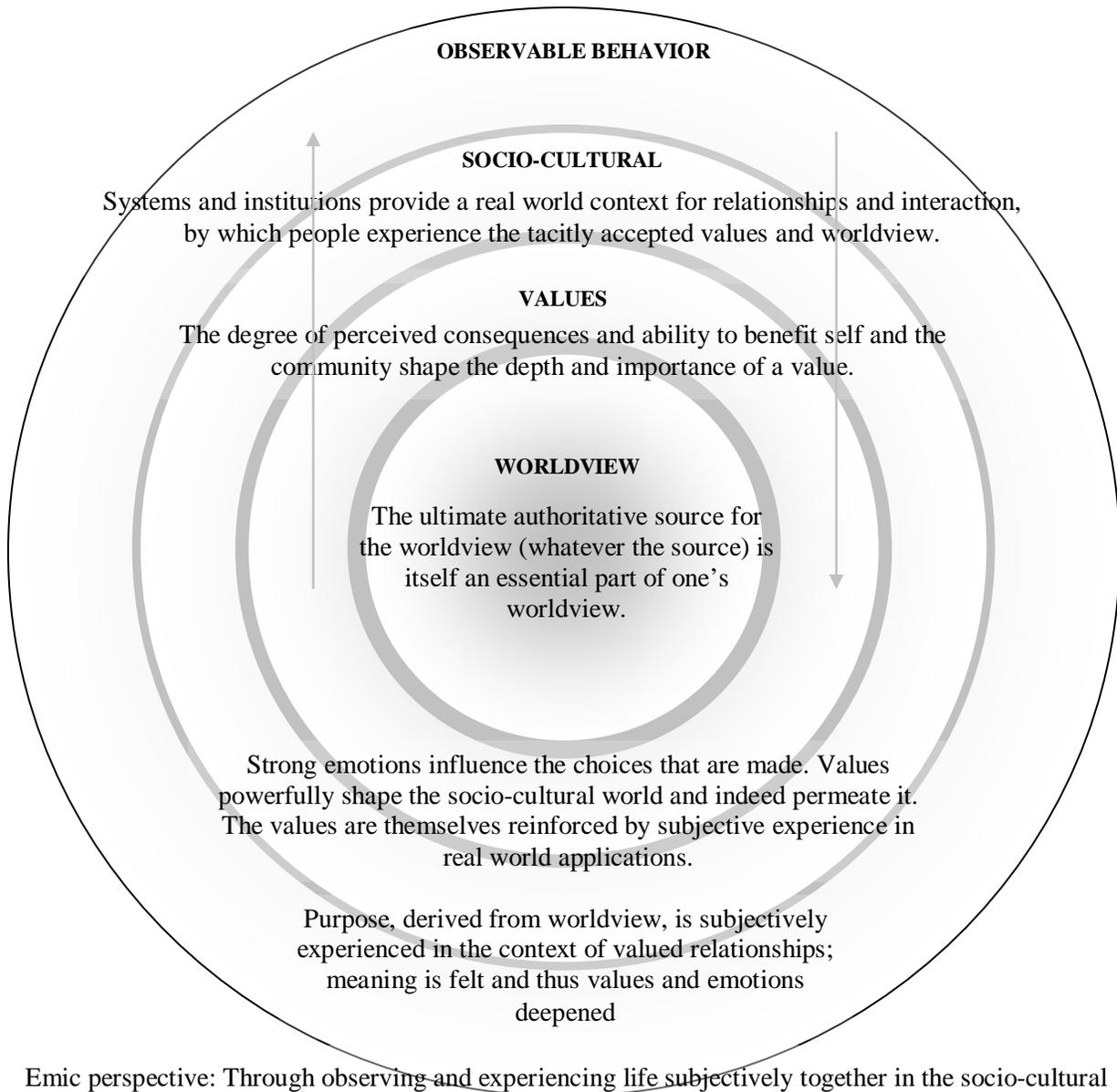
SOCIO-CULTURAL

VALUES

WORLDVIEW

Note about facilitation: *REFLECT* – After they have discussed these two questions in small groups, lead the entire group in a discussion about their reflections. Allow them sufficient time to thoroughly cover their findings. Record their thoughts and comments on the board. Note how the participants in the course may be defining worldview.
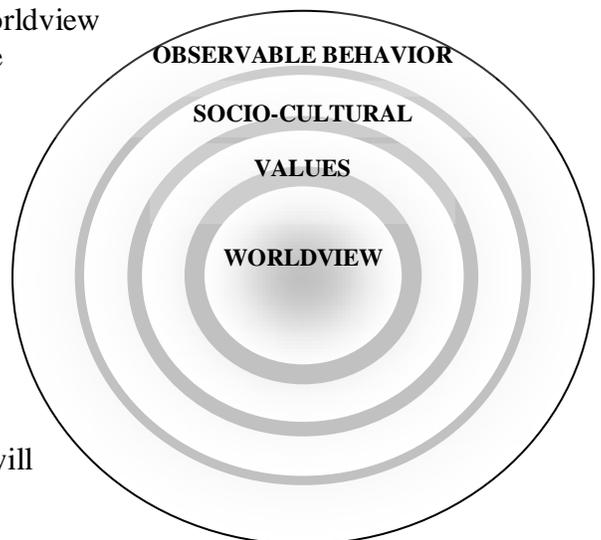
Note to Facilitator: TELL – Following the small group and large group interaction, present to the participants the expanded definition of worldview below.

13. An expanded definition of worldview – "The tacitly and emotionally held meta-narrative about the nature of reality that forms a grid through which one interprets and by which one relates to all aspects of life" (see PPT slide)

Note to Facilitator: Carefully explain the more fully-developed worldview graphic that follows. Begin from the worldview core and move outward to observable behavior.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

SOCIO-CULTURAL

Systems and institutions provide a real world context for relationships and interaction, by which people experience the tacitly accepted values and worldview.

VALUES

The degree of perceived consequences and ability to benefit self and the community shape the depth and importance of a value.

WORLDVIEW

The ultimate authoritative source for the worldview (whatever the source) is itself an essential part of one's worldview.

Strong emotions influence the choices that are made. Values powerfully shape the socio-cultural world and indeed permeate it. The values are themselves reinforced by subjective experience in real world applications.

Purpose, derived from worldview, is subjectively experienced in the context of valued relationships; meaning is felt and thus values and emotions deepened

Emic perspective: Through observing and experiencing life subjectively together in the socio-cultural context (includes the important aspect of enculturation processes) there is an affirmation and strengthening of all that lies underneath. The senses of identity and belonging are deepened, along with their associated emotions; there is a building and strengthening of history and memories (individually and corporately); all work together to strengthen and deepen relationships, identity, allegiances, loyalties, commitments, beliefs, emotions, values, and the worldview assumptions!

Etic perspective: An outsider may observe outward behavior but is limited in knowing what is really thought or felt underneath; one does not really understand emotions, values, and meaning. An incarnational approach (including allocation, culture and language acquisition, lifestyle, relationship building, and time) is imperative if one is to move beyond a mere phenomenological analysis and address God's truth at a worldview level, thus making way for change at all levels.

Note to facilitator: Up to this point we have discussed and reflected upon the following: (a) what worldviews are, (b) how they form, and (c) how they profoundly influence all aspects of life. Now we turn our attention to how worldview change occurs. At the beginning of this section we will emphasize the reality of the resistance to worldview change that takes place in the minds and hearts of people when they are challenged regarding their very identity.

Note about facilitation: *TELL*

<div align="center">How do worldviews change?</div>

14. How does worldview change occur?

    a. Resistance to worldview change

        1) Paul Hiebert notes, "Challenges to these assumptions threaten the very foundations of their world. People resist such challenges with deep emotion, for such questions threaten to destroy their understanding of reality. People are even willing to die for beliefs that make their lives and deaths meaningful" (1994, p. 38). (see PPT slide)

        2) He adds, "Shifts in worldview do not come easily for groups or individuals" (Hiebert, Shaw & Tiénou, 1999, p. 53).[9]

        3) In the eyes of God, worldview systems are not benign. Their core assumptions about reality are not neutral. Worldview systems are rival stories to the Bible itself.

        4) The battle we are fighting involves the need to destroy fortresses. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. (see PPT slide)

        5) Realize that socio-cultural systems and institutions are not formed in a vacuum. They emerge from the underlying worldview assumptions, often by means of a rival story—a metanarrative that stands in opposition to God's Story, His metanarrative.

        6) Let us note here that socio-cultural systems and institutions are not unnecessary or evil in and of themselves. However, to the degree that they are rooted in error,

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[9]See also Geertz (1973, p.90) regarding worldviews being emotionally embraced – long-lasting moods and motivations.

they only serve to reinforce and ultimately affirm that which is "raised up against the knowledge of God". That, God cannot and does not accept.

Note about facilitation: *SHOW* – Return to the worldview model with the concentric circles to illustrate that the deeper one penetrates into the worldview system, the greater the resistance to change. (see PPT slide)
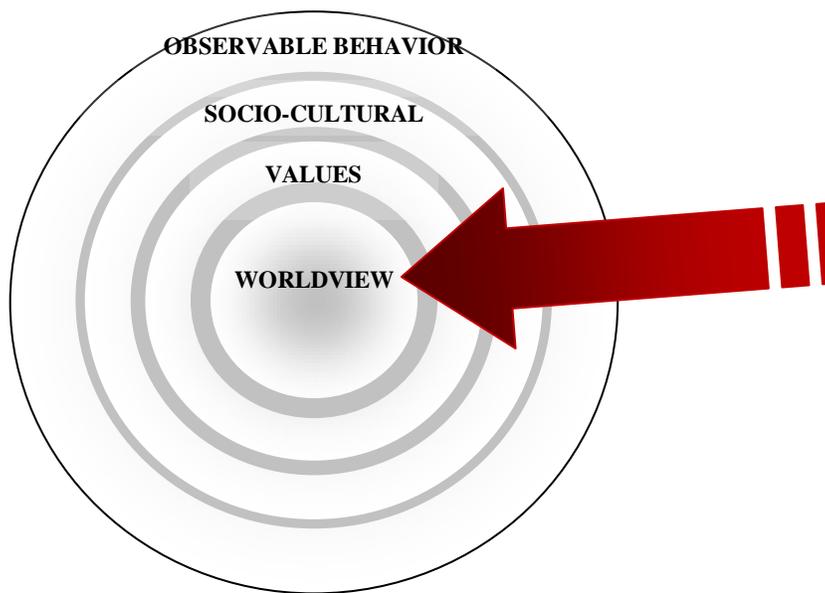
b.   The place to begin

1) Trying to bring about genuine change starting at the level of the socio-cultural systems and institutions would be like the Lord Jesus telling Nicodemus that he needed a new set of religious rituals, ceremonies, festivals and symbols. Similarly, it would be like telling the Samaritan woman, that indeed, the real issue of concern was the correct mountain upon which God should be worshipped. In the cases of Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, as was typical of the Lord Jesus, He steered the conversational encounters below the observable in order to address things at a worldview level. That is, He addressed the true concept of God and man, as well as the genuine nature of the relationship between them.

2) Gailyn Van Rheenen calls to our attention, "Significant cultural change takes place not when the paradigms of culture adequately express a worldview, but when old paradigms are being called into question.[10] Animistic societies become receptive to change when basic assumptions appear inadequate to explain reality. Until basic assumptions are questioned, there is resistance to change" (1991, p. 80). (see PPT slide)

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[10]We will address this important truth more fully in the *Pre-Evangelism c*ourse, where we explain how to bring a worldview to a healthy tension.

c. The context of worldview change

    1) During informal settings – We must always remember how worldviews primarily develop in the first place, that is, by means of stories typically communicated in informal settings.[11] This is the level at which worldviews are formed and the level at which worldview change occurs. Informal learning takes place in the context of what is heard and modeled, and through interaction with and imitation of the same.[12]

    2) Learning at the informal level happens for the most part unconsciously / unaware (Hall, 1959, p. 96 and Hesselgrave, 1994, p. 396).

        a) A child learning his mother tongue

        b) Bisorio examples

           i. Learning to make dugout canoes with father
          ii. Learning proper legal proceedings by witnessing village court sessions
         iii. Learning how and why to offer sacrifices to the *xowa anege* in the hunting processes
         iv. Learning what happens to the dead via pre-death and post-death events, burial rites and thereafter

    3) Again, Van Rheenen keenly observes, "Worldviews are like the air we breathe – very important but taken for granted" (1991, p. 33)

    4) Most informal learning takes place in the context of trusted and valued relationships—parents, siblings, extended family members, friends, peers, and leaders.[13] Since most informal learning takes place in these important relational contexts, the lessons learned are embraced with deep emotion. They have a strong hold on people and therefore are not easily changed. Nevertheless, worldview change will likely occur in the context of these and other trusted relationships.

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[11]Stating that most learning and worldview formation takes place primarily at the informal level does not exclude the impact of formal learning in educational institutions. These institutions have a profound affect on worldview development and change for they tend to reinforce and affirm the very worldviews from which they were born. The formal setting is a very powerful platform of influence.

[12]Understanding the enculturation processes of a people is critical to understanding the informal means by which worldview formation, transmission and change occurs. For more on enculturation processes, see the WRG course *Culture and Language Acquisition.*

[13]Other influences such art, music, media, and sports build on the foundation layed by the people in trusted and valued relationships.

5) Times of crisis - Worldview assumptions are rarely questioned when all is well. But, when those assumptions do not meet deep emotional needs or when they cannot explain reality, the worldview of the society is most vulnerable. This might occur during times of severe illness, death, famine, political upheaval, and war.

15. A change in the meta-narrative

a. Worldview change, of course, will not take place without a genuine replacement of the metanarrative that sets in place the fundamental understanding of reality for the host society.

b. As Hesselgrave has both queried and answered:

1) "How does worldview change or exchange implicit in Christian conversion take place" (1994, p. 50)? (see PPT slide)

2) "Not first by stressing appropriate behavioral patterns or building Christian institutions. Not necessarily by enumerating Christian values or outlining the basics of a Christian worldview. Nor even by taking bits and pieces, the "little stories" of the Bible, and dealing only with them. Worldview change is best accomplished by studying and telling or retelling the biblical big story that enshrines the Christian worldview" (1994, p. 50). (see PPT slide)

c. In that worldviews are entire systems (the lens through which everything is interpreted) a fragmented approach to ministry that addresses only isolated aspects in the system (e.g., topical teaching of abstract doctrines or isolated stories) will not be effective in changing the worldview. Only an approach to ministry that changes the ultimate frame of reference will best facilitate effective ministry at a worldview level.[14]

Note to facilitator: Having considered some aspects of worldview change, now we will explore the implications of ministering with genuine worldview change as our goal. Before facilitating this material, review the *Five-Stage Strategy* graphic (see PPT slide) and emphasize the fact that ministering for worldview change assumes a comprehensive approach to ministry, starting with the end in mind. In this section we will explore what is required to minister at a worldview level.

Implications of ministering at a worldview level

As stewards of God's Word, first we must comprehend their worldview, then proclaim His truth. Too often a zealous messenger seeks to get to the heart of the message before he understands the

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[14]In the *Worldview Matrix* course we will explore specifically how to carefully and intentionally teach God's Word for genuine worldview change.

heart of the hearer. "He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him" Pro 18:13. Evangelizing at a worldview level assumes a significant amount of time and patience has been dedicated to ministry efforts. The original false worldview did not develop overnight, so we cannot presume worldview change to occur overnight, either. Evangelizing at a worldview level assumes an effective pre-evangelistic ministry has been established (see *Pre-Evangelism* course).

16. Requirements for evangelism

    a. An incarnational approach – In most ministry contexts, we will live and learn culture and language in the context of informal settings.

        1) It is difficult to get to know people and gain their trust from a distance. Ministering to bring change at the worldview level assumes living among those you seek to reach. This means more than mere existence. It means relating in their cultural context as a member of their community.

        2) Remember, modeling is part of the story![15] It is important we have a real-world, grass-roots platform for modeling the life of Christ in all relationships. In this way we show them Christ long before we ever tell them about Him.

    b. Culture and language acquisition – The cross-cultural worker must learn the culture and language of the host society. Culture and language are inseparable. Put yourselves in their informal settings—the garden, river, in their homes—where worldview assumptions and values are passed on. Study how to answer.[16]

    c. Developing loving relationships - Worldviews are formed and changed in the context of valued and trusted relationships, and can be significantly influenced in the midst of trials and difficulties.

        1) It is imperative, by God's grace, that we become trusted friends of the host society, gaining the respect and confidence of individuals, families, and leaders.[17] We do not do this with insincere motives, simply to gain a foothold or to become influential, but to follow kingdom principles.

        2) We are to be ready to lovingly minister in the context of valued and trusted relationships whenever trials strike and tragedies shake their worldviews.

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[15]A Bisorio pastor in PNG shared with the missionaries that he reflected back over their history together, "We watched your lives when you first moved in to live among us, and we kept watching and observing. Later, when we could read God's Word for ourselves, we compared what God's Word said about how godly lives should be lived and how you lived your lives – and it matched!"

[16]In tribal settings cross-cultural missionaries may spend up to three years learning the unknown and unwritten culture and language of the people.

[17]The missionary's story includes not only what his mouth declares about God, but also what his life model informally declares about Him in the context of relationships.

d. Learning the local meta-narrative – We must come to a genuine understanding of the worldview by knowing the meta-narrative of the host society. We can only grasp this authoritative framework of reality, within which they live, as we gather and analyze what we have learned in our culture and language study. Remember, the worldview, the meta-narrative will be discovered through multiple stories.[18]

e. Contextualized delivery of the story – We must learn the enculturation processes of the host society so we can employ those very means, by God's grace, to help affect worldview change.[19] We must acquire understanding (the *what*) and skill (the *how*) of the specific, culturally appropriate informal means of teaching and learning. This, of course, includes how they tell stories! If we fail here, there will be a foreignness in our representation of God and presentation of His message. Consider the important principles of communication set forth in 1 Cor 14:7-11. In the end, a failure to be understood makes you a "foreigner", and ultimately the God who sent you will be a foreigner as well.

f. Laying foundations from the Old Testament – Ministry at a worldview level assumes firm foundations have been laid from the Old Testament for a clear presentation of the Gospel and an ongoing development of a biblical worldview. This is accomplished by building a biblical worldview through teaching God's truth from the historical narrative of the Scriptures, beginning in Genesis.

g. The new meta-narrative displaces the old – Genuine cross-cultural evangelism on a worldview level means more than simply addressing various main points of difference between rival meta-narratives. Rather, it means confronting an entire system (worldview) that is "raised up against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor 10:5). Because propositional truth is embedded in the historical narrative, the biblical worldview of God's Word and the non-biblical worldview of the host society will be brought into healthy tension through the delivery of the historical narrative and by highlighting the key issues relative to salvation. The historical narrative of the Bible will deconstruct and displace the old rival story.

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[18]For example, the Bisorio tribe in Papua New Guinea had a general story describing the role of the sun in the creation of the world, but also separate stories relative to the origin of death, clans (based on totems), and diverse human languages. Together the stories formed a comprehensive Bisorio meta-narrative or worldview.

[19]To effectively communicate God's truth for worldview change, we need to learn and employ culturally appropriate formats and contexts (e.g., visiting in village huts with families around the fireplace; in village places of casual gatherings, their public meeting format; these activities include developing genuine friendships with leaders, as well as with individuals and families), and cultural means / content (e.g., speaking in the vernacular, including culturally appropriate vocabulary and idioms; appropriate body and hand gesticulations, voice inflections, cultural illustrations).

h. A new ultimate authority - Building a new worldview in evangelism involves establishing a new ultimate authority[20] – the Word of God. Among believers, it will displace the existing ultimate authority of the host society's non-biblical worldview. It develops new or modified concepts regarding: God, man, sin, judgment, redemption, and forgiveness. This is accomplished through the careful, intentional and strategic use of the narrative of Holy Scripture. In the process, it is important to lead the hearers to realize they are part of the story, and to keep all divine truth life-related.

i. A model that sets the pattern – What we model is very important because it sets the pattern future disciples will tend to follow. For example, in PNG the missionary's approach of taking time to build solid biblical foundations before sharing the Gospel has been regularly followed by the Bisorio. This healthy foundation has led to the effectual equipping of believers.

j. A foundation for development and multiplication - Ministering at a worldview level will be a more effective way as it sets in place solid foundations for the growth, development and multiplication of the newly planted church.[21]

Note about facilitation: *DO* – Break into small groups and discuss this question. "In what ways will your evangelism efforts be affected if you do not minister at a worldview level?"

Note about facilitation: *REFLECT* – Come together as a large group to talk about the small group discussions and to ask these two questions:

- What are some things that are hindering you from ministering at a worldview level?
- How can these hindrances be overcome? What help would you need to overcome them?

Note to facilitator: Now we will turn our thoughts to the ramifications of worldview change. If one carries on evangelism in such a way that genuine worldview change occurs, what are some of the issues the new church will confront? We need to remember the fact that new believers are still living in the very same context in which they have lived all their lives. Biblical worldview development is just beginning to take place in their minds and hearts. We need to look to God for His grace to handle these deep and often very emotionally charged issues with patience and empathy.

Note about facilitation: *TELL / SHOW* – As we consider this important subject, realize that due to the numerous and diverse aspects that could be addressed, we will only be able to cover a few basic areas.

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[20]This is absolutely essential! It not only affects our evangelistic efforts, it also affects the future health and well-being of the newly planted church, and its ongoing outreach.

[21]Regarding the need to take great care in our approaches and methods, Ravi Zacharias has said, "What you win them with is what you win them to." (public lecture) This is incredibly important to remember!

17. Ramifications of worldview change in development and multiplication

    a. Potential areas of tension and conflict

        1) Social and cultural institutions

            a) Marriage – Who can marry whom? (e.g., pre-arranged marriages; pressure from non-believers for believers to marry non-believers)[22]How marriages take place? (e.g., various rituals that honor unbiblical beliefs)

            b) Identity – Because of group-orientation common to most cultures, identity is typically found in and affirmed by the family and community, including their beliefs, customs and practices. Pressure on new believers from non-believing family and community members to forsake Christ or face being ostracized is overwhelming.[23] It is no wonder that many pay the ultimate price of persecution and death at the hands of family and society. These are ramifications involving deep trial and powerful emotional struggles for both the new believer and the young local church.

            c) Religion – Religious events are often communal in nature, therefore, pressure on all members to participate is "natural". Given the context of the host society's worldview system, any non-participant, especially a dissenter, will face some persecution. Pressure to conform so that the family might *save face* can be a tremendous weight. Add to that the pressure to be a part of the existing religious community, where the new believer once found identity as a non-Christian, and the inner turmoil only increases.[24]

        2) Daily life sustenance

            a) Gathering food - How will you address the new disciples in the midst of crop failure, even when believers have worked diligently and humbly looked to God in faith and prayer for daily sustenance? What if they are tempted to take part in former beliefs and practices, like incantations and offerings, to obtain food? How will you disciple new believers when there is failure in hunting expeditions, when believers have turned their backs on the old and have

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[22]Salugu, a Bisorio Christian man, wanted to marry a Bisorio Christian woman, Maiyai. Her maternal uncle, Elo, asked Salugu to attend a sacrifice ritual to dead ancestors. (Elo was not a Christian, but as her maternal uncle, he had more authority regarding marriage arrangements than even Maiyai's parents.)

[23]A leader of one Bisorio clan applied such strong social pressure that entire families were kept from hearing the Gospel for years. Only after his death did they have a clear opportunity to hear and accept the Gospel!

[24] Numerous Bisorio believers wrestled with the social pressure to participate in the singsing, an ungodly traditional dance festival.

humbly submitted to God in trust and prayer? What will you say when the hunger pangs are real and intense? (e.g., trusting God, their new Heavenly Father versus old, former spirits)[25]

b) Getting sick - How will you counsel new believers when their precious loved ones are deathly ill? They have sought their new found Lord and Savior in prayer and faith, yet prayer and medical care efforts seem to fail. The emotional pressure to seek counsel and help from old practices and practioners causes incredible internal conflict in the new Christian. What will you say when they are tempted to employ a syncretistic approach—entreating the True God and local spirits to find the means to recovery?

b. Practical areas of impact and influence

1) By the local church

a) Because it is a separate entity within the existing community, it is important to equip the local church to be a pillar and support of the truth, having the desired effectiveness of salt while being distinct in its identity as His body.[26] A genuine sense of belonging to the Lord and to one another is vital if the church is to wield this kind of influence in a difficult and often hostile context.

b) The Church needs to understand how to be, and ever remain, a godly socio-cultural instrument for worldview change in the hand of God.[27] If the church withdraws and isolates itself from the community, its ability to adorn the doctrine of God's grace will also be withdrawn. This will hinder others from being drawn to the precious hope of the Good News of Christ.

c) Because the worldview approach is holistic in nature (the *what*) and because it is informally employed through biblical narrative, modeling and indigenous enculturation processes (the *how*), it is a method of evangelism and discipleship that facilitates reproduction.

2) By each individual believer - Especially in group-oriented societies, it is important to emphasize the value the Lord places on each one of His children.[28] It

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[25] A new believer among the Bisorio freely shared, in the midst of hunger and failed hunting trips, about the temptation he felt to call out to former spirits (e.g., *xowa anege*).

[26] See 1 Tim 3:15, Mt 5:13; and Col 4:6

[27] The Bisorio church has demonstrated a positive, godly influence on aspects of social structure, such as bride prices, the courting system, and even the housing situation (i.e., from communal residency to neo-local residency). In so doing, the local church has become a very influential socio-cultural institution for godliness and equity in Bisorio society.

[28] How many sheep did the Good Shepherd seek in the wilderness, after putting 99 safely in the pasture? How many silver coins did the woman lose before she frantically swept her house? How many repentant sinners cause rejoicing among the angels in heaven? The Lord says

is important to equip individual believers to continue in his or her biblical worldview development: (a) to walk with the Lord. This involves character development, addressing sin, and trials; (b) to share their faith effectively in their cultural context, by word, deed and attitude; and (c) to influence others for Christ, whether family, clan, or community, with the goal of changing their worldview.

c. New relationships – The newly developing worldview framework is a foundation for new and healthy relationships based on the Scripture.

    1) To authority – God's Word is now the ultimate authority rather than tribal folklore, the ancestors, or tribal elders. This is a monumental change in cultural orientation. Hiebert calls for an evaluation of former beliefs and practices through the process of critical contextualization (1994, pp. 88-90).

    2) A new identity (self and corporate) – Because of a new relationship with God through Christ, people have a new sense of identity. They belong to God. Belonging is important in all societies, but particularly in group oriented cultures.

    3) A sense of security – Intimately tied to the truth of the believer being "in Christ" is the truth of the believer's security "in Him". A worldview approach provides a solid foundation for understanding this important truth.

    4) To self – In this new relationship with God, the Holy Spirit will use the Word of God to address the development of inward character. This is foreign for the animist, who has never interacted with the spirit world for personal character development.

    5) To sin – Because of the former beliefs and the defining of *sin*, a worldview approach sets in place a healthy framework by which to understand sin from God's point of view. When ministry is carried out at a worldview level addressing sin issues is done more holistically rather than in a fragmented manner.

Note about facilitation: *DO* - Having considered the positive outcomes of a worldview approach to evangelism, discipleship and church planting, discuss the following: (a) current problems you are facing in your ministry and (b) what specific changes would you make in your current ministry?

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regarding believers, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad". Regarding non-believers His Word says, "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds" (2 Cor 5:10; Rev 20: 12-13).

Note about facilitation: *REFLECT* - Come together again as a large group and discuss the findings of the small group discussions

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Note to facilitator: Based on the problems identified by the participants, transition to the next crucial subject matter—syncretism. Not ministering at a worldview level unwittingly fosters untold syncretistic problems, seriously hindering the growth and multiplication of the Lord's Kingdom. Syncretism is one of the greatest hindrances to evangelism, church growth and multiplication.[29] It affects the overall advance of God's Kingdom around the world.

<div align="center">Syncretism and cultural forms</div>

18. Syncretism: What it is and what it does

    a. Definition – "Syncretism is the blending of Christian beliefs and practices with those of the dominant culture so that Christianity loses it distinctiveness" (Van Rheenen, 1997, p. 173). The tragic result is a new erroneous worldview system that distorts God's truth and the Gospel of Christ.

    b. Failure to minister at a worldview level is the primary cause of syncretism. Because the former worldview is not displaced, all or much of the old "lens" through which reality was understood and interpreted remains intact.

    c. High religion versus low religion[30] (see PPT slide) – Another main factor leading to syncretistic outcomes is the dynamic of high and low religions.

        1) High religions (e.g., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam):

            a) Offer answers to cosmic questions, such as origins, purpose, destiny, ultimate reality, and truth.

            b) Have written texts and are often institutionalized.

        2) Low religions (e.g., tribal animism, folk-Islam; folk-Catholicism):

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[29]Syncretism has also been described in *Understanding Folk Religion* as "split-level Christianity." We note here that one of the authors' main purposes for writing this book was "to both acknowledge and deal with a problem that has plagued Christian mission, almost from its inception – the problem of split-level Christianity." The authors describe this as "a phenomenon that impacts every corner of the world today," and contend it "has sapped the vitality of churches and limited Christianity to a segment of people's lives" (Hiebert, Shaw & Tiénou, 1999, pp. 391-392, 15).

[30]Adapted from Robert Strauss, "The Form-Meaning Correlation", 2006, pp 6-7.

a) Are concerned with the affairs of daily life, such as the surety of a good crop, reasons for drought, how to explain the death of a child, and methods of attaining good fortune or avoiding calamity. They seek to answer existential questions.

b) Are passed on mainly by oral tradition, duplicated rituals, re-enacted dramas, etc.

c) Seek success in daily living by means of controlling the process, or those who control the process. Gaining control typically involves rituals that relate to gods, spirits, ancestors and impersonal forces.

d) Control is more important than truth.

d. Syncretistic outcomes:

1) When high religion forms and functions are introduced into low religion contexts without clearly addressing their roots and meaning, syncretism is almost guaranteed.

2) In such cases Christian workers "communicate on the level of high religion rather than on the popular level of low religion. While the people are asking low religious questions, the missionary is preaching on the level of high religion" (Van Rheenen, 1991, p. 61). [see PPT slide]

3) Therefore, it is imperative that the cross-cultural worker teach at a worldview level that addresses low religion areas of meaning while providing answers to high religion questions.

e. Real-world consequences of syncretism – the following are examples from around the world:

1) No true conversions – Some people groups fail to truly respond, most likely due to a failure to understand God's Word and the Gospel. People attend church services regularly until they felt God was paid back for sending Christ.

2) True conversion with syncretistic residue:

a) After a rousing praise and worship service, a new believer seeks out the shaman on her way home in order to divine the whereabouts of her husband (who has been missing for three days).

b) In some parts of the world it is common for Christians to sleep with the Bible open next to their heads so God's word will be absorbed while asleep.

c) Saying a prayer before committing adultery wards off harmful consequences of the act.

d) Believers keep Psalm 91 open on a table to protect the household from evil.

e) A pastor believes a fox seen outside the house is his reincarnated grandfather.

f) After drinking a cup of coffee, some Christians will read coffee grounds in the bottom of the cup to predict the future.

g) Horseshoes or garlic is commonly hung outside the home in order to ward off the power of the evil eye.

f. A syncretistic church:

1) Is imprisoned by former worldview beliefs.

2) Is a weak, unhealthy, and anemic church. Its loyalties are divided and it is plagued by animistic fears and concerns.

3) Is unable to help others or spread the Good News of Christ. It has never truly understood the ramifications of the gospel itself. Sadly, if anything spreads, it is syncretism.

g. Ministering at a worldview level will help avoid or minimize syncretism and its outcomes because:

1) It replaces the old, unbiblical lens with a new, biblical lens through which reality is understood and interpreted. It addresses both high and low religion concerns, and answers new questions as well as existing ones.

2) It provides an entire new framework and a healthy context through which to better interpret, evaluate and relate to every aspect of life according to God's Word.

Note to facilitator: Having described syncretism as a mixture of the old and the new, in this section we will go deeper looking at cultural forms, the outward and observable behavior of a people group, and their associated functions and meanings.[31] What old forms and meanings can be retained? What old forms can be infused with new meanings? What new forms and meanings should be introduced? These are important concerns in our ministry efforts if we are to be good

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[31]We note here that these designations are at times difficult to separate, since they are so closely tied together. For our purposes in this section of the *Worldview* course, we will primarily consider the correlation between form and meaning.

stewards of God's truth. In our consideration, let's explore what must be assumed in order to analyze and understand cultural forms and their meanings.

19.   Cultural form, function, and meaning

    a.   Terms and definitions (see Kraft, 1979, pp. 64-80)

        1)   The term *form* refers to a material object, word, action, dance, color, drama, architecture, festival, or ritual that expresses or represents something.

           a)   All cultures use multiple and varied forms; some are more dominant than others (e.g., non-discursive symbols)[32]

           b)   Cultural forms are always relative to the society.

        2)   The term *function* refers to the intended purpose of the form.

        3)   *Meaning* refers to what the forms convey or indicate or signify (e.g., denotative or connotative meaning).
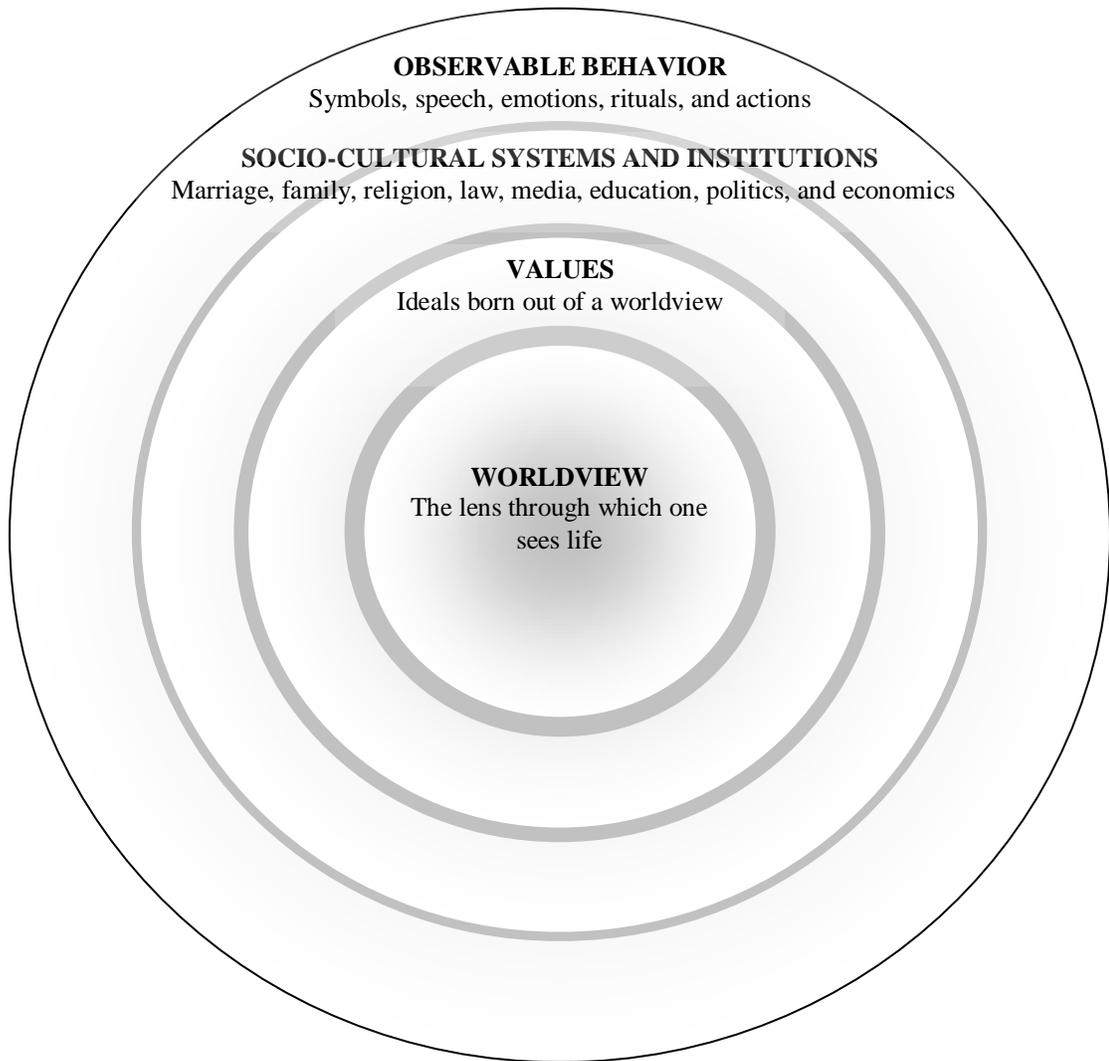
    b.   The form/meaning correlation (see Kraft, 1997, pp. 140 -144)[33]

        1)   Communication is possible because people have shared meaning in cultural forms.

        2)   The same form in another culture will have at least some different meanings.

        3)   The same meaning in another culture is often represented by different forms.

        4)   In cross-cultural communication, if one uses an inappropriate form, the meaning will be wrong. Van Rheenen reminds us that one of the most serious and costly errors that cross-cultural workers make is, "they assume that their own cultural categories are universal" (1991, p. 51).

Note about facilitation: *SHOW* - Refer to the worldview graphic below as you discuss the items below in section c.

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[32]For example: a nation's flag and anthem; a religion's icons; symbols of worship (Hiebert, Shaw & Tiénou, 1999, p. 243).

[33]Hiebert states that *symbols* are "form and meaning linked" (1985a, p.142).

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR
Symbols, speech, emotions, rituals, and actions

SOCIO-CULTURAL SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS
Marriage, family, religion, law, media, education, politics, and economics

VALUES
Ideals born out of a worldview

WORLDVIEW
The lens through which one
sees life

c. Other questions to consider in your endeavor to avoid syncretism:

1) What should the cross-cultural Christian worker do with Palestinian cultural forms of foot washing, location of church meetings, content of church meetings, and other New Testament activities? Should all religious forms in a host society be replaced by forms from the Bible (Hebrew, Greek, Roman culture)?

2) Can existing local cultural forms such as ancestor veneration or taboos and other rituals be incorporated into the New Testament church?

3) What are appropriate cultural forms for supracultural biblical principles? When is an old form acceptable? When should new meaning be given to old forms?

d. How are we to address this vital cross-cultural matter within our ministries?

   1) What is your understanding of the correlation between form and meaning in a given culture? What are your assumptions?

   2) Look underneath the observable behavior (the form) to the worldview assumptions (the meaning)

      a) "Many societies are oral and encode messages in symbol systems. They use images, masks, dress, art, dramas, stories, rituals, songs, chants, proverbs, riddles and many other aural and visual signs to symbolize their beliefs. To understand the world of signs for a given people requires learning to exegete their symbol systems" that provide "a window on a people's understanding of ultimate reality" (Hiebert, Shaw & Tiénou, 1999, p. 252). [see PPT slide]

      b) "The study of symbols, their meaning, and their uses in different contexts is essential for missionaries to understand the worldview underlying the culture" (Hiebert, Shaw & Tiénou, 1999, p. 253). [see PPT slide]

      c) "Symbol and praxis point beyond themselves to a controlling story or set of controlling stories which invest them with wider significance" (Wright, 1992, p. 124).

Note about facilitation: *DO* - Divide into small groups and work on a case study. Identify the (a) syncretistic practices, (b) the cultural forms associated with the identified syncretism, (c) the meaning that the existing worldview framework supplies to those forms, and (d) the solution for overcoming the identified syncretism

Note about facilitation: *REFLECT* - Come together again as a large group and discuss the findings of the small group discussions.

Note about facilitation: *REFLECT* – Review the six primary topics in the *Worldview* course:

- What are worldviews? See page 1
- How are worldviews formed? See page 8
- What is the nature of worldviews? See page 11
- How do worldviews change? See page 17
- Implications of ministering at a worldview level – see page 21
- Syncretism and cultural forms – see page 27

Tie the topics together into one coherent whole. Do this by storying the overall content of the course. Remind the participants where the course fits within the strategy of the five-stages for holistic ministry. Point the participants to the recommended resources listed in the bibliography. Stress the need to see this course as only a first step in understanding how to think worldviewishly.

APPENDIX A

Other definitions of *worldview*:

- Paul Hiebert – "Worldviews are the most fundamental and encompassing views of reality shared by a people in a culture" (1994, p.38).

- David Hesselgrave – "Worldview is at the core of culture. It is out of that core that the rest of culture emanates" (1994, p. 49).

- Greg Bahnsen – "A network of presuppositions – fundamental and systematically influential beliefs about metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics" (1998, p. 466).

- N.T. Wright – "'Worldview', in fact, embraces all deep-level human perceptions about reality" (1992, p.123).

- James Sire - "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 makeup of our world" (1997, p. 16).

- There is a clear and current discussion about *worldview* versus *worldevent* between Theodore Plantinga/Nicholas Wolterstorff and David Naugle that dates from 2002 until the present.

Appendix B

There are other factors that impact values, socio-cultural systems and institutions, and ultimately observable outward behavior. They include the following:

1. Man is created in the image of God – Genesis 1:27
2. The sinful nature – Ephesians 2:1-4
3. Personality – Based on the work of David McClelland at Harvard University, there are three universal types of personality:
   - Need for achievement
   - Need for affiliation
   - Need for power
4. Environment and enculturation – note the work of Marvin Harris in cultural materialism
5. Life history and memories
6. Ultimate causation of physiological behavior from mental, emotional, physical and psychological capabilities
7. Proximate causation of physiological behavior from chemicals (for example, testosterone stimulates aggressive behavior)

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