

Discussion Notes for Session 6

“We must realize that the final message of modern art is the uncertainty and *unrelatedness* of all things” (F. Schaeffer, quoted in Francis Schaeffer, An Authentic Life, Duriez, page 98.) “Unrelatedness” seems to be a good term to describe the absence of “appropriateness” in our age.

Today we will explore, not a worthy correspondence between Position and Person (as in Revelation 5), but a worthy correspondence between our Beliefs and our Interpretation of the Events that shape our Beliefs. Said another way, is there congruence between the way things are in reality, as God sees them, and the way that I see them? (What happened in the lives of our first parents between Genesis 2:25 and Genesis 3:6? Their outward circumstances in a perfect environment did not change. Their interpretation of those circumstances changed radically. Their Creator-Friend had become a selfish tyrant.) This raises the issue of our “worldview.”

A “worldview” is understood as the set of general truths or overarching principles that a person will use to make sense of the specific circumstances in which he lives. It is the “grid” through which the person interprets the details of his existence as he experiences them. It is the set of fundamental standards by which the person understands the particular events that occur around him. He is searching for coherence in the world in which he lives.

For instance, in the midst of the nightly news which regularly reports incidences of law breaking or tragedy that occur in our communities, the newscaster might interject the story of one person who helped a neighbor in need or someone who rescued a pet in distress. While you watch the coverage, your worldview is called into play.

When the anchorman gives the account which surrounds the latest murder, you might say, “Yes, there are awful acts of violence at work in my community but overall people are good by nature. We just need better after school programs or stricter gun control.” Or, when we hear of the latest winter storm we might say, “Yes that city is enduring a blizzard of epic proportions, but I know that this is only an aberration because overall the biggest concern facing our existence is the problem of global warming.” We seek coherence between the particular and the universal.

Our worldview aims to establish congruence in understanding the specific event in light of the general principle. The library of general truth principles a person has in his mind is the reservoir he uses to cope with the changing circumstances of his life. A Muslim might see an event and simply say, “It doesn’t need to make sense to me; Allah’s will be done. I just need to submit - or else.” An atheist might say, “It was all a matter of chance. But I will do my best to control chance events.” A Christian’s worldview would be, “God is an almighty, wise, personal, knowable Being. By His Providence He is sovereignly controlling every event in this world and so working for His glory and my good. I know this because the Bible tells me so. Now, how does this God instruct me to live in this fallen world?”

A worldview attempts to relate and interpret the general principles we have accepted as true to the specific events or circumstances in which we live.

In the field of logic there are two ways by which that relationship can be pursued. We can start with the fundamental principles we have accepted as true and unchangeable, and then fit the specific circumstances of our lives within that framework. Or we can start with the individual facts or observations as we see them, and from those specific circumstances try to work out the fundamental laws that appear to be true given what we have just observed or experienced. In

other words, we can reason from the general to the specific or from the specific to the general. The first alternative is comforting to the soul because it appears to give us certainty. The second alternative gives hope of knowing what is true and unchanging, but without complete certainty, because we inherently realize that there might be more particulars that we have not yet experienced.

These two schemes of reasoning are denominated by the terms “Deductive” or “Inductive” logic. **Which kind of reasoning is more “worthy” of implementation in the discovery of truth?** Is it wiser to move from general principle to specific situation, or to work from specific observation to a universal axiom?

In “Inductive” Bible study, for instance, the student starts with an individual verse or verses, meditates upon its character and content, and then moves to statements concerning the probable universal truths that come logically from the particular text before him. For instance, if he reads that Jesus declared, “Before Abraham was, I AM” (John 5:58), then he would conclude, “Jesus is claiming for Himself a shared common subsistence with God the Father.” Therefore, “Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is One...” (Dt. 6:4) means that there must be two divine Persons, but one essence, in a “Godhead” that eventually, with the Holy Spirit, can be called the Trinity.” Deductive reasoning would start with the already accepted information from the Apostle’s Creed and elsewhere in orthodox Christian doctrine, (that Christians believe in the Trinity) and fit Jesus’ declaration in John 8:58, into the already accepted universally declared fundamental.

Or in another illustration: “I believe that people are fundamentally good, although I have to admit there is a lot of evil out there.” That is deductive reasoning, moving from a foundational premise, people are basically good, to a specific occurrence, but one of them is a criminal. Or, we might think inductively: “I see a lot of evil things going on out there, could it be that mankind is inherently corrupt of heart? Incidentally, I introduced this distinction between deductive and inductive reasoning a year ago when we studied the book of Hosea. How can we reconcile the fact that God commanded His prophet to marry a prostitute (the particular) with the general truth that God is holy and righteous (the universal)?

Do you see that we are searching for the coherence, the fitting-ness, of the “particular” within the “universal?” Or, is there a confused “unrelatedness of all things?” Ah, now we have arrived again at the central question of these lessons! What is “appropriate” in the relationship between the universal and the particular?

“To philosophical!” you say. It is all too complicated. Well, let’s see how this plays out in Jesus’ world. Go in your Bibles to the gospel of John, chapter 9. **“And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?’”** Now the disciples are attempting to make sense of this particular situation. They are using logical judgment to reach a conclusion. What are they assuming as a true fundamental principle in their worldview? Are they reasoning deductively or inductively?

How does Jesus answer their question? How does His answer show that the disciples were operating from a deficient worldview? Is the universal principle by which the disciples are interpreting life indeed true? What was at fault regarding their general principle?

So Jesus, by a seemingly strange operation of divine power, gives the blind man his sight. That miracle sets off a powder keg of controversy. He has just upset the boundaries of an accepted universal truth they were holding. "How do we make sense of this?" say the people, the parents, the Pharisees, and the man himself?" **This particular is not "fitting" into our universal!**

Can you see how someone who adheres to a secular worldview could never admit the possibility of a supernatural miracle into his interpretation of how the world works? In the vocabulary of Francis Schaeffer, the world is a "closed system" in the secular worldview.

Or in this case, the Pharisees could not admit into their worldview the possibility that this Man Jesus could be working miracles because He was in fact God, the LORD, incarnate.

Other people in the story are wondering, "If we have just witnessed a miraculous sign, what shall we make of the Man who performed it?" The man who was healed was forced into the same question.

In verse 16 what is the conclusion of the Pharisees concerning the identity of Jesus. What do they base this verdict upon? A man who breaks the Sabbath law is a sinner, an imposter not to be trusted! What are they missing? Perhaps they were not so much concerned about the Law of God and the care of this man's soul as in retaining their power over the people. (Remember what Jesus said about His mission. He came to bring inevitable division, Matthew 10:34ff.)

As the narrative continues, what are some of the strategies of denial the Pharisees used to discredit the reality of the particular event? Is each strategy an attempt at logic? Yes, because even sinners are desperate to make some fitting correspondence between universals and particulars, between their worldview and things as they are experienced.

In verse 17 what is the conclusion of the previously blind man regarding Jesus? Is he reasoning deductively or inductively?

What is the motivation of the man's parents as they are called upon to enter the fray?

What do the religious leaders say they know about Christ in verse 24? How does the man reply? He knows one thing for sure. What is it?

What do the Pharisees say they know in verse 29?

What is the healed man's response to his interrogation in verses 30 through 33? Is the universal principle by which he is operating indeed true?

What do the characters in the story, especially the common man compared to the religious scholars, show with regard to the ability to think rightly? Who is the wise person? Certainly the proud person will not consent to be taught a truth which runs counter to his preconceived concept of what is right and true (verse 34).

Notice that Jesus, the Shepherd, the good one (John 10 follows), goes to find the healed man who had been excommunicated from the people of the religious community. What comfort does that give to you?

How would you summarize Jesus' concluding statement in verses 39-41? Why did He come into the world? Who is blind and who can see? Who would have their sin, not sent away, but remaining on their record?

When you study to rightly interpret and apply Scripture do you tend to use deductive or inductive reasoning? Which is more profitable? Is one method wiser than the other? Or why are both methods valuable?

A confession of faith or doctrinal creed of the church is valuable for providing a resource of universal truths to be commonly held. But the creed must derive its universal principles from what source? Are the creeds composed by use of inductive or deductive reasoning?

As helpful as the creeds are, we must not use the creeds as the authority to "prove" the Bible to be true. We must use the Bible to prove that the creeds are valid.

**The most critical matter of life is not so much what happens to me,
but how do I interpret what happens to me.**

What can you see with regard to the correspondence between your worldview and the truths that are disclosed in the Bible? Where has your "Biblical" worldview been challenged recently? What would make someone's worldview **worthy** of the Lord Christ?