

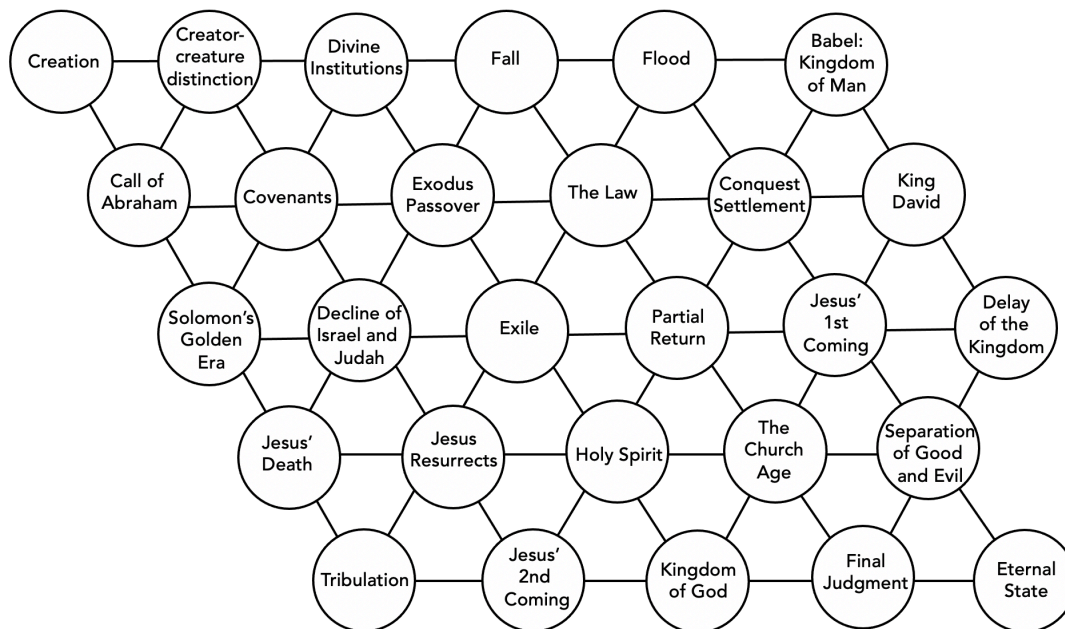
Lesson 54: Faith in Action V – Evaluating the Pagan Worldview

(Note: This Faith in Action exercise works best as a workshop. Please allow more time for meaningful discussion. Recommended time: three hours.)

Previously...

We reviewed the truths we learnt in the Old and New Testaments and saw how each of the events in the Bible builds upon previous events to give us a better and clearer understanding of God and His Word.

Importantly, we also reviewed how the Bible is an interlocking network of truth.



In the last lesson, we saw and practised how we could use the framework of Scripture as a tool to help us evaluate “biblical” statements and commentary.

However, these interlocking truths can also help us evaluate questions, ideas and criticisms that come from the pagan worldview.

How do we know this? We will start by studying how the apostle Paul did it. He used a biblical framework in speaking to Gentiles.


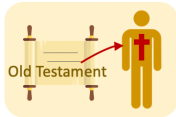
Part 1: Paul's Use of an Interlocked Biblical Framework

The apostle Paul had different ways of evangelising to people. With Jews and Gentiles who know their Scriptures, he used one approach. With Gentiles who do not know the Bible, he took another approach.



A. How Paul taught those who knew the Scriptures

This was what Paul did:

1. In every new town or city that he went to, he would first go to the synagogue. 
2. There, he would use Old Testament Scripture to show the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah they had been waiting for and that through faith in Messiah Jesus, they could be saved. 
3. Paul also addressed Gentiles who had been attending those synagogues. These Gentiles knew Old Testament Scripture and many were probably believers in Yahweh. They had the necessary Old Testament background to understand Paul's teaching.

This was how Paul led many Jews and Gentiles to become believers in Jesus. Here are some examples of the cities and towns he visited and what he did in them.



Notice that because these people already knew Scripture, he would go straight into talking about the Messiah.

Acts 9:19b–20 (Damascus)

¹⁹ Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days. ²⁰ And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is indeed the Son of God!”

Acts 13:14–16 (Antioch of Pisidia)

¹⁴ But Paul and Barnabas traveled inland to Antioch of Pisidia. On the Sabbath they went to the synagogue for the services. ¹⁵ After the usual readings from the books of Moses and the prophets, those in charge of the service sent them this message: “Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, come and give it.” ¹⁶ So Paul stood, lifted his hand to quiet them, and started speaking. “Men of Israel,” he said, “and you God-fearing Gentiles, listen to me.

Acts 14:1 (Iconium)

The same thing happened in Iconium. Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue and preached with such power that a great number of both Jews and Greeks became believers.

Acts 17:1–4 (Thessalonica)

¹ Paul and Silas then traveled through the towns of Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ² As was Paul’s custom, he went to the synagogue service, and for three Sabbaths in a row he used the Scriptures to reason with the people.

³ He explained the prophecies and proved that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead. He said, “This Jesus I’m telling you about is the Messiah.” ⁴ Some of the Jews who listened were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with many God-fearing Greek men and quite a few prominent women.

Acts 17:10–12 (Berea)

¹⁰ That very night the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. When they arrived there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹ And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul’s message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth. ¹² As a result, many Jews believed, as did many of the prominent Greek women and men.

This method of evangelism that Paul used worked because the people knew Scripture. However, he did something totally different when people did not know the Bible.



B. How Paul taught those who did not know the Scriptures

When Paul was with people who did not know Yahweh, he did not go straight into talking about Jesus. These people would not have the background to understand who Jesus is and why His work on earth and on the cross was so important, even for them.

Rather, they had their own understanding of the world, how the universe works and what life means.

During Paul's time, people in Athens had many different views of the world. However, there were four types of thinking (schools of thought) that were the most popular. These had the greatest influence not only at that time, but also today.

The four main thinkers and their schools of thought



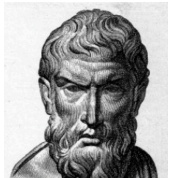
- I. **Plato:** He is known as the father of western philosophy and western-style logic.

He taught that there is a perfect or ideal world, but we live in a world that is neither perfect nor ideal.



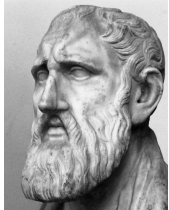
- II. **Aristotle:** He is also considered a father of western philosophy and science.

He developed what is called "formal logic". The way that most westerners think today is some form of logic developed by Aristotle. He also developed ideas in science that are still in use today.



- III. **Epicurus:** He taught that "pleasure" is the most important thing to pursue in life.

He said people can achieve pleasure by living modestly, limiting their desires and getting more knowledge about how the world works.



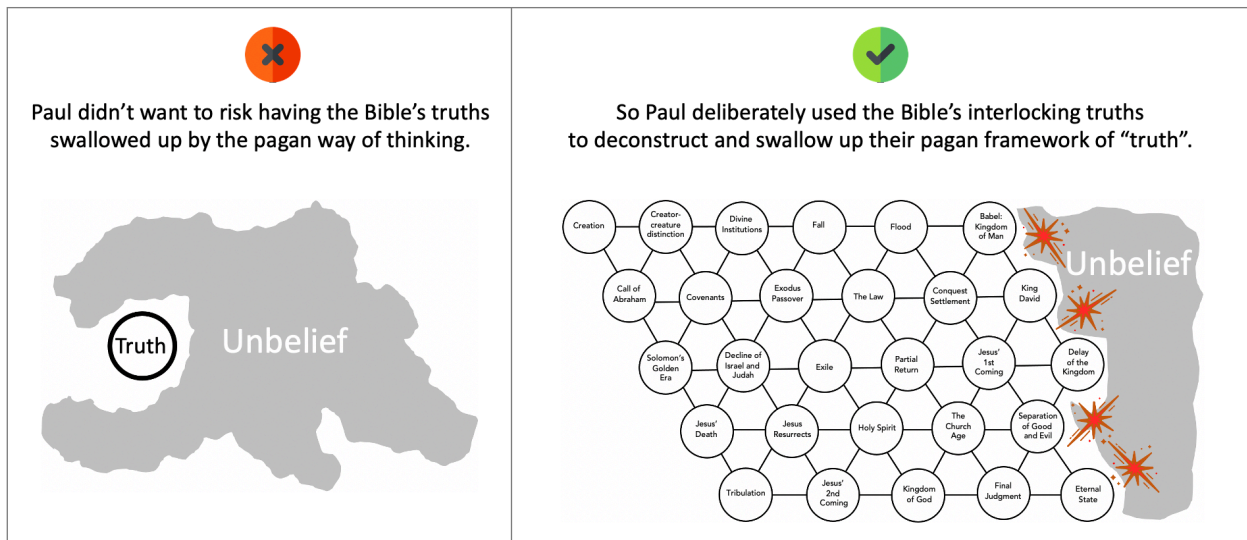
- IV. **Zeno of Citium:** He developed Stoic philosophy which is concerned with personal ethics. This is based on logic and on how the natural world works.

He taught that the way to happiness is to accept whatever happens in life. His teachings focus on knowing how to react to impersonal fate and chance.

This is just a very brief explanation and summary of the main types of thinking that were going on in Athens during Paul's time.

The important point is that when Paul was speaking with the pagans of Athens, he wasn't talking to a group of unthinking, stupid people. They were the smartest people around, people who had spent their time thinking through what is real and how this world really works.

So how did Paul speak to them?



But how did Paul do that? He did it by contrasting both worldviews.

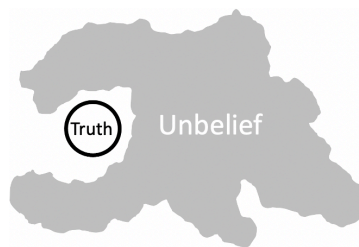
This is what happened in Athens as Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him. (Note: commentary is interspersed with the Bible text below.)

Acts 17:16, 18

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city.

¹⁸ He also had a debate with some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. When he told them about Jesus and his resurrection, they said, "What's this babbler trying to say with these strange ideas he's picked up?" Others said, "He seems to be preaching about some foreign gods."

When Paul started by talking about Jesus and His work, the unbelievers did not understand. They very quickly dismissed what Paul was saying as "babble" and "strange ideas". Their unbelief was swallowing up that one piece of Bible truth about the resurrection.



However, they were keen to hear more.

Acts 17:19–25

¹⁹ Then they took him to the high council of the city. “Come and tell us about this new teaching,” they said. ²⁰ “You are saying some rather strange things, and we want to know what it’s all about.” ²¹ (It should be explained that all the Athenians as well as the foreigners in Athens seemed to spend all their time discussing the latest ideas.)

²² So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: “Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, ²³ for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: ‘To an Unknown God.’ This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I’m telling you about.

²⁴ “He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, ²⁵ and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.

During this discussion, Paul did not want the focus to be on their pagan way of thinking. Instead, he began to surround them with the biblical view. He did this by contrasting the pagan worldview with the biblical worldview.

<p style="text-align: center;">Pagan Kingdom of Man</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Based on works Man would save himself through his own ideas</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Kingdom of God</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Based on grace God would save man</p>
<p>You are very religious. You have many shrines to the gods, even the “Unknown God”.</p>	<p>You may be religious and think you understand the world, but you don’t know this “Unknown God”.</p>
<p>You assume you can contain this “Unknown God” in a temple.</p> <p>(Note that Athens was full of temples to the Greek and Roman gods. These temples are symbols of their pagan worldview.)</p>	<p>No one can “contain” this God. He is far bigger than what you assume or think.</p> <p>Paul quotes what Solomon said after he built Yahweh’s temple. He is comparing Solomon’s temple, a symbol of the biblical worldview, with the temples in Athens! Paul is deliberately contrasting the biblical and pagan worldviews.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 Kings 8:27 “But will God really live on earth? Why, even the highest heavens cannot contain you. How much less this Temple I have built!</p>
<p>You assume you can please this “Unknown God” by building Him an altar. You have reduced your understanding of the world to just an altar.</p>	<p>This God made the world and everything in it. He does not live in a temple and He does not need an altar. He has no needs that you can satisfy.</p>
<p>You assume you can understand, control or manipulate Him.</p>	<p>This God is the source of all life and everything. He is the One with real understanding. No human way of thinking can minimise Him and bring Him down to man’s level so that man can understand, contain and control God.</p>

Paul then continued with this same approach.

Acts 17:26–31

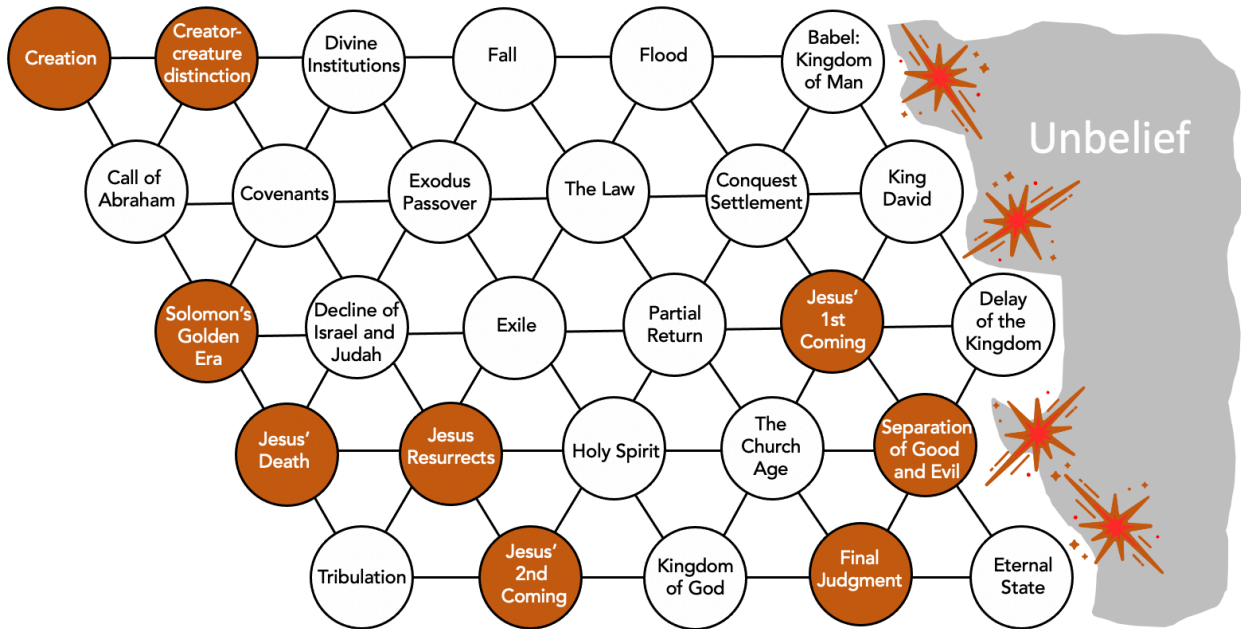
²⁶ From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries. ²⁷ “His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸ For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ ²⁹ And since this is true, we shouldn’t think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone.

³⁰ “God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. ³¹ For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.”

<p>Pagan Kingdom of Man</p> <p>Based on works Man would save himself through his own ideas</p>	<p>Kingdom of God</p> <p>Based on grace God would save man</p>
<p>Your poets correctly say that mankind is the offspring of God, but yet you think of God as an idol made by craftsmen.</p>	<p>God created one man and from that one man, He created all mankind. He is the Creator. He Himself is not a man-made idol.</p>
	<p>God is sovereign: He created man, He controls history, He created nations and He determines their boundaries.</p>
	<p>God’s purpose for all mankind is that they will know Him because it is only because of Him that mankind exists. God directs the events of mankind and history to lead people to Him.</p>
<p>You don’t know about this “Unknown God”. (From Acts 17:22.)</p>	<p>In the past, God was patient with people who did not know Him, but now God commands all people to repent of their sins and believe in Him.</p> <p>(Note: Paul says in Romans 1:18–25 that all people have evidence of God but they reject the truth. Also, we learnt in the Old Testament that everyone had direct information about God that Noah had passed down to all people.)</p>
	<p>God has chosen a time to judge the world and He has also appointed a specific man, Jesus, to do it. People know who this man is because God raised Him from the dead.</p>

What is recorded in Acts as Paul’s speech is most likely just a summary of all that he said. He probably said much more and elaborated on each of his points.

Nevertheless, we can see that based on what was recorded, Paul was introducing the interconnected biblical truths. In the below diagram, what Paul talked about is shaded.



Recall that when Paul first spoke about the resurrection of Jesus with the philosophers from Athens, they mocked him.

Acts 17:18

He also had a debate with some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. When he told them about Jesus and his resurrection, they said, “What’s this babbler trying to say with these strange ideas he’s picked up?” Others said, “He seems to be preaching about some foreign gods.”



But when Paul had a chance to speak with them again, notice that:

- He did not allow them to focus the discussion on the resurrection based on their worldview.
- He did not let them talk about the technicalities of the resurrection or how it’s possible.

Rather, Paul took a step back and politely but firmly took apart their worldview that believes:

- mankind has the ability to be the ultimate authority and
- man can contain god in their way of thinking.




Paul did this by contrasting the interlocking truths from the Bible with their man-made pagan ideas. He used the biblical framework to surround or swallow up their worldview.

How did the people respond to Paul’s speech?

Acts 17:32–34

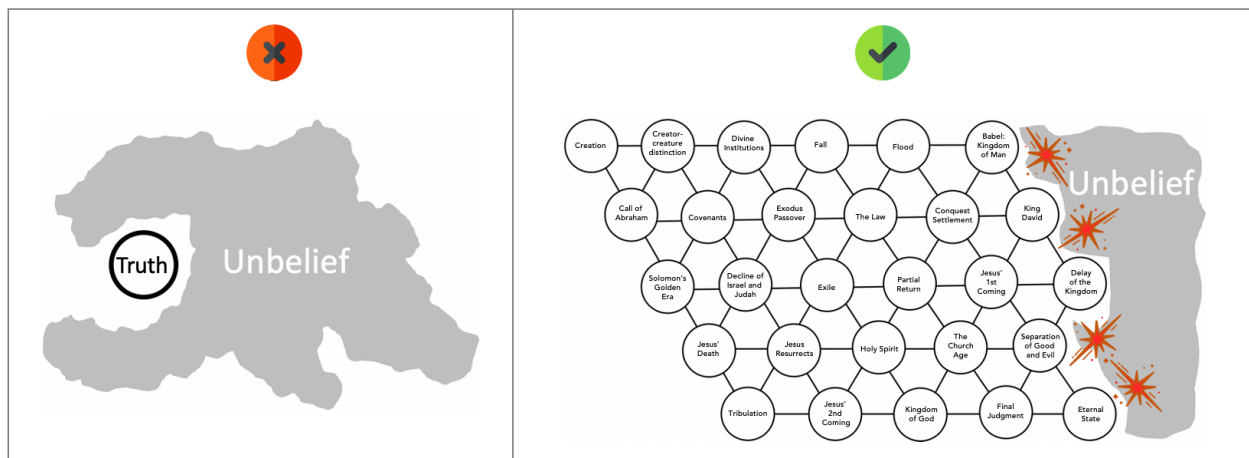
³² When they heard Paul speak about the resurrection of the dead, some laughed in contempt, but others said, “We want to hear more about this later.”

³³ That ended Paul’s discussion with them, ³⁴ but some joined him and became believers. Among them were Dionysius, a member of the council, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

<p>Hahaha</p> 		
<p>Some laughed at him. They rejected his worldview.</p>	<p>Others wanted to know more.</p>	<p>Still others realised that their framework or worldview about how the world works was weak or didn’t make sense. So they rejected the “truths” they had believed and they accepted the biblical framework instead. In other words, they came to faith in Christ!</p>

The way that Paul shared the gospel with those in Athens contains good lessons for us. It shows us how to evaluate the pagan way of thinking and then counter it with God’s Word.

Enveloping the pagan worldview with the biblical one will help us stand stronger in our faith instead of having our biblical truth swallowed up by the pagan way of thinking.




Part 2: A Worked Example—Evaluating the Pagan Way of Thinking

In our everyday life, we are exposed to an endless stream of pagan ideas. For example, someone (let's call her Kim) may share the following view:

Pagan Kingdom of Man
Based on WORKS
Man would save himself through his own ideas

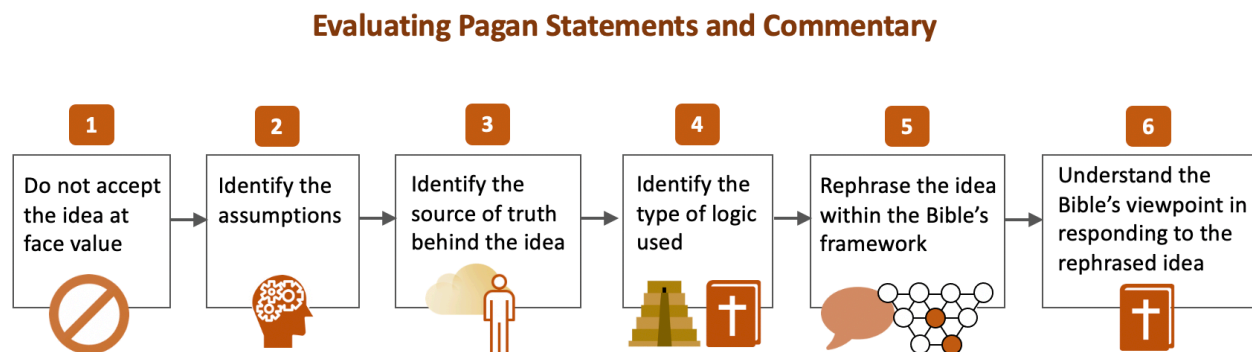
"Well, of course, Jane is now a Christian. You've seen how much she's suffered in her life. And you know she never had much strength so she needs a crutch to help her get over difficulties in her life. The church is her crutch. Without it, she wouldn't have made it. Others can weather the tough times but she needed some spiritual help."



Learning from Paul's example on how to deal with the pagan worldview, here are steps we can take to tackle non-biblical ideas that we come across.

Faith In Action Drill

There are six steps in this drill.



We'll go through each of them.



1. Do not accept the idea at face value.

Every idea, statement or comment comes with a whole set of assumptions and presuppositions. Do not accept it without first examining the assumptions.

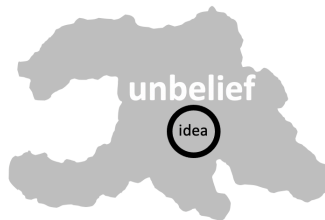
Simply put, don't accept Kim's comment.

If we accept her comment, we will be tempted to get defensive. We might try to:

- prove that Christians are not weak.
- explain that Christians don't really "need" the church, but it's "helpful".
- "attack her" by asking her if she thinks you are "weak" also since you're a Christian.
- use some other similar tactic.

None of these responses are helpful.

By accepting Kim's comment, we would have allowed ourselves to be ambushed. We would be saying that her comment is valid, even though it was spoken out of unbelief and spoken from the pagan worldview.



Her comment comes from deep within her unbelief or her pagan worldview.

It would now be very difficult to argue against her point of view especially after we have "accepted" her comment and its accompanying assumptions. So we must not be too quick to accept the comment.

This is what we should do instead.



2. Identify the assumptions.

In the ideal situation, if someone had said this to us, we would ask questions to better understand that person's presuppositions.

However, if we had read this comment in an article or on social media, just based on the comment, it is possible that these are Kim's assumptions:

- a. Regular people have what it takes to be strong and to solve their own problems by themselves. They don't need "religion", which is something invented to help the weak.
- b. Christianity and the church are for the weak.
- c. Spirituality or the church (not God) is the solution for weak people.



3. Identify the source of truth behind the idea.

In Lesson 26: Sent into Exile, we saw that in general, there are three sources of truth.

Sources of Truth

1. YAHWEH

God's Revelation in Scripture:
Content-filled message given in human language so man can understand.

2. Man

Human reason because man's mind is able to discover truth without any external help (that is, without any god).

3. Man

Man's personal experience and feelings are the ultimate source of truth. This includes scientific study.

In this case, Yahweh is clearly not Kim's source of truth. Her source of truth is herself, which is possibly based on her own personal experience with Christians. (So her source is category #3.)

(Note: those who claim that their truth comes from other religions could be categorised as #2 or #3. This is because their sources of truth are either solely through human reason or through some perceived spiritual experience.)



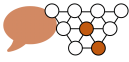
4. Identify the type of logic used.

In Lesson 1: Origin of the Divine Institutions and Lesson 2: Pagan View of Origins, we saw that the pagan and the biblical worldviews can be summarised as follows:

Pagan Worldview	Biblical Worldview
1. Continuity of Being (A scale) gods — man — nature	1. Creator-Creature Distinction One God Man Nature
2. Impersonal Fate and Chance	2. Personal Sovereign God
3. Ultimate Authority: Self	3. Ultimate Authority: God

One of these two worldviews will form the foundation of a person's logic and reasoning. In this example, it seems that Kim's logic is based on:

- Impersonal fate and chance:
 - There is no god running the universe.
 - There is no meaning in suffering.
- Ultimate authority: Self
 - People have the ability to save themselves.
 - People who can't save themselves are "abnormal", they are weak.
 - Only weak people need the church and a god (or something to believe in to overcome their weakness).



5. Rephrase what she is saying within the Bible’s framework.

We will now rephrase Kim’s idea using the vocabulary of the Bible’s framework. This helps us see more clearly what she is saying.

What she said	What she said rephrased
<p>“Well, of course, Jane is a Christian. You’ve seen how much she’s suffered in her life. And you know she never had much strength so she needs a crutch to help her get over difficulties in her life. The church is her crutch. Without it, she wouldn’t have made it. Others can weather the tough times but she needed some spiritual help.”</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I don’t acknowledge there’s a god. Everything that happens is by fate and chance. Suffering is a normal part of life. Mankind is the ultimate authority: we are in charge and in control of our own lives. Mankind is strong enough to save ourselves from whatever problems and suffering we face. Only weak people need to find support in church and Christianity.



Her comment comes from deep within her unbelief and her pagan worldview.

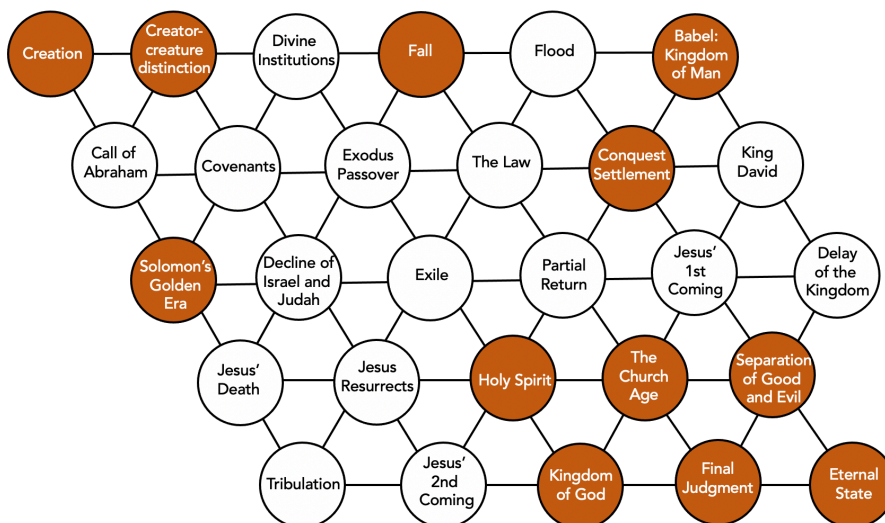


Whereas, we are interpreting what she is saying through the biblical framework.















6. Understand the Bible’s viewpoint in responding to the rephrased idea.

Using the interlocking framework diagram as a simple guide, we have coloured in orange the truths that her rephrased statement affects.



These are the biblical truths that are helpful to recall in this situation. They are the very truths that address her comment.



The Pagan View (What she said, rephrased)	The Biblical View (Truths we need to know)
<p>a. I don't acknowledge there's a god. Everything that happens is by fate and chance.</p>	 <p>Creation: Yahweh is the one true God. He is sovereign. He created the world, the universe and all living creatures. Nothing is by chance.</p>
<p>b. Suffering is a normal part of life.</p>	 <p>Fall: When God created the world perfect, that was the real "normal". Suffering isn't normal. It came about because of the Fall. The "problems" of this life are all because of the Fall and sin. We suffer because we have to live with sin. No human is able to solve the problem of sin. So God Himself will bring an end to sin and suffering one day.</p>
<p>c. Mankind is the ultimate authority: we are in charge and in control of our own lives.</p>	 <p>Creator-Creature Distinction: Man is a creature and has no real control over everything. God as the Creator, is the ultimate authority and He is sovereign over everything, including suffering.</p>  <p>Babel: People in their pride want to think they are in control and can solve their own problems. But the reality is that people are always focused on their own selfish wants and desires. When mankind tries to "solve" their own problems, it always leads them further away from God and closer to total evil. If God had left them in Babel, all mankind would be doomed to eternal death.</p>  <p>Conquest and Settlement: The end of the book of Judges shows what happened to Israel when they ignored God and did what was right in their own eyes. They became depraved and perverted and their lives became a mess.</p>

The Pagan View (What she said, rephrased)	The Biblical View (Truths we need to know)
<p>d. Mankind is strong enough to save ourselves from whatever problems and suffering we face.</p>	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; gap: 10px;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">  <p>Separation of Good and Evil</p> </div> <div> <p>Separation of Good and Evil and Final judgment: Ultimately, all problems are because of sin. And man is not able to solve that. Mankind needs God. It doesn't matter how well man "solves" their own problems on earth.</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">  <p>Final Judgment</p> </div> <div> <p>Ultimately, the biggest problem faced by all mankind is that we will be judged by God. And there are only two categories of people: those who trust in Yahweh for salvation and those who don't trust in Him. Those who don't trust Him will face the ultimate suffering: eternal suffering in the lake of fire.</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">  <p>Kingdom of God</p> </div> <div> <p>Kingdom of God and the Eternal State: Resurrected believers from Old Testament times, the church age and the Tribulation will finally be free from pain and suffering. Suffering is temporary. God is the One who provides the solution, first in the Kingdom, then in the Eternal State. Yahweh is the One who rescues and saves.</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">  <p>Eternal State</p> </div> </div> </div>
<p>e. Only weak people need to find support in church and Christianity.</p>	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; gap: 10px;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">  <p>Solomon's Golden Era</p> </div> <div> <p>Solomon: By God's design, if mankind wants to live well, they need to live connected to Him. For example, even though Solomon was the wisest man in all of history, when he ignored God's instructions and made what he thought were smart choices (for example, having political marriages to secure peace), the situation and his life turned out really bad. Even people who believe in Yahweh need Him constantly to help them live well.</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">  <p>Holy Spirit</p> </div> <div> <p>Holy Spirit and the church age: The Holy Spirit started the church. The church is the body of Christ. When people first believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit joins them to Jesus as well as to all other believers. All Christians are commanded by God to function as one body. God wants all brothers and sisters in Christ to care for each other and to work together to fulfil the Great Commission. No Christian is supposed to live in isolation from the body of Christ. But it takes great effort to have unity and to work well together.</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">  <p>The Church Age</p> </div> </div> </div>

At this point, we have gathered many interlocking truths from the Bible and we can form a comprehensive response to Kim's comment. (Notice how many biblical truths come together to respond to a "simple" pagan idea!)

We must not be hasty but take enough time to think through the biblical framework. In this way, we will remain grounded in God's truth and not have our faith shaken.

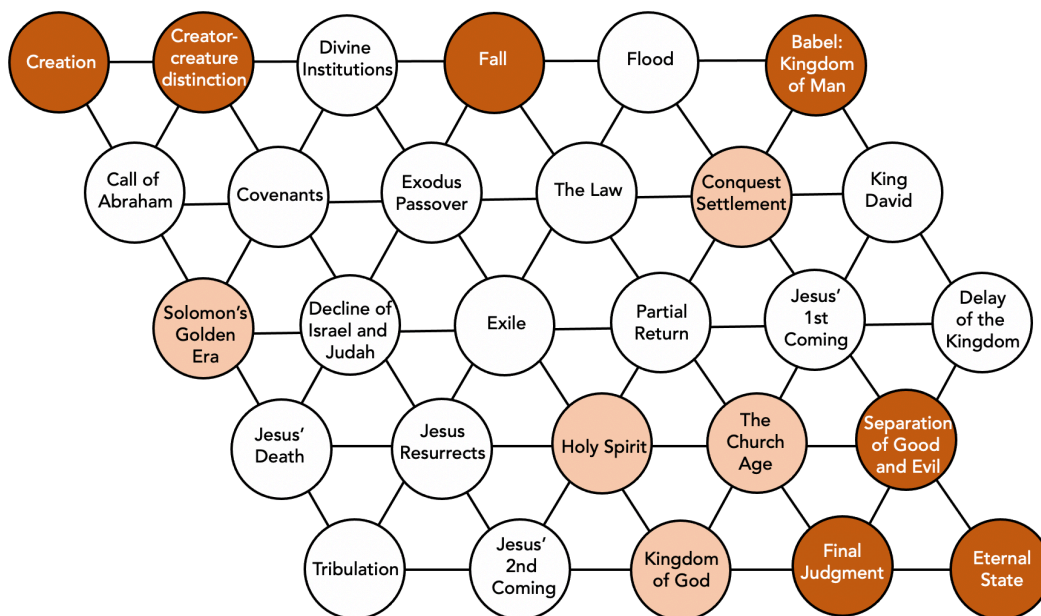
Gathering all the truths together, our mental response can be something like this:

Pagan Kingdom of Man Based on WORKS Man would save himself through his own ideas	Kingdom of God Based on GRACE God would save man
<p><i>"Well, of course, Jane is now a Christian. You've seen how much she's suffered in her life. And you know she never had much strength so she needs a crutch to help her get over difficulties in her life. The church is her crutch. Without it, she wouldn't have made it. Others can weather the tough times but she needed some spiritual help."</i></p> 	<p><i>I can understand why you would have a hard time accepting what the Bible has to say. Ultimately, people don't want to be answerable to a higher authority. If you believed in the Creator-God of the universe, then you would be answerable to Him. That's a scary thought! I can understand why you would reject it. Just like the first man and woman who after sinning, hid from God in the bushes, you are doing something similar by hiding in your "bushes".</i></p> 

But what if Kim had said to us and is expecting a reply?

Learning from how the apostle Paul responded to his audience, we will now attempt to respond to her.

It is typically not productive to cover too much in a single conversation or written response. In this worked example, we will cover the orange circles in our response. (We would address the lighter coloured circles with her in a separate conversation or written reply.)





Example of what to share with Kim, the unbeliever

You know, there's something you need to understand about why Jane became a Christian. Christianity has an explanation about why evil and suffering exist and Christianity also explains what God is going to do about it.

God records for us that when He first made the world and everything in it, it was a world that was completely free from evil and suffering. God said it was very good and this was what He calls normal.

Creation

The first man and woman were given free choice to love and trust in their Creator-God but instead they chose to make themselves the ultimate authority and they chose to rebel against God's authority. They rejected God and that rebellion is what introduced evil and sin and suffering into the world. Now this is the world that we live in, one that is filled with evil and suffering. God calls this abnormal.

Fall

Babel:
Kingdom
of Man

However, the Creator-God is not stuck with this situation. Instead, He has in place a plan to separate good and evil permanently. He doesn't want mankind and the universe He created to continue in this state of good and evil mixed together.

Final
Judgment

All throughout history, He has demonstrated through many historical events just what He would do to separate good and evil. His plan to save mankind from all this evil and suffering involves offering all of us a choice to trust Him and His plan or to continue to reject Him. While He waits and gives every person this choice, mankind will continue to use their free will to act in evil ways.

But in the future, God will come to separate good and evil. He will come to judge and to save. Those who trust Him, He will save. And those who reject Him, He will have to judge and remove.

Separation
of Good
and Evil

This is how He intends to get rid of evil and rebellious people. God is currently patient and gracious, allowing people the time to decide. But at His timing, He will rescue those who trust Him and get rid of evil permanently. Then mankind will not have to live with evil any longer. No more pain, suffering, disease, poverty, or death.

Eternal
State

That is what Jane has come to understand. Compare this to what you've been saying. If we accept that the world has always had evil and will forever have this mix of good and evil and there's no way to get rid of evil, then it truly is a bleak and hopeless world we live in.

What's more, if we believe that no one is in charge of the universe, then there really is no meaning or purpose to life. There is also no way to decide what is right or wrong. We are truly left with a meaningless and hopeless situation. The question becomes not why is there evil and suffering, but rather, what is the point of living if there is no meaning?

Creator-
creature
distinction

So for Jane, she's examined these two contrasting ideas, or worldviews, and she's convinced that the biblical worldview makes more sense and fits better with reality.

I can understand why it can be hard to accept what the Bible says. Because if that book is right, it means there truly is a God who created the world and owns it. As the owner, He is the ultimate

authority and we, the creatures He created, are answerable to Him! That's not something to be taken lightly! We become responsible for our actions because there is a higher authority.

But this God is also the One who says He will put an end to evil and suffering. Now that is good news!

I hope that helps you understand what went through Jane's mind. She is delighted to trust in the One who says He is going to put an end to evil and suffering. This gives her life meaning, hope and direction.

If you'd like, we can always talk about this some more.

Comment

This worked example was intentionally done in detail to explain each step carefully. But with practice, each question or situation can typically be summarised into a single sheet like the one on the following page.

Reference Sheet for the Worked Example



Comment: “Well, of course, Jane is now a Christian. You’ve seen how much she’s suffered in her life. And you know she never had much strength so she needs a crutch to help her get over difficulties in her life. The church is her crutch. Without it, she wouldn’t have made it. Others can weather the tough times but she needed some spiritual help.”



Step 2: Identify the assumptions

- Regular people have what it takes to be strong and to solve their own problems by themselves. They don’t need “religion”, which is something invented to help the weak.
- Christianity and the church are for the weak.
- Spirituality or the church (not God) is the solution for weak people.



Step 3: Identify the source of truth behind the idea

1. YAHWEH

God’s Revelation in Scripture:
Content-filled message given in human language so man can understand.

2. Man

Human reason because man’s mind is able to discover truth without any external help (that is, without any god).

3. Man

Man’s personal experience and feelings are the ultimate source of truth. This includes scientific study.



Step 4: Identify the type of logic used

Pagan Worldview	Biblical Worldview
1. Continuity of Being (A scale) gods — man — nature	1. Creator-Creature Distinction One God Man Nature
➔ 2. Impersonal Fate and Chance	2. Personal Sovereign God
➔ 3. Ultimate Authority: Self	3. Ultimate Authority: God



Step 5: Rephrase the idea within the Bible’s framework

Step 6: Understand the Bible’s viewpoint in responding to the rephrased idea



The Pagan View (What she said, rephrased)	The Biblical View (Truths we need to know—Summarised)
a. I don’t acknowledge there’s a god. Everything that happens is by fate and chance.	Creation: Yahweh is the one true God. He is sovereign.
b. Suffering is a normal part of life.	Fall, Creator-creature distinction: Suffering isn’t normal. God will bring it to an end.
c. Mankind is the ultimate authority: we are in charge and in control of our own lives.	Creator-creature distinction, Babel, Conquest and Settlement: Mankind in their pride wants to think they are in control and can solve their own problems.
d. Mankind is strong enough to save ourselves from whatever problems and suffering we face.	Final judgment, Kingdom of God, Eternal State: Ultimately, all problems are because of sin. And man is not able to solve that. Mankind needs God.

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Instructions

First, staple pages 1–18 together and hand them out.

After going through the worked example, hand out pages 19–24 as loose pages. If needed, provide extra copies of pages 23–24 or get the class to use blank sheets of paper for the exercise.

Finally, staple pages 25–44 together and hand them out after the exercise.

Part 3: Exercise—Evaluating the Pagan Way of Thinking

Step 1 of the evaluation says not to accept the ideas or statements that we are presented with at face value. This is an extremely important step. Many of us as Christians are ambushed when we accept the pagan statement and we end up arguing from within the pagan worldview with pagan assumptions. This is not helpful at all.

It is good to remember the advice of King Solomon. He says:

Proverbs 26:4–5

⁴ Don't answer the foolish arguments of fools,
or you will become as foolish as they are.

⁵ Be sure to answer the foolish arguments of fools,
or they will become wise in their own estimation.

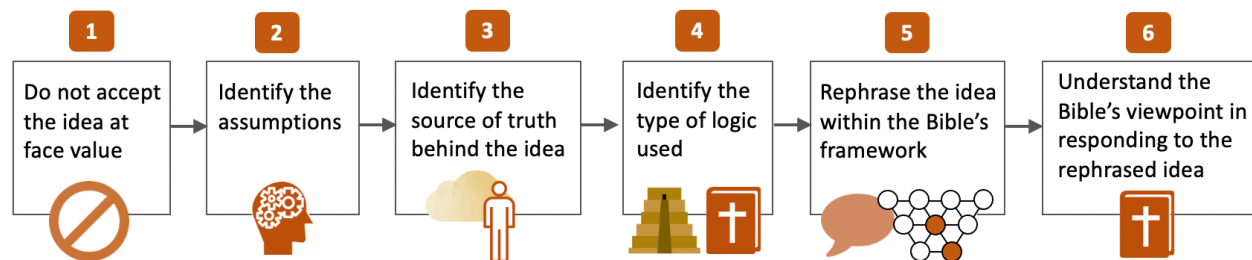
While it might appear that he is contradicting himself, what he is saying actually makes a lot of sense.

In verse 4, he is saying not to start with the same set of presuppositions or assumptions as the fool or we will become just like the fool. This points to the need to start from the biblical perspective on issues and not start by accepting the pagan worldview.

In verse 5, he is advising that we take the fool's thinking to its logical conclusion. This would expose the foolishness of the fool's thinking even to himself.

So here are the steps we can take to evaluate ideas or statements.

Evaluating Pagan Statements and Commentary



Instructions

We will now try evaluating eight statements from the pagan worldview.

1. The class will be divided into small discussion groups. As a small group, work through all eight statements, one at a time.
2. For each statement, each one should use one set of pages 23–24 to jot down their thoughts and craft a response. (Note: Print enough sets of pages 23–24 for everyone.)
3. Each group can form one group response for each statement to share with the whole class when the class regathers.

Statement 1

Any good community must support all views and opinions. No judgments should be placed on any person or idea. Any and every idea is equally valid.

Statement 2

As society evolves, it must have the freedom to update its social institutions like marriage and family to keep up with the changing times. It is foolish to think that we need to behave the same way we did when mankind first began. We have evolved and institutions like marriage and family also need to evolve.

Statement 3

Human beings have unlimited potential, and most of us are just scratching the surface of our powers. We simply need to learn how to harness our potential while setting aside negative thinking that drags us down.

Statement 4

Governments are put in place to decide what is right and wrong for society. The laws it creates are based on the values of the people. So the true ultimate authority for society is the people themselves. This is most clearly seen during elections.

Statement 5

Mankind is the cause of the sorry state of the environment. Through pollution, mass killing of animals and abuse of natural resources, we are destroying the earth. If we continue like this, there will be no earth left for anyone. It's time we stop our selfishness and let mother nature heal herself. The animals of this world have the right to a healthy planet. What gives us the right to abuse the earth?

Statement 6

Christianity helps people. I see lots of Christians helping others. They are just like other people who want to do good. For example, Alcoholics Anonymous also helps people. They are all the same.

Statement 7

Deep in every human soul, there is good. This desire for good is what powers the universe. When we desire to do good to others, the universe will help us. This is why it's important to do good things for others. The good will come back to us.

Statement 8

Education is the key to change the world. We know how education gives opportunities to the poor, especially the girls. When education is widespread, the problems of society will start to disappear. Education provides opportunities for work; it creates better governments and societies; it increases understanding about the world and ourselves; and it deepens empathy for each other.


Statement # _____




Step 1: Don't accept the idea at face value
Step 2: Identify the assumptions

Step 3: Identify the source of truth behind the idea




 **1. YAHWEH**

God's Revelation in Scripture:
 Content-filled message given in human language so man can understand.

 **2. Man**



Human reason because man's mind is able to discover truth without any external help (that is, without any god).

 **3. Man**

Man's personal experience and feelings are the ultimate source of truth. This includes scientific study.



Step 4: Identify the type of logic used

 Pagan Worldview	 Biblical Worldview
1. Continuity of Being (A scale) gods — man — nature	1. Creator-Creature Distinction One God Man Nature
2. Impersonal Fate and Chance	2. Personal Sovereign God
3. Ultimate Authority: Self	3. Ultimate Authority: God



Step 5: Rephrase the idea within the Bible's framework
Step 6: Understand the Bible's viewpoint in responding to the rephrased idea

Note: Suggested responses are found in the Appendix, but for a good learning experience, please do not refer to them until you have attempted the exercise.

Closing Comments

All of us as Christians are exposed to the pagan worldview every day. Which statements are good and in line with what the Bible teaches? Which are not in line with the Bible?

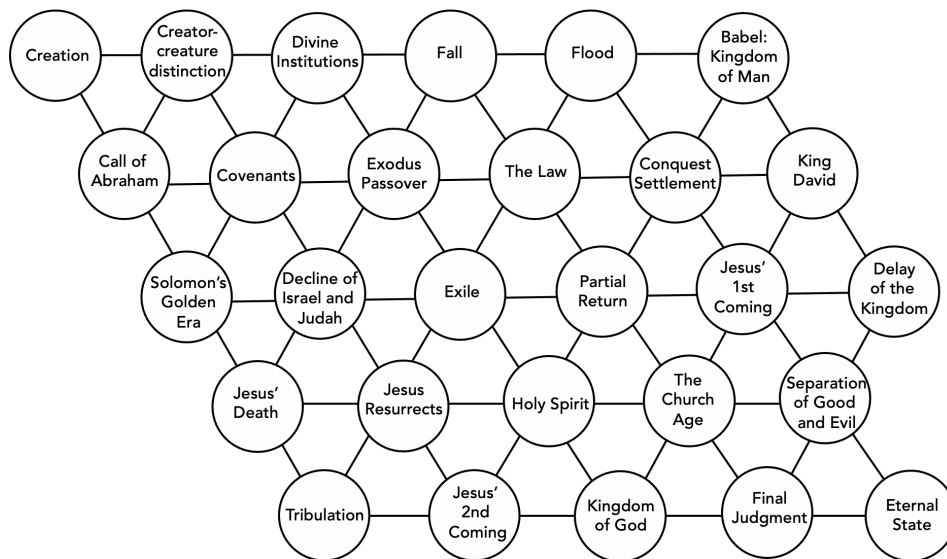
We want to train ourselves to recognise what is of God so that we can live pure and blameless lives because this will bring much praise and glory to God (Philippians 1:9–11).

But the only way to do that is to be intentional.

1. Intentionally and diligently study our Bible well.

When we know the biblical truths and events well, we can more easily use them to give perspective to the various opinions we are exposed to.

In this series, we have only covered some key events.



After we learn them well, continue building and adding on to the interlocking network of truth.

The Holy Spirit will have a lot more content to work with as He helps us recall God's words and use them more effectively in our lives.

2. Intentionally and diligently train our powers of discernment.

No one gains the skill to be able to discern right and wrong naturally. All of us need training.

Hebrews 5:14

Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.

Don't casually accept what we read in the media each day. Take time to intentionally go through the exercise of evaluating the opinions and statements as we have practised in this lesson. Compare and contrast what we read with the biblical worldview.



If we do this regularly by ourselves, or with our families, or with our Bible study groups, we will train ourselves on how to quickly evaluate statements and comments. Using the biblical framework will help us gain God's perspective on the current thinking of the world. Such active studying and analysing strengthens and protects our faith.



Also, if we have already thought through these issues, the next time someone actually makes these comments to us, we will not be stunned into silence. Instead, we would be able to respond in a meaningful way, perhaps even helping open hearts to listening to an alternate point of view, that is, the Bible's point of view.



Importantly, having gone through this thought process repeatedly, when confronted with such comments, we will be equipped to gently ask meaningful and directed questions to help us better understand the other person's worldview. Simply asking clarification questions can open up meaningful conversations that will allow us to engage with others at a deeper level.

If however, we are put on the spot in a conversation on a topic or area that we have not thought through, it is perfectly reasonable to say, "You have shared an interesting comment. Let me think about it and can we get back together again to talk more about this?" Thereafter, take the time to work out the biblical perspective and then reengage in conversation.



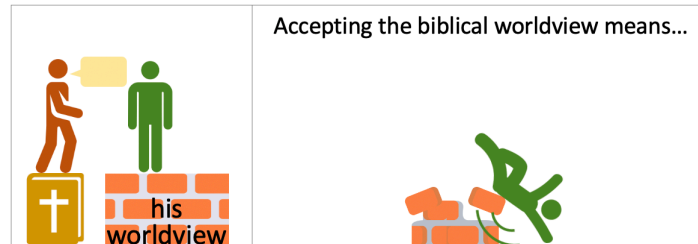
Do not feel afraid or overwhelmed. With the Holy Spirit's guidance, we can be diligent in this. But we should take this seriously and prioritise these opportunities that God gives us. It may be that we are the very ones who are to plant, water or sow the seed of belief in Christ. This work is of eternal value. It might result in seeing your friend in eternity.

Finally, it is important to understand that sharing the gospel with unbelievers is always confrontational.



People have their own beliefs and understanding of the world. Whenever we present the truths of the Bible, we are in fact arguing against their pagan worldview.

It is not easy to ask someone to give up on their own beliefs! For some, these are things they have believed their entire lives. Toppling their beliefs means destroying their whole understanding of life, the universe and what they think is ultimate meaning.



So we need to recognise that there is always tension in sharing the Bible, whether that tension presents itself outwardly or not. This is because the goal is indeed to tear down their pagan framework and replace it with the biblical worldview.

So we must always rely on prayer, specifically asking God to prepare our hearts and give us the right spirit and attitude, and also to prepare the hearts of those whom we're speaking to. We must never be fooled into thinking that we can do this with just our own human strength and wisdom.



Also, God tells us to engage with as much patience and grace as possible.

1 Peter 3:15–16

¹⁵ Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. ¹⁶ But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.

May God guide us all as we reach out to our loved ones and others He brings into our lives.

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Appendix: Suggested Responses

Statement 1: Any good community must support all views and opinions. No judgments should be placed on any person or idea. Any and every idea is equally valid.

Step 2: Identify the assumptions

- Mankind is the judge of what a “good” community looks like.
- A “good” community validates, accepts and affirms all opinions.
- Any kind of “judgment” on any views is bad because there is no ultimate right and wrong.

Step 3: Identify the source of truth behind the idea

1. Yahweh

God’s Revelation in Scripture:
Content-filled message given in human language so man can understand.

2. Man

Human reason because man’s mind is able to discover truth without any external help (that is, without any god).

3. Man

Man’s personal experience and feelings are the ultimate source of truth. This includes scientific study.

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Step 4: Identify the type of logic used

PAGAN WORLDVIEW	BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW
<p>1. Continuity of Being (A scale or continuum) gods — man — nature</p> <p>2. Impersonal Fate and Chance</p> <p>➔ 3. Ultimate authority: Self</p>	<p>1. Creator-Creature Distinction One God Man Nature</p> <p>2. Personal Sovereign God</p> <p>3. Ultimate authority: God</p>

Step 5: Rephrase the idea within the Bible’s framework

Step 6: Understand the Bible’s viewpoint in responding to the rephrased idea

The Pagan View (What is said, rephrased)	The Biblical View (Truths we need to know—Summarised)
<p>a. It is my opinion that all good communities must affirm all views and opinions.</p> <p>b. I judge that all kinds of “judgment” is wrong. Anyone who does not share this belief is wrong. (Note the irony!)</p> <p>c. There is no ultimate right and wrong, so mankind gets to decide.</p>	<p>Creation, Divine Institutions, The Law: Yahweh created the world and as the righteous and only Creator-Owner, He determined what “good” and “bad” is. He is the One who defined what a good society should look like.</p> <p>Fall, Babel: Mankind was never the ultimate authority. Fallen mankind, with minds and hearts filled with sin and pride always tries to usurp and rebel against God’s righteous authority. This often results in pride-filled statements that are irrational.</p> <p>The Law, The Law of Christ: There is ultimate right and wrong. This is determined by Yahweh Himself and communicated to mankind. God holds mankind accountable to His standard, even if mankind refuses to acknowledge Him.</p>

Statement 1: Example of a biblical response

Isn't it funny how we can insist that no one can judge? That statement itself is a judgment. That thought is making a statement on what is right and what is wrong. Even though we like the idea that everyone's views and opinions can be equally valid, that cannot be true. In everyday life, just using simple logic or using science, we can say that something is right or wrong.

So we all can't be right. In the biblical worldview, the Creator of the universe tells us how He made the world and everything in it. He designed the parameters and rules that would allow mankind and the rest of creation to live well. In other words, the Creator has given mankind a way to live well. It's like having an instruction manual for a piece of equipment. If we ignore the right way to use the equipment, it will soon get damaged and become useless.

In the same way, the God of the Bible, who is the Creator of the world, has recorded His truth in the Bible. Because He is the Creator, He is the ultimate source of right and wrong. But much of the world has rejected Him. In mankind's pride, we have turned our backs on the Creator and decided that we can live any way we want and we will be happy. But if we are honest, we can see that this is not working out. The Bible tells us there is a right way to live to be happy and there is a wrong way to live which results in misery.

What's more, because God is the Creator and Owner of all people, we are accountable to Him for how we have lived. It doesn't matter if we choose to reject Him. He will still hold us accountable for the way we live and the way we have responded to the truth He has given us.

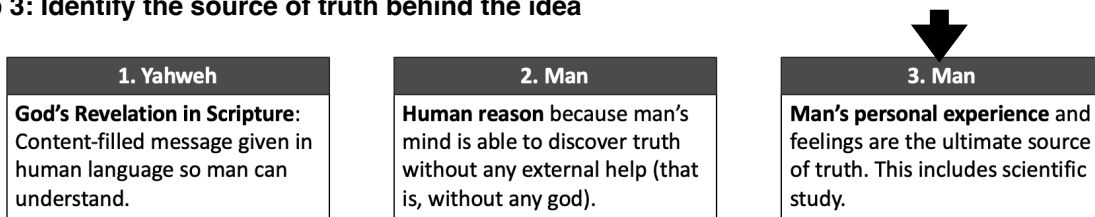
For me, even though life is hard, I have found meaning and joy in following God. He is teaching me His truth and guiding me in the right way to live. I know, in my own mind, I make many foolish and selfish decisions, but thank God, He continues to teach and guide me.

Statement 2: As society evolves, it must have the freedom to update its social institutions like marriage and family to keep up with the changing times. It is foolish to think that we need to behave the same way we did when mankind first began. We have evolved and institutions like marriage and family also need to evolve.

Step 2: Identify the assumptions

- Social institutions are man-made.
- Social institutions must adapt to the changing expectations and desires of mankind.
- There is no moral element to “evolving” (meaning that the change away from traditional ideas of marriage and family is neutral. It is neither good nor bad.)

Step 3: Identify the source of truth behind the idea



Step 4: Identify the type of logic used

	PAGAN WORLDVIEW	BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW
➔	1. Continuity of Being (A scale or continuum) gods — man — nature	1. Creator-Creature Distinction One God Man Nature
	2. Impersonal Fate and Chance	2. Personal Sovereign God
➔	3. Ultimate authority: Self	3. Ultimate authority: God

Step 5: Rephrase the idea within the Bible’s framework

Step 6: Understand the Bible’s viewpoint in responding to the rephrased idea

The Pagan View (What is said, rephrased)	The Biblical View (Truths we need to know—Summarised)
a. There is no such thing as right and wrong when it comes to social institutions.	Divine Institutions, Creator-creature distinction: Yahweh is the One who established the institutions of responsible dominion, marriage and family. The divine institutions were given to help man as a society, live well. Yahweh defined what each meant: responsible dominion is being under-lord of all nature and procreating to fill the earth; marriage is between one man and one woman; family has the responsibility of training the children in responsible dominion and in the Lord. God established right and wrong. “Right” is when people live in obedience to Him and “wrong” is when they rebel.
b. Everything evolves. Just as man evolves, social institutions must change to keep up with the desires of mankind.	Creation, Covenants, Kingdom of God: God’s Word never changes (Hebrews 13:8). God’s ultimate plan for the world never changed and in the Kingdom, God ensures His original plans are fulfilled. God’s definition of right and wrong never changes regardless of how mankind changes. The idea of evolution of man is not in the Bible: to Yahweh, man either submits to Him or remains in rebellion.

Statement 2: Example of a biblical response

It is very common to think that social institutions like marriage and family are man's ideas. Many academics and scientists and historians like to think that as primitive man evolved, man himself developed these institutions to survive better.

But you know, this way of thinking, is not a biblical idea. It is not the truth. In the Bible, God tells us who came up with these institutions. It was God Himself. God explains that when He designed the world, and humans and everything else, He used His wisdom to put in place a plan for mankind to live well with Him. God also put in place instructions or institutions for man. Since He is the Creator, we would expect Him to do that. His overall purpose is for man to be His representative to take care of creation, all of it. This is called responsible dominion and it is the first institution. And the ones He gave next are to help mankind fulfil that very first institution.

You see, God told man to multiply and fill the earth. In other words, he wanted more people to take care of every part of the earth. His plan was for people to be all over the world, making good use of creation, enjoying it and taking care of it. To do this, God designed two other institutions: marriage and family. Through marriage, a husband and wife are to work in partnership to be good stewards of creation. And through a husband and wife, more people can be created to fill the planet. This is God's plan.

God records for us how He will ultimately fulfil His design for mankind and the world. Man may rebel but rebelling from God's good plans results in heartache and misery. Man may refuse to acknowledge God's design and institutions. Mankind may even declare that they can do whatever they want and redesign or even throw away these institutions, but then, we will face the consequences of violating God's plans and designs for creation.

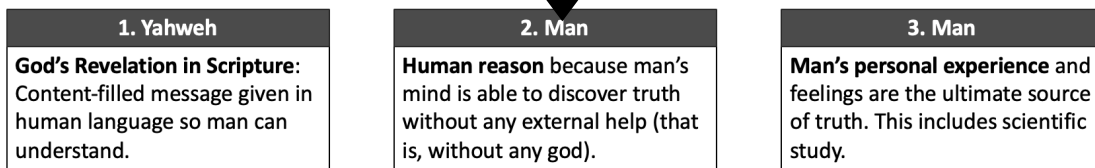
For me, when I came to learn about God and His plans for creation, I am learning that submitting to God's plans and designs results in joy. It's true, my sinful human self often makes mistakes and rebels but I am thankful we have a patient God.

Statement 3: Human beings have unlimited potential, and most of us are just scratching the surface of our powers. We simply need to learn how to harness our potential while setting aside negative thinking that drags us down.

Step 2: Identify the assumptions

- Humans are masters of our own fates.
- Everything is in a person’s mind. If a person can control their mind and think positive thoughts, they will be able to achieve anything they want.

Step 3: Identify the source of truth behind the idea



Step 4: Identify the type of logic used

	PAGAN WORLDVIEW	BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW
➔	1. Continuity of Being (A scale or continuum) gods — man — nature	1. Creator-Creature Distinction One God Man Nature
➔	2. Impersonal Fate and Chance	2. Personal Sovereign God
➔	3. Ultimate authority: Self	3. Ultimate authority: God

Step 5: Rephrase the idea within the Bible’s framework

Step 6: Understand the Bible’s viewpoint in responding to the rephrased idea

The Pagan View (What is said, rephrased)	The Biblical View (Truths we need to know— Summarised)
a. We can be anything and everything we want to be. We are in control.	Creator-creature distinction: Yahweh is the sovereign God. He is infinite and in control of everything. Mankind is not god. Man is finite and not in control of everything. Man is a creature that God created and will never “level-up” to be god. Yahweh is sovereign over the weather, climate, where we are born, which era we are born into, who our family is, our health, our safety in travel, etc. We are not in real control of even the basic things in life.
b. When we underperform or don’t reach our full potential, it is because we are not controlling our minds enough.	Adam and Eve, Abraham, King David, King Solomon, Holy Spirit, Fall of Satan and man: As Creator-God, Yahweh made each person different. We are not copies of each other in talent, personality, likes and dislikes. Even Christians have different spiritual gifts from God. When in our pride, we “fight” against God on what we were created for and we are not content with how He has made us, we end up in sin, just as Lucifer and Adam and Eve had done. We sometimes forget that because of the Fall, our minds also became fallen (we are illogical, irrational and sinful). To think that we can achieve anything with our fallen minds is in itself pride. This thinking is also without reason and logic.

Statement 3: Example of a biblical response

We like the idea that mankind is inherently good and that each person's potential is limitless. While it is true that each person has a lot of potential, we must also recognise a truth about humans. We are created creatures. We are created by an infinite, all-knowing, all-powerful God. He is the One without limit. He can do anything compatible with His character and His plans for what He created will never be thwarted.

He records for us in the Bible that each one of us is created to be finite. Though we are made to reflect His glory, we are very much limited. But He knows each one of us and He does have plans for each one of us. We can learn who He is, what He is like, and how we can have a relationship with Him. And once we do have that relationship, we can certainly learn what He has in mind for us. That is when our lives find purpose and joy, when we follow the design and plans that our Creator has for each of us.

When we think that we can be like the Creator, we are being proud and rebellious. The Bible explains the results of those who reject and rebel against their good and loving Creator. For me, I am learning to seek His will in all areas of my life. I find that whenever I try to take God's place and do things my way or seek my own goals, I end up getting hurt or feeling lost. My life loses meaning. Thinking that I'm in full control of my life is foolish and scary. So much of life is out of my control. I can't control the weather, the economy, the global situation. I can't even control the random events that happen to me each day.

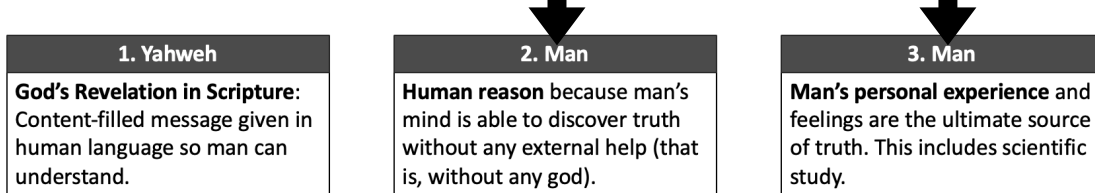
But when I seek the God who created me, I can rest easy. He is infinite and He is in control. When I trust His plans for me, I find purpose and meaning. It settles my heart when I know I am exactly where God plans for me to be.

Statement 4: Governments are put in place to decide what is right and wrong for society. The laws it creates are based on the values of the people. So the true ultimate authority for society is the people themselves. This is most clearly seen during elections.

Step 2: Identify the assumptions

- Governments are a man-made institution.
- Man has the ability and wisdom to determine right and wrong and to create good laws.
- The definition of “good laws” is whatever the majority of people decide is good.

Step 3: Identify the source of truth behind the idea



Step 4: Identify the type of logic used

	PAGAN WORLDVIEW		BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW
	1. Continuity of Being (A scale or continuum) gods — man — nature		1. Creator-Creature Distinction One God Man Nature
➡	2. Impersonal Fate and Chance		2. Personal Sovereign God
➡	3. Ultimate authority: Self		3. Ultimate authority: God

Step 5: Rephrase the idea within the Bible's framework

Step 6: Understand the Bible's viewpoint in responding to the rephrased idea

The Pagan View (What is said, rephrased)	The Biblical View (Truths we need to know—Summarised)
<p>a. Man created governments to determine right from wrong and to be the control and “conscience” of society.</p> <p>b. Governments know best the laws to make because they follow the will and desires of the people. A good society is where the government listens to the people.</p>	<p>Flood, Babel, The Law: Government was not man's idea. It was God's. After the Flood, God established capital punishment and He established the governmental structure to oversee this. The job of the government is to limit evil. Governments were never meant to be the final authority on what is right and wrong.</p> <p>The Law, Conquest and Settlement, Kingdom of God: God is the only appropriate Lawgiver. This was why Israel was given instructions on enforcing the law (executive power) and applying the law (judicial power), but not making the law (legislative power). The wisest thing that mankind can do is to follow the spirit of the law that God gave. Fallen mankind always thinks they know best. But the Bible describes great chaos and immorality when people do whatever they want. Fallen mankind is not able to determine right and wrong. The intent of fallen mankind's heart is always sinful. In the Millennial Kingdom, the world is run very well when Jesus is King of the world, ruling from Jerusalem. He is the lawgiver and law enforcer. God is the One who sets up this very good government.</p>

Statement 4: Example of a biblical response

Many people think that when humans organised themselves into groups and societies, they created governments to help rule and guide how all the people live together. This type of thinking is based on the idea that government is a man-made institution.

But the Bible tells us where the idea of government came from. The Bible explains that when mankind was innocent and obedient to God, God directed mankind. But after mankind rebelled, the intentions of mankind were consistently evil. So God introduced government to help slow down the spread of evil.

The clearest example of this was when God gave the chosen nation of Israel its laws. God's laws are comprehensive. They cover all areas of life: from agriculture, economics, hygiene and sanitation, to how families should function and more. God is the ultimate lawgiver because only He is perfect and sinless.

One of the interesting things about Israel is that while it had an executive branch in the form of the king, and a judicial branch in the form of judges, it did not have a legislative branch. Israel could not make new laws. There was no need to since the perfect lawgiver had given Israel instructions on how to run the nation. The government was God's idea, based on His perfect standards. He gave good laws because only He is perfectly good.

Today, many governments are based on the majority opinion of fallen mankind. Imagine, it is the 51% who decides what's right and what's wrong. Sinful mankind is very arrogant to think they can create a good society. Then there are governments who rely on a dictator! It is dangerous when governments are based on sinful mankind's thoughts and desires.

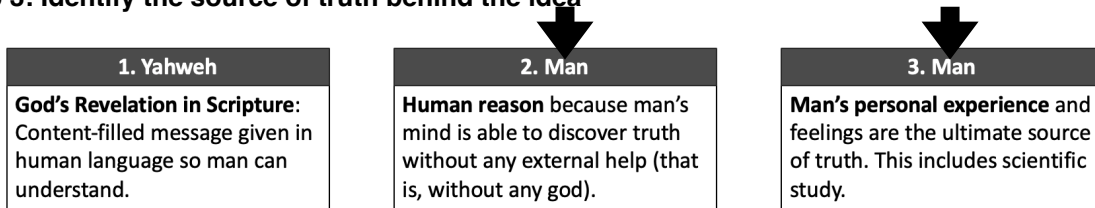
The Bible does talk about how one day in the future, God will bring in a perfect government who will rule with peace, righteousness and prosperity for all. This government will be headed up by Jesus and His will be a worldwide government. We can trust Jesus to rule well because He is the all-knowing, all-powerful, Creator-God Himself.

Statement 5: Mankind is the cause of the sorry state of the environment. Through pollution, mass killing of animals and abuse of natural resources, we are destroying the earth. If we continue like this, there will be no earth left for anyone. It's time we stop our selfishness and let mother nature heal herself. The animals of this world have the right to a healthy planet. What gives us the right to abuse the earth?

Step 2: Identify the assumptions

- Mankind's irresponsible lifestyles and actions are destroying the earth.
- Nature ("mother nature") has the ability to thrive if left on its own.
- Nature has rights. Animals have rights. Mankind has no right to the earth.

Step 3: Identify the source of truth behind the idea



Step 4: Identify the type of logic used

	PAGAN WORLDVIEW	BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW
➔	1. Continuity of Being (A scale or continuum) gods — man — nature	1. Creator-Creature Distinction One God Man Nature
	2. Impersonal Fate and Chance	2. Personal Sovereign God
➔	3. Ultimate authority: Self	3. Ultimate authority: God

Step 5: Rephrase the idea within the Bible's framework

Step 6: Understand the Bible's viewpoint in responding to the rephrased idea

The Pagan View (What is said, rephrased)	The Biblical View (Truths we need to know—Summarised)
<p>a. Man has the power to heal or destroy the earth based on their lifestyle choices.</p> <p>b. Nature has the right to be left alone without man's interference and animals have rights to live as they want. Man has no rights over the world.</p>	<p>Creation, Divine Institutions, Fall, Tribulation, Separation of Good and Evil, Kingdom of God: God gave man the role of under-lord. Man was supposed to exercise responsible dominion and rule over nature and take care of the animals. Mankind was given rights over the world by God. So when man fell, all nature fell as well. Man IS responsible for the state of nature today, but it is WAY more than just about their lifestyle choices. Sin destroyed man and nature. Even responsible living in a fallen world is not enough to "heal" the world. Mankind needs a Saviour to redeem them from fallenness (sin, selfishness, greed, etc., that impact the way they live and the world) and to redeem the whole earth. Man is not this Saviour.</p> <p>The Bible says that Jesus is the Only Saviour. He will judge evil mankind and in doing so, He will utterly destroy this world at the Tribulation. Then Jesus will bring in the Kingdom, a renewed world where He will guide glorified man to finally be the perfect under-lord.</p>

Statement 5: Example of a biblical response

Discussions about the environment are not necessarily driven by science and logic. It is driven by a worldview that treats mankind as just another creature. But the biblical worldview gives us a different insight.

The Creator-God who made this universe and this world tells us two very important pieces of information. The first is that He created the world and it belongs to Him. And He created mankind to be His representative. Mankind is different from everything else in the world. Man is not just another animal on planet earth. Rather, mankind is God's representative, ruling and taking care of the world on God's behalf.

The second piece of critical information is that when mankind rebelled against their Creator, mankind fell and became corrupted. The Bible describes it as having a sin nature. But not only that, the world that mankind was responsible for also became corrupted. So is mankind responsible for the bad state of the world? Yes, but it's not because people insist on burning fossil fuels or because they refuse to recycle. Rather, mankind's rebellion against God is the cause of the disastrous state of the planet today. We are responsible for death, sickness and even natural disasters. Our rebellion against our Creator-God caused all of this. We are far more responsible than we would like to admit.

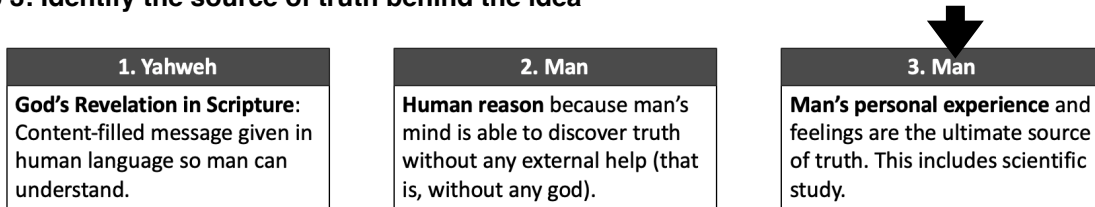
Since we are the creatures, we are not able to save the world. Only the Creator is able to save the world that He made. In the Bible, God describes how He will do it. He explained first how He can save mankind and He explains how He will save the planet by renewing it. Because He is all-powerful, He can do it. Because He is all-loving, He will do it. The question is: Will we trust Him to do it? Or will we continue in rebellion and believe we can save ourselves and our planet? For me, having studied the Bible that God recorded for us, I've come to trust Him for the solution.

Statement 6: Christianity helps people. I see lots of Christians helping others. They are just like other people who want to do good. For example, Alcoholics Anonymous also helps people. They are all the same.

Step 2: Identify the assumptions

- All kinds of “help” or doing good is the same and of the same value.
- It doesn’t really matter what problem is actually being solved.
- Christianity is about being a good person and helping others.

Step 3: Identify the source of truth behind the idea



Step 4: Identify the type of logic used

PAGAN WORLDVIEW	BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW
1. Continuity of Being (A scale or continuum) gods — man — nature	1. Creator-Creature Distinction One God Man Nature
➔ 2. Impersonal Fate and Chance	2. Personal Sovereign God
3. Ultimate authority: Self	3. Ultimate authority: God

Step 5: Rephrase the idea within the Bible’s framework

Step 6: Understand the Bible’s viewpoint in responding to the rephrased idea

The Pagan View (What is said, rephrased)	The Biblical View (Truths we need to know—Summarised)
a. Whatever problems people have, it’s good when other people try and help.	Creation, Fall, Jesus’ 1st and 2nd Coming, Final Judgment: The main problem of mankind is that we are all separated from the Holy God and are bound for eternity in the lake of fire. This is a massive problem that we cannot solve by ourselves. Sinful mankind cannot solve this problem. No amount of good works or nice thoughts can appease the justice of the righteous God who has been offended by our sin and rebellion. Knowing the problem is critical to understanding what the solution needs to be.
b. Christianity teaches people how to be good, but so do other organisations like Alcoholics Anonymous. It’s good when people just want to be “good” people. That’s all that matters.	Exodus, Conquest and Settlement, King David, King Solomon, Decline of Israel and Judah, Exile, Holy Spirit, The Church Age: Being a Christian is about placing our faith in Jesus to save us from this sin-problem that we have. Only after we place our faith in Him and are justified (made righteous by God), then sanctification (being made holy or “good”) comes into the picture. Christianity is not about moral education. It is about acknowledging that we are sinners in need of a Saviour. Whatever “good” people might do on earth, it just addresses the symptoms of sin. They are not dealing with matters of eternal death.

Statement 6: Example of a biblical response

Yes, it's true that Christians help others. All throughout history, there are countless stories of how Christians have changed the world by helping others. It was Christians who first started hospitals and orphanages. There are also countless Christians who risk their lives, even today, to save others.

There are also many accounts of non-Christians striving to help others. But there is a big difference in the motivation between non-Christians and Christians. Non-Christians are looking at help in a temporary way. They are only looking at this life.

But Christians recognise there is a larger problem at stake. The Bible tells us that God created mankind to have a relationship with Him. But mankind rebelled early on in history and this rebellion has caused a separation between God and man. Man now has a sin problem that doesn't just last within our lifetimes. God tells us that man's spirit lives forever and so after death, rebellious mankind will continue to live in separation from the God that they have rejected.

Christians are the ones who have turned to God for His solution on how to be permanently reconciled to Him. And so now, they are compelled to help others understand that God also offers them reconciliation. This reconciliation has eternal consequences. If we trust God to take care of our sin problem, we can live eternally with God and enjoy Him.

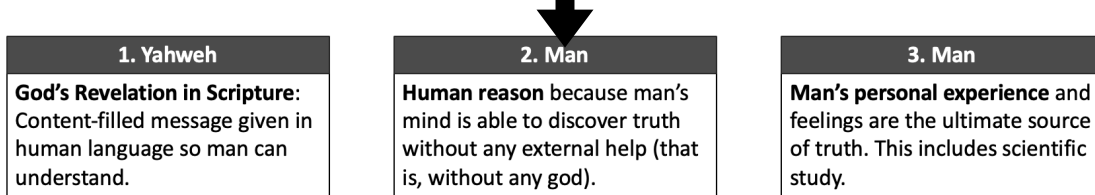
This desire to help others be reconciled to God is what motivates Christians to help others. Helping people through their current troubles is good and necessary and God commands it. But with it, there is the deeper desire to share the good news that the Creator-God of the universe is offering a permanent and eternal solution to sin and suffering. Christians are offering the good news that they themselves have received.

Statement 7: Deep in every human soul, there is good. This desire for good is what powers the universe. When we desire to do good to others, the universe will help us. This is why it's important to do good things for others. The good will come back to us.

Step 2: Identify the assumptions

- Man is born naturally good.
- What runs the universe is a force that can be controlled or manipulated by man's sincerity and good intentions.
- When mankind does good, the universe is obligated to repay or reward mankind with good.

Step 3: Identify the source of truth behind the idea



Step 4: Identify the type of logic used

PAGAN WORLDVIEW	BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW
1. Continuity of Being (A scale or continuum) gods — man — nature	1. Creator-Creature Distinction One God Man Nature
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Step 5: Rephrase the idea within the Bible's framework

Step 6: Understand the Bible's viewpoint in responding to the rephrased idea

The Pagan View (What is said, rephrased)	The Biblical View (Truths we need to know— Summarised)
a. Everyone is born good and there is good in everyone.	Fall, The Law, Old Testament history of man's behaviour, Jesus' birth, Separation of good and evil: After the Fall, no man is good. The Bible says that all are born with Adam's imputed sin and a sin nature and all commit personal sin. The standard of righteousness on what is "good" is given by God and all mankind has fallen short of His standard.
b. If we want a good life, we need to do good to others, so that the impersonal force that is called the universe, will be obligated to return good to us. This is how we control the kind of life we have.	Creator-creature distinction, Job, Tribulation, Jesus' 2nd Coming, Kingdom of God, Final Judgment: The universe was created and is run by the sovereign God, Yahweh. He is not an impersonal force. And He does not owe mankind anything. Anything He does for mankind is out of His grace and mercy. He is not manipulatable. He dictates the rules, not man. Even though God gave man free will, God is still sovereign. So even being a Christian does not "guarantee a good life" in the way pagans define "a good life". Job, a man of God, went through deep trials and suffering. In fact, there are many reasons for suffering (Lesson 19). The sure hope and certainty Christians have is that they will enjoy a wonderful eternity with their good God.

Statement 7: Example of a biblical response

Think about this for a moment. Every time the government comes up with a law, what happens? People try to find a loophole! Or if someone comes up with a plan or programme to help others, what happens? People abuse the plan and try to maximise the benefits for themselves!

We would like to think that deep down in every person's heart, everyone is inherently good. But that is simply not true. Just look at any baby. Which word do you think babies learn first: "yes" or "no"? Most times, it's "no", isn't it?

The Bible tells us the reason for this. When God first created mankind, He made man and woman innocent. There was no flaw in them. They were actually good. God gave this first man and woman free will so they could decide to love and obey God, or they could choose to rebel. God tells us that they chose to rebel. In doing this, they corrupted themselves and this corrupted nature is known as the sin nature. Since that time, every person born has this same corrupted sin nature that makes people inherently sinful! It's unfortunate but it is true.

But God didn't leave it there. If you read the Bible, you will see the unfolding of God's plan to rescue mankind. He had a plan since the beginning to solve this sin problem. I can explain more, but very briefly, God Himself provided a solution to the problem. He came as Jesus and as part of that solution, Jesus takes away man's eternal death penalty by dying as man's substitute. And for all who trust Jesus to do this for them, He also put His Spirit into them. The Spirit of Jesus works to overcome the sin nature in every believer.

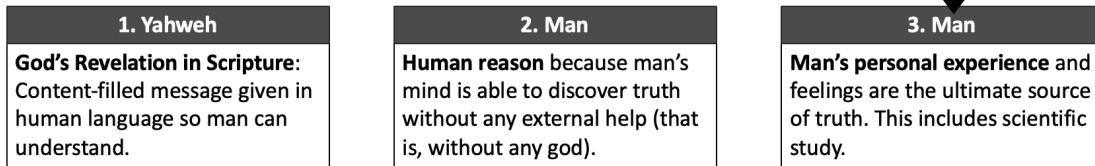
Now, God has a plan to renew the whole earth and ensure that all who trust Him will live with Him on a renewed earth where everything is put right again. But while we wait on this corrupted earth, He tells us in the Bible that while He is with us through every situation, our current life is not guaranteed to be peaceful and prosperous. Rather, He asks Christians to trust Him both through the good times and the bad because as God, He has good purposes for every life situation. The world is not random or controlled by unknown forces, but is intimately directed by the Creator-God who made the world.

Statement 8: Education is the key to change the world. We know how education gives opportunities to the poor, especially the girls. When education is widespread, the problems of society will start to disappear. Education provides opportunities for work; it creates better governments and societies; it increases understanding about the world and ourselves; and it deepens empathy for each other.

Step 2: Identify the assumptions

- The world’s problems all stem from illiteracy and a lack of education.
- Poverty and sin can be wiped out by education.

Step 3: Identify the source of truth behind the idea



Step 4: Identify the type of logic used

PAGAN WORLDVIEW	BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW
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Step 5: Rephrase the idea within the Bible’s framework

Step 6: Understand the Bible’s viewpoint in responding to the rephrased idea

The Pagan View (What is said, rephrased)	The Biblical View (Truths we need to know – Summarised)
a. All the world’s problems, including sin, can be solved by education. Education is the saviour of mankind.	<p>Solomon’s Golden Era, Kingdom of God: In the thousand-year Millennium when King Jesus is ruling the world from Jerusalem, mankind will not lack anything. They will have access to all the wisdom and learning they need. Yet, when Satan is released from the abyss, he manages to reveal that the hearts of countless humans are actually wicked. They never believed in Jesus and when given the opportunity, they show their wickedness in rebellion and war against King Jesus. God is showing that no external circumstance can change the heart of wicked man. Education will just create literate or “smarter” sinful man. But they will still be wicked, selfish, proud and abusive.</p> <p>Even King Solomon, gifted by God to be the wisest (most “educated”) man who ever lived, turned his heart against God. He was disobedient, rebellious and he tried to secure his own kingdom through man-made plans.</p> <p>There is absolutely no Saviour for mankind and the world but Jesus alone. His Holy Spirit living in people’s hearts is the only thing that can start the change in mankind.</p>

Statement 8: Example of a biblical response

It is true that education can do wonders. In fact, when you read the history of missionaries going into areas where people are not literate, one of the first things these missionaries help with is education. The main reason for this is because God chose to communicate His truth and history to us through the written word and so in order to help people learn about God, missionaries often began by teaching people how to read and write. Sometimes, they have to create written forms of languages that have no written form.

But the Bible tells us that the problem of mankind is not a lack of education. Rather, mankind has a sin problem. In every person's heart, there is a sin nature that first of all causes people to reject and rebel against the God who created them. This sin nature also causes people to be proud and selfish and to hurt each other.

When we look at societies all across the world, we see there is sin and evil in each and every one of them. We tend to talk about "third-world" problems and how education can solve these issues. Education can help but it doesn't solve man's sin nature. In "first-world" countries, where education is easily available and many people go to school, there are just as many problems. Some "first-world" problems are even more sophisticated and complex because everyone is educated! So education cannot save mankind!

The Bible says we need spiritual heart surgery. We need to be transformed by a Saviour. That Saviour is Jesus, who is God Himself. Jesus offers salvation on several levels. One of them is that He will transform our hearts so that we are no longer rebellious but are willing to love and obey God. The Bible tells us of the future when the earth will be filled with people who do have clean and righteous hearts. With people like these who love God, society will truly be transformed. But it has to be God doing it, working at the level of the human heart.

For me, that actually takes away a lot of pressure. I don't have the solution to make the world a better place. I don't have to rely on other people to make the world a better place. God asks us to trust Him to do it. My job is to love and obey God and cooperate with His plans.

Endnotes

Page 4: The first image is a Plato detail from "The School of Athens" by Raphael. 1509. Public domain work. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sanzio_01_Plato_Aristotle.jpg (Accessed 14 Dec 2020.)

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