Let's start today by talking about the use and the misuse of some really important words and phrases. Take the word "Christian"—as we've discussed before—where the followers of Jesus at the Church in Antioch in the book of Acts were derisively labeled *Christians* by scoffers because that term meant "little anointed ones." So, this word *Christian* was originally meant to be condescending and demeaning, but that intent was completely turned on its head by those Jesus-followers at Antioch such that the label "Christian" became a badge of honor for them in that ground-breaking time and place.

But over the many centuries since, the word *Christian* has ultimately come to mean whatever the eyes of any particular beholder want the word to mean! That's happened because people have self-defined themselves as "Christians" in the uniquely-chosen ways they want the word "Christian" to mean—from Catholics to Mormons to Baptists! And that's also true for unbelievers who think they're Christians simply because they live in the United States and embrace some cultural aspects they count as Christian!

In these ways, a great many individuals claim the same broad label "Christian" even though they have very different beliefs and behaviors and traditions—*yes, even very different hearts and mindsets that are at very significant odds with one another.* The overall reality is, people often gravitate to powerful labels like "Christian" because, in some circles at least, that carries a highly-desired measure of perceived stature or knowledge or commitment. So, what's the savvy approach for all of us in response to that? Well, we should always be vigilant and discerning about important word usage that can and does vary significantly.

Another example of a word-usage varying widely in the modern church world is the word "evangelical." The early usage of the term *evangelical* definitionally meant a born-again believer who was seriously active in sharing the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ unto salvation and eternal life. But here's the thing: do folks today who label themselves as evangelicals *actually evangelize* with the Gospel of Christ?

But, nowadays, in a place like America, the word *evangelical* often means someone who holds and expresses specific opinions on volatile political issues like marriage or genders or abortion or immigration. And, quite sadly, many people who actually consider themselves "evangelical" largely agree with that kind of political definition as correct—even while rarely, if ever, proclaiming the good news of the Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). Yeah, nowadays we find the usage of the word *evangelical* totally revised!

And so it also goes with another phrase where there is similar confusion: the phrase "Biblical worldview." If you do a little web research, you will find that, generally speaking, there is a somewhat consistent line of thinking about this phrase on a number of "Christian" websites. Here's a glimpse of a sample definition: *a Biblical worldview answers questions about God and His purposes by relying on God's revelation in the Bible rather than views of personal preference about life, culture, politics, and philosophy.* And, you know what, right off the bat, that seems to be a pretty good definition.

But the problem is that many folks then come up with significantly different conclusions about what a street-level definition of a "Biblical worldview" actually means in the current rough-and-tumble world of real life. Yes, as you hear these words, the reality is that all the various Christian churches, Christian universities, Christian leaders, and street-level Christians who would first largely agree with that definition *then come up with drastically different and often conflicting and combative positions about God and His character and His purposes.* Of course, then the list of contentious opinions that follow is endless!

The upshot of this is that so-called "Biblical worldviews" that are vigorously claimed by people often do look a whole lot different in Rome than in Colorado Springs…or Washington D.C. …or Moscow…or Calcutta…or Nigeria! And that fact is not only true—it is reliably often changing in any given week…in any given year…in any given century over the past couple of thousand years! That's right: assertions about supposedly-anchored Biblical worldviews vary widely…and they don't just vary widely, but wildly!

The reason this is important is that the phrase *Biblical worldview* often tends to comes up in debates in order to gain an advantage in a discussion about politics or culture issues. Unsurprisingly, it seems that,

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quite often, people like to claim the authority of the Bible when they are really just giving their opinions. But don't we all do that…in some way or another? *It's just that all too often, folks get their opinions confused and totally conflated with God's core views and priorities!* Having taught politics over a number of years, I'm compelled to address this issue, especially when two serious believers on completely different sides of a key political issue both claim a governing Biblical worldview! Let's dig in for a minute…

First, we should always start with this anchor from 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV): "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." So far, so good.

But God's revelation in the Bible reached a whole new level of completion with the New Covenant. The writer of the book of Hebrews says "…Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. …In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete." (Hebrews 8:6-7,13)

Here's the extraordinary thing about that. The Holy Spirit is teaching us through these Scriptures that the New Covenant is superior, yes, that New Covenant is the covenant found only through the Cross of Christ. When Nicodemus, a teacher of the law, sought Jesus out in the dark of the night, he was told by Jesus that to enter the Kingdom of God, you must be born again…born of water and of the Spirit! (John 3) Wow, while Old Testament Abrahamic and Davidic covenants were in fulfilled and continued in Christ, the writer to the Hebrews explains that the Mosaic law covenant is lesser.

But the reality is that many Christians harbor the illusion that the key to their holiness is to keep the Mosaic law…in fact, to keep the law better than other people do! And that can often supposedly become a "gotcha" approach to political and cultural ideas and policies. But may I be blunt here, by quoting Paul?

The reality is that all have sinned, as Paul wrote in Romans 3:23, all have "fallen short of the glory of God." What the Bible *doesn't* say to us is that it's only "*others* who have fallen short of the glory of God and we need to fix their virtues via political power and cultural rules." No, there's only one real answer to sin: Christ and Him crucified. Even so, Paul went more deeply into this very important framework in two ways.

In Colossians 1:13-14, Paul wrote this to believers: "[Our Father in heaven] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Then, to the believers in Phillipi, Paul takes it to the level of current citizenship! Paul writes that "…our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." (3:20)

So, when some people so often call on their personal "Biblical worldview" that relies on the Old Covenant as the key authority for political and cultural discussions, they often have missed the central message of the New Covenant. In fact, they neglect core actions that Jesus told all His true disciples to obey: "to love God and love their neighbors as themselves" as well as "to go forth and make disciples" worldwide. That means we are to make disciples *of Christ…*not disciples of Moses or our favorite theologians or politicians!

Yes, indeed, we are to be true evangelists and believers focused on making disciples of Christ unto salvation and eternal life! Then, Paul instructs believers that "we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20) *We're not primarily ambassadors for supposedly better politics or culture—but for Christ!* And that means we are ambassadors for reconciling individuals to God, not supposedly reconciling nation-states to God.

Just like the New Covenant is a better covenant, a better worldview can be rightly labeled as a "Kingdom worldview" with its eternal King Jesus, now and forever! And that astutely narrows the Biblical-worldview landscape to God's true purposes and "our Savior's desire that all people worldwide be saved." (1 Timothy 2:4) The truth is, Jesus freshly revealed a full *Kingdom worldview* at the Cross. And it's as fresh and needed now as ever. And Jesus Himself gave the final Word: "Seek first the Kingdom of God…" That's stunning!

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A&A: Application & Action

1. Why do you think so many people who identify as Christian enjoy trying to change behaviors through power politics rather than spending their effort to proclaim the joyous good news of the Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24)? Discuss.

2. Does your church tend to lapse into an Old-Covenant-law worldview as of primary importance as opposed to the better New-Covenant "Kingdom worldview" that the letters to the Hebrews specifically directs us to? Discuss.

3. Do you sometimes find yourself tending to an Old-Covenant-law worldview as of primary importance as opposed to the better New-Covenant "Kingdom worldview" that the letter to the Hebrews specifically directs us to? Discuss.

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