

# Three Battlefronts: The World

by Scott Moreau

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*Scott Moreau's sermon explores the complexities of worldview and its critical role in understanding spiritual warfare and cultural interactions.*

**Duration:** 52:34

**Scripture:** Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, Matthew 6:33, Luke 14:23, John 15:15, Romans 12:2, Ephesians 6:12, James 4:7

**Topics:** "World"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about American students visiting a foreign country and taking pictures of chickens in a shop. The shopkeeper, who was a believer, observed their actions and could tell which shopkeepers were not believers based on their reactions. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding worldviews and how they shape our interpretation of events. They also highlight the significance of being aware of our own worldview and how it influences our responses to difficult situations.

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## Transcript

Father, how we do thank you for this opportunity to glorify you, to be together, to learn more about the dynamics of how people view the world around them. I pray that this would not just be a time of intellectual development but of equipment for service and ministry to enable us to more readily understand the worldview of those to whom you have called us to minister and to be able to, as a result, minister more effectively to them. In this we pray, in Jesus' name, amen.

Over the course of the first few sessions we are going to have together, we're going to be dealing with the concept of the world, the flesh, and the devil, the three battlefronts, as it were, of spiritual warfare. One of the things I see on a regular basis in the spiritual warfare area, whether it's missionaries, whether it's people here in the United States, is limiting spiritual warfare to these three areas. And you'll notice there's something missing from the overhead that you have in your diagram.

And that's the point that we've got to keep in control. When we're looking at spiritual warfare, if we ignore God's sovereignty, we're missing 90% of the message. Because, frankly, Satan is empowered when we just focus on him and ignore the fact that God is sovereignly in control of all situations.

That's the foundation on which we will look at worldview and on which we will look at Satan today. We're not going to spend a lot of time dealing with God's sovereignty, but I can't leave you without focusing on

that as the heartbeat of what it is we're going to do. My initiation in worldview, my first term in Swaziland where I was teaching high school physics to students.

I was a physics major at a Christian college here in the United States and I was wonderfully well equipped for dealing with the world of atoms. But I was teaching atoms to a group of students who didn't believe in them because they didn't see them. Now, I knew atoms existed, they didn't.

But in my first year of class, all of a sudden one day a girl started getting the shakes, fell down out of her chair and was writhing on the floor. And, of course, I knew what was wrong with her. It was epilepsy.

It was a seizure, wasn't it? One of the things that was marvelously introduced to me by the Lord through this was that just because you can't see something, it doesn't mean it doesn't exist. Whether you're talking atoms or whether you're talking spirits. In this particular case in Swaziland, there's a well-known type of magical practice such that a young man would make sexual advances towards a girl.

She would, in all likelihood, refuse him. But when she did that, she ran a risk because he then would go to the diviner who would call up spirits who would afflict the girl along these lines until she let the boy have his way with her. And at that point in time, then he would decide whether he wanted to continue the relationship or not.

And what happened in my classroom was this girl was afflicted by this type of spirit. I didn't know how to handle that. Not in part because I hadn't received what I would call solid, good, biblical doctrinal teaching.

If you had asked me in terms of a theological test whether I believed in spirits, I would say, yes, I do. Do they operate in the world? Yes, they do. It was not a question of my theological worldview.

It was a question of what might be called my functional worldview. Yes, I believe in spirits, but don't let them come near me because I don't know what to do with them. Though, again, on a doctrinal test, I would have answered spirits exist and they are alive and well in the planet today and they are wanting to deal and get involved in the lives of people inappropriately.

But when it came time to recognizing it, when it happened in front of my face, I wanted to deny it. That's a function of worldview. And that's what we're going to spend some time looking at today.

What do we mean when we talk about worldview? A worldview, in effect, is an unthought through set of presuppositions on which we build the way we look at the world. That's where the word comes from, worldview. An interesting thing to note and possibly a commentary on the term, you really only find it in two arenas of discussion today.

One is in cultural anthropological circles. The other is in missiological circles. Outside of those, you see some discussion of it, but when I see sometimes theologians wrestling with worldview, it's much more just the cognitive side than it is the side that undergirds how we look at reality.

But some characteristics of worldview that I want to introduce here today. First, it is pre-theoretical in character. It's not necessarily coherent.

It's not necessarily non-contradictory. You can find incoherent thoughts in worldview. You can find contradictions.

You want to see contradictions in worldview, you look at the American baseball scene. It's one of the most superstitious arenas that you will find in the world of sports. Baseball players, as we see when we watch the World Series, who never clean their helmet.

Why? Because they're afraid their luck might change. Baseball players who wear the same set of pants, even when they get torn, they just sew them back up. John Krupp, the first baseman for the Philadelphia Phillies, is the case in point as I'm talking about that.

As a matter of fact, I have a fascinating article called *The Magic of Baseball*, written in an anthropology text that deals with superstitious and religious worldviews. People who chew gum on one side of their mouth when they win and decide, I can never switch that again. If you were to ask them, do you believe in superstition? Odds are pretty high they'd say no.

But then when you start saying, why do you chew your gum this way? Why do you wear only these shoes? Why do you have this ritual when you go up to the mound before you start a baseball game? Worldviews can be contradictory. In effect, they show where we are really coming from when we're looking at life. You want to know what worldviews are? It's been a delight to raise children having this as part of my background because when my children ask me why, very quickly they get into worldview questions.

Daddy, why do we do it this way? Or when I told my oldest when she was young, we need to wear clothing in public. Why daddy? Because that's the way we do it. When you get to the stage where you don't have an answer to the why question, typically you're at the foundation of worldview at that point in time.

Because it's polite. Because this is the way we do it. You're getting at some of the values that form the foundation of worldview.

And as I have noted, it's not necessarily coherent. It can even be contradictory. So when people start talking about theological presuppositions, we're not necessarily talking at the level of conscious thought.

This is what I will answer when I come to a doctrinal test. But we're talking about how people handle life when their toothpaste tube is squeezed. How I handled the girl who had the seizure who fell down during my class hour.

I called in the vice principal. We went and got her and put her down on a couch in his room which was adjoining the school. And I went back and I continued my lecture.

Because I didn't have a frame for dealing with that within the context of my functional worldview. It wasn't until later that I found out what the spiritual dynamics were. I would love to tell you that we cast the demon out and she came to Christ.

But no, that didn't happen. I wasn't adequately prepared to understand the dynamics of worldview. Even though I had had three months of good training of understanding other cultures, this issue was a non-issue in terms of our training.

It defines the way we lean into life. The approach we take. It provides for us both a map of life and a map for life.

A map that helps us interpret the events that take place in life as well as a map that tells us how life should go. Being completely objective. The fact is that worldview as part of the human dynamic makes it

impossible for us to be completely objective.

One of the areas I see much cultural discussion are exegetical discussions and those are appropriate. But there are hidden cultural agendas behind those exegetical discussions. And people tend to go to the text that make them feel comfortable or tend to find explanations that fit their worldview rather than allowing the text to speak for itself.

By the way, you'll notice I'm being very careful not to advocate what is the true biblical position. I'm simply noting that in an arena of discussion, worldview informs how we discuss it as much as biblical exegesis does. Sometimes the most dangerous person is the person who thinks they are just saying exactly what the Bible says.

When in reality they're putting forth their culture. Elmer Townes has written a wonderful article back in the 1970s in *Missiology* as a magazine, *The Missionary, Agent of Secularization*. Because too often missionaries carried with them a secular worldview without being aware of it and they imparted that secular worldview into the local churches that they planted and established.

And the churches in effect have imbibed of that and on the surface level would operate very much the same as a Western church does. By the way, the problem now is those churches have been operating that way for a generation or two or three and they have bought into it so soundly that when you try and reintroduce some traditional concepts of worldview and deal with some of the live issues, they refuse to accept it because the leaders have invested too much in the Western way of looking at Christianity. But if you look at the church in the African scene, it's the fastest growing church in terms of a continent wide in the world and has been almost this entire century.

It's estimated that by the year 2000 there will be over 300 million Christians in the continent of Africa. Now Christians is very broadly defined there. But the fastest growing segment of the African church is not the mainline mission founded denominations.

It's the independent churches. These days called the African initiated churches of which there are approximately 10,000 denominations of every stripe and variety that you can imagine. One of the reasons this is the fastest growing segment of the African church is because this part of the church addresses the real felt needs that people have.

The needs that come up when their toothpaste tube is squeezed. We'll talk about that in a minute. Foundationally, worldview is religious in character.

This is where I follow Harvey Kahn. He puts at the core of worldview the religious direction of the heart and I think that we as made in the image of God have this inbuilt, innate, whether you want to call it part of our genetic coding or not, it is part of our spiritual mapping as a people, we have a need for a relationship in the spiritual arena. Whether we pursue that with God or pursue that with spirits or pursue that in other areas of life, we have this inbuilt need.

Worldview helps us come to grips and formulate answers to the questions, where am I? What's the nature of time and space around me? Now don't get caught up just in the philosophical side of these questions. What is space? And as a physics major of course I want to talk about Planck constants and space being like a sponge and wormholes and all these Star Trek type of things. But the framework here is not as much that as the question of what is space.

What does it mean to have space which is a sacred space? What does it mean to have interpersonal space? What is too close, what is too far when I'm communicating with somebody? That's the interpersonal side of space but there is a religious side of space as well. Are there holy spaces such as the sanctuary? Such as this particular tree? Such as this particular ground? Cemeteries are wonderful examples of religious space. What types of activities are appropriate in cemeteries? Neighborhood barbecues? Absolutely not.

So our worldview will inform us how we deal with various types of spaces, how we understand them. We tend to carry our understanding of spaces when we go into a new culture and try and interpret the events of that culture in light of our understanding of spaces and the importance and the significance that they carry. That's just one example of spaces.

Time and space ties into where am I, who am I is the next area. What is the nature of human being? This ties into both existence and being. And those of you of course who are working in the Asian context are very well aware of this strong difference of the Hindu view of what it means to exist and to be as opposed to the Christian view.

Are we real? Are we part of a larger cosmic consciousness who through ignorance have lost sight of that and the goal of life is to re-merge with that consciousness? Or do we have independent existence apart from our Creator that has been granted and is continually given to us as an ongoing gift from the Creator? Why am I is the next question. What is the purpose for people in human history? I tie this into knowledge and logic as we see it in a worldview. Every worldview has its logic.

I'm leery of the term illogical. Maybe there are things that don't make sense in terms of our understanding of logic, but that doesn't mean they're illogical, they're following a different logic pattern. I think one of the most significant questions that is being asked in the contextualization literature today is, is there a single scriptural logic? For the philosophers among you, does the law of non-contradiction hold because God has established it or is it something that Western philosophers thought of? And that is a question of tremendous significance in the missionary arena, especially when you're among a people who have a different logic system and who operate on the constraints of relational logic.

For example, they have different priorities. When it comes time to saying yes, it's very difficult for them to avoid that. I had a Chinese student once say to me, so that's why Americans make me say no.

I said, explain what you mean. She said, I would go to their house and they would offer me some chicken and I would say yes, I would like some and so I would eat it and I would be full and they would say, would you like some more? And she said, then I would say yes, I would. And she was surprised because then they would give me some more.

In her cultural framework, it's not as much what you say as the way you say it that determines the meaning. And the way she said yes within her Chinese culture was communicating a resounding no. But her American hosts only listened to the words, they didn't know the nonverbal side of communication to look for.

She also told me that she never would have been able to come to Christ if she hadn't gotten her father's approval. And I said, how did your father approve of it? She said, we were at a crusade together, I looked at his eyes when the invitation was given and I knew it was okay for me to go forward. Not a word was spoken.

She also said when she was on a short term summer project, she returned to Hong Kong and she went with a group of American students and the first day in the marketplace, the American students were amazed by what they saw, live animals. You know, we're not used to that at Jewel or at Osco or any of our grocery, whatever, Piggly Wiggly, whatever part of the country you're from. We don't expect to go see chickens running around either back behind the butcher's counter or at the counter itself.

And so these American students, with great delight, saw this strangest in the other culture, got out their cameras and started taking pictures. She said the first thing she did, she stood back from them. In nonverbal communication, she was indicating I'm not part of them.

And she said she looked at the face of each shopkeeper and she could tell which shopkeeper at that point in time was lost to the gospel from these students because of their actions. She didn't have to talk with them. She could see it.

That ties into, in part, why am I, but how do I interpret the meanings of what I see going on around me? The American students were blissfully unaware of the impression they were creating, but she was extremely aware. And she knew the reality of what had happened in the lives of the shopkeepers when they saw the students taking pictures. Now, it is not just a map of life.

It is a map for life. It tells us what ought to be. It gives us a plan by which to live, a strategy to deal with, not just each day, but the events of each day.

The building up enough social security in the form of children and grandchildren to make sure that when you retire, you've got a living legacy to carry on after you. All cultures have frameworks for understanding what is success and how do I achieve it. And our worldview gives us scripts or schema or maps by which we understand how to deal with these issues in life.

Do you want to know what worldview is? Watch how people handle sickness or death. Don't give them a Sunday morning doctrinal questionnaire. Don't expect them to answer on a formal written exam what their real worldview is.

Watch them in the events of life that they face. Be with them at the funerals. See what is taking place as Amy Carmichael did to be a messenger of hope in what might, for them, be a hopeless situation.

Be a student of the squeezing of a tube. Not only can we find out our own worldview when our tube is squeezed, but we can see the worldviews of others as well, too. By the way, what's one of the ways we find out our worldview? Let me ask you a question.

This is a good question to ask a veteran missionaries. How many of you, when you get sick, call the doctor first or call the Lord first? It's a fascinating question, isn't it? Our worldview has conditioned us to believe that if the doctor can't handle it, then we go to the Lord because the Lord is there for problems that are too big for the doctors. Rather than recognizing God is there for all problems, in effect, it's almost a functional deistic approach to life.

So when we're looking at our own worldview, let's be aware of that, and that's one of the reasons, by the way, the Western missionary is seen as an agent of secularization. Because somebody gets sick, and in the African context, at least, nobody ever got sick without a reason behind it. And I'll get into this when I look at Satan's strategies.

In almost every case I've been able to identify, there will be relational conflict that will be tied into the reason. If we are aware of relational conflict, we have a wonderful tool for engaging in appropriate spiritual warfare in cross-cultural contexts. If we're aware that almost every form of divination I've ever seen deals either with the identity of the diviner, or it deals with a relational problem that led to a difficulty that caused people to go to the diviner to begin with, then I have a foundation for saying, yes, I can deal with the warfare issues and understand the demonic, but if I leave the relational issues unresolved, the problem's going to crop up again.

Over, and over, and over. So this is a major culture, and I think this is one of the reasons spiritual warfare has become a fad here in the United States. Those of you who are missionaries know what I mean.

In between furloughs, one of the questions you always ask is, what new fad is there going to be in the church when I come back? And I noticed a significant fad coming up with spiritual warfare, in part because of Peretti's books. By the way, I took a survey of my college students at the school where I teach, and I asked them, how many of you have heard of Peretti? 95% raised their hand. I said, how many of you can name two other authors in the arena of spiritual warfare? Nobody.

Nobody. One of the reasons Peretti was so popular was because he touched or tapped a vein that was present in the larger culture, not just in the church. But I would say what has happened in the American culture is we have shifted from a materialistic framework to almost an animistic framework, and that's one of the dangers I see taking place in the church right now, a return to a Christian animism.

I want to make sure that when the pendulum swings, we know where it needs to stop, rather than allowing it to swing too far. But that's often the case that happens, and that's one of the reasons you're seeing a plethora of writings, of books, of conferences. And I'm glad that spiritual warfare has finally become a topic of relevance here in the United States.

But my question is, how long will the fad last? I've heard that the publishers have already started slowing down in publishing books related to spiritual warfare. They feel they've tapped the market. I don't know whether that's true or not, but that's what I've heard from some of the sources I have at my institution.

Now, we all think, for example, 1% of the age group population goes to university. 1%. How important is it for them to pass their exams? As you have seen, there are exams at the end of primary school.

Exams usually, if they have a junior certificate level or a middle school level, exams at the end of that. If you fail the exam, that's it. You're done.

If you have connections or money, you might be able to re-sit for the exam. But every year, I taught 90 students up to 10th grade, and then they sat for an exam. And after that, we only had 30 students.

And in the two years I taught in Swaziland, in the public high school, we had two students go on to university. So we were beating the average. We were doubling the average.

Two out of about 65 students went. How important is education? It's seen as extremely important. And this is one of the reasons in the African context you find a lot of magical practices associated with passing exams.

People's tubes are being squeezed. Or sometimes, suddenly they will become oppressed when they're studying for exams. Whether we look at the spiritual diagnosis which says this might be one of Satan's

strategies, or the psychosocial diagnosis that says this person is preparing for failure, and if failure comes, they've got a ready-made excuse, the devil made me fail.

We've got to recognize this as a reality among the people. If we don't address it, they won't bring it up to us. The missionaries had a reputation from what I could see in Africa.

Limited exposure. Missionaries do not know how to deal with the spirit realm. Therefore, we don't talk to them about it.

It doesn't mean it doesn't exist. The missionaries, on the other hand, make the assumption if it were important, they would talk to us about it. I found on more than one occasion I had to prove to people that I was aware of the dynamics of the spirit realm were going on before they would begin to open up to me.

What do you think about witchcraft? Oh, there's no problem with witchcraft here. Why is it then every football club in this country has its own diviner to ensure its success? How do students get good grades on their exams? How do you ensure that you're going to succeed in business? And then they would start to say, oh yes, I know about all these things. And they would start to open up.

But in one sense, I had a reputation because of the color of my skin and because of my heritage that I didn't know how to deal with these things. And it's better left alone because the missionary will just kind of disparage it. We need to come to sensitivity with this in a scriptural framework, but also understand the world view of the people we're seeking to minister to.

I realized I have to take off my watch and look at it because we're not running on missionary time here. We're running on North American time. Okay.

Now, within the framework and the dynamics of world view is at the core of who we are, but it's changeable. It's malleable. When we become a new creature in Christ, we can take on a new world view.

It is not automatic that we take on a new world view, but we can. And part of our job as missionaries is to facilitate the development of an indigenous world view that is true to the scripture and insofar as is possible, still true to the culture, rather than importing our own world view and expecting them to have to follow that. How are world views constructed? This is something I haven't seen in the literature and I realize it's extremely important to understand.

How do we get a world view? What's involved with it? I'm going to really touch on quickly because I've noticed the time constraints that we're under. Five things that are used and the metaphor I take here is that of the artist's palette expressed in a variety of different ways. This gives you the idea that world view is not something mechanical.

It's something that constantly can be changed and is something that varies with the individual. But in all cultures, these things are parts that are present. First, I just touch on the genetic parameters.

In effect, we have a God-given set of genetic blueprints. We're like nobody else, which means she's hurt easily and can cry a long time when she's hurt. It's a wonderful gift of God because it can be used when people are hurting around her, she's going to be able to hurt with them.

She's the type who will stick with them when others would give up. It can also be used to cultivate an attitude of stubbornness and rebelliousness. Our desire in the framework of our daughter is to recognize

God has given her this set of blueprints.

We can work with those and develop them in a godly fashion to enable her to be operating in a godly way in this world. Secondly, is the image of God. Every human being is made in the image of God.

That is part of who we are, and as a result of that, that's why I say that powers or understanding of God is at the core of our world view. We all also have a life history. C and D are intimately intertwined.

You can't separate them. I've done it for the purpose of discussion because I'm following a linear format here, so I've laid them out for you this way. But our life history and our enculturation process, we were enculturated very early as to what is right and what is wrong.

How many choices do we give our children? My three-year-old comes down in the morning and I say, Anna, what would you like for breakfast? Would you like Pop-Tarts? And if so, what flavor would you like? Or would you like cereal? Do you want oatmeal? Do you want orange juice? Do you want milk? Do you want my own? Number one. Number two, variety is not only the spice of life, it is a right to which I am entitled. Therefore, I must have variety.

Or you could put it this way, I have variety, therefore I exist. Or I am not bored. This is one of the dynamics that we see here, but it's part of the thing that we do without thinking.

There can be very little colder and crueller to the African than taking a young baby and putting it in its own bed in its own room. Young babies in most of the third world sleep with their parents until they're three to six years old. They're there for instant needs being taken care of.

And we think, but how can you have privacy? That's not as much of an issue in other parts of the world because world view doesn't say it has to be the same type of issue. Instead for them, the cold idea, a child in a, you let your child cry to sleep. In cultures where children sleep with their parents, the average response time is six seconds to their crying.

And we as Americans say, but that's going to spoil the child. It means every time they cry their needs are met. Initially it means the child cries more, but eventually the relationship develops to such a stage that that crying is not seen as often.

Whereas in cultures where children sleep apart from the parents, the average response time is five to thirty minutes. What kind of world view does that inculcate in the child? You're on your own kid. See the foundations of Western individualism are not built on what the TV says.

They're built into the very fabric of how we live our lives and how we raise up our children. That's why I tie in life history and inculturation together. The life history is not only in the family, it's outside of the family, so is inculturation.

We also have a sinful or a transformed nature which impacts our concept of world view and how we look at the world. And lastly, I will simply note what might be called a foundational or a transformational grammar, the syntax of development of a world view. That's the paintbrush.

How we as individuals made in the image of God, take the inculturation process, the life history, the image of God, the genetic parameters, the sinful or transformed nature and paint a picture of our world. These all tie in together. It's a complex process.

If you think you understand world views, you need to study it another twenty years with me and I'll learn together with you. But at the same time, it's an exceedingly important process. Now, I'm not preaching relativism here.

I want to be very careful with that. We have one normative framework given to us by revelation, that is the scriptures. But each culture has its own means of understanding life and the world around it and the scriptures need to be made relevant to that people in that culture so that they can be able to develop worship forms that make sense to them and glorify God.

Patterns of church life that make sense to them and glorify God. Our church in Kenya had a stated starting time but no finishing time. We knew we were supposed to start at 1145 and a funny mix of things in the urban setting.

The pastor was always frustrated when people wouldn't come on time. He was a combo. He was an African pastor.

He was always frustrated with that but then he would also let the service run sometimes between 12 and 2.30. You never knew for sure when you were going to get out. And as Americans, we tended to think of the pastor as a time thief. But for the pastor, the idea is we're together.

We're worshipping the Lord. What is the issue of time? Do you have to schedule a relationship with God? That, by the way, is one of the things I give as advice to people in discipleship. Outside of the U.S., in third world cultures, please avoid scheduling discipleship.

Because then it's a business. You ever taken the time to drop in on somebody unannounced, unexpected, unplanned for? I had a student tell me, there is nothing I would love more than for you to come in to my house someday without me knowing you were going to come. Sit down and talk for three hours without telling me why you came and then leave.

Because that means you're my friend. Otherwise, it's business. So when we schedule dinner engagements, when we schedule let's get together and study the Bible, it's a business orientation rather than a friendship.

That one comes free of charge. That's not part of the lecture notes. But I think it's a critical thing for us to understand how worldview impacts discipleship in cross-cultural contexts.

I would suggest that the heartbeat of worldviews is power. And to use terminology that you find more in the literature these days, I'm going to talk a little bit about what I'm calling the geography of power scapes. Landscapes of power, how people view power and how that impacts their understanding of worldview and their relationship with God, which is a critical issue for us in spiritual warfare.

First, being made in God's image, people of every culture postulate deities to large pantheons of gods, to a high god who might be distant and removed, to ancestors who still participate with us in the family. Every culture builds its core around the powers and built on its understanding of powers, the correlative understandings of time, space, knowledge, logic, existence and being are enfolded as well, too. This is the core of worldview.

Again, not a coherent set of assumptions, but a set of assumptions by which we live in any event, and which carry us through life. But I would suggest that if we are to develop a solid biblical understanding and

culturally relevant approach to spiritual warfare, we need to understand the power scapes and the culture that we're seeking to minister to. In cross-cultural context, we can see, and this really ties into the biblical framework, two varieties of powers.

One are powers that are considered to be personal forces. I'm not laying these out as all biblical, gods, animated objects, metamorphosis, totemism and so on. I'm on page four of your notes right now.

But these are phenomena that are observed in cross-cultural context around the world. At the same time, there are also impersonal forces. Karma, which is built on your previous life, and which has nothing to do necessarily with how you live now, except for when you die and go on to your next life.

Then karma is going to get you. So if you ask the Hindu priest, as I did at a temple near my home, where do people, what do they do when they get sick? Because I was asking that question, what do they do with their toothpaste tube squeeze? He said the first thing that they have to understand is the reason they are sick is because they had bad karma from past lives. So it's all their fault.

But when they get sick, first they go to this particular god who opens the door for them to talk to the other gods. He's the gatekeeper god. Then they go to the right god to deal with that particular sickness.

That's where the foundation of worldview is found. What kind of powers do I access and what are there? You see, it's not always either or. Sometimes it's both and, the personal and the impersonal intertwining.

Just as we can look at gravity and electromagnetism as natural forces in the world, but God is superintending even the operation of those forces. Ultimately, our powerscape is a personal god. In every culture, each power will have its own sphere of operation, and that's what the next diagram is intended to portray.

If it works, it's okay. And I see that carried into the church. My wife had chronic asthma problems in Kenya.

And, of course, we know how to deal with it, don't we? We go to the doctor and get the right prescriptions and medications for it. Well, our house helper had a different idea. She said, you need to go see Mary Akatsa.

Well, who is Mary Akatsa? Mary Akatsa is a healer practicing in one of the slum areas in Nairobi. And she would have thousands of people come to see her. This is the same Mary Akatsa, and I've got the newspaper clippings if you want to see it, who brought Jesus to Nairobi, literally.

She said, Jesus is going to come. And she preached that for about a week, and people were excited, and suddenly a man showed up in a turban and a hat, and he disappeared at a bus stop. Now, whether he got on a bus or in a taxi or where he went, nobody knows for sure, but it was splashed across the front pages of the headlines.

This is the one my house helper, who was a member of an evangelical church, was saying to my wife, she needs to go to to be prayed for for healing. And I said, why go to Mary Akatsa? Because if it works, what's wrong with it? That's the attitude we see very often. We don't just see it, by the way, in the cross-cultural context.

I find that attitude in much of the spiritual warfare literature that I read these days. If it works, it must be right. One evangelical seminary professor talking about antenatal therapy, where he leads people through

the first nine months of their mother's pregnancy and has them pray, is there anything that happened during those nine months so we can pray warfare prayer against it, while they were in the womb? I said, wait a minute, where do we find scriptural warrant for this type of an approach? The attitude is taken, people are being helped by this, and that's what really counts, doesn't it? That's a world view.

Distance. Every culture will have an understanding of how we are to relate to powers. This, by the way, becomes a very important concept when we're looking at mission institutions and organizations and leaderships.

Some cultures have what is called large power distance approach. They will always be looking to make sure they know who is on top and who is on bottom. When you see sometimes Africans greeting each other and they're of the same tribe, they can spend from 15 minutes to an hour talking to each other, just finding out where they stand in relation to each other, so they know how to address each other, brother, uncle, and that defines for them the power setting.

By the way, you tend to see this in collective societies. Collective societies don't feel completely comfortable with egalitarianism. There will always be some form of a hierarchy, sometimes very minor, sometimes very pronounced in collective societies.

It is typically the more individualistic societies where we want to flatten everything out. But the social dynamics are this. There will be powers who will be in charge, and what is our relationship to the powers? Think of this when you think of Jesus as your buddy or your best friend.

Best friend carries certain connotations and baggage with it. Most people outside of the North American context, when they hear Americans talking about friendships, think of a buddy. American friendships are characterized as very quick to go deeply, but they stay at that level and never go any deeper.

American friendships tend to be characterized as shallow. So when they think of Jesus as my best friend and they hear it from an American, they think of the term buddy. That is confidence.

And I would say, what's right? Neither. There are times when in our relationship with God, we need to have what's called a small power distance approach. He is very personal.

I think Dr. Bubek shared wonderfully on this in terms of his worship experiences with the Lord. Tremendous dynamic times of deep personal worship and relationship with him. That is a low power distance approach.

When it comes time to spiritual warfare, though, there's a different issue, isn't there? We don't want that approach with Satan. Satan is under the authority of Christ. We share in his authority as seated with him.

So with Satan and his works, we exercise a large power distance approach. But you will see this not just in relation to powers, but also in relation to human institutions and religious institutions in a culture. If we understand their concepts of power distance, we can have an idea of how we need to enhance the ability to be on a lower power distance scale with God in terms of their interpersonal dynamics and relationship, but on a higher power distance scale with the powers.

Because we stand in authority over them. And we don't have to relate to them on an equal scale. I'm going to touch on a few ideas very quickly.

And that's point number five. Our world view becomes a front for spiritual warfare wherever it contradicts biblical teachings. I find very often in the North American church a form of pragmatic dualism.

That Satan is given an ascendancy that he doesn't deserve. You ask any American in the church who's stronger, God or Satan, and they'll probably give you the right answer. But when it comes to spiritual warfare issues, they say, no, I don't want to touch that.

They are intimidated out of the game because of a pragmatic dualism. Satan has made himself to look bigger than he is. And we'll talk about that in the afternoon sessions.

A second way our world view can become a front is when we buy into the conspiracy theories that refuse to acknowledge God's sovereignty. I see this on a regular basis. The implication being Satan is in control and God is not.

The first victim of ritual abuse that I talked with said to me, when Satan wants to get you, there's nothing you can do about it. That was her world view. That was how she approached life.

She had bought into the lie. That obviously needed to be changed, but when I see people, and I can name some authors, I'm going to avoid it. You especially see this in some of the New Age writings.

Anytime somebody has a rainbow sticker on their car, they must be a New Age adherent. That's a conspiracy theory that denies the sovereignty of God and the fact that he gave us the rainbow as a biblical symbol of his grace and his promise not to destroy mankind through a flood again. And when we allow God's sovereignty to be co-opted by conspiracy theories that are inappropriate, we're on the verge of losing the battle.

I am, by the way, a conspiracy theorist. You want to know my conspiracy? God's in control. I see a lot of people, just like dogs chasing their tail, looking for the Satanists in their church.

I'm not saying they don't exist, but I am saying the more energy and attention we give to Satan, Satanists infiltrating the church, they can be won to Christ. Isn't that neat? Isn't that neat? If we have that as our framework, it's much easier to deal with it than it is the idea they're here and they're going to take over and our church is going to have a split and it's all their fault. And I've seen this happen in too many churches.

Another way our worldview can be a front for spiritual warfare is when we use binding as a fetish rather than thanking God for his control and sovereignty in all situations. You ever met people who bind everything in sight? When the bottom line reality is Satan has been bound by Jesus on the cross, we are privileged to participate in that. But binding becomes a fetish, a magic charm, a Christian animistic approach to life.

That frightens me when I see that. And this is what I mean. Our larger culture has gone into more of a spiritistic direction and that's one of the things we need to watch out for.

The last thing I'll just touch on, I've got about three more, I'll try and pick up these in the afternoon session. The use of Satan or demons to deny my own responsibility. What a wonderful way to deny the fact that I did it.

By attributing it all to Satan, the devil made me do it. Or at times to use Satan's influence on my life as a means of gaining attention. You'll find some people who are claiming abuse because all of a sudden the

world focuses on them.

They're a victim. I'm not meaning to deny the reality of sexual abuse, of satanic ritual abuse, but we have to be aware that Satan wants to play that game as well and cause us to expend a lot of energy. You ever notice one thing? Those who have been accused as the abusers are rarely perceived to be innocent until proven guilty.

Typically they're assumed to be guilty. We need to be very careful with that. Now granted, we're not into the judicial system and trying to prove something in a court of law, but we have to walk carefully because churches have been torn apart by false accusations.

And I always have danger, and I'll give this as my closing point, with the testimony of a former Satanist. And you know why? Because Satan's the father of lies. When I hear a Satanist saying, this is how Satan wants to win the world, I say, how did you find that out? Well, he told me.

Oh? How did you know it's true? And they don't. You've always got to, and I'm not saying they're not sincere people. And they're not sincerely believing this is what they've heard.

But do you think Satan entrusts his strategy to any human being? Do you think Satan even knows what his strategy is? He's the author of chaos. He's the father of rebellion, the one who is by nature a liar. I'm not sure he understands his strategy except to lash out in pain and jealousy.

And we'll talk about that in the next hour. Let me close in prayer. Father, how I thank you for your control in all situations.

I thank you for the wonderful opportunity to start this session this morning with worship of the living King of Kings rather than focus on the enemy. We choose to focus on you, to trust you, and to allow you to work in our lives to develop in us a worldview that is in accord with biblical reality and that enables us to function freely as children of the King of Kings. In Jesus' name, amen.

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