

YEAR ONE

MY JOURNEY



MAN IN THE MIRROR

WELCOME TO MY JOURNEY

Man in the Mirror ('MIM') welcomes you to *My Journey*!

The American philosopher and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “*Life is a journey, not a destination.*”

The Apostle Paul compared our journey to a race, urging us to “*run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith*” (Hebrews 12:1-2). If we want to finish well, we must fix our eyes on Jesus.

No man can succeed alone on his journey through life. With that in mind, we have carefully curated *My Journey* to help you navigate your challenges as a man and disciple of Christ. We want to help you move beyond survival mode with the ultimate goal of *fighting the good fight, finishing the race, and keeping the faith.* (2 Timothy 4:7).

This workbook is Year One of a three-year curriculum structured for discussion in MIM Small Groups. Your group will help you reflect honestly, pursue God wholeheartedly, and live vibrantly. No matter where you are on your spiritual pilgrimage, *My Journey* will lead you into a season of building meaningful relationships that change lives and build the kingdom of God.

Through your MIM men's group, you will be encouraged to establish accountability with your fellow brothers and learn to engage in life-on-life discipleship. As part of MIM's mandate for “no man left behind”, you will learn to care, pray, and encourage one another to grow into spiritual maturity and Christlikeness.

Above all, by pointing each other to Christ, you will become a disciple and a disciple-maker—beginning in your own home.

So, buckle up, enjoy the ride, and have a great adventure!

The MIM Asia Team

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PATRICK MORLEY

Patrick Morley is the Founder of Man in the Mirror, a global men's ministry impacting thousands of churches and millions of men.

After building one of Florida's 100 largest privately held companies by the age of 35, Patrick Morley began his own journey in search for meaning, purpose, and a deeper relationship with God. In doing so, he started a weekly Bible study in a bar with a handful of guys in 1986—a study that now reaches thousands of men around the world every week.

Inspired and challenged by those studies and conversations, he wrote *The Man in the Mirror*, named one of the 100 most influential Christian books of the 20th century. The deep hunger he saw in men for a more authentic life led him to start *Man in the Mirror* as a men's ministry in 1986. Patrick says "the ministry of *Man in the Mirror* exists in answer to the prayers of all those wives, mothers, and grandmothers who have for decades been praying for the men in their lives."

Widely regarded as a leading authority on men's issues, Patrick has written 23 books and more than 750 articles—all focused on helping men solve their most compelling problems. His books have been translated into numerous languages and printed in 48 countries.

He graduated from the University of Central Florida, earned a PhD in management, completed postgraduate studies at Harvard Business School and Oxford University, and graduated from Reformed Theological Seminary. He and his wife live in Winter Park, FL. They have two married children and five grandchildren.

MAN IN THE MIRROR VISION & MISSION

Man in the Mirror equips Christian men around the world to engage in meaningful relationships that change lives and build the kingdom of God.

At Man in the Mirror, we want to see every man reflect honestly, pursue God wholeheartedly, and live vibrantly. Here's how:

PERSONAL

Creating and curating resources for men who want to live abundant lives in Christ.

ONE-ON-ONE

Inspiring and equipping mature Christian men to guide another man toward the goodness and grace of God.

GROUPS

Providing opportunities for men to connect with a group of brothers, where together they navigate the Christian life.

CHURCHES

Training, supporting, and consulting with men's leaders in local churches as they build disciple-making ministries.

For further information on Man in the Mirror ministry, please visit:

www.mimasia.org, www.maninthemirror.org and

Facebook: [maninthemirror.malaysia](https://www.facebook.com/maninthemirror.malaysia).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A work of this magnitude requires wisdom and expertise from many disciplines. It takes a team. I would especially like to thank the leadership, editorial, copyediting, and proofreading team of Robert Lim (MIM Asia Director), Rudeen Chua, and Harold Lean. I love you men—such an honor to work with you on this epic project. A special word of thanks also to James Tai for your outstanding design and layout. I'm deeply grateful to Mike Griffin who organized my trip to Beijing, Shanghai, Singapore, and Kuala Lumpur in 2016 that ended up launching MIM Asia.

The Man in the Mirror team in the U.S. has fully supported this ambitious global curriculum project. Special thanks to: Robert Lim for coming up with the idea for a global men's discipleship curriculum, Brett Clemmer for championing the idea, Pat Leupold who served as a liaison to Robert Lim, and Bruce Winters who was instrumental in getting this project off the ground. My literary agent, Erik Wolgemuth, worked tirelessly to ensure we crossed all the t's and dotted all the i's. I'm also grateful to Zondervan Publishing/HarperCollins, Moody Publishers, and Waterbrook/Penguin Random House for the rights to create this workbook series.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

MIM Press & MIM Asia

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ISBN: 979-8-9867859-2-9

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Cover Design & Content Layout: MIM Asia Resources
Printed in Malaysia

MIM SMALL GROUP OBJECTIVES

M & M (MISSIONAL & MULTIPLICATION)

MISSIONAL

To equip men through learning and engaging in meaningful relationships that lead to true discipleship in Christ.

MULTIPLICATION

To prepare and empower men in leading others toward biblical manhood and discipleship.

FIVE FOR CHRIST

Commit 5 names to Christ and pledge to lead them toward God through prayers and loving actions.

No.	Name	Relation
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____

MIM SMALL GROUP MEMBER'S COVENANT

MIM Small Group covenant to Christ and fellow brothers:

- To commit to spiritual growth by having regular personal devotional or quiet time with God, studying the Word, praying daily, worshipping, and serving others.
- To make it a priority to attend and be prompt to all meetings, to prepare for the meeting in advance by reading the chapter, answering questions, and memorising the scripture verse.
- To participate in group discussions and activities.
- To be truthful & honest in my sharing and not be judgemental of others.
- To protect the privacy and confidentiality of the Small Group. Whatever is shared in the group stays with the group.
- To pray for one another, our families, and salvation of our pre-believing relatives & friends.
- To support the MIM ministry in sharing the vision, engaging through mission, and giving to multiply.
- To adhere to no part of this workbook may be reproduced in any form by any means electronic, photocopy, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author or the publisher.

.....
Signed by member
Date:

.....
Signed by group leader
Date:

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CHAPTER 1

IDENTITY: SETTLING WHO I AM AND WHAT MY LIFE IS ABOUT

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here!*
2 Corinthians 5:17

OBJECTIVES

The key learning points of this chapter are:

- To know and understand what men want.
- To identify the reasons behind us losing our identity.
- To discover our true identity and purpose from God's perspective.

*“When you seek your identity in Jesus Christ and His gospel,
you will find a deep, lasting satisfaction so infectious that others will want it too.”*

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!
2 Corinthians 5:17

MISSING IDENTITY: IN CONUNDRUM

The questions “who am I and why do I exist?” are not easy to answer.

When we talk about identity, we often associate it with the term “seeking” or “finding” and aptly so, as our identity seems to be repeatedly lost or missing. In the search for our identity, we need to know where to find it, and to do so, one needs to know what men want.

Men are wired to want three things:

- **A CAUSE: Something to live for.** A cause is something we can give our lives to that will make a difference. This is our need to be significant, to find a purpose and a mission – to die for a worthy cause instead of living without a reason at all.
- **A COMPANION: Someone to share life with.** This is the sphere of relationships, love, family, friends, or a wife. A man goes off to hunt his bear (his cause) and then returns home to be congratulated or consoled by his wife and the community that loves and supports him.
- **A CONVICTION: Something to stand for.** This is a belief system or worldview that explains why the first two are so difficult. We all want a belief system or worldview that is true and coherent and makes sense of God and life.

There are essentially four worldviews — **secular, moral, religious, and Christianity**. Of these four worldviews, all eventually fail except Christianity, and usually at the worst possible moment. The Christian worldview is the only conviction that makes more sense as time passes. All other worldviews make less sense over time because of the unexplainable anomalies that keep piling up.

Once we satisfy these three wants, everything else we want (and need) generally falls into line.

Question: *What belief system/conviction do you currently live by?*

STOLEN IDENTITY: IN CRISIS

THE FALL

OUR CULTURAL MOMENT

There are many reasons why the big questions of “who I am and what my life is all about” are tricky and hard to answer, but two require a mention— what is commonly called “the Fall” and our cultural moment.

THE FALL

“The Fall”, described in Genesis 3, refers to the story of how sin and suffering pervasively entered the world through the sins of Adam and Eve.

Because of the Fall, there are forces constantly trying to throw us into an identity crisis – the world, the flesh, and the devil.

We must manage our lives against the Fall which had significantly distorted our outlook. There is a war going on inside each of us between the Spirit and the flesh to define our identity. However, the Bible makes a great pair of glasses for correcting our outlook. Just as we’re warned to take precautions against cyber-hacking, consider these scriptural warnings about getting hacked by our enemies on the spiritual battlefield: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The World	The Flesh	The Devil
<p>The enemy without - Entrenched around us.</p> <p>Anything that conflicts with Christianity, such as materialism and consumerism.</p>	<p>The enemy within - Entrenched inside of us.</p> <p>Our own sinful natures.</p>	<p>The Hacker-in-Chief.</p> <p>The devil is the Deceiver and Accuser – making us feel false condemnation, shame, and guilt. He robs us of our identity and makes our life miserable.</p>
<p><i>“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever”</i> (1 John 2:15–17).</p>	<p><i>“What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person”</i> (Mark 7:20–23).</p>	<p><i>“He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies”</i> (John 8:44).</p> <p><i>“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”</i> (1 Peter 5:8).</p>

OUR CULTURAL MOMENT

The Fall also leads to cultural upheaval where men today are under a cloud of suspicion. Regrettably, entertainment, news, and social media have created “a great mass of common assumptions”¹ about who men are—mostly negative.

As a result, the male identity has taken a beating.

But the vast majority of us get out of bed every day and try to do the right thing. Of course, some men do wicked things, and their sins have given rise to stereotypes about men.

These pejorative assumptions about men have been repeated millions of times. Often enough to become an “outlook.” Christian author C. S. Lewis put it so well:

“Every age has its own outlook . . . All contemporary writers share to some extent the contemporary outlook—even those, like myself, who seem most opposed to it. Nothing strikes me more when I read the controversies of past ages than the fact that both sides were usually assuming without question a good deal which we should now absolutely deny. They thought that they were as completely opposed as two sides could be, but in fact they were all the time secretly united— united with each other and against earlier and later ages—by a great mass of common assumption²”

You can fully become the man God created you to be. God’s promise to you is that you don’t have to be caged in “the contemporary outlook.” Jesus Christ has come to set you free:

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)

Jesus has provided a way of escape, which we’ll explore in this workbook.

Question: *Why do you think most men struggle to find their true identity?
In what ways do you struggle with your true identity?*

TRUE IDENTITY: IN CHRIST

Our Identity and Purpose can be viewed from the perspective of Psalm 8:3-6:

- **Our Identity—Who We Are**
You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor.
- **Our Purpose—What Our Lives Are About**
You made them rulers over the works of Your hands; You put everything under their feet.

You will never know “who” you are until you answer the question of “Whose” you are.

You will never know “what” the purpose of your life is, until you can answer the question “Who” is the purpose of your life.

Now it’s time to clarify what we mean by “identity” so we know we’re talking about the same thing.

YOUR “OBITUARY” IDENTITY

The man we see (The Visible You)

Part of your identity is like the clothes you wear. These make up your “obituary” identity—the visible things others remember about you when you’re gone.

When you see yourself, who do you see? Is it based on:

- **your roles** — like husband or father?
- **what you do** — your work or ministry?
- **what you have** — like your home, money, and car?
- **what you look like** — your appearance, your physique, or the color of your skin?
- **who you know** — your relationships, acquaintances, or friends?
- **where you’re from** — your family background or your birthplace/origin?

Here's the problem:

If all the above things that define you are gone, does that mean your identity is lost?

And how closely do you think the man you see compares to the man God sees?

YOUR "NAKED BEFORE GOD" IDENTITY

The man God sees (The Hidden You)

The other part of your identity is like the body under the clothes: what men say really matters most when they take stock of their lives—your wife, your children, your friends, your faith, your heart, your calling, your character, and how you conduct yourself. These make up your “naked before God” identity.

When David was picked to be the king of Israel, the Lord sent Samuel to the home of Jesse. When Samuel arrived, he saw Jesse's handsome oldest son and was ready to offer him the job. But the Lord said, “No, not him.”

‘But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. **People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.**”’ (1 Samuel 16:7, emphasis added)

People will judge you by your appearance. But God looks at your heart.

Who you are in Christ is who you really are.

King David, the man after God's own heart, asked the ultimate question about our identity—who are we, and why do we exist? His answer, echoed throughout Scripture, gives us the Christian answer to who we are and what our lives are all about:

“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is mankind that You are mindful of them, human beings that You care for them?” (Psalm 8:3-4)

IDENTITY AS “ROLES”

One way we can think about our identity is in terms of “roles.” For instance:

- **Sons and daughters:** Is there any greater joy than to “feel” completely loved and accepted without reservation?
- **Disciples:** To be a disciple is the highest honor to which a man can aspire. For now, let's define a disciple as someone who believes in Jesus and wants to model their life after his teachings and example.
- **Friends:** In John 15:15, Jesus says, *“I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”*
- **Servants:** Because of the love, grace, and mercy of Jesus, we feel like we can no longer be happy unless we serve him as an expression of our deep gratitude.
- **Temples:** The Holy Spirit lives inside us. We “house” the presence of God.
- **Vessels:** When we draw close to God, the Holy Spirit fills us with so much love, grace, mercy, kindness, and generosity that we have enough for ourselves and an “overflow” that we can share with others through love and acts of service.
- **Charges:** In John 14:26, the Holy Spirit has been charged to teach us all things and remind us of everything Jesus told us.

This, of course, is not an exhaustive list.

IDENTITY AS “ATTRIBUTES”

Another way we think of our identity is in relation to “*character and conduct*” — or “*attributes.*”

God has not left this to chance. He has told us which attributes to prize most, and He has promised to give us those attributes freely through His Spirit out of the overflow of abiding in Christ:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22–23 ESV)

The fruit of the Spirit is what God does for you, not what you do for God.

It is also appropriate to add humility to any list of desirable identity attributes:

“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” (James 4:6)

Does this list do justice to the identity attributes you would like to exhibit?

If so, consider memorizing the two verses above so you will always have them on the tip of your tongue.

A HUG AND A DECLARATION

To tie off this chapter, let’s go with these two ideas:

A HUG	A DECLARATION
Something God can do for you	Something you can do for God

There are many great speakers trying to inspire men to go change the world by making appeals to their courage, pride, inner strength, moral obligation, sense of duty, willingness to make a sacrifice, and “this is what you really need to do.” Those appeals, especially when emotionally charged, can get men amped up, jacked up, and fired up. But in most cases, their effect is only temporary.

There is one thing, though, that really and truly changes men’s hearts. That is to bring men into the real presence of Jesus, even if only for a brief moment, to get a little larger glimpse of the God who is.

***What changes men's hearts is when they feel in their emotions what they believe in their minds—
that God really loves them without reservation, unconditionally, just as they are.***

A Hug From God:

(Something God can do for you)

God loves you very much. In fact, He wants to give you a hug.

Listen carefully to what God has to say to you:

“I love you very much.

***I know your name. I knit you together in your mother’s womb.
All the days of your life were ordained before one of them came to pass.
I have determined the exact times and places where you should live.***

***Your times are in my hands. I know every thought you have from afar.
I know every word you speak before it forms on the tip of your tongue.
You are my new creation. You are the full expression of my creative genius.
I was at my very best when I made you.***

***I will never forsake or leave you. No one will be able to snatch you out of my hands.
I began a good work in you and will carry it on to completion.
When you are a battered reed, I will not break you off.
When you are a smoldering wick, I will not put you out.
Two sparrows are bought and sold for a penny, yet not one of them falls to the ground
without my knowing it—and you are worth more than many sparrows.
I am patient, not wanting anyone to perish.
My word that goes out from my mouth to you will accomplish all this and achieve what I want.”***

These words are adapted straight from God’s Word. How do we respond to such wonderful news?

A Call to Action: A Declaration
(Something You Can Do for God)

We now give you an opportunity to declare your identity “in Christ” and what your life is all about. By making the following declaration, you can affirm, “The old has gone, the new is here!”

MY DECLARATION OF CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

Heavenly Father, I am tired of weak, unsatisfying faith. I am weary of leading a divided life. I want to be so fully “in Christ” that others want to catch what I have. As a “new creation,” I long to know Your love for me as a son, disciple, friend, servant, temple, vessel, and charge of the Holy Spirit. I want to experience and infectiously exhibit all the fruit of Your Spirit, with all humility.

So here today, I take my stand. I repent of all my worldly and sinful ways and put my faith in Christ alone. I hereby declare that from this day forward, I will stop seeking the God, or gods, I have wanted and will start seeking the God who is. I pledge to lead a Bible-saturated life of devotion and study of God.

My desire is to renew my mind, to be a man after God’s own heart, to live out of the overflow of a vibrant relationship with Jesus, and to fully follow Jesus Christ with my whole heart each and every day. I will make it my business to live in a right relationship with God and in a right relationship with all people, and to exercise my gifts to fulfill Your calling on my life.

My true identity is “in Christ.” I commit to live openly for the glory of God in all my ways. I openly confess that I can do none of this apart from Your grace, Father, through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I pledge my allegiance this day to a life of Christ-centered manhood. If they cut me, I want to bleed Jesus. Amen.

(Signature)

Name :

Date :

Question: *Knowing your true identity in Christ, how would you live differently now?*

CONCLUSION

When God looks at you, He doesn't just see you; **He sees Himself**. We were made to *mirror* His identity. Theologians call this the *imago dei*—**the image of God**.

Then God said, ***“Let us make mankind in Our image, in Our likeness,*** so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.” (Genesis 1:26–27, emphasis added)

- **Our Identity—***who we are, our “being,”* is like the angels and mirrors the image of God Himself—repeated four times in the italicized parts of the verse above!
- **Our Purpose—***what our lives are all about, our “doing,”* is to tend the culture and build His kingdom.

We may have struggled with the question of “who am I” but our God, the Great I AM is in the business of restoring our identity – whether it was once missing, lost, or stolen.

*“But you are not like that, **for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession.** As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.*

Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God’s people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God’s mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9-10 (NLT), emphasis added)

Here’s the one idea that, fully understood and truly believed, can change everything:

When you seek your identity in Jesus Christ and His Gospel, you will find a deep, lasting satisfaction so infectious that others will want it too.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

REVIEW STATEMENTS

- **Men are wired to want 3 things – a cause, a companion, and a conviction.**
- **Due to the Fall, there are forces trying to throw us into an identity crisis— the world, the flesh, and the devil.**
- **We are made to mirror God’s identity because we are made in His image.**
- **When you seek your identity in Jesus Christ, you will find a deep, lasting satisfaction so infectious that others will want it too.**

MEMORY VERSE

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!
2 Corinthians 5:17

Questions: *Why are we a new creation if we are in Christ?
What words would you use to describe your identity in Christ now that you have completed this chapter?*

PRAYER



CHAPTER 2

LEADING AN UNEXAMINED LIFE

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

Colossians 2:8

OBJECTIVES

The key learning points of this chapter are:

- To understand the differences between two worldviews and how they shape our behavior.
- To recognize the “Two Yous” in us and how they affect our lives.
- To learn how to lead an examined life and make a commitment towards it.

“The life which is unexamined is not worth living”
Socrates, quoted by Plato in Apology

Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord.
Lamentations 3:40

LIFE’S BIG QUESTIONS

In one of the episodes of a British TV show in the 1980s called Dempsey and Makepeace, Dempsey, a tough New York cop, stated matter of factly after an action-packed scene, “Life is hard, and then you die.”

Many people take life one episode at a time, never giving a thought to what tomorrow may bring. There comes a day, though, when we each want the real answers to the questions:

“Why is life so hard?” and “What happens when I die?”

When we progress along the trajectory we set for ourselves, we don’t give much thought to the why questions of life. But when we hit the target and are still not satisfied, the questions start to come:

“Who am I? Why do I exist? Is this all there is? If I’m so successful, why do I feel so empty?”

And if we don’t hit our target, the list of questions grows even longer:

***“Why me, God? If You love me, where are You when I need You?
 Why won’t You bless me? How could this happen to me?”***

Our hurt feelings slowly give way to anger and bitterness, fear and guilt, or some of each.

AN UNEXAMINED LIFE

We rush from task to task. We don’t call enough time-outs to reflect on life’s larger meaning and purpose. Rather, we live myopically from day to day; we live under the tyranny of today’s problems. Our lives are consumed in action as we react to the seemingly endless menu of options that vie for our attention, time, and money. But as Gandhi said, *“There is more to life than increasing its speed.”*

Spiritually, too many of us are just “playing church”—just going through the motions. We show up for worship services, but the message we come away with doesn’t do for us what it does for some of the other men. We don’t know exactly why, and before we could spend enough time thinking about it, our minds wander to the work problems chewing at our gut. We speed off to the next busy task, and by Monday afternoon, the memory of Sunday is as distant as the memory of last year’s vacation.

As a lawyer or electrician is no better than the effort he puts into keeping up with his profession or honing his skills, so is the Christian no better than the effort he puts into self-examination of life’s big questions.

A friend whom I had always admired for his business skill once commented that it was better to kill unborn children than to allow them to be born unwanted into a life of suffering. He did not argue that the unborn are not human beings. Rather, since they would be neglected and possibly abused, he

reasoned the unwanted are mercifully spared when terminated before birth. Of all the reasons I've heard for abortion, this one stands alone as the most patently absurd. This friend—wealthy and influential—was making important commercial decisions shaping the life of our community.

Why do men think the things they think, say the things they say, and do the things they do?

Each of us has a worldview. For most of us, our worldview results more from where we were born, who our parents were, and what schools we attended than a careful examination of issues. Yet our worldview influences every thought we have, every word we speak, and every action we take.

TWO SIDES OF EVERYTHING		
TWO WORLDVIEWS	TWO OUTCOMES	TWO YOUS

TWO WORLDVIEWS

A worldview is the lens that we filter life through. It informs our beliefs, which impacts our decisions and actions. Everything that you do flows from your worldview.

As we grow and mature, our worldview develops from our many experiences and relationships. There are two predominant worldviews in America today. One view, the secular worldview, believes man is the central figure in shaping events. The second view, the Christian worldview, believes God is sovereign and active in everyday life.

The secularist believes man is intrinsically good, masters his own fate, determines on his own the boundaries of his achievements and knowledge, and is unconstrained by moral standards—apart from those he chooses at his sole discretion.

The Christian, on the other hand, believes an all-powerful God created the heavens and the earth. This living, omnipotent God possesses all knowledge, and because of His great love for us, He established absolute moral standards for our protection. He is holy, loving, and personal.

Often confused about the differences between these two worldviews, Christian men frequently apply the wrong set of principles to their problems. We seem to have a fragmented understanding of how to live as Christian men.

In today's world, Christians have seen things in bits and pieces instead of in totals. We have sounded alarms over the breakdown of the family, pornography, gun violence, racism, poverty, and abortion. But as Dr. Francis Schaeffer pointed out, we "have not seen this as a totality—each thing being a part, a symptom, of a much larger problem."³

We have moved away from traditional Judeo-Christian values toward a worldview that lets us self-select values based on whether they serve our self-interests. Like a child loose in a candy store, we pick our values, we determine our own fate, we captain our own ship.

These two worldviews, secular and Christian, are on a collision course. They inevitably produce opposite results. To understand the differences between the two is the key first step to resolving the questions of the unexamined life.

Christian Worldview	Secular Worldview
Truth is absolute	Truth is relative
God is eternally good	Man is intrinsically good
Faith in his Master (God)	Masters his own fate
Die to self	Live for self
God's revelation	Human reasoning
Depends on the authority of God	Deepens the authority of self
Serve others first	Seek self first

We often don't even see these dramatic differences.

A daring circus performer can ride on two horses at the same time by having each foot planted on the back of each horse as long as the horses are close together. If the two horses begin to move apart from each other though, the performer must pick one or the other to ride.

So it is in our spiritual journeys. At first, these two worldviews don't seem that far apart. Unless we carefully examine our lives, we tend to see the Christian worldview and the secular worldview close together.

However, when we begin to take a closer look, we start to see unmistakable contrasts.

***The choice between a Christian worldview and the secular worldview
is a choice between God's race and the rat race.***

Question: *What dominant worldview influences your thinking and the way you live your life?
In what ways have they influenced you - for good or for bad?*

TWO OUTCOMES

It is for a lack of discipleship that men lead unexamined lives.

Christians in Captivity

For years I watched Christians struggle with lifestyle and worldview issues. They sincerely wanted the peace and contentment that comes from knowing Christ personally. Yet they experienced constant tension because of their material appetites.

How can Christians go so far astray? The secular worldview competes directly with the Christian worldview. Since Christians are in a minority, we are often proselytized by the majority message of consumerism and materialism that is trying to convert us to a secular lifestyle. That's right—the disciples of the other worldview work just as hard as Christians do to make converts!

Yes, these two predominant worldviews exist, but how many of us have drawn a sharp contrast between the two? How many of us have carefully chiseled ours in a search for truth? Or is our worldview more the product of our environment and circumstances?

Colossians 2:8 tells us, *“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.”*

The secularists have been doing a much better job of influencing our culture than we Christians.

Today, Christians in America are a minority. Christians are as much of a minority, and their values and views are as impotent, as any minority group at any time in modern history. Why is this? Because we lead unexamined lives, many good men—Christian men—have been taken captive “through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world.” In other words, many of us are Christians in our spirit, but secular in our practice. We have become a generation of cultural Christians.

In his book *The Closing of the American Mind*, Dr. Allan Bloom spoke to the issue of leading an unexamined life. He made a compelling case for replacing the openness of our times, what he termed “the openness of indifference,” with “the openness that invites us to the quest for knowledge and certitude.”⁴

Dr. Bloom built the case that our society’s “openness” is not one that pursues the truth with dogged determination, but an openness that presses to be “open to all kinds of men, all kinds of lifestyles, all ideologies.” The only enemy is the man not open to everything.

The man who thinks like this is so blind that he can’t tell you whether our daring circus rider is on horses or donkeys, nor could he tell you if one is better than the other—even if he were lucky enough to notice a difference.

This is not openness that examines its beliefs in pursuit of moral truth and good, but openness that finds its virtue in saying yes to everything—anything goes. The Christian’s openness comes from his search for truth and absolutes. The secularist’s openness exists because he makes up the truth in his own “best thinking” and has no absolutes. He thinks it doesn’t matter what you believe, as long as you’re sincere.

This captures one aspect of leading an unexamined life. We can know much, but if we do not use our knowledge to elevate ourselves—our mind, our soul, our spirit—to the highest level of moral good we can attain, then we are poor stewards of that knowledge. And we become Christians in captivity, held captive by the secular worldview, “captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy.”

Christians in Liberty

We have seen things in bits and pieces instead of in totals. Archaeologists search the ruins of long-forgotten civilizations looking for, among other things, shards. A shard is a piece of broken pottery that the archaeologist studies. Then he visualizes what the object must have looked like by projecting from the broken pieces.

This is how we should lead our lives. We should look at every shard—every idea and theory we discover flowing through our minds—and see which worldview it represents. Too often we see events and circumstances as unrelated and isolated when, instead, we should try to visualize how they fit into the bigger picture of our worldview.

If we are going to live by the Christian worldview, we must recognize, first, that ours is a minority view and, second, that we are responsible for our own lives. Christ aches for us to turn to Him and follow His plan. But we are the ones who must decide to do it. *The first step to knowing God’s plan for our lives is the commitment to see ourselves as we really are.*

Question: *Why is leading an examined life important if you want to live by the Christian worldview?*

TWO YOUS

There are two yous—the visible you and the real you.

The visible you is the you that is known by others. We know intuitively from our experiences how to act and speak to fit in with our peer groups. We often act differently from one peer group to the next.

The visible you is the known you. It is never the real you. We have learned to speak and act in ways that allow us to cope with our world and peacefully coexist. We work hard to project a certain image of ourselves to others.

The real you is the you that is known by God. We are who we are in our minds first, before we speak or act. Our speech and actions are the results of our thinking. Scripture tells us, *“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”* (Jeremiah 17:9). To protect our self-image, we kid, trick, and fool ourselves into believing the visible you is somehow real. To see ourselves as we really are, we must acknowledge our inability to do so without God’s help.

Figure 2.1 uses an iceberg to illustrate the visible you and the real you. The tip of the iceberg is the known you while the real you is hidden below the surface of the water.

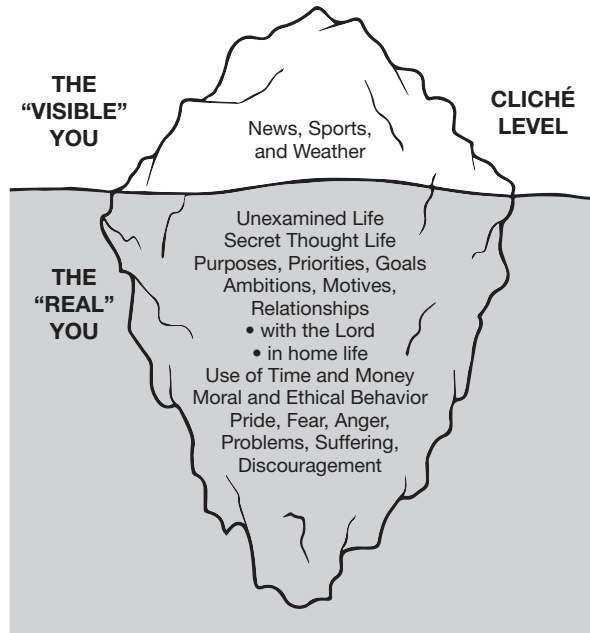


Figure 2.1

The mind is where the battle takes place. It’s the battle between the majority view and the minority, Christian view. Ephesians 6:12 describes this battle for the mind: *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

Because we don’t take this invisible war seriously, many of us are losing the battle for our minds. But we can win them back by committing ourselves to self-examination through studying the Scriptures. You can know the real you, the you that is known by our God.

Question: *Share some of the struggles you face in your thought life as you battle between the Christian worldview and the Secular worldview.*

What are the efforts you ought to take to win this spiritual battle described in Ephesians 6:12?

“Look At the Fish”

Ralph Waldo Emerson listed Louis Agassiz second in his journal of the men he most admired, after Carlyle and before the likes of Thoreau and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Agassiz had a magic touch with people. At a young age, he gained an international reputation as a natural scientist.

Swiss born, he arrived in Boston in 1846 with boundless imagination and enthusiasm. He accepted a teaching post at Harvard University, where he conducted seemingly infinite investigations of fishes and fossils.

As great as the genius of Agassiz was in the study of fossils and fishes, his genius as a teacher was of far greater significance. He trained a whole generation of scientific men who achieved important stature of their own. Agassiz developed his own original method of instruction, which gave his students an opportunity to learn to think for themselves and to work out their own problems.

I first learned of Agassiz when I attended an executive education program at the Harvard Business School. The professors revere Agassiz and have immortalized him in the culture. His ideas on instruction are an integral part of the famous Harvard Business School case study method. The lesson for the man who would like to examine his life is considerable.

One of Agassiz's students, who later became a professor of near equal popularity, Mr. Scudder, gave this account of Agassiz's method of insisting that his students look very carefully again and again at a fish specimen for days until they discovered more each time about the fish. Agassiz's unorthodox teaching method of observing facts and their orderly arrangement, accompanied by the urgent exhortation not to be content with them left an inestimable value and legacy to Mr. Scudder where he described it as the best entomological lesson he ever had.

The main reason we lead unexamined lives is that we do not take time to "look at the fish," carefully looking for more and more. We can always see so much more if we will only take the time to look. "Take this fish and look at it." Soon we discover that Professor Agassiz's criticism is just—we have not examined our lives carefully. With any good fortune, we will soon be able to say, "*No, I am certain I don't see it yet, but I see how little I saw before.*"

By the end of this workbook, I hope it will be with Mr. Scudder's reluctance that you leave this study and turn to some new area of self-examination. With the Bible as your resource book, you will be able to find God's principle for every aspect of your life. You will be able to bring the bits and pieces of your life into connection with the general laws of God.

CONCLUSION

Have you been leading an unexamined life? Have you ever understood the dramatic differences in worldviews? Do you understand why you think the things you think, say the things you say, and do the things you do?

Or have you been taking it one day at a time?

"Okay" you say, "I'm convinced. I have decided there is more to know about the real me—the me that is known by God. What's the next step?"

There was a pastor who wanted to get to know a church visitor who was a sports enthusiast. Since the pastor liked boxing, he invited the man to a boxing match, to which the man had never been. Just before the fight started, one of the boxers made the sign of the cross.

"What does that mean?" asked the man.

The pastor quickly replied, *"It doesn't mean a thing if the guy can't box."*

Let's move on then, and gain the skills we need to win the battle for our minds. The rest of this workbook will provide you with a framework to think about specific problem areas of your life—a framework to look at the fish.

Robert Frost, the author of the poem, "The Road Not Taken" reflected, *"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less travelled by, And that has made all the difference."*

Likewise, leading an examined life is perhaps the road less travelled for many of us, but if we choose it, it will surely make all the difference.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

REVIEW STATEMENTS

- Don't go through the motions without asking those important why questions of life.
- The choice between a Christian worldview and the secular worldview is a choice between God's race and the rat race.
- There are two yous—the visible you and the real you. Discover the real you.
- It is for a lack of discipleship that men lead unexamined lives.
- I will examine my life by going deeper, looking closer, and staying longer.

MEMORY VERSE

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

Colossians 2:8

Questions: *What are some of the hollow and deceptive philosophies in your culture that have taken you captive?
How do we prepare ourselves to face these hollow and deceptive philosophies?*

PRAYER
