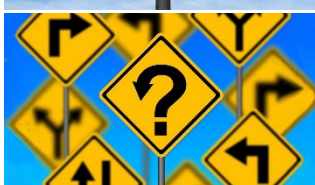
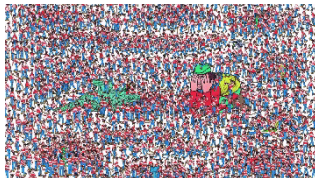
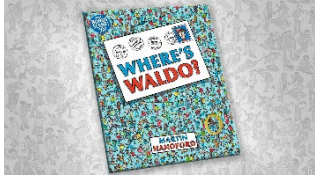


The Big Picture

Part III: Sensibly Seeing Our Morality

April 30, 2023



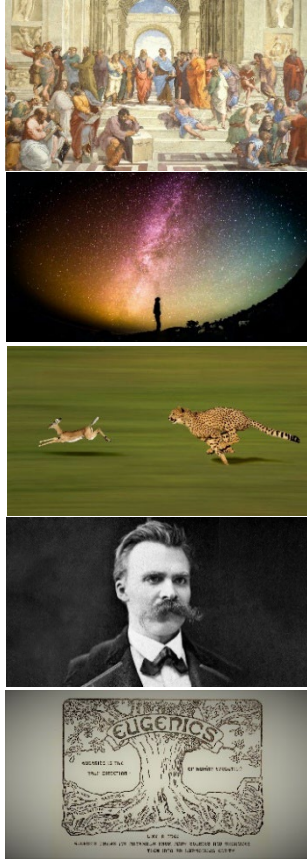
Today we're back to building the beliefs of a working worldview that makes the most sense of all the chaos and confusion in life's big picture! And so, we've been considering and comparing some popular answers to human Origin, Meaning, Morality, and Destiny to find what really works; rationally and realistically. And since it's week three, it's time to talk morality and how to handle all of life's good, bad, and ugly! So let's start by considering this question: What's good here? Y'know, like a restaurant. We've all spent some time sampling life's menu and based on the taste you've experienced, you already have an opinion on what's worth-while and what's not; so, what's good? Should I try the 'career' or a couple orders of 'having kids'? How about the 'video games paired with a glass of sleeping in'? And I've heard mixed reviews on the 'greed with gossip sauce', what's your take? And what exactly do you like about the good stuff and dislike about the bad? Well, let's get ready to dig in!

So far, we've talked about life's origin and meaning by walking through some of the steps that took me from a secular 'science-says' worldview into the Christian camp and I explained how completely arbitrary and logically empty I found the secular approach to life; due to its total lack of ultimate purpose, significance, or emotional support. However, we did find a coherent and consistent hope hidden in the supernatural story at the core of the Christian worldview – which closely paralleled the parable of the Prodigal Son where we're told: We're here because we wanted what God wouldn't offer. Cuz He knew better and we didn't. And to keep the peace in a place of perfection, He had to let us leave to learn what we want. And it does make sense that we'd live life down here if we had to learn to love what's actually good up there, so we don't repeat the mistake that ruins perfection! And that takes morality.

Cuz morals are our beliefs about what's good. What has added value to our lives by aiding us in achieving our goals? That's the stuff we value as good. While the stuff that worked against what we wanted, is bad. And to grab a hold of that good, we use ethics. Cuz ethics are our rules to get to the good we want. And they are determined by whatever 'goods' a group is going for; society's ethics include laws for living together, medical ethics include oaths to only heal, and Christian ethics include commandments to personally pursue God's perfection.

It's the same for each context; every ethic is designed to get to that group's agreed goodness. Which means 'big picture' people like us, need big ethics to get to the big answers we're after!

And in my search, thankfully I found that people have been looking for the big stuff since the beginning of time. Take the ancient Greeks; **all they did was talk and talk about the 'Logos'**. Which was what they called the 'supreme truth' behind the universe. Logos this, logos that... which is funny, because the word logos literally means 'word' – because it explained everything, making it the absolute best thing on life's menu! So how do we get to it?!



Well, as I continued plugging in and playing out the 'science-says' worldview, **I took the secular path as far as it would go**. But here's why it fell short: *whatever* we have as the *meaning* of our life – that's our *goal*. It's the *reason* behind everything we *do*. And our morality *measure* says **good things get us closer to our goal while bad things get in the way**. But – as we saw last week, the *atheist* worldview *admits* it has no objective *meaning*. And at their *best*, they recommend *making up* your own meaning – even though it's not necessarily *true* or really *matters* in the big picture. So think about what *that* means for *morals*. *Logically*, either **they're completely fake in a meaningless life** or *slightly* better, they're **completely random in a life of made-up meaning**. Which means *secular ethics* will only lead us to something *fake* or *random*! **Big whoop!** That solves nothing. Anyone can *make up* morals based on what they *feel* – but *that* doesn't make them *right*! Besides, if we all get to have the same *authority*, we can never tell *anybody* we're right or they're wrong. So, jails should be empty and everyone should do what they want. That *is* the way of *nature*. In fact, **from the 'science-says' perspective that's our model; survival of the fittest**.

So, in a strictly 'science-says' worldview, wouldn't we have to *abandon* morality to stay *consistent* with our *accidental* origin and *meaningless* life? **Yes!** But it doesn't make you popular, because it sounds terrible!

Just ask Friedrich Nietzsche and his huge *moustache*! Cuz he admits that if there is indeed *no* supernatural God beyond *this* material world, then **"there does not exist any perspective higher than life itself."** And then goes on to logically *conclude*, **"value judgments [aka morals] concerning life, for or against, can in the last resort never be true."** And he breaks down the stuff in secular beliefs that they'd rather just ignore away. For example, why is being *caring* any better than being *aggressive*? They're *both* part of our human nature and they're *both* a part of natural *life* on the whole. So where *do* we get a standard to label one *good* and the other *bad*? Without God, it's relative to each *individual* and their *group*; and the *strongest* one wins.

And that's how it should be in a world without God. But guess what happens when you try to plug and play with *that* worldview? Well, history reminds us – *it aint good*! Ever heard of eugenics? It's the 'science-says' idea that *rationally*, if nature wants the fittest and *that's* where we get our morals, then *ethically*, we *should* do things to '*strengthen*' the genepool. So we *did*. And America sterilized criminals and people with disabilities. Cuz *factually*, **that is reasonable behavior if belief in God isn't!** But how does that sit with you? *Not good I hope!* Because it took those *un-natural* morals that we instinctually *feel*, to challenge eugenics in the supreme court. But guess what? It was **UPHELD** by a vote of 8-1! Because without *GOD*, this *was* ethical behavior!

And guess who was the only one to vote *against* it? A *Christian*; who said it violated his *God-given* morals that deemed *every* human valuable as God's beloved creation! You see the problem, right? Without *God*, and His *supernatural* standard of *good* – which is the *perfection up there* – we're *forced* to believe in *nature-only* morals that conflict with the *supernatural* instinct we all *feel*. So consequently, **a lot of people down here say they don't believe in up there, but act like they do**. So for *me*, 'science-says' morality just made *God's* case.



And I'm not alone; C.S. Lewis, who spent much of *his* early life as an *atheist*, says the moral instinct was a primary reason he accepted God and became the prolific Christian author he did. As he explains in *Mere Christianity*, we've all heard people arguing, but think about how it goes; they say things like: '**How'd you like it if anyone did the same to you?**', '**That's my seat, I was there first**', or '**Give me a bit of your orange, I gave you a bit of mine.**' Because when a person says such things, "**He is appealing to some kind of standard of behavior which he expects the other man to know about.**" And it sure seems they do, cuz rather than *deny* the standard, the other guy almost always makes a case that he didn't really violate it. Which begs the question, "**If we do not believe in decent behavior, why should we be so anxious to make excuses for not having behaved decently?**" We can't help it! Because we all naturally know real good when we see it!

Like I said earlier, we've been deciding what's *good* based on our taste, but the real question is, **where did our taste come from?** Well, God says we were designed to get it from three sources, **His creation, His Spirit, and His Word** (2Co 5:1-10; Rom 1:18-21, 2:14-15; 2Ti 3:16).

So no wonder I, along with the whole secular world, was struggling to reconcile what we *see* in creation with how we *feel* in our spirit! We were missing what *God said* in His *Word*! And **without His Word, we only have a two-dimensional picture** of supreme truth and the ethical rules to get to it. So what does the Bible offer in the way of a supreme *ethic* to get us to a supreme *truth* about supreme *good*? How *close* can it get us to this '*logos*' we're all looking for? *Face to face*. It says:

In the beginning *was* the [Logos] ~~Word~~, and the [Logos] ~~Word~~ was with God, and the [Logos] ~~Word~~ was God... [And the Greeks were like, "Yeah – don't you wish *we* had it?!" And John said, "Well then don't interrupt, cuz you're gonna want to hear this:"] The [Logos] ~~Word~~ became *flesh* and made His dwelling among *us*. We have *seen* His glory. – John 1:1 NIV

You get that?! The Bible is flat out *advertising Jesus* as the walking, talking answers to life! It says **He's the living LOGOS!** In other words, He IS *the* supreme *TRUTH* that explains everything; *and* as a *human*, His *life* must be *the* *WAY* to live the supreme *ethic* to get to *the* supreme *good* of perfect *LIFE*. And He couldn't say it more clearly:

I *am* the way [ethic] and the truth [answer] and the life [good]. – John 14:6 NIV

Well thanks for spelling out exactly what we're all looking for; score one for the Bible! And so I thought, "**Alright, if the Bible is the third piece I need to find my answers, let's plug and play! Now which way do we go from here?**" And in classic Bible fashion, that answer takes on the form of a question: "**What would Jesus do?**"

Cuz **if He's the Logos, emulating Him would train us to know true good by living true good.**

And He makes it real clear what supreme *ethic* He used to live out the supreme *truth* behind supreme *good*: **Love**. Which is why our first command is to:

Love the Lord your God ... And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these *two* commandments. – Matthew 22:37-40 NIV

Apparently, *that's* the big ethic we need to live out the *morality* part of a Christian worldview. And sure enough, the *good* that love *produces*, *does fit* as a *consistent and coherent* part of the big-picture story we've been building. But, *remember*, a working worldview can't just be *rational*; it has to be *realistic*, too. So, we still gotta ask: **What exactly does love look like down here and can we do it?** Well,

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. – 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 NIV

Well yeah – that's not a problem if I understand God is just the Dad who had to let us *go* to get us *back!* And after I see the price He paid to come down as Jesus and show us how to get home – well, I *not only* love Him like this, but *learned* it from *His* example! So let's get real, **loving Dad isn't the problem... it's the other kids!** Do we gotta love *all* our neighbors?



How do we do that? They aint offering much of that 'good' stuff that gets us closer to our goal, so how is it be *practical* to love them? Well, here's the secret: *it isn't*. Just like God loving *you* wasn't practical. We didn't deserve it and we don't make it easy. And even *our* perfect ethical example got frustrated with *us... a lot!* But here's what He *knew* – that *we're* still *learning*: **love is more than a momentary feeling, it's a plan of action.** It may not *feel* practical *down here*, but from the perspective of perfection *up there*, **it's what we have to do to serve, preserve, and reproduce everything good.** And if you can't see enough value in someone to love *them*, then just love the Lord your Dad enough to do it for *Him*. Because as He explains:

'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me.' – Matthew 25:40 NIV

Not because *they* deserve it, but because you love Him and *He* wants to save *them*. Just like He did *you*. And **saving takes love.** And **love takes practice.** Because it's something we have to learn.

We love because He first loved us. – 1 John 4:19 NIV

But that **practice makes progress.** And **progress makes perfect.** And **perfect makes permanent.** And *permanent* is our destiny – and that's what we're talking about next week!