Welcome to *The Worldview Course*, a 13-week video series designed to help you see God’s world the way he sees it. Hosted by Mark Nauroth and James Gilbert, the goal of the course is to help you form a more biblical perspective in five areas critical to 21st-Century life: *politics, economics, education, religion* and *social issues*.

Let’s begin with a question you probably have never asked yourself: *Does a fish know it’s wet?* Just assume it’s a very smart fish for the moment and take the question seriously. Even if a fish had the capacity to reason, it would never have a reason to question its watery environment unless it suddenly found itself surrounded by something called “air”—a word not even likely in the fish dictionary. In fact, the word “water” probably wouldn’t be in there either, because to a fish the world isn’t water. It’s just, well...it just is, and the fish takes it for granted so completely that it’s never had to think about it. In that sense, most of us are like fish. We don’t question our environment simply because we don’t notice it. To us, it’s just reality.

*The Worldview Course* won’t ask you to abandon your convictions, but it undoubtedly will challenge your assumptions. It’s designed to gently pull you up and out of the sin-clouded water of today’s world, to make you gasp a little and question—in the light of God’s word—a large set of assumptions about the world that probably seem as automatic to you as water to a fish.

In truth, only the God who made the world has an unclouded view of it and sees it as it truly is. He is the Author of reality and, according to *Psalm 24*, the sole owner of “the world and those who dwell therein.” In other words, God owns the world, us and everyone and everything we’re involved with: our children, our homes, our jobs, our schools and textbooks, our votes and the candidates who get them—he owns them all. Therefore, the big question for us is: *How can we learn to view all the people, components and issues of our lives the way God views them?* How can we overcome the distorted images of the watery muck we live in and develop God’s worldview?
King David gave the short answer in Psalm 119:9, when he said, “How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.” Jesus reiterated the principle in John 15:7 when he said “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

Part 1: The Worldview Course Assumptions

A. All of the Bible for all of life.

1. The Worldview Course assumes that God’s word is the first and last word on every area of human existence and conduct. Or, as Paul told Timothy, scripture is an educational tool designed to equip us for “every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17), not merely as pastors or Sunday School teachers, but as engineers, scientists, construction workers, homemakers and every other way of life.

2. All of the Bible is God’s abiding word, and the Old and New Testaments are in perfect harmony with one another.

3. The Old Testament and New Testament are both about life in Jesus.

B. Education = Discipleship

1. Most of us have erroneously assumed that education takes place for 30-hours per week in a government-run school, while discipleship happens at church and—hopefully—at home. But The Worldview Course assumes that the two words are perfectly synonymous, and there are data in Part 2 (see the next page) to back up that assumption.

C. Worldview education for children is a vain exercise without worldview education for parents.

1. A wise pastor was once accused by a church member of being too authoritative in his sermons. “Look, you don’t have to have a pastor,” the clergyman responded, “but you get to have one. You can do whatever you like. My job is to give you a godly perspective. So, don’t receive what I say as law, but as life.”
The Worldview Course is used by a variety of age groups, but it is designed first of all for adults—especially parents and single adults, pastors and educators. God has ordained you to call the shots in your home, church or school. We merely want to help you aim better!

Part 2: The PEERS Test

In the mid-1980s, Dan Smithwick, an information analyst at AT&T, saw what many other Christians were seeing: American society had broken from its Christian moorings and was drifting from the shores of truth into a sea of relativism. Dan’s expertise in analysis prompted the creation of a test that could measure a person’s worldview against the objective standards in the Bible. The test examined five key areas—politics, economics, education, religion and social issues—and was dubbed PEERS.

By 1988, Dan’s ministry, Nehemiah Institute, was conducting worldview assessments of Christian high school students—most of them attending public schools. Since then, the Institute has collected some three million data points from over 100,000 students through arrangements made either with their pastors or school administrators. The results can be seen in Figure 2 on page 5.

A. PEERS Test Structure

1. The PEERS Test is comprised of a series of 70 statements, with each statement expressing one of the four worldviews most prevalent in American society:

   - **Biblical Theism:** A worldview closely patterned after the ways of God as revealed in scripture.
   - **Moderate Christian:** A worldview based in biblical moral values, but relatively uninformed as to the practical and professional disciplines the scriptures teach.
   - **Secularism:** The belief that man is his own master, that he creates his own system of truth, meaning and value out of his own reason and experience. Thus, material facts (e.g., basic arithmetic, the laws of physics) are self-existent, and most social systems (e.g., politics, economics, etc.) are morally neutral.
○ **Socialism:** A wholly materialistic worldview that ascribes supreme authority to the State in the name of the people, to ensure social equality and “fair” distribution of goods.

2. The PEERS Test is set up on a Likert scale, which means there are five possible responses to each statement:
   - Strongly agree
   - Tend to agree
   - Neutral
   - Tend to disagree
   - Strongly disagree

3. Responses are scientifically compiled and graded on a scale ranging from +100 to -100 (see Figure 1). Full documentation and the results of an independent PEERS reliability study are available at nehemiahinstitute.com.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composite Score Range</th>
<th>Worldview Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70 to 100</td>
<td>Biblical Theism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 69</td>
<td>Moderate Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 to 29</td>
<td>Secularism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 to -100</td>
<td>Socialism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1:* Ranges of scores for The PEERS Test. Copyright © 2016 Nehemiah Institute. Used with permission.

Note that extreme scores at either end of the spectrum indicate strength of conviction, i.e., that the test-taker not only believes certain principles but can explain exactly why he or she believes them.

**B. PEERS Test Results**

Figure 2 illustrates PEERS Test results from 1988 through 2015.

1. PEERS subjects come from the following academic environments.
   All figures are approximate:
   - 90% of the students are from Christian homes and regularly attend church.
80-85% attend public schools.

10-12% attend traditional Christian schools.

Less than 5% are homeschooled or attend Christian “worldview” schools, that is, schools emphasizing biblical worldview in classroom instruction and teacher training.

2. Scores for both public-school students and those attending traditional Christian schools have steadily declined since 1988. In fact, the only reason Christian-school students score slightly higher than their public-school counterparts is their familiarity with the Religion category of the PEERS Test. In other words, attending a Christian school has little bearing on students’ views on politics, economics, education and social issues.

1988 scores reflect a Moderate Christian worldview, i.e., that students had some knowledge of the biblical perspective in all five PEERS categories.

2015 scores reflect a solidly Secularist worldview, with Christian students attending public schools rapidly approaching a Socialist worldview.

Figure 2: PEERS Composite chart showing average scores from 1988 to 2015. Note the strong and consistent trend away from biblical thinking, especially in recent years. Copyright © 2016 Nehemiah Institute. Used with permission.
3. Factors influencing declining scores:
   - Most schools consider scripture academically irrelevant, if not inappropriate. The result is a de-facto agnostic perspective on a variety of subjects.
   - Even Christian school curricula frequently consist of secular textbooks, with a Bible class or chapel service added. Academic subjects are considered spiritually neutral, having no material connection with the Bible.
   - Educational responsibility is widely assumed to be the domain of professional educators, usually in the public system.
   - Teacher training and certification are received from secular colleges and universities that propagate Horace Mann's and John Dewey's philosophy and methodology.
   - Education/Discipleship also takes place via electronic media and peer influence.
   - One or two church services cannot compete with 30 hours per week in the classroom and 50 hours per week of media screen time.

As a result of a “faith” that consists of moral principles but seems otherwise disconnected from everyday life, the large majority of Christian young people stop attending church by the end of their first year in college. Parents, teachers and pastors must admit to the existence of this problem, face up to its cause and take the initiative in raising their children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). This is more than moral instruction; it involves every aspect of learning.

Part 3: What is a Worldview and Why does it Matter?

A worldview is the set of assumptions about reality that we develop as we grow from childhood to adulthood. Just as a person wearing eyeglasses adapts to them so that they are forgotten, we see the world around us through a set of cultural lenses that we assume are accurate. But what if one person wears yellow-tinted glasses and another a blue-tinted pair? Do they see the world the same way? No, but each quickly adjusts to the color of the lens, so that it becomes the color of their world. Neither person sees
the world as it truly is, without the “tint” of bias. Nor do they realize that this bias even exists.

Because worldviews are generally automatic, studying your own worldview is—in the words of UC Berkeley’s Phillip Johnson—like trying to stare into the pupil of your own eye. We see the world around us through our eyes but we cannot look into our own eyes—not unless we have a very good mirror. This is why James 1:22-25 likens God’s word to a mirror and encourages us to find in that word his pattern for every aspect of our lives.

A. The mirror matters.

1. Not dedicating our minds and our children’s minds to God’s word causes us and them to “forget” God’s view of us and the world around us.

2. In Deuteronomy 6:6-9, the Bible’s first authoritative word on the purpose of education, Moses exhorted parents and grandparents to infuse their children’s lives with God’s word from morning to night, discussing it at home and everywhere else, and posting it, if necessary, everywhere they might look, so that his commands would become the basis of their thinking on every subject.

B. Bad ideas have bad consequences.

1. Christians today are known for what we oppose rather than what we support.

2. We are known for protesting society’s problems rather than providing answers.

3. We are known for predicting a dark future rather than being the light of the world (see Matthew 5:14). As a result, the key institutions of Western society are dominated by secularist worldviews. Politics, economics, banking, education (especially universities), entertainment and news media are largely devoid of positive Christian influence.
C. Godly ideas have godly consequences.
   1. We must learn that “Christian” education is not a subtype. To the contrary, if Jesus is truly Lord of all, and has been given “all authority in heaven and on earth,” (Matthew 28:18) then his word is the proper foundation of all education, from philosophy and methodology to curriculum.

D. Someone’s worldview will dominate society.
   1. All worldviews start with a faith statement, an assumption.
   2. Religious neutrality is a myth, regardless of the subject at hand.
   3. Jesus’ prescribed pathway to authority (inclusive of politics, economics, education, religion and society) is serving, not taking over (see Matthew 20:25-28 and John 18:36). Responsibility flows to those who serve.

E. This course deals with the five PEERS categories.
   1. Politics comes first in The Worldview Course only because it has made itself first. In an ideal world, it would appear far down the list.
   2. Economics, because it is properly centered in the home, ideally would be the first area of study.
   3. Education cannot be religiously neutral. Remember, ignoring God imparts a de facto atheistic perspective on any given subject. It isn’t necessary to say there is no God. It’s only necessary to ignore him.

Part 4: The Pig in the Road

Business author Joel Barker closed his book, Paradigms: The Business of Discovering the Future, with the tale of a man who spent every Saturday driving his powerful sports car to his mountain cabin. Over the course of time, the man had memorized every twist and turn along the road that led to his retreat. One Saturday, however, just as the man was leaning into a particularly challenging curve, a car came barreling down the mountain in the opposite direction. And just as the car zoomed past, missing him by inches, a beautiful woman stuck her head out its window and yelled, “PIG!”
How dare she, thought the man, and instantly he yelled “SOW!” as he came to a safe stop. After he had calmed himself, the man pulled back onto the road and began climbing through the gears, a slight smile crossing his lips as he savored his quick retort. He had given as good as he got, he thought as he pressed the accelerator and leaned into another curve.

That was when he hit the pig.

What the man assumed to be an accusation had actually been a warning. But why did he hear it wrong? Weren’t he and the woman traveling the same road? Yes, but in opposite directions, which gave them completely different points of view. The woman’s perspective included the pig. The man’s perspective did not. *The Worldview Course* will hopefully strengthen your convictions, while giving you a new point of view—one that alerts you to a few pigs on the road ahead.

Between now and the next session, you will take the PEERS Test, either in a group setting or on your own. However, you won’t receive your score and analysis until after taking it again near the conclusion of *The Worldview Course*. At that time you will be given both scores, and be able to measure the progress you have made.

Remember: The PEERS Test is like an eye examination. *You can’t “fail” it!* Its purpose is merely to take a measurement, so that you will know where your strengths and weaknesses lie regarding your real-world application of God’s word. As you take the test, answer truthfully and instinctively. Don’t overthink things or worry about “trick” statements. There are none.

However, there is a “pig” in the road just ahead, right there, out in the open. So buckle up, keep your eyes peeled and let’s get started!