

# FAITH IN FOCUS

WEST CHURCH, BANGOR

CHRISTIAN THINKING IN THE MODERN WORLD



Week 3, 9 Apr 2019

Explaining our Faith ~

Understanding and Engaging Worldviews

# SERIES OVERVIEW



**AIM:** help to think through some of today's big issues so we can make wise decisions and share the Christian faith confidently with others

**Week 1** Tuesday 19th February @ 7.30 pm

A Christian approach to making choices ~ the Sanctity of Life

**Week 2** Tuesday 19th March @ 7.30 pm

Is it ever right to end a life? ~ Facing death faithfully

**Week 3** Tuesday 9th April @ 7.30 pm,

Explaining our faith ~ Understanding and Engaging Worldviews

**Week 4** Tuesday 7th May @ 7.30 pm

The problem of evil & suffering ~ the uniqueness of Christianity

[www.paulcoulter.net/focus](http://www.paulcoulter.net/focus)



**RECAP**



# CHRISTIAN THINKING



## Expresses love for God

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” **Matthew 22 v37**

## Exposes Satan’s lies

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. [...] Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. **Ephesians 4 v14; 6 v11)**

## Enables effective evangelism

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. **2 Corinthians 10 v5**

# THE GOSPEL FRAMEWORK



## God rules

- What did Father God intend for human life in this issue?

## We rebelled

- What are the sins of belief and behaviour in this issue?

## God rescues

- How do we know forgiveness and life in Christ in this issue?

## We respond

- What do repentance, faith and obedience mean in this issue?

## God restores

- What hope and help does the Spirit give in this issue?



Home > News

## Royal College of Physicians drops their opposition to assisted dying, following controversial poll



The poll found 43.4 per cent of respondents were opposed to a change in the law - little different to a finding of 44.4 per cent when the poll was conducted in 2014.

The number wanting the college to support assisted dying increased to 31.6 per cent from 24.6 per cent.

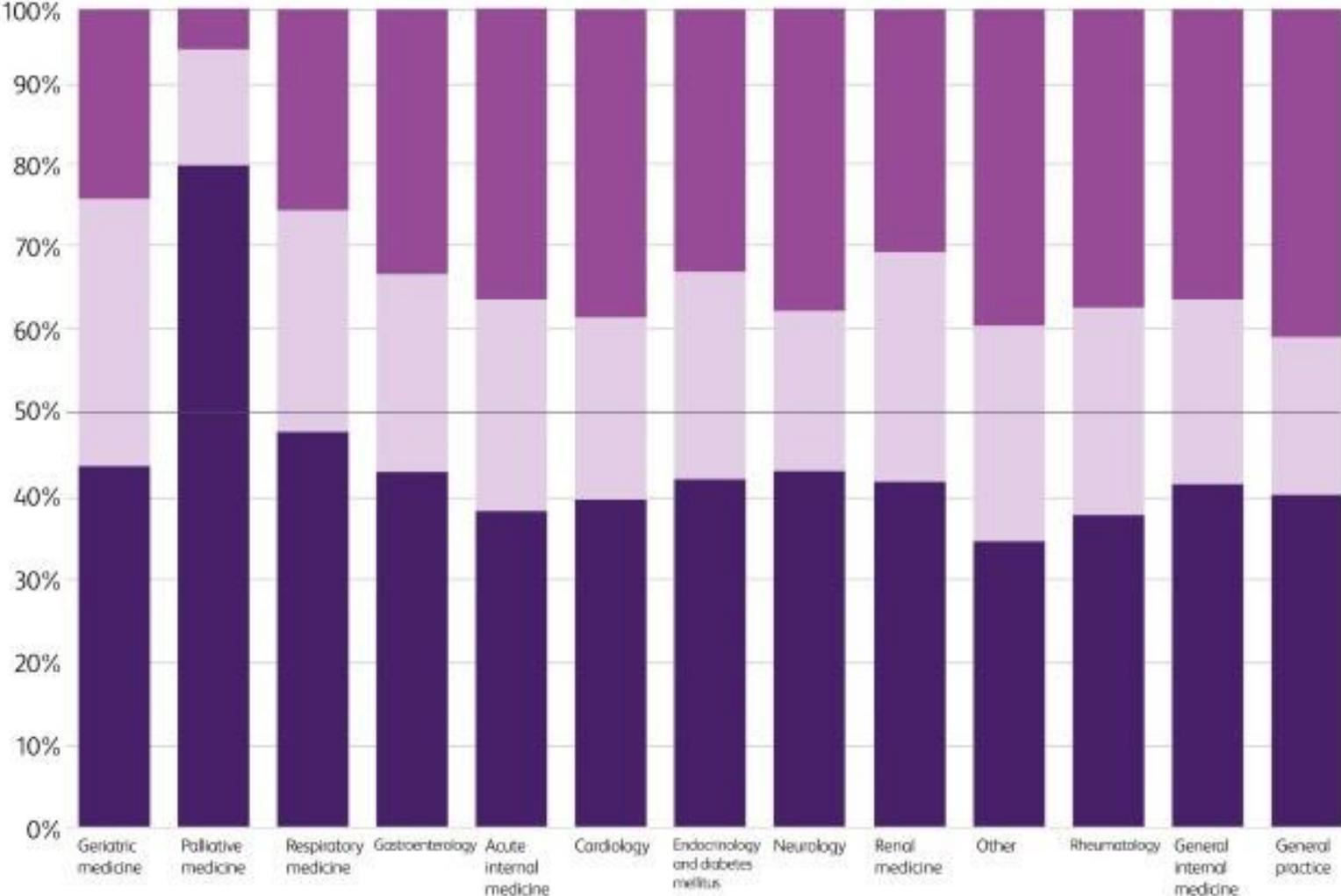
Just 25 per cent thought the RCP stance should be neutral - a fall from 31 per cent, when medics were last polled.

The percentage saying they would be prepared to participate in assisted dying increased from 21.4 per cent to 24.6 per cent. The number saying no fell from 58.4 per cent to 55.1 per cent.



# What should the **RCP's position** be on whether or not there should be a change in the law to permit assisted dying? By specialty $\geq 200$ responses

**In favour**   **Neutral**   **Opposed**







# **UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGING WORLDVIEWS**

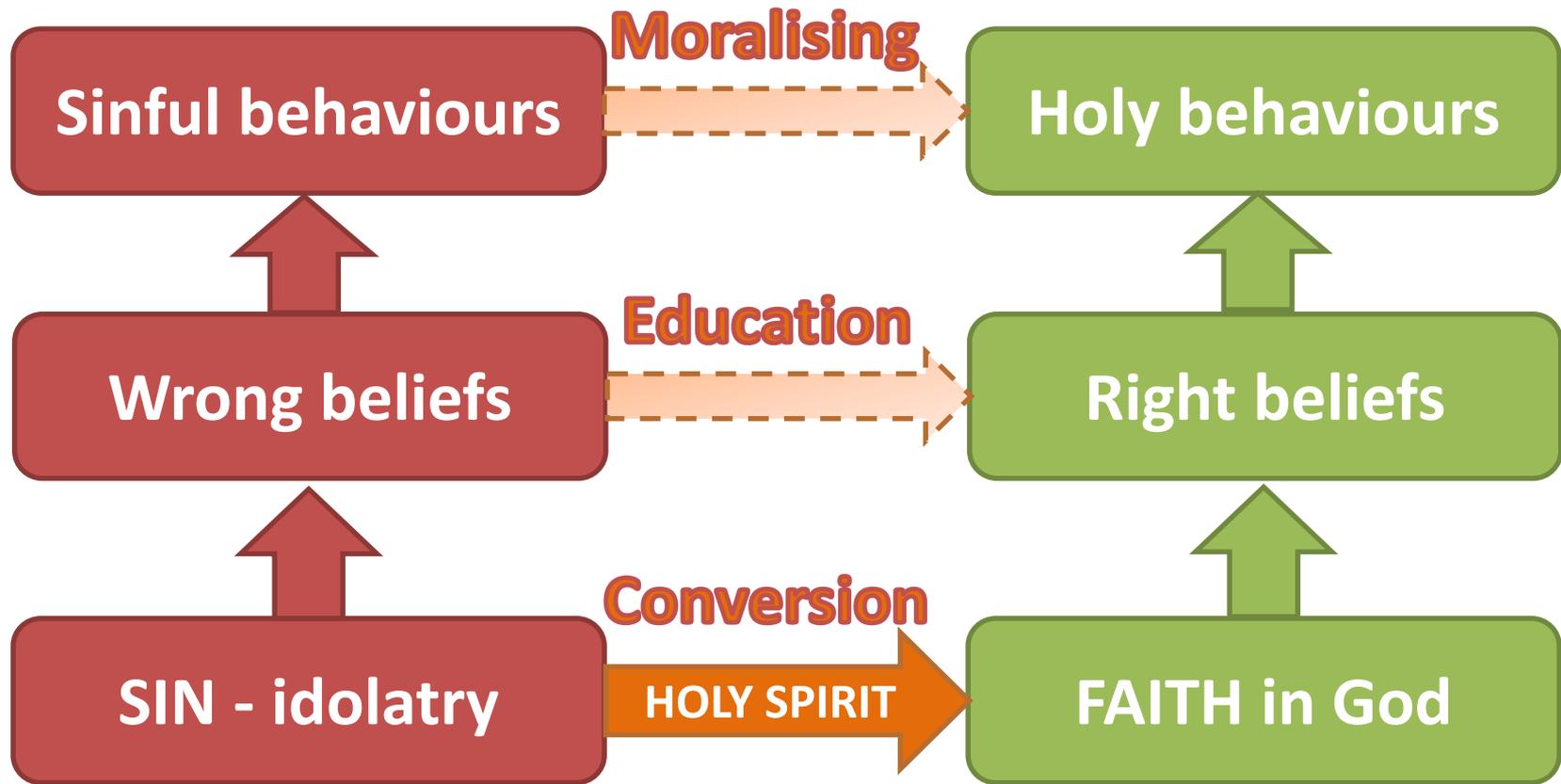
# A QUESTION



How can a sinful person become a holy person?



# THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM



you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God  
1 Thessalonians 1 v9

# WHAT IS A WORLDVIEW?



“a set of beliefs about the most important issues in life” Ronald Nash, 1992, p.16

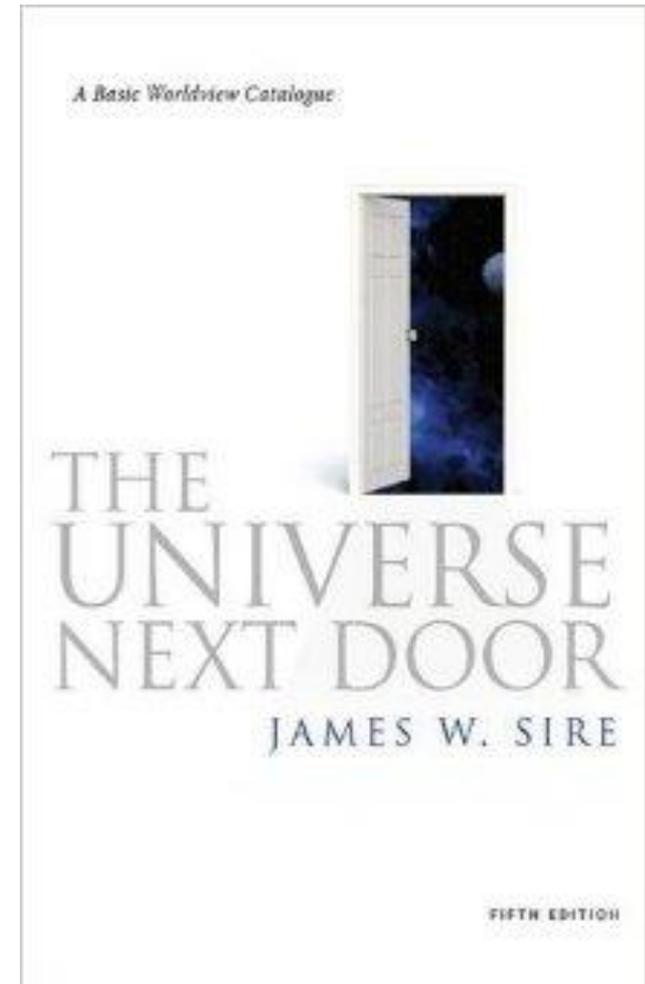


# WHAT IS A 'WORLDVIEW'?



a **commitment**, a fundamental orientation of the heart,  
that can be expressed as a **story** or in a **set of presuppositions** (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the **foundation** on which we live and move and have our being.

**Sire, 2009, p.20**



# CONSCIOUS OR SUBCONSCIOUS



“As men are not able to fight against death, misery, ignorance, they have taken it into their heads, in order to be happy, not to think of them at all. [...]

We run carelessly to the precipice, after we have put something before us to prevent us seeing it.”

**Blaise Pascal, 1660, *Pensées*,  
II.168,183**

# CONSISTENT OR INCONSISTENT



“The fragmented identity produced by a fragmented society reflects itself in people who behave like chameleons who put up different appearances not because they are dishonest, but because all of this is a part of themselves.”

**Benno van den Toren, 2011, p.13**



# What is the basic nature of reality?



Only physical  
'stuff' (matter)

Impersonal  
'spirit' forces

The human  
self

Personal God  
separate from  
universe

**NATURALISM**

**Eastern  
religions**

**New  
Age**

**Is God involved and  
has God spoken?**

**Is meaning possible**

Stories in  
communities

No

Yes

**Deism**

**Which book  
and prophet?**

Individual  
Experience

Nature

**Postmodernism**

Qur'an &  
Muhammad

Bible &  
Jesus

No

**Existentialism**

**Modernism (humanism)**

**Islam**

**Christianity**

**Nihilism**

# FIVE CORE NEEDS



## Meaning

Does the universe have ultimate purpose?

Does my life matter?

## Identity

What is a human being?

Who am I?

## Fulfilment

What is a good life?

How can I be happy?

## Direction

Is there absolute right and wrong?

What should I do?

## Hope

Is there a greater goal to work towards?

Where is my life heading?





# **EXPLAINING OUR FAITH**

# ARE WE ... ?



## **‘Functional Deists’**

- Excluding God from the ordinary things of life and limiting our expectations of what He might do?

## **‘Christian’ existentialists**

- Choosing on the basis of experience without reference to the Scripture, Church or historic faith?

## **Postmodern ‘Christians’**

- Defined by our own stories in our cultures rather than by God’s great story?

# FIVE CORE NEEDS



## Meaning

Does the universe have ultimate purpose?

Does my life matter?

## Identity

What is a human being?

Who am I?

## Fulfilment

What is a good life?

How can I be happy?

## Direction

Is there absolute right and wrong?

What should I do?

## Hope

Is there a greater goal to work towards?

Where is my life heading?

# A CHRISTIAN (GOSPEL) WORLDVIEW



- Meaning**      **God rules** – good and holy, loving and just
- Identity**      **We rebel** – dignity and depravity
- Fulfilment**      **God redeems** – forgiveness and new life
- Direction**      **We respond** –repent, believe, obey
- Hope**      **God restores** – change now and ultimately



# PROBLEMS TESTING WORLDVIEWS



**Who can judge?**

**Humility**

Complete insider knowledge, objectivity and fairness

**At what cost?**

**Gentleness**

“They love truth when she enlightens, they hate her when she reproves.” **Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, XXIII**

**Against what standard?**

**Christ-centred**

e.g., is it a problem if there are contradictions?

# 3 STRATEGIES



## 1. Expose inconsistencies

- Show the gaps where they depend on faith
- Follow the logic to its conclusion

## 2. Explore points of contact

- Show how partial truths make sense in light of Christ
- Follow their desires to their conclusion

## 3. Explain Jesus

- Show how He cannot fit within their worldview
- Follow His words to their conclusion





in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy,  
always being prepared to make a defence to  
anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope  
that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect

**1 Peter 3v15**



in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy,

**always being prepared**

to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect

**1 Peter 3v15**

# Be prepared



You may not feel you are the best person, but you are God's person in this moment

What might stop you sharing?

- **Shame** – purify your conscience (v16)
- **Ignorance** – admit your limits; commit to learning
- **Fear** ...





in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as  
holy, always being prepared to

**make a defence**

to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope  
that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect

**1 Peter 3v15**

# Give an 'apology'





in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as  
holy, always being prepared to make a defence to  
anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope  
that is in you; yet

**do it with gentleness and** ~~respect~~  
*phobou*

**1 Peter 3v15**

# Who is Jesus?



do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But **the LORD of hosts**, him you shall honour as holy.  
**Isaiah 8v12-13**

Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honour **Christ the Lord** as holy **1 Peter 3 v14-15**

Confidence AND Humility



in your hearts

**honour Christ the Lord as holy,**

always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and fear

**1 Peter 3v15**

# Jesus the only offence



Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honour as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he will become

**a sanctuary and a stone of offence**

and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.

**Isaiah 8 v12-15**

e.g., Not 'God and suffering',  
but 'God in Jesus and suffering'



in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy,  
always being prepared to make a defence to  
anyone who asks you for

**a reason for the hope**

that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and fear

**1 Peter 3v15**

# Making the gospel clear



## God rules [Father - creation]

- Does God exist? Creation / Science? Suffering?

## We rebelled [sin]

- Morality? Human nature? Identity and sexuality?

## God rescues [Son – Messiah, Saviour, Lord]

- Can I trust the Bible? Is Jesus the only way?

## We respond [faith]

- What must I do to be saved?

## God restores [Spirit – hope]

- Does God really love me? Can I be sure?





in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy,  
always being prepared to make a defence

**to anyone who asks you**

for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it  
with gentleness and fear

**1 Peter 3v15**

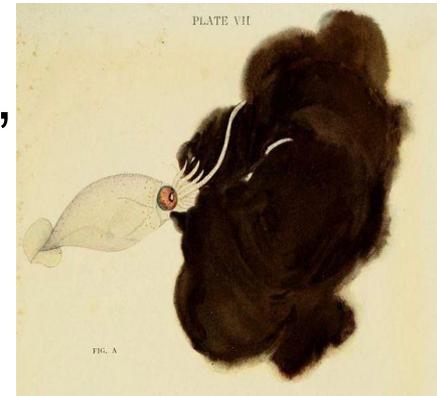
# Why this question now?



Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.

Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.

**Proverbs 26v4-5**



**NOTHING  
READ  
IS EVER  
BETWEEN  
WHAT IT  
THE LINES.  
SEEMS.**





in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy,  
always being prepared to make a defence to  
anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope  
that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and fear

**1 Peter 3v15**

