**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Resurrection Series**

Acts of the Holy Spirit

Acts 6:8-15 – Stephen: Full of the Spirit Worldview

August 18th, In the Year of Our Lord 2024

Pastor Matthew Diehl

(All Scripture is from the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.)

Sermon Audio and Texts: roundtopchurch.org / Under Member’s tab

Note: Final version of sermons is posted with possible additions.

Email questions to Pastor: rtchurch@cvctx.com

 Before we read the Scripture pertaining to today’s message, I want to make some observations about our times. First, I realize it is hard to find a home church that actually preaches and teaches the Word of God. In addition, do the leaders and congregation, after hearing God’s Word simply store it away for pondering throughout the week or look for opportunities to apply God’s Word? I think, that is, those of us who are paying attention see that Christianity has become a spectator religion. America’s secular culture in the past half century has pushed and come to insist that Christians keep their worldview to themselves and stay within the four walls of the church building and not participate in anything. But that was not enough. Then, the secularist invaded many churches and through years of deluding God’s Word or simply stop teaching God’s Word, they substituted hedonist humanism. Over the years of drinking the hedonist Kool-aide, people could not identify Biblical Christianity and came to believe that the hedonist worldview was Christian.

The speakers at the conference I just attended presented the concern many of us have. . . that very few people have a Biblical Worldview. In fact, they report that their most recent findings show that only 21% of the people in the Christian church have a Biblical worldview. And only 2% of the American society. I have often talked about the Judeo-Christian worldview. For a reference point, I quote from the website “Got Questions” Your Questions, Biblical Answers (<https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-worldview.html>)

**What is a Christian worldview?**

A “worldview” refers to a comprehensive conception of the world from a specific standpoint. A “Christian worldview,” then, is a comprehensive conception of the world from a Christian standpoint. An individual’s worldview is his “big picture,” a harmony of all his beliefs about the world. It is his way of understanding reality. One’s worldview is the basis for making daily decisions and is therefore extremely important.

1) Where did we come from? (and why are we here?)

2) What is wrong with the world?
3) How can we fix it?

A prevalent worldview today is naturalism, which answers the three questions like this: 1) We are the product of random acts of nature with no real purpose. 2) We do not respect nature as we should. 3) We can save the world through ecology and conservation. A naturalistic worldview generates many related philosophies such as [moral relativism](https://www.gotquestions.org/moral-relativism.html), [existentialism](https://www.gotquestions.org/existentialism.html), [pragmatism](https://www.gotquestions.org/pragmatism.html), and [utopianism](https://www.gotquestions.org/utopianism.html).

A Christian worldview, on the other hand, answers the three questions biblically: 1) We are God’s creation, designed to govern the world and fellowship with Him ([Genesis 1:27-28](https://www.bibleref.com/Genesis/1/Genesis-1-27.html); [2:15](https://www.bibleref.com/Genesis/2/Genesis-2-15.html)). 2) We sinned against God and subjected the whole world to a curse ([Genesis 3](https://www.bibleref.com/Genesis/3/Genesis-chapter-3.html)). 3) God Himself has redeemed the world through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ ([Genesis 3:15](https://www.bibleref.com/Genesis/3/Genesis-3-15.html); [Luke 19:10](https://www.bibleref.com/Luke/19/Luke-19-10.html)), and will one day restore creation to its former perfect state ([Isaiah 65:17-25](https://www.bibleref.com/Isaiah/65/Isaiah-65-17.html)). A Christian worldview leads us to believe in moral absolutes, miracles, human dignity, and the possibility of redemption.

It is important to remember that a worldview is comprehensive. It affects every area of life, from money to morality, from politics to art. True Christianity is more than a set of ideas to use at church. Christianity as taught in the Bible is itself a worldview. The Bible never distinguishes between a “religious” and a “secular” life; the Christian life is the only life there is. Jesus proclaimed Himself “the way, the truth, and the life” ([John 14:6](https://www.bibleref.com/John/14/John-14-6.html)) and, in doing so, became our worldview.

 Ok, many of us have a biblical worldview. . . it is who we are. I have also included in this sermon research from the respected demographer George Barna, who presents an orderly path forward grounded in God’s Word. Basically, Barna encourages Believers to carry out the Great Commission with a focus on specific teachings.

**Barna, CRC Research Identify ‘Seven Cornerstones’ for Restoring Biblical Worldview**

by [tracymunsil](https://www.arizonachristian.edu/author/tracy-munsil/) | Mar 14, 2023 |

[American Worldview Inventory](https://www.arizonachristian.edu/category/crc/awvi/), [CRC](https://www.arizonachristian.edu/category/crc/), [George Barna](https://www.arizonachristian.edu/category/crc/george-barna/), [Seven Cornerstones](https://www.arizonachristian.edu/category/crc/seven-cornerstones/)

**Dr. Tracy F. Munsil | March 14, 2023 | CRC | *American Worldview Inventory 2023*
From the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University**

Biblical worldview among American adults continues to drop precipitously, including a  [**drop from 6% to 4% since the start of the pandemic**](https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CRC_AWVI2023_Release1.pdf)**.** But new research reveals a possible solution to counter this national worldview crisis—the “seven cornerstones of the biblical worldview.”

If these seven particular beliefs are in place, a person is far more likely to possess a biblical worldview, according to a new report from veteran researcher [Dr. George Barna](https://www.arizonachristian.edu/culturalresearchcenter/leadership/) and the [Cultural Research Center](https://www.arizonachristian.edu/culturalresearchcenter/) at [Arizona Christian University](https://www.arizonachristian.edu/).

**In fact, the research shows that more than 80% of adults who embrace these seven basic biblical teachings hold a biblical worldview,** compared to only a relative handful of people who do not hold all seven. **Without** all seven cornerstones in place, the research shows it is highly unlikely a person will have a biblical worldview.

According to [Len Munsil,](https://www.arizonachristian.edu/about/leadership/president/about-len-munsil/) President of Arizona Christian University, **focusing on these seven cornerstones could dramatically reshape the nation’s worldview landscape.**

“This latest research identifies how to turn around more than 30 years of biblical worldview decline,” Munsil said. “It gives us an empirical, data-driven roadmap for expanding biblical worldview in our nation—and it’s not complicated.”

Munsil continued, “At ACU, we’re in the process of considering how an understanding of these seven cornerstones can be used on campus, especially in our classrooms, to help our students develop and deepen their biblical worldview. Because we know that those with a biblical worldview—who align their beliefs and behaviors with Scripture—**are able to flourish in life because they are living according to God’s design.”**

In the latest report from the [*American Worldview Inventory 2023*](https://www.arizonachristian.edu/culturalresearchcenter/research/)*,* Barna identifies the “seven cornerstones of the biblical worldview.” They are:

1. An orthodox, biblical understanding of God.
2. All human beings are sinful by nature; every choice we make has moral considerations and consequences.
3. Knowing Jesus Christ is the only means to salvation, through our confession of sin and reliance on His forgiveness.
4. The entire Bible is true, reliable, and relevant, making it the best moral guide for every person, in all situations.
5. Absolute moral truth exists—and those truths are defined by God, described in the Bible, and are unchanging across time and cultures.
6. The ultimate purpose of human life is to know, love, and serve God with all your heart, mind, strength, and soul.
7. Success on earth is best understood as consistent obedience to God—in thoughts, words, and actions.

<https://www.arizonachristian.edu/2023/03/14/barna-crc-research-identify-seven-> cornerstones-for-restoring-biblical-worldview/

 Now we will see how Stephen’s biblical worldview impacted early Christianity (Acts 6-7). It is evident that Stephen knew he was created by God to serve others. Stephen knew there was a problem in the world, and he believed God had equipped him to be part of the solution which was verified by others. Remember “Got Questions” outlined a biblical worldview with three points. . . Where did we come from and why are we here? What is wrong with the world? How can we fix it? Stephen exemplified these three points and more.

Remember, Stephen was a man chosen by the congregation to be a table servant overseeing the fair distribution of food. Within those biblical qualifications, a person had to be full of the Spirit, have a good reputation and wisdom, who could be put in charge of serving the fair distribution of food. What a simply remarkable set of qualifications. There are only three. . . full of Spirit, good reputation and wisdom. Wow! Who would have known! All of these point to a person’s moral character that has been regenerated from a life separate from God to a victorious life uplifted by God’s Holy Spirit. We must realize that Stephen was gifted in these areas because God alone equipped him. 1 Cor. 12:11 specifically tells us that God’s Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts as He wills.

Now, let us apply the seven biblical worldview components from Len Munsil, President of Arizona Christian University, to Stephen’s life situation.

1. Did Stephen have a biblical understanding of God? Yes, he demonstrated his love for God and neighbor. Remember, Jesus said, "But the greatest among you shall be your servant.” (Matt. 23:11). Stephen exhibited God’s two Greatest Commands by being selected and fulfilling his duties.

29 Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD;

 30 AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'

 31 "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

 (Mark 12:29-31)

2. Did Stephen believe human beings are sinful by nature; every choice we make has moral considerations and consequences? Obviously, Stephen was being selected because someone had sinned by their neglecting the fair distribution of food.

3. Did Stephen know Jesus Christ as his only Savior and believe that through Him forgiveness of sin was given? Yes, by the fact he was with Peter and John and the family of Jesus after the Cross, Resurrection, Appearances and forty-day ministry, Ascension and Holy Spirit empowerment. They approved of his heart-beliefs.

4. Did Stephen believe the entire Bible is true, reliable and relevant, making it the best moral guide for every person, in all situations? Of course, Stephen did not have a New Testament, because it had not been written. Stephen was a living testament to the moral guidance of all of God’s Word which at that time was the Jewish TaNaKh. We see in Stephen’s witness to the Jews (Acts 7) that he knew Hebrew history very well. From this account, we can assume Stephen had a high regard for the Word of God. Quoting from God’s Word gained him martyrdom.

5. Did Stephen believe that absolute moral truth exists—and those truths are defined by God, described in the Bible, and are unchanging across time and cultures? Yes! From reading the record of Stephen’s life in the book of Acts, we see that he gave his life for what he believed. Stephen willingly testified to the historical moral truth defined by God and His Word to the Jews, who stoned him to death. Yes, Stephen believed. . . gave his earthly life proclaiming God’s moral truth.

6. Did Stephen see that the ultimate purpose of human life is to know, love and serve God with all your heart, mind, strength and soul? Yes, Stephen did. By faith, he would not back down or relent his testimony about God’s covenant with the Jews, and he gave all his heart, mind, strength and soul as evidenced in Scripture.

59 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" 60 Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:59-60)

7. Did Stephen have success on earth because he had a consistent understanding of his responsibilities to God? Did Stephen demonstrate consistent obedience to God—in thoughts, words and actions? Yes, to both these questions. Stephen’s thoughts, words and actions brought martyrdom to him by stoning. I see Stephen was a Holy Spirit driven person. I say, that being a Christian. . . we automatically do many things that God calls us and has planned for our lives. Yes, there are times when we say to ourselves that we should not do so-and-so because God says so. You know. . . like rob banks and steal cars. However, most of the time our Spirit lives automatically produce good things. We do not have to force ourselves to be good. God’s Spirit indwells the Christian heart. Let’s read about Stephen.

**Acts 6:8** And **Stephen**, full of grace and power,

was performing great wonders and signs among the people.

 **9** But some men

from what was called the **Synagogue of the Freedmen,**

[men who had been a slave but had been set at liberty had their own synagogue.]

including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians,

and some from Cilicia and Asia,

rose up and argued with Stephen.

 **10** But they were **unable to** **cope**

 with the **wisdom** and the **Spirit** with which he was **speaking**.

 **11** Then they **secretly induced** men to say,

"We have heard him speak blasphemous words

against Moses and against God."

 **12** And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes,

and they came up to him and dragged him away

and brought him before the Council.

 **13** They put forward false witnesses who said,

"This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law;

**14** for we have heard him say that this Nazarene,

Jesus, will destroy this place

and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."

 **15** And fixing their gaze on him,

 all who were sitting in the Council saw his face

like the face of an angel.

**In closing,** I will say that most of us are not called by God to be a martyr. From what we know, Stephen had no family and no family responsibilities. God did not inspire a man to martyrdom and leave a family behind. Stephen knew that his life would go on to be with our Lord and Savior forever. Stephen experienced his *Second Coming* when he died, as we all will. We will all be greeted by the Lord upon the failing of our temporal bodies. Scripture tells us. . . “They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" (Acts 7:59). Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep [ἐκοιμήθη – ekoimethe]. (Acts 7:60).

I note that Luke chose the Greek word for “sleep” (ekoimethe) instead of the Greek word “teleutao,” meaning to come to an end, hence die as in Matthew 2:19. (“But when Herod died, behold.”).

**Friberg,** *Analytical Greek Lexicon*

 **κοιμάομαι** pf. κεκοίμημαι; 1aor. ἐκοιμήθην; 1fut. κοιμηθήσομαι; only passive in the NT;

literally *sleep, fall asleep* (Acts 12:6);

figuratively and euphemistically, for dying *fall asleep, die* (John 11:11)

**Strong’s # 5053 τελευτάω** *teleutao* **Meaning:** to complete, to come to an end, hence *to die*

**Origin:** from *5054* **Usage:** deceased(1), die(4), died(5), dying(1), put(2).

**Notes:** Matthew 1:20, 2:12-13, 22

I see that the Lord had Luke convey the truth that Stephen’s life was really not over. And it was not. Most people know that Jesus told the dying criminal on the cross beside Him. . ."Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). The apostle Paul testified that to die was to be with Christ (Philippians 1:23), and when a Believer is absent from the body, they were to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). When Jesus unveiled His plan for bringing an end to this age, He had John witness in Revelation 6:9-11 that the martyred souls in Heaven cry to God to bring justice on Earth.

The Apostle Paul writes to the Believers in Corinth. . .

 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,

 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.

 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;

 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Cor. 15:51-58)

AMEN