Worldview and Culture Part 1
By Dr. Lloyd Kwast

Lloyd Kwast:

Understanding worldview, missionary interacting, and understanding and gaining sensitivity to a worldview. This whole topic is uh problematical for anthropologists. Some feel it's almost an illegitimate examination because they get so much into philosophy and epistemology. But certainly for our purposes of applied anthropology, missionary anthropology, it is of crucial importance. Uh, it's a difficult area to uh examine, because it's-it's hard to get at those aspects of culture that are, by and large, implicit. Remember, that behavior is such an explicit examination. Here we come to the heart of why all of this happens. And the only way we can think about and we relate to this whole area is by paradigms, by pictures, by analogies, by examining assumptions and presuppositions. And boy, you know, this is tough to do. And because of this, sometimes anthropologists said this is not even a legitimate category of investigation. Others say, yes, it is. I'm in the camp that says yes, very much so, unless we see how people grasp their understanding of reality and their perceptions and their models and pictures of that, we really don't know too much about what's going on, even in the dimension of cognitive process and how these are formed.

And this is not easy. How do you get into a person's brain to see the pictures that he is conjuring up to view all of this? Mark and I were talking about that after class. I said, "The way you think fascinates me." And I said, "It's a dimensional cognitive style." Well, he didn't know what I--thought it was an insult, it was actually a compliment. But some of you have noticed that. Everybody makes those comments coming from a little different perspective, because he's

formulating this from different frames of reference, from different frames of even perceiving reality. Now, in our model, that's what we have. The outer ring is the express behavior. We said this reflects values, basic understanding of what is true and not true. But the heart of culture is what we call worldview, in this case, and that is that perception of what is real. Now, it's more complex than this, but at least that is, in a word, uh, a way we can look at this whole area. And uh it is tough sometimes to get handles on how to unlock this heart of culture.

In this case, I call it the heart of culture. And this is the area of culture in which the locus of culture is the way a people looks out and perceives their world or their universe of reality. It's in the mind. It's in the-the imagination. It's a way a person thinks about it. That seems to be the most important aspect or, or um, dimension of-of this reality. And in that sense, it doesn't seem real. And it seems like everybody would think their own way about it. But it's not true. This is the area of culture in which there's the greatest conformity for basic outlooks. And that bothers me, too. It's unexamined. Somehow we got this notion. And if you grew up in Southern California, I can almost assure you that you struggle with an area of perceiving supernaturalism, because somehow this is a very invasive, implicit assumption that what is real is material. And if you grew up in parts of Asia or Africa, I could almost assure you that you-your basic paradigm is supernaturalism and you have a hard time divorcing that from what you see happening out here. Cause and effect.

If lightning strikes, I can almost assure you, almost everybody that's a typical American or Western European, we'll assume it has to do with the discharge of electricity in the material aspect. If that happens in Africa, I can just almost assure you the first question is what's the

spiritual significance of this? That's how pervasive and powerful these assumptions are. And how we catch them is a mystery almost. Remember I said in the first lecture: we, we learn these, we absorb them almost from the atmosphere. And let alone knowing how we absorb them, to be able to analyze them and list them is the problem that we're gonna face. Keys for unlocking this complexity--again, I'm using very simple models here, but helpful ones--is to ask what assumptions are at work here about reality. In this case, what is most real? What is less real? What is not real at all? Would be a way of getting a hold of this. So in this respect, worldview of a people can be viewed as their assumptions about reality. That's key. Trying to get at their assumptions about reality. Or we could use the word presupposition.

People perceive the world differently because they make different assumptions about reality. Let me repeat that. People perceive the world differently because they make different assumptions about reality. Worldview assumptions are usually implicit, and remain largely unexamined, are taken for granted. They are the givens, or the norms. And that's, I guess, the dangerous part as believers. The most powerful aspect of culture is the one that we examine the least, because it's so hard to get a hold of, even sort it out in our own minds, let alone that culture to which we're going to minister. Worldview assumptions are reinforced by the deepest emotional feelings of protection. And here's a quote from Paul Hiebert, "And anyone who challenges these assumptions becomes the object of vehement attack. Here is a very highly esteemed anthropologist saying that. Let me repeat this. Worldview assumptions are reinforced by the deepest emotional feelings of protection, "And anyone who challenges them becomes the object of vehement attack."

And I know, because I-earlier years, I was not as clever on telling students what I was trying to get at. And I didn't warn them like I do you, over and over, I come back to warnings. Why? I was reported to the dean one time. You know, this is really dangerous stuff, looking at culture, especially cultural worldview. And, you know, if you want to move into heresy, this is what you do. You look at it and examine it. And I'm pleading just the opposite. To avoid heresy, we've got to look at it, examine it, challenge it, call it a lie if we have to. We must judge it by God's Word. Some illustrations. Some of you have said you like me always drawing illustrations or examples. And that's true. We need to to get handles. Western worldview assumes by and large, I always say that, we're using hyperbole here, extreme statements in order to make a point. But Western worldview, by and large, assumes that the world external to themselves is real, but lifeless. Did you catch that? The world that's external to us, it's real. That wall, it's real. The stars, the galaxies, but lifeless. We sometimes are fascinated by the possibility of life on other galaxies. But, you know, that's another thing.

And by the way, if there's life, it's probably much like we are. And if it's not, we're not too interested. But if they have self-awareness and if they can think, then, hey, we've got brothers and sisters out there. That is, if they have two sexes as we. What if they're unisex? Well, that's another fascination, isn't it? I'm sure they're green, whatever they are.

[Audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

I get the silliest thoughts. Okay. So that's an illustration about an assumption. However, in South East Asia or in Asia in general, that-those assumptions might be different. That is, they might

assume the external world does not really exist at all, I think some Indian worldview philosophies, and that it is by and large an illusion of the mind and the reality rests in the ability to think about it. So the reality is up here. And I just said that earlier, the reality of cultural worldview is here. The locus of it is the way I think about it. And this sounds mystical. And right away we're alarmed we're becoming Eastern mystics. But who can deny but that our perception. It is not to say that there is out there an objective reality, it's just our perception we're dealing with. Dr. Hiebert has probably written some of the best material that I know of, and articles, and also in this book "On This Problem", it's the problem of the baseball umpire. You know, the umpire said, "it's-it's a strike. Because I perceived it as a strike. And what actually happened doesn't matter. It's what I think about it that makes a reality."

[Lloyd Kwast laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

Then the playback shows he's a liar. Let's see, we assume that there's a reality out there and that ump--kill the ump unless he has perceived the reality. Now, mind you, with playbacks, we can get at some of that reality, but they don't like playbacks because the game's rules would break down if they always had to go to the monitor. Although now we're starting to use the monitor, and they have to get together and say, hey, we were wrong. Guess perceptions can be wrong. I just heard on the news, uh, they had a race, a horse race, and everybody in the crowd thought one horse won, and all the officials, and they played it back, and to their horror, it was another horse. Um, so everybody's perception can be wrong. I was in an accident one time with my dad. It wasn't serious, but a guy ran into us in Lansing, Michigan. I was just a teenager, scared me to death. And it was by real motor works. I don't know if you're old enough to remember real, but

um, and it was lunchtime and there are all kinds of people at the corner and everybody in the crowd said that we were at fault.

And the policeman came and he started to ask questions of the other driver and my dad. And my dad knew that we were not at fault. The other guy had run a red light. And the policeman, by looking at the skid marks and having a few answer his question, didn't say a word. He started to write out a ticket. Gave it to the other guy.

[Lloyd Kwast laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:
Boy, did we feel vindicated. But uh, perception. So perception is the problem we grapple with when we're examining world view, and most evangelicals don't like that. Does that say there is an objective reality? Yes, there is. Does it mean we can always pick up on that perception? Not necessarily. And that's the problem we have. Culture is that lens by which we perceive reality. Ultimate objective reality. But the perception is skewed. Is our perception of an absolute reality of God, right? I've been telling you all week it is distorted, and it's twisted, sometimes it's lost because of cultural worldview. Can we capture that absolute reality? Here, Koon, Thomas Koon, has done quite a bit of writing in perception in the scientific realm, that speaks to missionary anthropologists. And he uses the analogy "growing out of physics." Newton had some clear perceptions of an objective reality we call gravitation. And they were true. They are helpful. We still teach them. But then Einstein comes along and he changes the paradigm to such an extreme that either Newton has to be naive or a liar. Is that right?

It would seem so, but not so. But it's a totally different frame. So that gravitational force doesn't observe an apple dropping, but observes mass, and time, and acceleration, and energy. These are the parts. It's E equals MC squared, in fact. And looking at it from that dimension, it unlocks a whole new way of looking at physical reality that blows our mind. And he said that all matter, if my calculations are right, and my math is right, can be equated with energy. That doesn't seem real. I can touch that wall. You mean that wall can be transferred into energy? Yes. And his math proved true when they exploded some of the first nuclear bombs. But do you think Einstein and his formula reflects absolute reality in the physical realm? He said no. He said we must be as little children trying to grope for what the absolute is in the physical realm. Would you agree or disagree? Or does Einstein's formula, mathematical formula, say the last word in what is real out there?

What about subatomic physics? You know, the atom was the smallest object in uh nature. In fact, the word itself means that. Now we're discovering universes within the atom, subatomic material. What's the smallest particle of reality? Well, uh, who knows how far the universe goes in? How far does the universe go out? What mathematical formulas capture this? And does anything in culture help us to say now we know the absolute? We are groping with some big, big concepts here. But to bring us back to reality, God hasn't told us everything about physics, or culture, or ourselves. But what we must know, we can know. May I-could I repeat that? God hasn't told us everything about Himself, or reality, or the absolute reality, or objective reality. But what we must know, we can know. That is an important formula. Never forget it. What we must know, we can know. That God says He's reverse-reserved some things for Himself. Why do

you think He's done that? What if He showed us everything of reality about Himself in the universe? I think we'd die, we would look at God and we'd be dead.

It'd be like Moses looking fully into the glory of God's face. You can't do that without dying. Um, I, you know, maybe I'm wrong theologically, but I'd like to think of heaven as learning a hundred billion new facts of God's glory and splendor every day for eternity and still having things to learn when it's all gone. Could God be that infinite? What does the word infinite mean? Infinite is power. Infinite is glory. Infinitude. This is the things you're dealing with in worldview. Maybe we should quit the course right now.

[Lloyd Kwast laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

I knew you'd like this lecture. This is this is the fun one.

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

And what gets us nervous is we throw up our hands and say this is far beyond our bill. Just give me a Bible and a few memorized verses.

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

Lloyd Kwast:

Let me go with-share my faith. Quite frankly, that's what I want you to do.

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

Lloyd Kwast:

But listen, you ask, you ask me, I'm not uh, you know, you ask me to take this course, to give this information, and you want to unlock people's ways of thinking so you can witness more effectively. And here it is. Don't gripe.

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

Lloyd Kwast:

Hey--okay, here are the three points. Western assumes a world external-that's external to them is there and it's real, but lifeless. Eastern often assume that it's their perception of the reality that's important, but it's a largely illusion. What a contrast. And then thirdly, tribal peoples assume that the world around them is real, but it's living. Animism. So there you have three wildly different worldviews. The first one, the western world, world external to us is real. We have a reality. It has a reality, but it's lifeless. No personality. And everybody would say amen to that. Eastern, the external world isn't real. It's an illusion. That's an extreme statement, but you get the point. And by the way, some Western philosophers have come to that point. The only reality is our perception.

Audience member:

You can be a Christian and still believe that, as long as God is real.

Lloyd Kwast:

Well, you know, the way I'm presenting worldview, it almost sounds like it. Doesn't it? The perception of reality is very important. I think we tend to underestimate the power of perception,

and the realities it has built. But let's be sure that we say there is an objective real God, although we grope after Him to know Him. We sure do. And certainly our ideas about God are skewed by this perception uh, dimension of a worldview. And then the third--uh, that's the second view. The third one is what we would call tribe or animistic. And that is, there is an external world, but it is animated. It's living. So the mountain, and the rock, the whole from the top to the bottom, from God Creator, through Satan, the demons, through people, through trees, through the vegetation, through the rocks, the sand, the stars, the universe, all a living organism, all animated by spiritual and living forces. That's what the word animism means, by the way. Now, how could human beings genetically so similar come up with such wildly differing outlooks, is because of world view. That's the answer. Yeah.

Audience member:

[Unintelligible]

Lloyd Kwast:

That's a good point. Yeah. Uh, I word animated [unintelligible] I'm repeating this for the tape's sake, and even our cartoons, we bring to life lifeless characters, and lifeless drawings. Even the motion picture action. Uh, we have single frame, two dimensional drawings that we animate by moving them. Interesting physics and theory of physics in this, like Einstein's view that only as you have acceleration and motion do you understand the nature of the universe. That's one of the parts of the equation, isn't it? And certainly mass is part of the equation. Energy is part of the equation. And all is put together. If you're a physicist or dabble with this, you know that Einstein's formula, mathematical formulas are already far outdated, far beyond that already. And

some-some go so far as to say that uh they were helpful but misleading. I wouldn't say that. Um, Einst-uh Newton, it doesn't make his theories false. It's just that they didn't--their categories weren't adequate. And it doesn't make Einstein false. It just the categories aren't adequate. What categories are?

May I suggest to you, no human categories, no matter how brilliant the physics will ever be adequate. If we're dealing with an infinite God, who in His infinite wisdom made that objective reality. And I think it is just sheer nonsense and arrogance for us to say as Christians, well, you know, with our worldview frame of reference, we can know the truth and we can know it all. I think the uh, the paradigm most of us work with in the West, because of science and our superior intelligence, versus other cultures, uh we can know about nineteen- ninety-seven to ninety eight percent of all that there is to know. We will admit that we have a few things we don't know. Uh, what probably is the true paradigm of knowledge? Well I'd like to suggest what we must know, we can know.

[Lloyd Kwast laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

But we are really ignorant when it comes to the objective realities of a living God who made us, who loves us, and who calls us to Himself. The assumption is about time, uh I was--told you I'd come back to this, okay, Roger?

Roger:

[Unintelligible]

Lloyd Kwast:

The Apostle Paul. Yeah, he wouldn't be animistic. Um, the power uh yeah-he uh-his worldview is very much molded by um, by Greco-Roman thought. The uh, in the old en--here I'm a little loath to say, well, thank God, somehow the Western view somehow captured the reality. But you go both in Old Testament and New, you find it most compatible with number one on this uh, this outline. But we can't have the arrogance to say, well, we have the right one, that all nature is dead--I mean, anything external. Because remember, we are talking about the ultimate reality that rests in personality yesterday. And we see already our view is skewed in terms of propositional truth. But we have to be careful how we say these things. All I'm doing is pushing us to think and to appreciate how other people do put their universe together and start from where they are rather than imposing our-an assumption. Another problem is when you deal with changing worldview assumptions, it's not easy. How do you just get people to undo their view? Very hard to get Africans to assume that all nature is-the inanimate nature is dead, deader than a doornail, and has no bearing on me spiritually. But then you find it creeping back into Western, where the stars, and pyramids, or whatever else. Uh somehow they have an influence.

Audience member:

[Unintelligible]

Lloyd Kwast:

What?

Audience member:

Crystals.

Lloyd Kwast:

Crystals. They're--yeah. So, we have this backwash because of our need to know, our lust to know, and that which we can know and must know, we can know. And we don't have to lust after knowledge for power, or significance.

Audience member:

[Unintelligible] don't have to treat a dog [unintelligible].

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

Lloyd Kwast:

Hey listen, I treat Trixie nice. What-what are you trying to imply?

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

Audience member:

I mean like, here we say that we've gotten everything in scientific and lifeless, and yet we come back to our animals and we treat them like humans.

Lloyd Kwast:

We make them humans. I even talk to my dog. I shouldn't admit this in here.

[Audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

I talk to myself, too.

[Lloyd Kwast laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

But I don't talk to my teddy bear. Okay uh--

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

Lloyd Kwast:

Oh, we are just starting. Yeah. But go ahead.

Audience member:

[Unintelligible]

Lloyd Kwast:

I told you before not to ask that question--

[Audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

--Because my-my model is not logically consistent. And I told you why I divided it. I'm not reprimanding you, but you're embarrassing me.

[Audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

Because that's a linear question, and my model, at this point, admittedly, is not linear-linearly uh logical.

Audience member:

The reason I'm asking is because I taught your model and one of the students asked and I didn't know.

Lloyd Kwast:

That's right. And the reason is that uh, it's not logically consistent, but there's a good reason why I developed it that way.

Audience member:

And the other question I had is, are you saying, uh, in relation [unintelligible] truth, as would be reality. If truth is absolute. What is true and what is real are two different things.

Lloyd Kwast:

Yeah. Yeah. And so our perception--

Audience member:

What is real is based on our perception. What is truth is objective.

Lloyd Kwast:

At least we assume that our way of thinking about truth is objective. We objectify it. That's the-that's the right answer. We objectify our dogmatic statements of truth. Now, whether they conform to that reality is another question. And that's what we grapple with in Worldview. How does our dogma conform to what scripture says, or tries to establish as real?

Audience member:

Now biblically, is truth and reality the same thing?

Lloyd Kwast:

Well, in terms of the biblical understanding of knowledge, we shall know, even as we are known. And it admits that we see through a glass darkly. What Paul is saying is we-we grope after this. And what he is saying is that we are known, and that is the objective reality that matters in this. It's not that we have a grip of knowledge to be as God. This is the lust that I started my lectures with, this lust to be as God by knowing. And the more important action is just the reverse that's far less satisfying to Western people. And that is that I am known. What gives me significance and comfort is that I'm known, not that I know. And one thing that I won't be able to talk you out of is this insistence that you-you as-I as your instructor tell you what to know. And what I'm telling you is that we grope after this, especially when get into worldview. And I get nervous when I get into this lecture. I really do, because, you know, I talk about swimming through it in the earlier lectures. Look where we're going to swim in this one. But it's important that we think about it.

And tell you--we've got a problem, uh, [unintelligible]. And that's the--part of the problem, is that we have this lust to have the final word. Uh, for me to tell you what the Bible says is absolutely objectively true. What is that truth about myself? And I'll tell you, it's that I'm known. Not that I know. How much do we know ourselves? What is the Western assumption? Know thyself because you can. It could take a few days, but you can know yourself. Do we know ourselves according to scripture? Absolutely not. That's what gets us into trouble. Do you believe that? I do. I don't know myself. It scares me. I plead with the God who knows me so well uh-to-uh-for-and what is my response to know myself better? No, know Him better. Here we're getting very theological again. Does this satisfy a typical Western person who-who insists on knowing? No. Sounds like gobbledygook. Forget that pious talk. Tell me what the truth is. Or build me up by telling me that I can know myself psychologically, I can be in charge. I can be the master of my own fate. And I'm going to feel good about life. But please don't become a missionary. That would be my answer to that.

Audience member:

[Unintelligible] culture wants us so much to know ourselves, and you become almost paranoid, no one really knows what that means.

Lloyd Kwast:

You're right. We don't know what it means so.

[Lloyd Kwast laughs]

Audience member:

No one really knows what it means, but uses phrases like, you know, "find yourself", and people are passing to me--doing all these internal kind of things you know to find out--there's all these tests you can take and everything. Because we are, almost, so paranoid.

Lloyd Kwast:

And we're outraged when people tell us we don't know ourselves. The Pharisees were absolutely outraged when you know when they were told they don't know what they're doing, that they're fighting against God, when they were defending God. We're outraged. Uh, lectures like this make us all nervous. We don't like it. Now Eastern, if I were doing this in the eastern context, first of all, the inconsistent--illogical inconsistency of my model wouldn't bother them. They'd say it's a helpful one. That's all they need to say about it. And this uh groping um, was part of their thinking process. They love to grope, to think after things. To, to pursue ideas, um and live--and a crisis-oriented people find it very hard to tolerate these things. But that's a good example. Yeah. Tim?

Tim:

But then don't we also find a danger, there's a verse that says, "those who are always learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth"--

Lloyd Kwast:

That's right.

Tim:

I mean we still have to say there is, in God's Word there is objective truth there.

Lloyd Kwast:

Yeah.

Tim:

And, and there are worldviews that hinder people from coming to understanding-of the understanding of the objective truth, to a whole new world that allows you to have extreme contradictions. And to-- doesn't that require--

Lloyd Kwast:

Oh, yes. I said this is dangerous territory. But I just told you one of those truths, that it's the truth in God's mind and His knowledge of me, that is the significant one. And that leaves you empty. See, what you're saying isn't implying by even saying it is that I can come independently to that truth. And what I'm saying to you, the Bible teaches I can't. I can only do it in the mind of Christ. And that's mystical. And we don't like it. We're not oriented that way. And all I wanted you to do is, you know, you can react, but I-you've got to think about it, Tim, you've got to think about it. And you've got to be equipped if you're going to go to eastern cultures, uh, to grapple with this, and minister to them, and to yourself, and come to the knowledge of the truth about yourself. And one aspect of that knowledge is that I can't know myself, in spite of what Socrates said.

[Lloyd Kwast laughs nervously]

Lloyd Kwast:

It is bothersome, you know. And the minute I get a little, you know, that's why I-you get nervous. You get reported to the dean, um.

[Audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

This is--why-why do you go to seminary if this is what-the kind of garbage you get? And again, crisis people like a neat set of notes. One, two, three, three ways to do it without trying too hard or thinking too deeply.

[Audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

And there you've got 'em. And if you got to preach a sermon, you get the notes out and tell people what the truth is. I always--people who grow in wisdom. I had one man said he was an expert on the family, until he had one.

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

Lloyd Kwast:

And now when he's called on family conferences, he doesn't know what to say.

[Audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

I say wonderful. There is a man growing in the wisdom and in the mind of Christ. But he sure helps people more now than he used to. Let me tell you that much.

[Lloyd Kwast laughs]

Lloyd Kwast: And I guess I'm at that place in life. I'm old enough, I've worked overseas long enough, and I've--that I can maybe be a better teacher to help you in life than I was when I had all the answers. But I sure enjoyed it more. You know, when you're the authority. What fun.

[Audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:
But when you come away from class thinking, you don't know any more than your students. It bothers you.

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

Lloyd Kwast:
But at least I know where to point to. That's-that gives me satisfaction. Well, I don't know, this-this whole lecture is degenerating very quickly. Should we move on? I-we-we start--I gave you a silly illustration on time. But let me show you how a worldview looks at time, assumptions about time. One is it's linear and it moves in a uniform fashion through equally measured segments. Remember the analogy, the analog, of a swee-sweephand on a watch. There are two worldview perceptions or assumptions here. One, it's dishit-digital, and one, it's analog or an analogy. There are two really different world views reflected right on my little wristwatch. Marvelous thing. Think about that. Maybe you've never had thought about it, but it's fascinating. Something Sherwood said one time. I-it clicked. You know how those things happen? It clicked. This is an

analogy. It's not real at all. Now, Tim, I want a reality about what time is, and may I suggest what it is? Time shall be no more. There, we're getting a hold of this reality!

[Lloyd Kwast laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

You like that? No way. We're creatures of culture. You're getting me on. Tell me the reality about this universe. You know what I suspect it is? We already have telescopes that, they say, look at the edge of the universe. Well, we're gonna have bigger ones out in space in a few years, and they're going to see universes beyond the universe. And could I suggest to you a statement of reality? That I don't-I couldn't prove, but I suspect that an infinite God would make an infinite physical universe. That's a suspicion I have. And as they say, how can that be?

[Audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

Okay, Mark. See, we lost him. I know we would before this course ended.

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

Mark:

How could--

Lloyd Kwast:

Don't ask me.

Mark:

[Unintelligible] this doesn't make sense.

[Audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

But I'll tell you.

Audience member:

But you see, that's because we're working with finite minds.

Lloyd Kwast:

Do you know what? It's a better-it's a better statement than what they did in the Middle Ages, "Could God make a rock bigger than He could lift?"

[Audience laughs]

Audience member:

Well, also--

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

Audience member:

We live forever. That doesn't make sense. And it does-it doesn't make sense to me either how you can end eternity. What comes after the ending? You see-I mean, if you're gonna end it with a brick wall, what comes after the brick wall? See that makes little sense to me.

Lloyd Kwast:

You guys should get together after class, I can tell.

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

New audience member:

How can something infinite make-a person infinite create something that's, has the same qualities--

Lloyd Kwast:

Just to show off his glory. Why not? He could do that as easily as make it finite.

New audience member:

[Unintelligible]

Lloyd Kwast:

Well, let's not argue over this.

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

Lloyd Kwast:

You think I know? I just thought-I wanted to shock, uh--

Mark:

Do you-do you think that uh, these three worldviews we looked at, that one is—now-now to me, I would say, you know, different perspect-perspectives of the world, but there has to be--

Lloyd Kwast:

Which one's best? Number one.

Mark:

Yeah, well yeah!

Lloyd Kwast:

Okay.

Mark:

They're all wrong. If there's no such thing as the principle of noncontradiction though, that to me goes back to the character of God. Can God--

Lloyd Kwast:

Well I-but I-I see your linear logic coming all out all over the place.

Mark:

So God can, from the Bible, the God of the Bible that I read about, can-can believe one thing, and the opposite of the same thing at the same time?

Lloyd Kwast:

Could the God I worship defy the laws of Greek logic? That's the real question.

Mark:

Well, this is just a reflection of reality, a mottled reality.

Lloyd Kwast:

Okay.

Mark:

The principle of noncontradiction is the way it really is, it's not because it's Greek that makes it bad, it's because there's a--

Lloyd Kwast:

I know that's why some anthropologists say this whole thing is getting back to the ancient, uh, epistemological disciplines. See why I said--and why I'm a little nervous in. But all I'm doing now, Mark, you're drawing me into the dimension that I don't want to deal with. Because if--No, no, I'm not--this is not a put down. I'm not avoiding you. All I'm asking you to do is see that when you move into that eastern culture, they're gonna have an epistemology that doesn't fit your categories, even of logic.

Mark:

They can't know anything if they explicitly deny the principle of non-contradiction.

Lloyd Kwast:

And then they'll ask you, what can you know? By using--

Mark:

Because I know God!

Lloyd Kwast:

That's right. They're--sometimes it leads to that. But they would argue on the same hand, that our epistemology prevents us from knowing God. See, this is--uh the shoe can fit on the other foot, too. Okay now--

[Audience laughs]

[Two audience members talking and laughing in background]

Lloyd Kwast:

Could I-could I bring a semblance of-of sanity back to this whole thing?

Audience member:

No.

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

Lloyd Kwast:

I uh, I think I've already opened Pandora's box.

[Audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

What can we do to redeem this whole process? I didn't realize I would get this bad.

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

Lloyd Kwast:

Let me--

Mark:

[Unintelligible]

Lloyd Kwast:

We're gonna have to redo this tape. Let me uh--

[Audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

Let me go back to a simplistic illustration, on time. And--because we're really getting into the rare atmosphere here. And-and Mark, your questions need answering, and you need-uh you need a philosopher and an epistemologist to work with you.

Mark:

I have one! [Continues talking while Kwast talks over him]

Lloyd Kwast:

I'm-I'm a simple minded uh miss-missionary, but assumptions about time, you begin to see, if there's tension at that point in the culture, where it might grow out of this-these views are assumptions about reality. My question is, it seems logical that our view of time and how we divide it, and it moves linearly, is-is the only way you could think about that reality. But right away, the minute you start examining that carefully, there is no reality to the analogy. So part of the worldview is analogy. It's a picture. It's a paradigm. It's an example that we use to think about a reality. Is there a reality of time? And why--what is that reality if there is a time at which God will do away with that reality, or time will be no more. I'm getting beyond myself, folks. I don't know, except that I know that I'm a creature of space and time, and I can't think about an infinite universe, I can't think about eternity, because of my limitations.

Audience member:

But you can't think of a finite universe either.

Lloyd Kwast:

You can't think about a finite universe. Can you think about an infinite universe that goes inward as well as outward? No. We're really going to--and what is there, a brick wall? A chain-link fence out there? To stop it. If you could even conceive of how big the known universe is, you couldn't comprehend it. We-we're aware of about 100 billion galaxies of about between 3 and 4 billion stars each. Just do that mathical-math-mathematical equation and try to comprehend it. And we know about those, you can see them. Or hear them. Radio telescopes. We're dealing with

a God who's a little bigger than we are. That's one thing. Now, it's not to deny the objective reality. That's what I'm trying to say, Mark. And what we must know, we can know. I'm not saying that we can't know. Eastern philosophies, epistemology, often gets into that realm. We can't give up territory here. But one thing we can't say is that we can know--we do know, and knowledge has made us wise and powerful. And that's what Western--the trap is of Western epistemology. I can know myself, and to know, uh, is to experience the reality in and of itself. The more important reality is that I am known.

Linear time. Uh, now. Here are other views of that reality: cyclical, that it follows the pattern of nature. Summer, winter, spring, summer and fall. Or spiral, moving from beginning to end, but in cyclical form. Another view is pendulum, back and forth. Different rates, sometimes stopping altogether. Time as an arena in which experience and events happen, and time is real only as uh verified by experience. So it was not experience in human-i-if-it's not part of the human experience, it's not real. It's like the-the uh, if you've take-all of you have had freshman courses in uh, or general ed courses in philosophy. If a tree falls in the forest and nobody hears, it doesn't make any sound. You know. Well, we can explain that mechanically. Yes, it's set up vibrations in the air, had an ear picked it up. But if it's not experienced or perceived, is it real? We get into all this kind of uh argument. I don't wish to, because nobody's ever settled those questions, have they? Uh, uh depends on how we think about it and what we assume about it, but that's their idea of time. Unless it is experienced, uh unless events occur, you can't really consider it time.

Because of that, they have a two-dimensional model of time instead of three dimensional. What's the three dimensional? You know it well, present, past, and future. Or, past, present, and future,

depends on how you want to do it. How about future, present, and past? No, we'd rather have it past, present, and future. Right away, you're revealing a worldview assumption, aren't you? Why don't we say it the other way? Because we see time flowing from the past to the future. You say to be logical, you must have a three dimensional view of time. No, not if you cannot conceive of the future as being real. And if you got a world view that says it's got to be experienced to be real, how could you ever call a future real? See what you have? So reality then becomes present and past. You can only assume that there's going to be a future, but can't be sure of it. And it can't be-uh, you can't consider it a reality.

Mark:

What does a person like that, in that kind of culture, do when they become a Christian, and they look at prophecies?

[Lloyd Kwast clears throat]

Lloyd Kwast:

They--well, they-if they have a spiral view, if they have a purely cyclical view, it's a problem. But very few cultures have this. Even in India. Usually a spiral view. And by--I'm convinced the book of Proverbs has a spiral view of history. There is a repetition, but it moves toward consummation. And um, but basically in a two-dimensional view of time, that is a legitimate question. They'll concede the point, but they say, what's important is not to pretend you're standing in the present looking in the--

[Audio cuts out]

Lloyd Kwast:

But we do it by virtue of what we see. Wisdom is to grope wisely into the future by virtue of what you know, and have studied. And that's their argument. They say, yes, it's true we can anticipate groping to a consummation, but only because God has said it here and we've experienced it in our history.

Mark:

[Unintelligible]

Lloyd Kwast:

Well, good. I made a point! [Claps hands together] Finally!

Mark:

I mean there's a fine line, but when you say you can't know-- [Continues to talk while Kwast talks]

Lloyd Kwast:

Okay, but I'm--all I'm doing. See--you-you're so crisis today, Mark.

[Mark laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

I can hardly--I'm not asking you to make judgments on what's right and wrong. Um, I'm not reprimanding you either. It's so typical, it gets hard for us, doesn't it? We're very crisis oriented

and we grope and we get nervous. I knew this would happen before the week ended. Uh-we-it just gets too much. We've got to go home and-and uh read the Reader's Digest, to come back to reality.

[Audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

You know what bugs me about the Reader's Digest? They've got all kinds of stories, of tragedy, of accident, but they always make it. And in this real world, most of us don't make it. We die.

Audience member:

Dr. Kwast? Um, do we have to change, uh [unintelligible]

[Lloyd Kwast laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

By the way, I still get the Reader's Digest. And I even read it, but not to get reality, you know.

[Lloyd Kwast laughs]

Audience member:

Are they-do we need to change peoples' worldview in order for them to become Christian?

Lloyd Kwast:

Let me put it this way. Becoming Christian often does um change worldview. I don't like-uh-you know, I've got to be careful. It sounds like I'm-I'm chiding you. I did that with Karen. I don't do

it. I-I am not a wise--but I'm saying we've got to be careful. Not you, we have to be careful how we say things and how we relate to. I would be very careful in saying, does that mean that when we bring the gospel, we've got to change world view? I'd rather say it this way. When the gospel comes and they understand how God has worked, and how He relates to uh, uh consummation, how He relates to history, it will change worldview.

Mark:

Oh, [unintelligible]

[Audience laughs]

Lloyd Kwast:

I may--

Audience member:

Thank you.

Mark:

[Unintelligible]

Lloyd Kwast:

Good. Now you can go home in peace.

[Lloyd Kwast and audience laugh]

Lloyd Kwast:

Why do we get so nervous about this? What if in our group-groping, we did go beyond the limit of-of safety here, but could come back and say, oh, yeah, we went too far on that one? Is it safe to explore these things, or is culture so sacred we can't really examine it? That's-this is what we're prob-we're really struggling with. The reason why I'm very, very careful about saying, okay, you've got to change your worldview in these ways is because maybe a two-dimensional view of time with the assurance that God will bring it to consummation is-is a good and adequate paradigm. And to replace it with one in which they largely ignore the past, as we do, is a dangerous one. Extremely dangerous. And that my assurance, that in consummation, God will be the victor and my Savior, and bring forth reserva-resurrection is because I see the God of reserv-resurrection in Job, and in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament, and be--

[Audio cuts out]