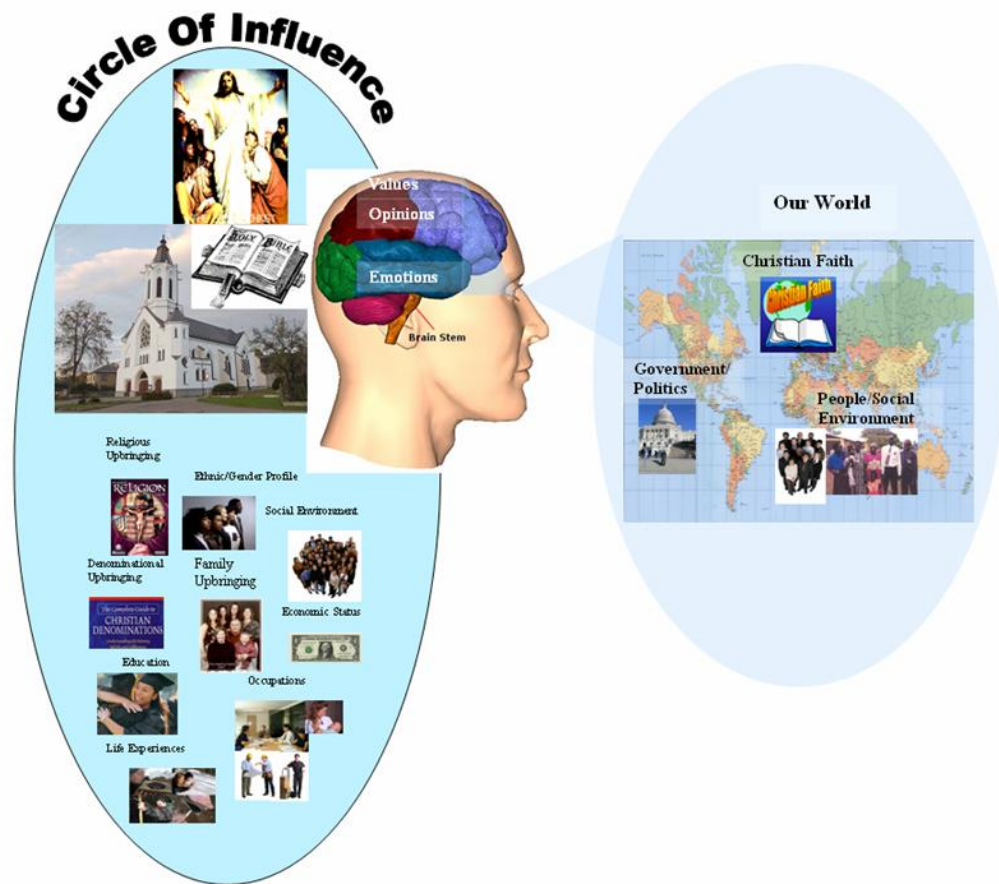


How Do You View Your World



By Johnny Outing Jr.

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How do you see your world? Do you allow your life experiences and social environment solely shape your worldview? Do you tend to judge others because they do not see things as you do as though your view is more superior? For instance, how often do we call people “idiots”, “scumbag”, or “stupid” because they do not see or act in a way that we consider the “norm”? Could it be possible that your “norm” is just your opinion or viewpoint and not fact?



In every one of us, sociological factors are different within our Circle of Influence that ultimately affects how we see the world and even spiritual matters. For the most part, someone raised in a stable rural(country) environment will have a different value system than one who was raised in an unstable urban(city) environment. We all see the world differently through different eyes that have been shaped by sociological factors pre-ordained by God.

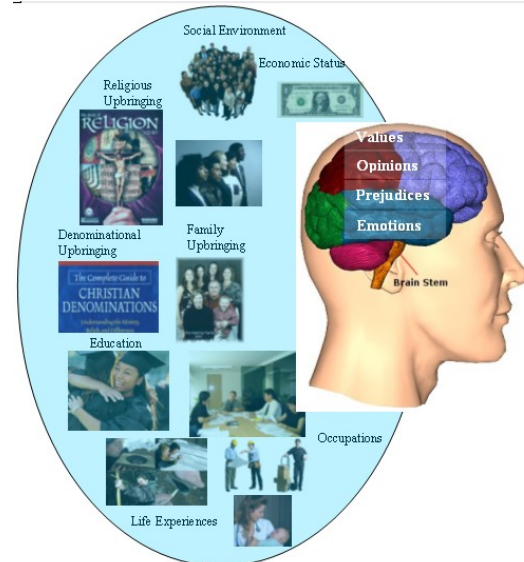
Although we do not like to admit it, how we see the world and the factors that affect our worldview will affect how we see scripture, politics, religion, crime, and many other sociological themes. There are factors, controllable and non-controllable, that have influenced how we see the world. We must examine these sociological factors within the

context of a community of Christians to determine areas of improvement that will bring us more in the unity of our faith. It is our attempt to explore these factors and show that Christ wants Believers to allow the Holy Spirit to shape our minds, body, and soul to submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Definitions

Circle Of Influence – Is an imaginary circle that represents the sum total of sociological factors that has shaped our value systems, opinions, and emotions and thus it impacts how we view the world.

Sociological Factors - These factors make up our Circle of Influence. It includes our social environment, economic status, religious/denominational upbringing, ethnic/gender profile, education, occupations, and life experiences



Social Environment – One of the elements of this Circle of Influence is our social environment. It is defined as

social and cultural conditions influence the life of an individual or community. One who was raised primarily in an urban(city) environment maybe more skeptical and cautious of people. Whereas, one raised in a rural(country) environment maybe more trusting of people. An urban raised person may believe more in promoting individual pursuits; whereas, the rural raised person may believe more in promoting the welfare of community. How does/did your social environment affect your outlook on life?



Gender Profile – One of the most underrated element of the circle of influence is understanding the differences in the sexes. Women and Men think and view things differently from each other. Women may view an event with more compassion; whereas men may view the same event with apathy. Even when evaluating scripture, women may tend to be more empathetic to the plight of people; whereas men may tend to maintain allegiance to the wording of scripture. These are stereotypical observations and it could be the opposite is true in many cases. How often have you and your spouse had a disagreement over an issue because you both have a different outlook?

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Ethnic Profile – Racism is one of the most celebrated evils of this postmodern age. Because there is apparent social prejudice towards people with a different color or ethnicity it has caused racial polarizations in lifestyles and outlook. People of color may have more concerns for social justice for all people; whereas, People from an anglo-saxon descent may have more concern for the environment. Because of the past trauma that People of Color have faced, they may view scripture more from an emotional point of view than an anglo-saxon, who may view scripture from purely an intellectual point of view. How has ethnicity affected you within your circle of influence?



Race, Gender, Religious Background, Family Background, Education, and Monetary Status should never be used to factor whether a person has more of a superior or inferior outlook on life.

Family Upbringing – How we were raised and the type family environment affects our circle of influence in that it plays an important factor of how we respond to our world. A person raised in a single-parent household may have more of a liberal view than one who was raised in a two-parent conventional household. One who was raised by domestic parents may have more religious stability than one raised by more industrious on-the-go parents. A

person raised by a conservative religious family may have more conservative values than one raised by a more liberal non-religious family. How has your family upbringing affected how you view the world? Religion? Christianity? Politics?

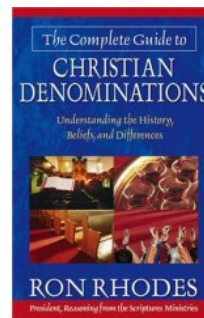


Religious Upbringing – Religious upbringing plays a significant role in our circle of influence. One raised without any religious upbringing may have liberal views on life. A person raised as a Jehovah Witness may have a hard time going into a church even after being convinced that the JW's are a cult. A person raised as a strict Muslim may have a difficult time converting to Christianity because that religion is embedded into them. A person raised as a Christian may have little tolerance for those from sinful past lifestyles and other religions. How has your religious upbringing affect how you see people and even scripture.



Denominational Upbringing – Because Christianity is not a monolithic religion, many denominational or institutional teachings of Christianity has adversely

affected how Christians view scripture and the world. A person from a Pentecostal background tends to judge a person from a Baptist background because they feel they are more morally upright. Methodists may tend to have a more socialite status than the others. A Pentecostal may spiritualize or allegorize scripture than a Baptist (highlight spiritual gifts more). A Catholic may have a view that the Church has absolute power or sovereignty over an individual; whereas, a Protestant (i.e. Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Reformed, Pentecostal) may feel that the Church does not have absolute power over the life of an individual. A Reformed Christian may have a more systematic approach to Christianity than others. Some denominations may stress a stringent dress code than others (women must wear pants at all times). How has your denominational upbringing affected you?



Education – The level of Education is a big factor of how Christians view scripture and even see their world. A person with a high school education may feel that academic study of the Bible is not necessary and “quenches the spirit”. A person with some college education may have a tendency to intellectualize the scripture too much. Persons with a high school education may have a theology that is more folklore than a well-thought out theology and thus is

easily swayed by false doctrine. Persons with college education and a sound study of scripture may be too critical of others because their theology is not sound in their opinion. How has the education status affected you and how you view scripture? Has it helped?

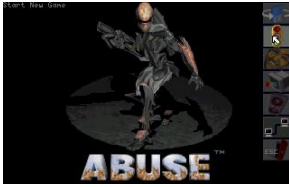


Economic Status – A person once stated, “money is not everything but it ranks right up there with oxygen”. One’s economic status plays an important role on how they see the world and even scripture. A person from a lower income status may not have the education and is usually a direct result of the other circle of influence factors. As a result, they tend to leave the understanding of scripture to others and as a result they are more prone to be lead astray. On the other hand, a rich person may not put any trust in God and put sole trust in their self-determination and ingenuity. Some are more prone to the heresy of the “health and wealth gospel”. How have you seen how one’s economic status affected their theology, salvation? Should money or education categorize Christians?



Life Experiences – When you combine all of these factors it produces life experiences. We all have different life experiences that has affected our outlook on life. Some people have been traumatized by witnessing death of a loved one at an early age. Others may have witness gross atrocities such as rape, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, drug abuse. These experiences may have affected their ability to view the world and even scripture in a more objective manner. For instance, a person who experienced child abuse may have a hard time understanding why God would allow children to be hurt or killed in the Bible. Persons experience racial abuse may have a hard time understanding why God condoned slavery in the Bible. A woman who suffered inequality in her marriage or seen it in her family’s life may have a hard time accepting the marital roles displayed in the Bible. A person who’s never experienced heartache may see the Bible as too horrific to read. How has life experiences affected you or others that you know of in relation to scripture and life in general?

Race, Gender, Religious Background, Family Background, Education, and Monetary Status are the most common factors that prevent Christians in maximizing unity in the Body of Christ.



GROUP STUDY

Think of a recent episode of you having a disagreement with your spouse, co-worker, friend, or family member where you both viewed the same issue differently?

Who was right?
Who was wrong?

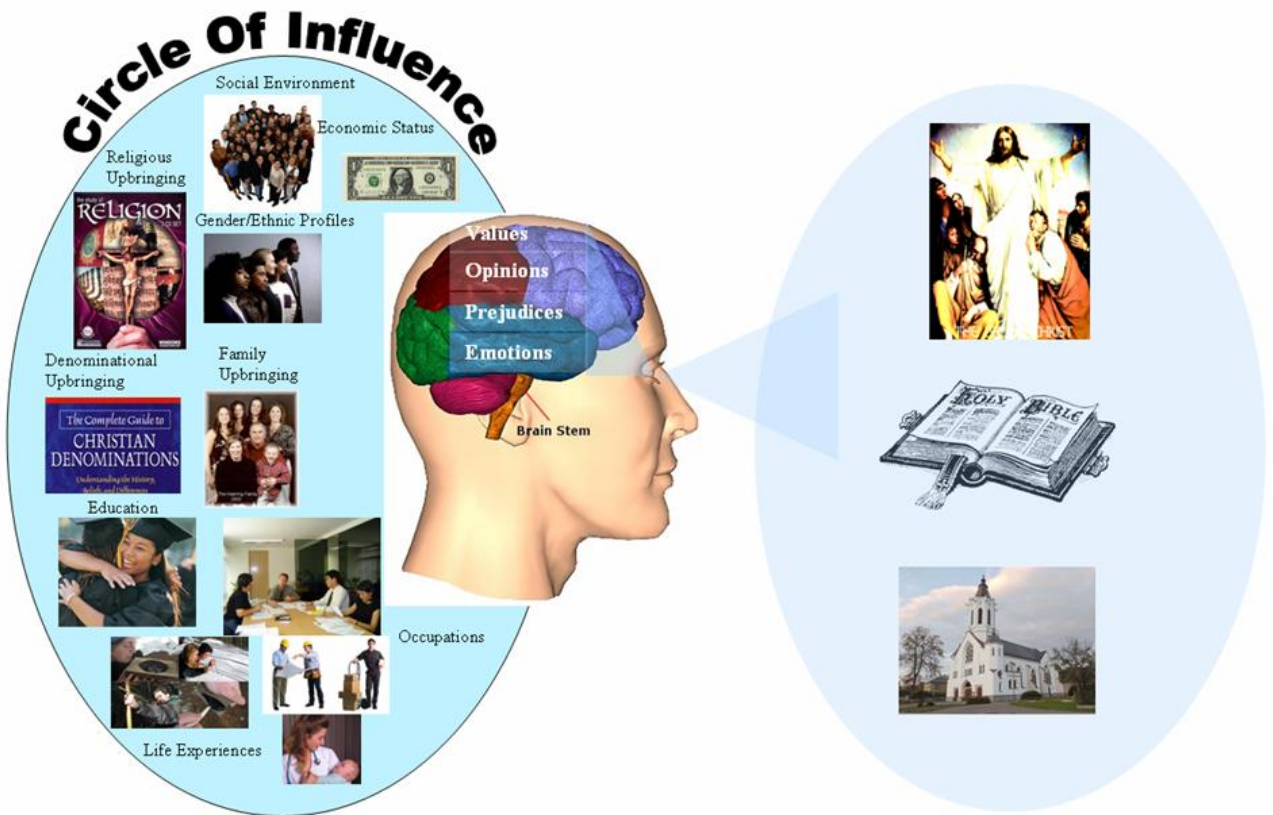
Discuss a latest current event. Evaluate how each student's opinion varies from the other. Evaluate each other's Circle of Influence to see how it factors in the diverse opinions.

How has these sociological factors affected how you've been influenced in your thinking on matters(i.e. politics, religion, faith)?

We should not seek to destroy sociological factors that have shaped our worldview but rather use it as a frame of reference within the context of our Christian Faith.

THE WRONG VISION

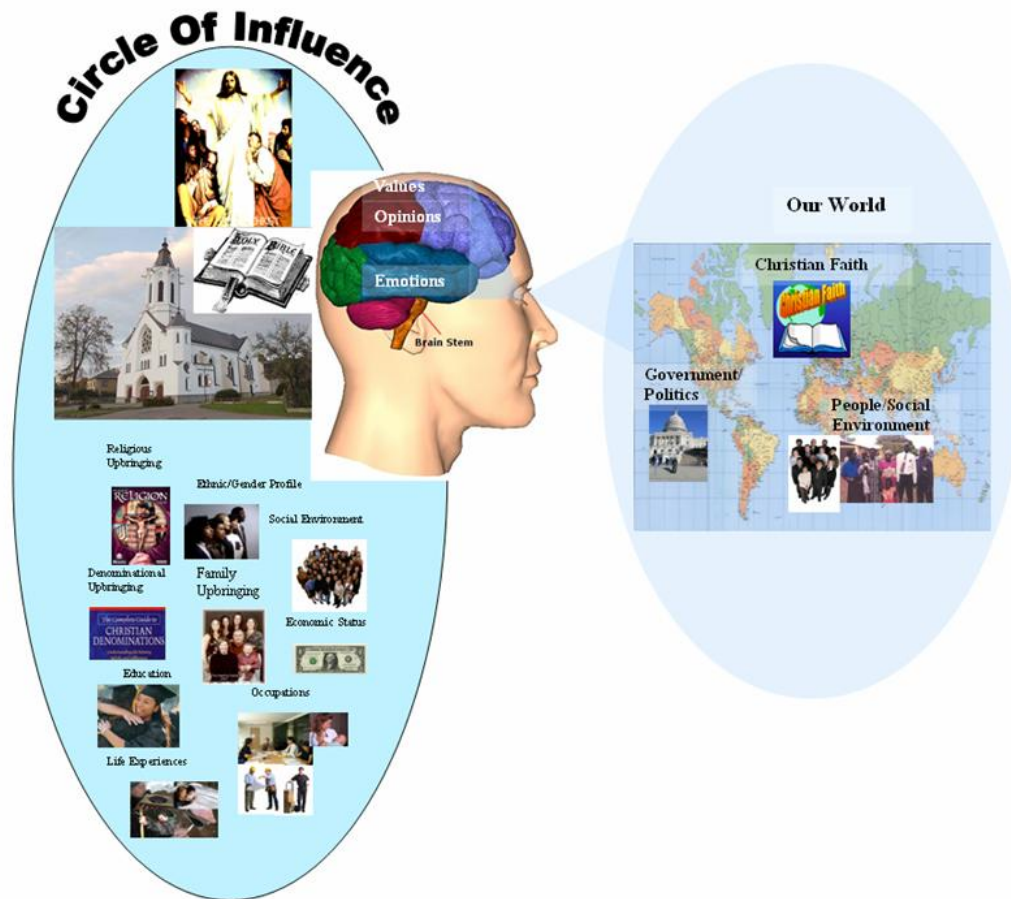
- This is the normal worldview held by the secular world and even Christians. We want to evaluate the Bible and the Church solely through the influence of our environment. We allow Life Experiences, Family Upbringing, Social Environment, Economic Status, Religious Upbringing, Denominational Upbringing, Cultural Background, Ethnic Profile, Gender Profile, Education, Occupation to solely form our Values, Opinions, Prejudices, to be used as a way to evaluate our world, the function of Church, and to interpret the Bible. This is absolutely the wrong way of seeing this from a Christian worldview. God wants to use these sociological factors but they should not be used independently of the Christian context.



We often read these sociological factors that is part of our circle of influence to evaluate Christ and his church and even interpret scripture. Using this method will create false subjective interpretations. As a result, everyone forms their own opinion spiritual matters whether true or false.

THE RIGHT VISION

This is how we should see our world and people, through the eyes of Christ, who has been revealed through the Bible and thus provided to his Church. Our values, opinions, emotions should be shaped by the Church as long as the church is following Christ, confirmed by the Bible using the sociological factors to form a more clearer worldview. We cannot allow the events and decadence of our culture to solely form our worldview. Instead we should use the sociological factors of our circle of influence as a frame of reference within the framework of Christianity. We must see our world, the culture, and the people through the eyes of Christ. To do so, we must follow the word of God(Bible) via the earthly representative of Christ(The Church). Are you using the Christian context and then the sociological factors as a basis to evaluate your world?



Are you using the Christian context first and then the sociological factors as a basis to evaluate your world?

Summary

As Christians we must become acutely aware that we all see things differently. In most cases, our view is not any more superior or inferior than the other. It is simply our view. Understanding one another's worldview is not an exact science but as we engage in dialogue and desire to understand one another, we will be on the road to fulfilling the mandate that God wants us, "come into unity of the faith". The next time you are in a disagreement over matters, especially spiritual ones, always respect how the other person views the very same event that you are observing. In fact, it could be that your view needs more focus when you've been critical of the other person's view. When we disagree over the interpretation of scripture, try to understand the sociological factors that have shaped the other person's circle of influence and yours as well to know how to correctly engage in dialogue with that person. If you have a more correct interpretation of scripture, based on systematic study, and the person you've engaged in dialogue disagrees with, it could be that person sees scripture from a more emotional paradigm than yourself and therefore you should try to provide the same correct interpretation in an emotional level. Remember, we are human beings, not automatons(robots), and we must engage ourselves as such. We should all put primary emphasis on improving our worldview by committing ourselves to a lifelong journey of constantly improving our communication channels and understanding one another. Christ tells us that men will not that you are my disciples by you loving one another. Always engage your viewpoint with others with a mutual respect and dignity towards the other person's view and in the long run the body of Christ will further the advancement of coming in the unity of the faith.

