360

One Brit's Childhood in China

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Dr. Os Guinness's Personal Page

Our Praxis Circle Contributors are fascinating people, telling special stories. Here we begin a series of regular posts entitled *Our Story*. The series will offer short videos of Praxis Circle Contributors talking about important, personal events that shaped their worldview.

We open *Our Story* with Dr. Os Guinness, whom we regularly refer to as "The Father of Praxis Circle." (In a later post, we'll explain why.) He describes his boyhood experience in China through age ten.

Dr. Guinness mentions all of these people-events in the video:

- Arthur Guinness, Guinness Brewery
- Empress Dowager Cixi
- The Last Emperor (Puyi)
- Chinese Civil War
- Mao Zedong, Chiang Kai-shek
- Chinese Great Famine
- Rape of Nanking
- Chinese Reign of Terror

As "Our Story" suggests, we all have a worldview generated somehow. Clearly, our past informs our present, which changes moment-by-moment. Furthermore, our beliefs, actions, and choices do much to shape our future, as individuals and in groups.

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Featured just below is an excerpt and chart from a popular worldview book we highly recommend to anyone interested in current American worldview issues – *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories that Shape Our Lives* (2009), by Steve Wilkens and Mark Sanford.

Hidden Worldviews describes the process creating our worldview and personal story. Our stories are usually interesting, and often dramatic, entertaining, or fun; we all can and do learn from each other. In fact, that's how we find meaning and become whomever we are.

An obvious question: What events had a big impact during your first ten years?

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Our Story and Worldview Formation

At birth, we arrive in a world filled with competing visions of purpose, truth and goodness, and we experience them in a multitude of ways. Worldviews come at us, not as fully-formed systems of interrelated ideas, but in bits and pieces. We encounter them through national heritage, religion, family influence, the educational system, peer groups, various media and countless additional sources. They are transmitted by these sources through such diverse forms as music, political speeches, advertising, unsolicited advice from friends or family and, yes, via our coffee-at-Starbucks conversations. And sometimes what is not said explicitly in these different modes of communication shapes our worldviews as much as what is said. In short, these influences are so pervasive throughout culture that we may not even see them at all.

Moreover, worldview formation, like a story, is not a static affair. Every good narrative, including our own, has a dynamic quality. Like stories, lives have a beginning, a middle and an ending that include specific contexts, unique characters, plot twists, conflicts or crises, along with resolutions that set up the next episode. As a result, even when the fundamental outlines of our worldview hold up over a lifetime, the details go through modifications based on our psychological development, new events or relationships, exposure to new ideas or a number of other factors.

As the story unfolds, however, the sequence, actors and plot development are only the most visible features. In reality, our stories are structured, in large part, by forces that reside beneath the surface. My actions manifest the subterranean influence of my self-understanding, my convictions and my values. Things that happen to me and around me, many of them beyond my immediate control, provide the setting for my story. Nevertheless, what occurs in the various chapters, what my character becomes, is also molded by what I believe and value. Thus, in the following diagram we will trace the components of our story, our worldview, as they radiate from our interior stories toward external expression and action.

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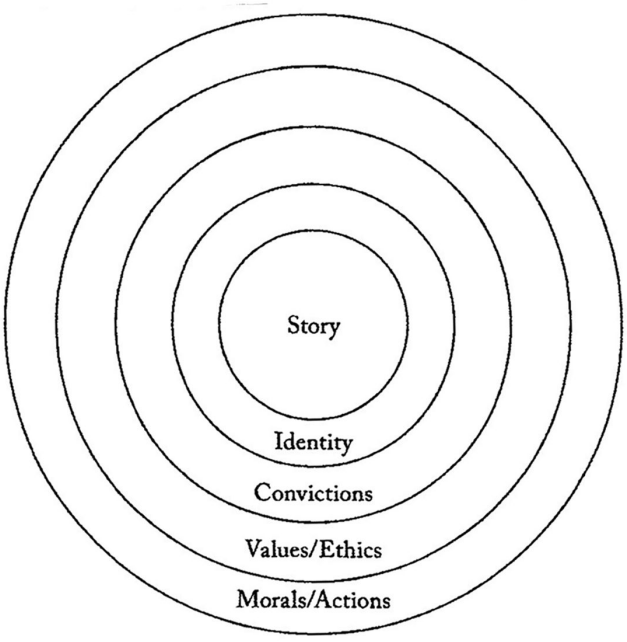

Story:	The central narrative of our life
Identity:	How we see ourselves and present ourselves to others
Convictions:	Those beliefs that make up how reality works for us
Values/Ethics:	What we believe we should do and what we take to be our highest priorities
Morals/Actions:	The realm of doing that includes all of our activities

Figure 1. Transformation model (developed by Dr. Steve Green)

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