

# Biblical Worldview Scope

## Writing and Grammar 2 (4th ed.)

**Introduction:** This document is our attempt to answer the question, “What will help a second-grade student understand writing and grammar from the perspective of a biblical worldview?” What follows is a list of themes that we believe are important for students to know and internalize. We expect that early in the course students will be required to *recall* and *explain* these themes. However, as these themes are repeated, we plan to guide students to *evaluate* ideas within them, *formulate* a Christian understanding of them, and *apply* what they have learned about these themes. We hope that students will show high levels of internalization whenever they are required to apply these themes. Our desire is that they not just understand the biblical worldview reflected in the exposition of these themes, but that they willingly embrace and live out this worldview.

The worldview themes for Writing and Grammar 2 are **Order, Creativity, Respect, and Responsibility**. In the exposition of the themes which follows, we engage the overarching biblical framework of creation, fall, and redemption. In discussing a theme under the heading of creation, we engage a topic as God meant it to look in His world in terms of creational norms. Our discussion may engage man and his world before the fall, Jesus Christ as the perfect image of God, biblical teaching on this topic more generally, or other norms wisely discerned in the light of Scripture. As we discuss a theme under the heading of the fall, we explore how the topic at hand has been twisted in a fallen world inhabited by sinful humanity. And when we explore the theme under the heading of redemption, we discuss how God means for Christians to live as regards the topic at hand, each working redemptively in his own sphere to understand the topic in light of how it has been twisted and how to move toward creational norms.

The following exposition of worldview themes uses elementary-level language for ease of reference. “The way God made the world to work,” “the order God built into his creation,” and similar expressions are references to the idea of creational norms. In saying “sin hurts the way our minds work,” the noetic effects of sin are in view.

## Order

**Christians should use language in an orderly way.<sup>1</sup>**

*Creation: God has built order into both life and language.*

When something has order, it is purposefully arranged in a certain way. God is a God of order, and the world He created is an orderly world (Gen 8:22). It was made according to God’s design, and it works according to God’s design. The gift of language that God has given us has order built into it.<sup>2</sup> Because God made us in His image (Gen 1:27), we can use language to say things that others will understand. God has given man the ability to give more order to language with rules about language use. For instance, people agree on how words will be pronounced, what punctuation marks mean, the definitions of words, and so forth. When we use words to say things, we must arrange them in certain ways, or they will not say what we mean. God has also shown us that there is an order to

1 Order can be considered from at least two angles in regard to language. One is how language works: order is intrinsic to it, and language cannot function without it. Another angle is the *moral* order that God has built into his creation, and our use of language is subject to that moral order as well. “Good subcreation can’t help but glorify the ultimate Creator. When colors, sounds, and words are arranged beautifully, they point beyond themselves as all created things are supposed to. They point to a divine order and a divine Orderer.” *Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption*, 1st ed. (BJU Press), 386.

2 The conventions of English grammar are not directly given by God; the order in view here has to do with how language works more generally. “Our reasoning is subject to the laws of thought, our speech to semantic principles. Everything is subject to given laws of God: everything is creational.” Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 27.

how we should live.<sup>3</sup> When we use words in good ways and for good things, we live according to God's order. For instance, when we use words truthfully and lovingly, we are using them in good ways that please God. When we use words to praise God and help others, we are using them for good things He wants us to use them for.

*Fall: Sinful man's use of language has become disordered.*

When Adam and Eve sinned, they went against the order God had built into his creation. What they said afterward showed this, because they used their words to blame others for their sin (Gen 3:9–13). In a fallen world, it is harder for people to use words in an orderly way to say what they mean, because sin hurts the way our minds work (Rom 1:21). Also, people are careless in their language and use words in evil ways and for evil things. When people do these things, they go against the way God made His world to work. For instance, when people use words to gossip, or slander, or curse God, or lie, or boast, they are using words for things that go against God's order (Job 1:5; Ps 101:5; Rom 1:30; 3:13–14; 1 Tim 5:13). When people speak carelessly or harshly, they are using words in ways that go against God's order (Matt 12:36; Col 3:8).

*Redemption: God wants believers to use language to press things back to the order He intends.*

God wants Christians to use language in an orderly way so that others will understand them. This is important, because God has given Christians important things to say. God wants Christians to use words that help fix the disorder that sin brought into the world. The most important way they can do this is to use words to share the good news about Jesus. Their words can also help to make things in this world more the way God wants them to be. We can imitate what God has done in the Bible by using words in an orderly way to give instructions to people. We can tell people what we have discovered about God and his world by writing an organized research report.

## Creativity

**Christians should use words to create useful and beautiful things.**

*Creation: People are creative because they are made in God's image.*

God's creativity is shown in his Creation. Because God created people in His image (Gen 1:26–27), they can create things as well, though not out of nothing like God did.<sup>4</sup> After Adam was created, he didn't use words just to repeat what God said to him, but he put them together in new ways to say new things (Gen 2:23). In fact, after God created all the birds and beasts, He brought them to Adam to see what Adam would call them, and Adam came up with names for them all (Gen 2:19). God wants people to use their creativity to do His work in the world, both with their words and in many other ways. He also wants them to use their creativity in an orderly way, that is, in a way that lines up with how he made the world to work. Sometimes that creativity shows up in special types of writing like poetry. Sometimes it shows up in using our imagination to write a story. Sometimes it shows up when we use vivid words instead of boring ones, or when we make sure our sentences don't all sound the same.

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3 "A truly Christian worldview recognizes that God put all the stuff He made into a *created order*. He made creational norms—divine laws that govern the way human individuals and cultures operate. There are right and wrong ways to fulfill your God-given earthly task, no matter what it is." *Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption*, 83.

4 We are what some have called "sub-creators"—creators under God, a term used by J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," in *Tree and Leaf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 37; Jerram Barrs, *Echoes of Eden: Reflections on Christianity, Literature, and the Arts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 26–27. "A human being is a creature, not the Creator. But he is capable of exercising a kind of derivative creativity, as when he makes up a story." Vern Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word: Language—A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 18. "God created you in His image, which means that you, too, will create. In fact, you have a mandate to create: remember the Creation Mandate?" *Basics for a Biblical Worldview* (BJU Press), 185.

"Classical Christian thinkers such as Augustine, Bonaventure, and Aquinas, regardless of other differences, all agree that the *imago* can be seen as man's creativity. He is intended by God to be creative in his very bones, for the creative force is deeply ingrained in his nature; it is the core of his being. There can be no doubt. He is created in the image of the Creator, and his ability to create and shape the world is his only because he has received it in the *imago Dei*." Calvin Johansson, *Music and Ministry: A Biblical Counterpoint* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 22–23.

### *Fall: Sinful man misuses the creativity God has given him.*

In a sinful world, people misuse the creativity they received from God. They may not admit that their creativity comes from God and instead take all the credit for it themselves. They use their words to make things that are false and evil and ugly.<sup>5</sup> For instance, they may write a story that makes something wicked look like it is good and normal.

### *Redemption: God wants Christians to serve Him and others with creativity.*

God wants Christians to use their creativity to serve Him and others. Creativity is needed to come up with good ways to solve the many different problems that came into the world because of sin. God delights in Christians using creativity to praise Him and speak of Him in appropriate ways. There are many ways that Christians can serve God and others through writing. They may use their imagination in writing a letter to someone who is discouraged, creatively helping that person to understand biblical truth. They may use creativity to write a poem that tells about God and His world. They may creatively use adjectives and adverbs to tell others about how good Jesus is and what he has done for them. They may write creative stories that show others the world in the way God wants them to see it.

## **Respect**

**Christians should show appropriate respect to others with their words.**

### *Creation: God wants us to show respect to authorities and others.*

Our highest respect is owed to God as our Creator, and our respect from others is derived from it, both in that God has established certain lines of human authority (e.g., Rom 13:1–7) and in that all people bear God’s image (e.g., Jam 3:8–10). One of the ways God has made the world to work in an orderly way is by making each of us to be led by various authorities, such as our parents, teachers, church leaders, and governmental officials. They have been given to us by God to help us, and He expects us to show respect to them (Rom 13:1–7; Eph 6:1–2; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Pet 2:17<sup>6</sup>). When we communicate with these authorities (or when we communicate about them), we should use respectful language. When we speak with proper respect to our authorities, we are showing that we respect God, who made them our authorities (cf. John 5:23). When we sincerely use respectful language in this way, we show God we are thankful for the authorities He has placed in our lives. God wants us to show appropriate respect toward all people (Titus 3:2; 1 Pet 2:17), not just our authorities, because all people are made in God’s image (cf. James 3:7–9). One way people show this respect is by using courteous language.<sup>7</sup> Another way is to address people in person and in writing with appropriate titles.

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<sup>5</sup> “The fact that man has a creative nature that can soar to great creative heights does not mean that his creativity will always take a wholesome direction. Sloth, indifference, selfishness, pride, or any number of similar things can rob and warp his creativity so as to produce the trivial, the mediocre, or the grotesque.” Johansson, *Music and Ministry*, 24.

<sup>6</sup> “Christians should be courteous and respectful to all people. ... ‘Love the brotherhood’ indicates a higher obligation to fellow Christians ... not only to respect them but also to show strong, deep love to them. ... ‘Fear God’ indicates a still higher obligation. Christians are not only to honour and love God (1:3, 8; 2:5, 9); they are also to fear him, something they should not do toward unbelievers (3:14) or toward other believers.” (Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, 122–23)

“Christians are to honor everybody, no matter what their position. This appears to be a unique command in the New Testament because it is not confined to honoring fellow-Christians. Indeed the context makes it clear that Peter means people outside the church. They are not to be despised because they are not believers, nor hated because they are persecutors, nor treated with contempt because they are of lower rank or status, but treated with honor. It inevitably follows that people are not to be regarded as second-class citizens because they are of a different race or color.” I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter*, IVPNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 85.

<sup>7</sup> “As servant communicators, our verbal and nonverbal actions should convey sincere kindness toward others. Kindness honors all people as our neighbors. It also promotes civility—polite, respectful interactions.” Quentin J. Schultze, *Communicating with Grace and Virtue: Learning to Listen, Speak, Text, and Interact as a Christian* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 65.

*Fall: Sinful man is self-centered, and his words are often disrespectful.*

In a sinful world, people do not like to be under authority but want to rule their own lives. They often show this by using disrespectful language when they talk about God, or what they say about God and to God may sound respectful without reflecting a heart that honors God (Matt 15:8). They also show this by speaking disrespectfully when they talk to their authorities, or when they talk about them. The media that students take in regularly preaches a message of disrespect toward traditional authority figures. The world wrongly claims that people show respect to other people by accepting their sinful ideas and practices.

*Redemption: When Christians show respect as they should, they show others something about how God made the world to work.*

By showing respect in communicating with their authorities and others, Christians show a watching world something about the way God wants the world to work (cf. 1 Tim 6:1). When Christians show appropriate respect to others, they can build good relationships that can be used to tell others about Jesus. They can present their opinions in a way that shows proper respect even when they disagree with someone else.

## Responsibility

**Christians need to take personal responsibility for their lives and language.**

*Creation: God has given people the responsibility for what they do and say.*

All people have personal responsibility before God (Ezek 18:20) and are accountable for what they do (Rom 14:12; 2 Cor 5:10) and what they say (Matt 12:36). There are many things that God has made people responsible for, and their use of language is one of those things.<sup>8</sup> God told Adam what he was responsible for after Adam was created, and he has told us in His word what we are responsible for.

*Fall: People refuse to take responsibility for what they should, and they think they will not reap the consequences.*

When Adam and Eve sinned and God confronted them, they did not take responsibility for their sin but used their words to cast blame on others (Gen 3:9–13). Ever since then, people have been unwilling to take personal responsibility for their actions. Cain, for instance, asked, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen 4:9). Second graders might fail to show responsibility by not doing the work they are given to do at home or at school, or they may fail to follow instructions carefully in doing their work. We are tempted to think that nothing bad will happen if we do not do what we should. However, Scriptural examples such as Adam, Cain, Achan, and many others show that God holds people responsible for their actions. God teaches us in Scripture that what a person sows, he will reap (Gal 6:7–8). When we use our words foolishly or carelessly, we can expect to reap the results.

*Redemption: God helps Christians to fulfill their responsibilities.*

Christians must be responsible in the way they live and in the way they use language. While they are personally responsible for this, however, God promises His help to all who ask. When Christians accept personal responsibility for their actions and words, they show that they are growing into maturity and living like Jesus (1 Cor 13:11). Christians can show responsibility by researching what they write about, so they get their facts correct. They can show responsibility by revising their work to make sure it is done right.

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<sup>8</sup> “Adam, like us, was a caretaker of God’s world, gifted with language to do his work responsibly under God’s authority (in God’s account and according to Adam’s faithful accounting). In effect, God is our king and we are his special linguistic workers. We are called to communicate responsibly in God’s name, not just in our own names for our own earthly purposes.... Language involves personal and shared responsibility, not just using symbols and sharing messages. Biblically speaking, we humans do not ultimately own anything, including language. God gives us language to use on his behalf and in the service of him and others.” Quentin Schultze, *Communicating with Grace and Virtue*, 34.

## Order and Creativity

“Yet creativity cannot exist without order—a structure within which creation can happen. On a cosmic level the extraordinary profusion of species could never survive if the world were an undifferentiated soup of elements. This is true of human creativity too. Without the darkened box of a theater, films would lose their compelling power. Without the lines and spaces that make up written English, this book would be a soup of letters. Creativity requires cosmos—it requires an ordered environment.”

Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 22

“Far from limiting one’s freedom, it’s actually structure and order that provide space for creativity to flourish--in music, in sports, in business, in medicine, in woodworking, in homemaking, in automotive engineering, in whatever dominion work you find yourself called to do. Creativity is possible because of who we are--God’s image-bearers--and because of the structured world God gave us to subdue.”

*Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption*, 1st ed. (BJU Press), 74.

**“Carrying out the Creation Mandate.** Instead of taking an evolutionary view, Christians should view art as part of the task of carrying out the Creation Mandate. Art is part of culture, and culture is the result of carrying out that mandate. As such, humans are to be subcreators. That is, their creativity is supposed to develop God’s creation according to His divine order. As fallen beings, humans will carry out their tasks (including art, music, literature, etc.) in ways that are more or less conformed to God’s design.”

*Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption* (teacher’s edition), 1st ed. (BJU Press), p. 386.

“When God commissioned Adam to have authority over His world, He gave him the following prohibition: ‘Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.’ (Gen. 2:16–17). It’s clear from this statement that God values freedom. He gave Adam a vast array of food sources to choose from. But God does not value autonomy. As Francis Schaeffer would say, He values *freedom within form*. Adam was free to make his own choices within the limits set by God. Adam was not free to make choices beyond those limits.”

*Biblical Worldview Beyond the Basics*, 2nd ed. (BJU Press), p. 439.