

# Integration of Faith and Learning: Shaping the Christian Worldview

**Dr. Hank Kelly**  
**Executive Vice President**

# David Dockery, *Shaping a Christian Worldview*

- “The integration of faith and learning is at the essence of authentic Christian higher education and should be wholeheartedly implemented across the campus and across the curriculum.”
- “Learning, shaped and formed by faith, results in living, shaped and formed by faith.”

# History lesson

- Early U.S. institutions of higher education were Christian, and all subjects were taught in the context of faith
- Divorce of faith from teaching and scholarship
  - Belief in objective truth but dominant perspective maintained that faith had to be bracketed from this search for truth
  - Situation worse with rise of postmodernism and belief in relative truth
- Even at many Christian institutions, tendency to study the Bible as literature or history, and truths contained therein are not integrated throughout curriculum

# What happens without integration?

- Christianity tends to become an emotional commitment and response, relying exclusively on feelings that can change more easily than an intellectually grounded and reinforced belief.
- Students may compartmentalize their faith, putting it in a box separate from their intellectual and working life.
- Students will tend to exhibit a passive acceptance of current cultural values, lacking an active engagement and response to them, unable to separate entertainment values from moral and artistic values.

# Why don't our students think like a Christian?

- They can't.
- They do not know how.

# What can we do?

- Integration is not substituting a devotional for a solid teaching of the subject.
- Modeling alone will not show our students how to think like a Christian.
- Pray—for students and facilitators.
- We need to think like a Christian.
- Teach our students how to think like a Christian
  - Understanding of what God is doing
  - Practice of relating everything to God

# Worldview

A set of presuppositions (or assumptions) that we hold (consciously or unconsciously) about a basic makeup of our world.

- Supplies interpretative framework for understanding our experiences
- Provides the values that form the basis for decision making

# Elements of a worldview

- God
  - Does God exist?
  - What is the nature of God?
  - Is there only one true God?
  - Is God a personal being or an impersonal force or power?
- Ultimate Reality (Metaphysics)
  - What is the relationship between God and the universe?
  - Is there a purpose to the universe?
  - Are miracles possible?

# Elements of a worldview

- Knowledge (Epistemology)
  - Is knowledge about the world possible?
  - Can we trust our senses?
  - What are the proper roles of reason and sense experience in knowledge?
  - Is truth relative or must truth be the same for all rational beings?
  - Is the scientific method the only (or perhaps the best) method of knowledge?
  - Can God reveal himself to human beings?

# Elements of a worldview

- **Ethics**
  - Are there moral laws that govern human conduct?
  - What are they?
  - Are these moral laws the same for all human beings?
- **Humankind**
  - Are human beings free or are they merely pawns of deterministic forces?
  - Or is there an alternative to these extremes?
  - Are human beings only bodies or material beings?
  - Does physical death end the existence of the human person?

# Elements of a Christian worldview

- God
  - Belief in one supremely powerful and personal God (theism)
  - Some attributes of God: holiness, justice, and love
  - Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man
  - Christ entered into the human race (incarnation)

# Elements of a Christian worldview

- Ultimate Reality (Metaphysics)
  - God created the world *ex nihilo* (from nothing)
  - Everything depends upon God for its existence
  - Because there is God-ordained order to the creation, human beings can discover that order, making science possible
  - God is not absent from the creation; miracles, revelation, and providence are possible

# Elements of a Christian worldview

- Knowledge (Epistemology)
  - Truth is objective
  - God reveals information about himself
  - Senses supply information about the world
- Ethics
  - Humans are created in God's image and are therefore moral creatures
  - Sin has distorted the image of God and explains why humans turn away from God and the moral law
  - God is the ground of the universal moral laws that ought to govern human behavior

# Elements of a Christian worldview

- Humankind
  - Humans are made in God's image
  - Humans are free to respond to or reject God and will be judged according to how they respond to Him
  - Humans need God's forgiveness and redemption
  - Physical death is not the end of personal existence
  - Humans are dependent on God for life, meaning, understanding, and purpose

# Integration techniques

- Pray before class
- Read Scripture relevant to subject matter
- Share personal faith and spiritual journey
- Behave Christianly towards students and others
- Apply biblical concepts generally to curriculum
- Ask students to share faith and discuss their academic and spiritual journeys
- Seek common ground between faith and scholarly discipline

# Integration techniques

- Show compatibility between Christian and secular ideas
- Use Christian and biblical examples and illustrations
- Compare biblical teaching to good practice in subject area
- Argue the Bible has much to say about knowledge (human nature, beauty, history, etc.)
- Model good biblical interpretive methods
- Identify and apply biblical principles and texts to subject matter

# Integration techniques

- Ask integrative questions, requiring faith/Bible and knowledge connection
- Teach that Christian faith should be the organizing truth that informs and interprets the subject matter and all knowledge
- Provide alternative assumption sets to other worldviews (e.g., philosophical materialism, postmodernism)
- Apply biblical worldview to scholarly pursuits and knowledge acquisition

# Integration starting point

How does your discipline/subject matter fit into the Christian worldview (not how does the Christian worldview fit into your discipline/subject matter)?

# Integration questions

- How does my discipline enable students to participate with and enjoy God in His creative activity?
- How does my discipline enable students to participate with and enjoy God in His redemptive activity?
- How has sin affected my discipline?
- What philosophic/theological assumptions undergird my course?
- What general Salvation themes or issues can I highlight in my course?
- At what junctures in my course is it natural and convenient to illustrate or deal with the claims of the Gospel?

# Integration of faith in math

- Demonstrates existence of objective truths.
- Enables us to bring order to disorder, to invent, and to shape things into new things.
- Enables us to glorify God by doing the “good works which he has ordained” (Ephesians 2:10) more effectively.
- Ethics—“Figures don’t lie, but liars figure.”
- The ability to use math for problem solving is a remarkable gift to mankind from God.

# What about other courses?

- Communication
- Business
- Psychology

# Sources

- Brisben, D. (n.d.). *Higher education as spiritual formation.* [www.cccu.org/filefolder/HE -  
\\_Spiritual Form.ppt](http://www.cccu.org/filefolder/HE_-_Spiritual_Form.ppt)
- Dockery, D. S. (2007). *Renewing minds: Serving church and society through Christian higher education.* Nashville, TN: B&H.
- Harris, R. A. (2000). *The integration of faith and learning.*  
<http://www.virtualsalt.com/integrat.htm>

# Sources

- Harris, R. A. (2004). *Foundations for faith-learning integration*. Poster session presented at the National Faculty Leadership Conference, Washington, D.C. <http://www.virtualsalt.com/int/foundations.pdf>
- MacCullough, M. (2002). An approach to worldview integration: A key teaching tool for the authentic Christian teacher. *Christian School Education*, 6(1).  
<http://www.acsi.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=H2vicl7%2fVcl%3d&tabid=681&language=en-US>

# Sources

- Nash, R. H. (1992). *Worldviews in conflict: Choosing Christianity in a world of ideas*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.