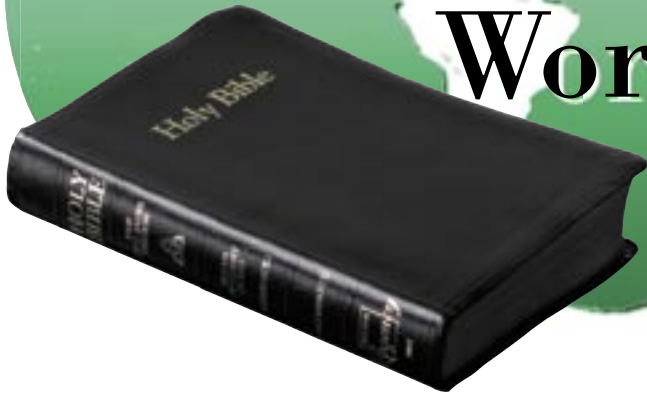


# How to Produce Students with a Biblical Worldview



BY LES OLLILA

One of the great visions of Christian education was to remove our Christian children from the constant bombardment of humanistic philosophies so that they could be exposed more to God's absolute truth in their formative years. We reasoned that our mission fields would never lack workers, and the pulpits in our country would always be supplied because there would be an army of trained servants available. The product, however, in many cases, has been disappointing.

Some of my opportunities to preach at high school commencements have caused my heart to rejoice because of the graduates' passion and vision for God's work. But others have left me deeply grieved in my heart because I could see that secularism had made deep inroads into the hearts of the graduates as reflected by their values and goals. One typical negative example was a Christian high school that had over forty graduates; only one graduate had a burden for ministry and planned to attend a Christian college. Perhaps the enemy of humanism that we have long feared has been replaced by the enemies of lethargy, secularism, and a worldview that is shockingly close to that of the unsaved.

In his book *City on a Hill*, Phillip Graham Ryken quotes from a book called *The Abandoned Generation*:

William Willimon and Thomas Naylor of Duke University identify the priorities of the next generation of American college graduates. The results from a student survey taken at Duke's School of Business were especially telling. Students were asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Their mandate to the faculty was, "Teach me how to be a moneymaking machine." "Give me only the facts, tools and techniques required to ensure my instantaneous financial success." All else was irrelevant.

Many Americans still seem to believe that the person who dies with the most toys wins. They would rather not be bothered with other people's pain and suffering. Some call it a "crisis of compassion." There was a time when Americans were known for helping one another out and for helping the world. We used to say, "Bring me your poor, your tired, your hungry." Now we often say, "Take them away! Take them somewhere else, so I don't have to worry about them or look after them. They can come back when they figure out how to solve their own problems." In these post-Christian times, most people pursue their own personal prosperity. They are too selfish to serve. (Ryken, 2003)

While we are grieved by the mentality expressed by these students, even Christian parents seem to be afraid that their child is going to get the "foolish" idea to go into the ministry and end up living on nothing and having to go through the shame of raising support to go reach a people group which has never heard the name of Christ. When all is analyzed, I believe that we would discover that the Christian today has a worldview that is only a few percentage points different than that of the unbeliever.

## Decaying Nation

Consider the historical settings: How did we deteriorate to this decayed state in a nation that was founded on godly principles? In his book, *The Battle for a Generation*, Ron Hutchcraft (1996) points out that in the decades following World War II, our society suffered some losses that molded the character of our present nation. He indicates that from 1950 to the present, the youth of each decade suffered a loss of

innocence (50s), authority (60s), love (70s), and hope (80s). The collective loss of each decade and its generation has ripped our culture apart and spun its people out of control. The effects are highly visible on every side.

During the 50s, the youth were stripped of innocence. Two major factors contributing to this loss were television and rock music. Rock music's influence through its lyrics and style had a marked effect not only on the youth of that day, but also on the mentality of the generation that followed.

In the 60s, promoted by its music and drug culture, our youth suffered a loss of respect for authority. For example, on June 25, 1962, in the case of *Engel vs. Vitale*, the United States Supreme Court took the first step toward removing God's authority and influence from public life. As a result, prayer and Bible reading became taboo. One year later, on June 16, 1963, in the *O'Hare/Curlett* case, Bible reading and the quoting of the Lord's Prayer were outlawed from public schools. With this decision, the reference point of truth and authority was removed from the public sector. Demonstrations against any authority became the rule rather than the exception, and respect for all forms of authority was stripped from American culture. Many colleges were taken over by their students, and administrators found themselves on the outside looking in. Self-autonomy became the rule. In his book *Slouching Toward Gomorrah*, Robert Bork names "radical individualism" as one of the destructive philosophies of our day (Bork, 1996).

The 70s brought a greater emphasis on mothers working outside of the home—either to survive financially or to earn more money so the "American Dream" could become a reality for their families. The devastating consequence of parental absence was the rise of "latch key children," who went home after school to empty houses and experienced a loss of love and a loss of intrinsic value.

When we examine the last two decades leading up to the feared Y2K, we find evidence of a loss of hope. We have entered a century of postmodernity and a no-hope philosophy. God has been rejected, and science is no longer the source of hope. Consequently, we can best describe this generation as one that has been stripped of all hope. The byword of this postmodern youth culture is "Whatever!" That one word reflects the lack of an anchor in this drifting culture. It is little wonder that suicide among the youth is so rampant in our world.

## Destructive Philosophies

God's people must be insulated from destructive philosophies but not isolated from people if they hope to maintain a testimony in a decaying and dark culture. In John 17, Jesus gives us a picture of the believer's relationship to the world. He refers to believers as those He has "taken out of the world"

(a reference to their purging from sin). Yet He says that they are "in the world," a clear indication that they are still present. He then says they are "not of the world," which shows that God's children must be separated from worldly philosophies. Finally, God's people are sent *into* the world to fulfill the Great Commission which indicates the soteriological purpose of their mission.

Local church leaders and congregations need to seriously evaluate the mission and program of the church and school—to evaluate whether the church is having a positive influence on homes and the instruction of families in God's truth. Many families, which God intended to be the foundational structure of our culture, have traded God's truth for the philosophy and pleasure of this world. Fathers and mothers must realize their eternal accountability as communicators of God's truth. Without this commitment, church leaders and the family structure will cave in under

the onslaught of a postmodern philosophy. When the church is so closely aligned to the world's values and views, there is no one to show the superiority of God's way of thinking.

In an article entitled "The Pattern of This Age: Defining the Key Components of the World's Worldview," Dr. Douglas McLachlan states, "Romans 12:2 speaks pointedly to the subject of worldviews. When Paul says, 'And do not be conformed to this world. . . ' he employs two key words: 'world,' which is actually 'age' (aion meaning, 'this present age' in contrast to 'the age to come'); and 'do not be conformed,' which is a compound having at its root the word 'scheme' (suschematizomai). It suggests the adoption or imitation of a pose or received mode of something. So the verse means, 'Do not let the age in which you live force you into its scheme of thinking and behaving.'"

Dr. McLachlan continues:

The idea is that the world has its own ways of thinking and doing things and is exerting pressure on Christians to conform to it. This is a pressure which we are strongly to resist. This is Paul's version of the Bible's universal mandate against worldliness. However, to think of worldliness exclusively in terms of codes of conduct is to trivialize what is a far more serious and far more subtle problem. Paul makes this clear in his next phrase: "but be transformed *by the renewing of your mind*." This means that he is concerned about a way of thinking rather than merely a way of behaving, though right behavior will naturally follow if our thinking is set straight. The worldliness we are to break free of is the world's "worldview." We are to break out of the world's categories of thinking and allow our minds to be molded by the Word of God instead.

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We find ourselves today as educators confronted with post-modern thinking and faced with the challenge of preparing this generation of youth to stand with a message of hope based on a biblical worldview.

A worldview is a set of presuppositions or assumptions, which we hold consciously or subconsciously about the basic make-up of our world. Christians operate on the presupposition that God is and God has spoken. The contrasting worldview purports that God is not, and God has not spoken because according to Romans 1:21-23a:

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.

A Christian worldview places the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all areas of thinking and life, with the Word of God as the absolute reference point. Hence, Christian education should confidently teach the Christian worldview. How can we accomplish this task? *The Mind Game Survival Course Manual*, produced by Probe Ministries, has an excellent presentation for teaching Christian high schoolers and college students how to understand, defend, and live out a Christian worldview in the midst of an anti-God culture. The manual gives three keys to survival in a postmodern culture: think biblically, communicate effectively, and learn continually (1996). Let us evaluate these three points.

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### Think Biblically

First, we must think biblically. Thinking biblically requires the development of a biblical framework to filter all of life's responsibilities and issues. This framework must include how God has worked in the past and the truths from His Word. The ministry offers potential pitfalls that can turn the believer's mind to pragmatic thinking. By careful examination, one discovers that some things are logical but not necessarily theological. Christians must be convinced beyond all doubt of the sufficiency of Christ and the adequacy of God's Word to keep on a right course (II Tim. 3:16-17).

True biblical thinking also focuses on the worship of God. Worship flows out of the heart of one who is filled with the knowledge of God. All worship is a response to truth, and true worship comes from a heart that loves God more than anyone or anything (Job 1:20). One aid in worship is to build a personal biography of God. This practice entails reading the

Bible, finding descriptions of God's character, and recording one's findings. A verse like Psalm 62:2 would be particularly effective: "He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved." Once a list of God's characteristics is comprised, one may use it during prayer to adore God and to express gratitude to God for who He is.

Biblical thinking also requires studying the works of God. The children of Israel did not apostatize and become a part of the ungodly nations because they forgot His words, but rather because they forgot His works (Judges 2 and Psalm 78). The "second generation syndrome" is a result of parents not communicating the works of God to their children. Each Monday during chapel at Northland Baptist Bible College, ten minutes is set aside for "Works of God" testimonies. During this special time, students have the opportunity to report how they have seen God alive in the last seven days. Jehovah Jireh is frequently mentioned when God provides needs. How we need Him in an age that knows only Jehovah "Visa"! Barna's research reveals that Christians may be missing the mark in living a Christian worldview.

Notice that the values forfeited by Christians are those that had given a true spiritual edge to their lives—components like radical obedience to God, stewardship of all dimensions of their life, voluntary submission to spiritual peers and a commitment to theological purity. Instead of an intense focus on their core attributes as believers, most Christians have settled for a second-class faith commitment, mouthing the words and doing some of the overt acts of obeisance, but partitioning their heart into religious and nonreligious chambers. Like a cancer, the nonreligious chamber continues to eat away at the religious, reducing the magnitude and significance of the religious side. (Barna, 2001)

### Communicate Effectively

Another way to maintain a Christian culture is to communicate effectively. Communicating effectively requires the child of God to develop proper skills and a keen knowledge to articulate and to defend the Christian faith. We must provide believers with a precise Christian apologetic that equips both parents and youth with answers as to why they believe what they believe. First Peter 3:15, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer (apologetic) to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." One glaring weakness of the average Christian is a lack of critical thinking. The critical thinker goes beyond rote answers to a biblically based response that comes out of firm conviction. Dissatisfied with brief devotional thoughts, he gets into serious study of God's Word and God's character. The critical thinker gathers all the facts, considers all the probabilities, weighs them against the Word of God, and reaches a conclusion. Just as an effective communicator should have more than a casual knowledge of his subject, the Christian in this postmodern culture should have more than a casual knowledge of God and His Word.

An interesting article in *Worldwide Challenge* (1995) gives good guidelines to help parents and educators teach the skill of critical thinking. The following thoughts are reflected in the text:

Critical thinking is the process of gathering facts, comparing them and making a clear judgment based on truth. It is important that we square away in our own minds the difference between *thinking* critically and *being* critical. Critical thinking is a way to gather truth and come to correct conclusions. Being critical deals with attitude. Critical thinking is positive; a critical attitude needs correction.

We can begin developing critical thinking skills in children when language skills first start, by encouraging them to ask questions such as “Why?” “How?” and “What’s a better way?” We have lost that. We often give children the answers instead of helping them discover answers.

Broken down into seven steps, the critical-thinking process becomes more tangible for a parent to guide a child through:

1. Gather the facts. What do we know?
2. Order the facts. Which facts belong together, lead to each other?
3. Form several theories. Based on these facts, what are possible answers?
4. Compare the facts. In light of these theories, are more facts needed?
5. List the probabilities. Which of these theories is most likely to be true?
6. Compare probabilities with facts. Are the probabilities compatible with the facts? Are they realistic?
7. Reach a conclusion. Make a decision based on what you’ve learned. (Schoor, 1995).

Not only is critical examination needed, but there is also a need to clearly express the truth. If a professing Christian is to express his thoughts clearly, he must first believe firmly what he is burdened to communicate. Paul’s example on Mars Hill revealed passionate communication based on his conviction about the Word of God and the person of Christ. He clearly expressed that there is only one way of salvation. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, clearly expressed God’s mind from his knowledge of Old Testament Scriptures. People who are impacting our culture positively today are passionately communicating the truth of God from a firm biblical conviction.

Maybe our generation lacks clear passionate expression because it lacks clear conviction about absolute, moral truths expressed in the Bible: The deity and virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the conviction that God is the all powerful creator and sustainer, the gift of salvation by grace through faith, the reality of Satan, the responsibility to fulfill the great commission, the inspiration of God’s Word, and the reality of eternal damnation under the wrath of God. These alone are just a few of the areas that need to be emphasized.

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## Learn Continually

Finally, to maintain a Christian worldview, God’s people must be committed to Spirit-filled living and continual learning. Leaders are readers who should never get too old to learn. Teachers must set the example as constant learners. Always revamping and updating notes so as not to, in a rote manner, communicate in the same way that has been done for years. Those who stay fresh in their learning stay excited in their communication. The old saying is that “you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make him drink.” Someone has wisely added, “No, but you can salt the oats and make him thirst for water.” A teacher who has stopped learning is cheating the student who is paying to be taught. Good teachers who are constant learners create a thirst in students to deepen their knowledge. Our goal should be to graduate students who are firmly fixed in their knowledge of God and committed to living with a Biblical worldview. ■

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