“Can You Suggest Graduation Gifts With Worldview In Mind?”

We are desiring to give each of our graduates an age appropriate gift, i.e., 8th grade, High School, and College, for graduation. We want to give them something to help them think through the Christian worldview in light of the culture they are being raised in.

Great question! We are in the “business” of providing such resources for kids and adults especially useful for those headed to secular university or college so anything on our site is appropriate, as well as the books & sites below.

The Reasons to Believe section of Probe.org is a great place for starters.

Resources written for children up to about 8th grade:

Here are Amazon.com listings by journalist turned Christian apologetics author extraordinaire Lee Strobel (note emphasis on titles very similar but not the same):

- *The Case for a **Creator** for Kids*
- *The Case for **Christ** for Kids*
- *The Case for **Faith** for Kids*
- *Off My Case for Kids: 12 Stories to Help You Defend Your Faith*
- *The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God* *(more grown-up edition)*
- *The Case for Faith—Student Edition*

Also, see:

My Heart Christ's Home: Retold for Children (don't know grade level) by Robert Boyd Munger OR

My Heart Christ's Home (original)

Other suggestions for high school grads, possibly 8th graders:

Ethix: Being Bold in a Whatever World, by Sean McDowell (son of Josh McDowell, good author, speaker, thinker in his own right; this book written somewhat to youth leaders, perhaps—I've only sampled it; great illustrations especially about absolute truth vs. relative truth and morality)

How to Stay Christian in College, by J. Budziszewski—My wife and I give this one to high school grads for obvious reasons, given the title. J. Budziszewski is a one-of-a-kind critical thinker who matches his intellect with caring for kids. See his columns under Ask Theophilus at Boundless.org—excellent narratives of paraphrased professor-student conversations about deep, real life issues from a Christian worldview.

Note: I suggest the 1999 edition, although there's a newer one (Th1nk books, a NavPress imprint). This older one contains many useful links, many from a site I used to edit:

LeaderU.com. Massively useful for scholarly work like writing papers, essays, debates. Most or all of the links cited in the book should still work.

Chris Chrisman Goes to College: and Faces the Challenges of Relativism, Individualism and Pluralism. From the master of worldview, James Sire, brought down off the proverbial shelf for laypeople, this fictional account of three new collegians creatively tackles the topics in the book's subtitle. Particularly interesting: Sire "identifies no fewer than six types of relativism," according to the cover.

For college or high school grads:

Welcome To College: A Christ-Followers Guide for the Journey, by Jonathan Morrow. This sweeping, but accessible and succinct volume contains 42 chapters that ask: What do Christians really believe? Can I put that into words for unbelievers? What is the nature of truth and how do we know things? What about sex? Finances? How should a Christian worldview inform my entire life and experience? and much more. Packs a worldview wallop.

Making Your Faith Your Own, A Guidebook for Believers With Questions, by Teresa Vining. See the top review of a pastor's wife.

The second review at Amazon.com of the above book is by my colleague, Sue Bohlin, whose responses on scores of questions from believers and unbelievers, posted here on Probe.org, are worth their weight in gold:

Probe Answers Your Email. Look for Sue Bohlin's responses particularly, especially in the Marriage & Family, Sexuality, Homosexuality and Gender sections, but elsewhere as well. Michael Gleghorn is great on theology & philosophy. This set of 500-600 answers is good for high school, college, adult, sometimes younger, depending on topics.

My Utmost for His Highest (latest edition), Oswald Chambers

A subscription to our own *Probe-Alert* e-letter (always free, every two weeks, relevant new materials and more) might be a good "freebie"—they'll have to approve it via email. Or, to avoid that and make it a one-step operation, send a list of emails to me and I'll mass subscribe them manually.

I hope you find this helpful. God bless you and your graduates and may they thrive in their faith as they move to their next life-step.

Byron Barlowe

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“I’m a Christian in Love With a Hindu”

Hi, I’m a Christian girl. I’m in love with my friend who is Hindu. I’m much worried for my future. I’m praying for his salvation, so that my marriage goes smooth and we can lead a Christian family life. If I ignore him, also, it would mean I had made a sin. Please give me a helpful guidance, so that I should not sin.

God is very clear about this kind of situation in 2 Corinthians 6:14 (King James Version): “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?” The context of the passage is marriage. If you marry anyone other than a Christ-follower, you cannot and will not have a smooth marriage. This is especially true when the people come from such strongly different worldviews and belief systems. Do pray for your friend’s salvation, but do not date him. We marry people we date and fall in love with; I strongly suggest you distance yourself from him because he is not safe for you spiritually.

If you ignore him—or even withdraw from him—it is not a sin. That is obedience and wisdom, not sin.

I hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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“What Should I Do About My Dream About Death?”

While sleeping I heard a voice say, “Melanie is dead.” This was repeated, loudly and clearly. I picked up my phone to dial my mom and realized I had been asleep. I am 42 years old. I am saved. Melanie is my niece who has turned Muslim. She had just given birth to a baby boy that same morning.

What am I supposed to do about this message and where could it have originated from?

Wow! What a horrible way to have your sleep crashed into!

An important response when something like this happens is to immediately invite the Lord Jesus into it. Ask for His perspective and His wisdom. Then, if it were me, I would say something like, “Lord, I don’t know where this is coming from, but I’m going to take it as a signal to pray for Melanie. No matter if it’s from an angel or a demon, you turn it into an opportunity to trust and intercede.”

For what it’s worth, I had a similar, unnerving experience one time. A month after 9/11, I was going to fly back to Dallas from Chicago, and there was some scuttlebutt about hijackers planning to crash a jet full of fuel into the Sears Tower after takeoff. I was awakened that day with the chilling words, “You’re going to die today.” It caused such a spirit of fear and total lack of peace that I immediately knew it wasn’t from God, but it was so strong I had a hard time shaking it off as the spiritual warfare that it was. So I do understand

how deeply troubling this message was and is.

I send this with a prayer that God will open Melanies eyes to who He truly is.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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"If Everyone Left Unhealthy Churches, Wouldn't Many Shut Down?"

Dear Mr. Zukeran,

I recently came across your article Abusive Churches: Leaving Them Behind." In it, you state that "it is best to leave an abusive or unhealthy church."

Why is this a necessary step to take? If everyone were to leave churches considered unhealthy, many churches would shut down as a result. Can you clear this up for me? Thank you.

I stated that leaving an abusive church was the best thing to do. The reason is that it is very difficult to recover or worship the Lord when you are in an abusive church that is dominating your life. Being surrounded in such an environment constantly is not healthy and the atmosphere will affect your outlook. It is like being a fish swimming in an unhealthy aquarium. The more you remain in it, often the more unhealthy you get.

It is also very difficult to change an abusive church since it is structured with no accountability on the leader so it is very unlikely to change. So for your personal health, mentally and spiritually, it is best to leave and enter into a healthy environment and church.

You asked, wouldn't the abusive church shut down if people left? That is correct and that is the best thing that could happen. Abusive churches do a lot of harm to people and to the name of Christ. We do not need abusive churches growing and spreading. We need unhealthy churches to shut down and healthy churches growing and planting healthy churches. That is why I say it is best to leave an abusive church.

Patrick Zukeran

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"How Do the Health-and-Wealth Believers Rationalize Their Beliefs?"

I read your Stairway to Heaven article on materialism and still can't understand why people (and especially these new mega churches) are still so into it. People have actually told me that God wants us to have wealth, and I keep receiving "religious" email chain letters about being "blessed" monetarily. I would prefer blessings of a more loving type . . . !!

My question is always, what kind of "wealth" does that necessarily mean? It is all so contradictory to Jesus'

teachings as well as to His overthrowing of the merchants' tables in the Temple. How do they rationalize this way of thinking?

Thank you for your thoughtful response to my essay on materialism.

I also have difficulty understanding the "health and wealth" gospel that some profess in the name of Christ. I find no justification for it in Scripture. In fact, I find just the opposite in passages like 1 Peter 4:12-16:

> "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.
> But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.
> If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.
> If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.
> However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name."

Paul, in Romans 5, points out that suffering is an integral part of developing the character we need to serve Christ effectively. As to where this "health and wealth" gospel comes from, I suppose it begins with the very popular view that "God wants me to be happy" rather than the biblical admonition to be holy as God is holy. Fortunately, many churches (both large and small) work hard to overcome this form of hedonism.

For Him,

Don Closson

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“What About All the Violence and Conquering in the Name of the Christian God?”

Just read your answer to email on the Pope’s inflammatory remarks about Islam, and I had a question about this statement:

> *“Muslims certainly cannot deny that Mohammed admonished Muslims to pick up their swords for Allahs cause (see my essay Islam and the Sword at Probe.org). They also cannot ignore the fact that Islam conquered both the Persian and Byzantine Empires via warfare.”*

While both statements are or may in fact be true, one we Christians cannot deny that as much violence and conquering has been done in the name of God. One should be careful about removing the speck from a brother’s eye before taking the log out of his own. Actually, I believe Christian war preceded Islamic war.

I am not discounting the evil done in the name of Christ, and of course there were Christians fighting before there were Muslims since Christianity preceded Islam by six centuries. My point is about their very nature as belief systems. When one compares the actions of Christ with the actions of Mohammed, the lives of the apostles with the lives of Mohammeds companions, and the teaching found in the New Testament with what is taught in the Quran, one finds a distinct difference in the role that violence plays. Even when we compare the early history of the two religions we find that Christianity went through a three hundred year period of persecution while

Islam conquered a region stretching from Spain to India, experienced three civil wars, and had three of its first four caliphs assassinated by other Muslims.

There is also the distinction to be made between individuals committing violence and vengeful acts, and the responsibility of governments or kings to uphold justice and protect their people from harm. There has been a 1,400 year conflict going on between the civilization that has constituted Europe after the Roman Empire fell and the Islamic world. For most of that time Europe was on the defensive side of things. Not until the late 17th century did the Islamic threat diminish after their failure to take Vienna and the Ottoman Empire was forced to sign the treaty of Karlowitz in 1699.

One also has to remember that Islam is both a religion and a political system; it does not recognize a separation between church and state. When a western nation acts against a Muslim one it is not Christianity vs. Islam, it is a political entity, democratic or otherwise, deciding to act against a religious/political entity.

All of this to say that while we can point to atrocities done in the name of Christ, they have no support in the New Testament. However, atrocities done in the name of Islam have explicit models in the life of Mohammed and can find justification and support in the Quran.

None of this discussion discounts our obligation as ambassadors for Christ to love and reach out to individual Muslims in humility and with compassion.

Thank you for your thoughtful comments.

Don Closson

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“Am I a Prude for Refusing to Endorse the Movie “Ratatouille”?”

WARNING – this email contains a movie “spoiler”… My husband and I saw the G-rated Pixar movie *Ratatouille*. As a conservative Christian, I was troubled and saddened that an important element of the movie reveals that the garbage boy Linguini is the illegitimate son of the recently deceased chef Gusteau, who doesn’t even know he has a son. While the movie is otherwise entertaining and worthwhile, I cannot endorse such a film. My husband, who is as devout as me, didn’t think this was a big deal and that kids wouldn’t put it together and neither would most adults. Am I being too prudish? Or do you think I should stand firm in my convictions that wrong is wrong…even if everybody does it?

One last thing, is there a Christian-based movie rating site?

First, concerning your question about Christian movie reviewing sites:

www.pluggedinonline.com

www.movieguide.org

www.christianitytoday.com/movies/

christianity.about.com/od/christianmovies/Christian_Movies_and_Christian_Movie_Reviews.htm

Secondly: while I haven’t yet seen the movie (but plan to tomorrow!), I did read all the reviews at the above sites so I would have a better idea of what troubles you. I also

discussed the movie with one of my Probe colleagues who took his family to see it. I fully appreciate your concern about illegitimate children, but is this part of the story lifted up as something to emulate and freely accept? Or is it a plot device that can be addressed in discussion with others after the movie? It sounds like a teachable moment to me, much like the wrong and sinful elements of Bible stories that are presented without comment by the biblical writers and invite us to interact with them wisely.

From what I read in the reviews (and in my conversation with the one who did see it), there are other wrongs in the movie such as stealing, throwing knives, arrogance, etc., which you did not indicate your objection to. Would you say you cannot endorse any movie that has anything wrong in it? I respectfully suggest that this kind of movie provides audiences with the opportunity to develop discernment in how they process what's in it, and especially how they discuss it with their children and other viewers. Personally, I find it very helpful when someone with a developed Christian worldview sees a movie and tells me, "If you see this movie, look for _____ and _____ but watch out for _____."

Our philosophy here at Probe is that there is no such thing as sheer entertainment. All movies are made for a reason, with a viewpoint, and there is something the producers and directors want you to see or think, or a certain way in which they want you to respond. So Christians need to have their thinking caps on when seeing any movie, filtering everything through the lens of God's word and His values.

In that case, when a character is revealed to be illegitimate, our response would then be, "Oh, illegitimacy is so sad because sexual sin is sad and hurtful. God wants so much better for us, and that's why He calls us to purity. So the issue is not the presence of an illegitimate character, but whether or not our response to it is in alignment with what God has shown us in His word."

I would add that there are many movies that are so filled with moral filth and ungodliness that it’s like trying to find something to eat in a compost heap. We’re better off not going (or renting, or watching) them at all.

Thanks for writing.

Sue Bohlin

Addendum: I just returned from seeing the movie myself, and stand by everything I said. Excuse me, but I have an urge to go in the kitchen and cook up something *marvelous*! <grin>

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“Should a Christian Radio Station Accept an Underwriting Grant from a Ford Dealership?”

I am on the board of a local Christian radio station. We have a man who is a franchise owner of a Ford Motor Company Dealership. He is a Christian and wants to support our radio station through his dealership. There is currently a national boycott against Ford for their support of homosexual agendas. Is it ethical to allow him to underwrite our station when we are in support of the national boycott of Ford products? We as a board want to do the right thing.

Thank you for your question. This is a good case of an ethical dilemma in which Christians may come to different conclusions.

1. The Bible clearly teaches that if someone believes a particular action to be wrong for them, then it is wrong. Paul says in Romans 14:4, I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. So if a station manager feels it would be wrong to receive support from a Ford dealership, then it is wrong. End of discussion.

2. However, if a station manager does NOT have an initial moral concern, then you might consider some other issues:

(a) Many people would see a distinction between the Ford Motor Company and a local dealership. While we may disagree with the policies of the national leadership of Ford toward homosexuality, that doesn't necessarily mean that the local dealership agrees with those policies. In fact, one of the sad results of the boycott has been that many local Ford dealerships (run by godly Christians who disagree with Ford's policies) have been hurt by the boycott.

(b) This leads to my next point. Many Christians do not agree that a boycott of Ford Motor Company is the best way to send a signal to the company. They feel that it is too blunt an instrument. Some Christians may be led to follow the boycott, while others do not. Paul says in Romans 14:3 that the one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat nor should the one who does not eat . . . judge the one who eats. In other words, whether you participate in or refrain from a boycott is an individual decision that a station manager should be "fully convinced of" (Romans 14:5).

(c) Some might also point out that there is a difference between boycotting Ford and receiving a sponsorship from a local dealership. The station is not buying a Ford product but receiving an underwriting grant. Essentially, it is the difference between the station paying Ford and Ford paying the station. Obviously, this distinction is meaningless if one believes that anything Ford Motor Company does is tainted

> *by their national policy. In that case, giving money to Ford or receiving money from Ford would be wrong.*

So I would encourage you and your station manager to consider whether you feel it is wrong to receive a grant from the local Ford dealership as I describe in section #1. If you do, then the other points are meaningless. If you do NOT feel it would be wrong, then you might consider the three points I put under section #2.

Kerby Anderson

"How Can Dementia Turn a Mature Christian So Ugly?"

I am worried by the behaviour of Christians I know who suffer from dementia. I have frequently seen them displaying racism, sexually suggestive behaviour, and generally rude and difficult behaviour unthinkable to their pre-dementia selves. How does this tie up with the idea of a Christian being transformed within? I am bothered by the thought that sanctification is only skin deep, as it were—a learned veneer.

That's an excellent question!

I too have seen incredibly godly, mature Christians heartbreakingly transformed by Alzheimer's and dementia into ugly caricatures of their former selves. I believe the answer lies in the nature of the two kinds of "flesh" the Bible talks about. Our "new creation" is housed in a body of physical flesh that has been impacted by the fall and marred by sin. The fall makes our brains subject to decay and disease which leads to the tragic behavior you describe. The other flesh—not

our physical bodies, but that part of us which operates in our own strength, apart from God (see Romans 7:18, 8:8, 13:14; Galatians 3:3, 5:17)—is never transformed, which is why we have to crucify it and die to self. The transformation of sanctification happens to our souls and in our spirits, but our flesh is unredeemable and still occupies a place in our physical bodies. Racism, sexually suggestive behavior, and rude and difficult behavior are all fruits of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). Praise God, the flesh will fall away when we die or are taken up to heaven!

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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"Can a Born-Again Christian Remain in a Carnal State?"

If one is truly a born again Christian, can they remain in a carnal state? If they are not willing to grow spiritually, give up those things which are offensive to God are they truly saved? Also much debate about losing one's salvation seems to be a confusing topic for some. It says in God's word that no man can pluck you out of the Father's hand but what if one decides to remove themselves by renouncing their belief in the Lord? God did not remove them, they removed themselves. We have a Bible study in our work place and this seems to be an ongoing problem to give a clear cut answer to. Please could you help me?

Your questions are perceptive and very important for

understanding the Christian life. I think it's safe to say that Christians are not effectually sinless people. With that in mind, our righteousness is not ours, but Christ's. Granted, a Christian is a regenerated being. We have the Spirit of God living in us and have the freedom to choose right over wrong. But some people seem to be changed overnight, while others are slower about showing the fruits of new birth. We must trust God to have that under consideration as He works in the life of new or not-so-new believers.

It's important that we look at our lives and the lives of others from a broader perspective than we might be used to. God works throughout our whole lives. When we become Christians we can look back at times before our salvation and see that He was working even then. I think we'll also be able to look back in eternity and see where God was working throughout our whole lives (unsaved and saved), when we weren't even aware of it. To get to the point, living "carnally" does not necessarily invalidate a person's claim to salvation. But at the least it ought to call it into question. 1 John 2:3-6 gives us an effective measure of our relationship to Christ. If we know Him, then we'll act like it. If I'm not finding the desire or the ability to follow Christ's will for my life, then I am forced to ask, "Why not?" I can recount many testimonies of people who truly came to know Christ after being in such a predicament.

A believer's security is a very important issue. For if one can forfeit his inheritance, then how many sins will it take to disqualify him. John 10:27-30 does teach that no one is able to "snatch them out of the Father's hand." Paul says in Romans 8:38-39, "I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." So it seems that no one (not even the person himself) or no thing can take us from God.

Better yet, what if he chooses one day to renounce the faith he once held so dearly? I'm in no place to decide if someone's profession of faith was sincere or not. But we do have the responsibility as brothers and sisters in Christ to challenge each other to bear fruit. If it isn't being seen, then there ought to be someone who can say, "Hey, I'm not seeing any fruit." Philippians 1:6 affirms our hope: "Being confident in this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." So, biblically speaking, salvation is for keeps. The question must be, "Is the person who isn't living for Christ really a Christian at all?" Only God and the person in question can really answer that. Our responsibility as a community of faith is to encourage one another to be true to each other's profession of faith.

I hope this helps you in your search for truth. He rewards those who seek Him.

Kris Samons
Probe Ministries