Religious Beliefs and Advanced Degrees

Steve Cable examines how people with advanced degrees match up to the populations as a whole in their denominational affiliation and basic religious beliefs.

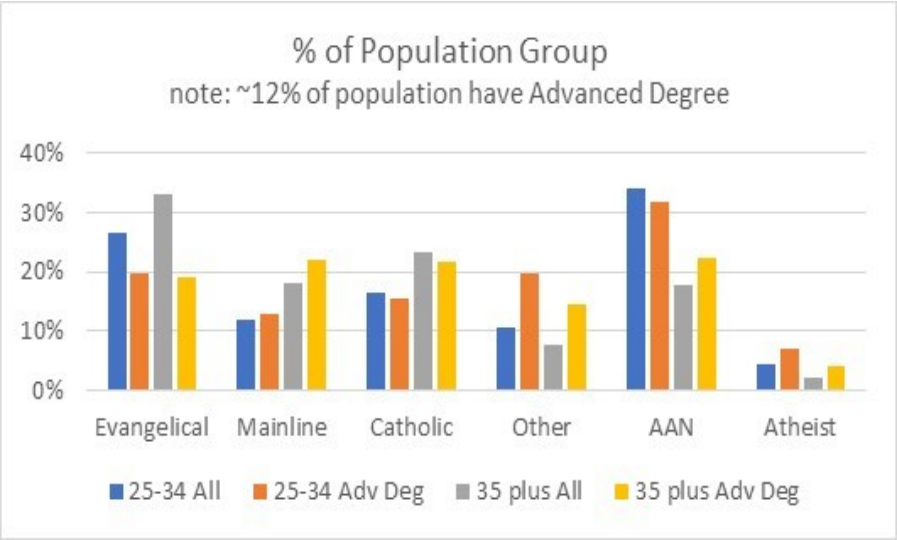
Religious Beliefs and Advanced Degrees

A colleague asked me, "Do you have any recent research—insights—into the religious beliefs of professors?" After some deep digging, I was surprised to see that advanced degrees may not change basic religious views like many believe they do.

The simple answer is no. I have not found any survey data that I can access that focuses on college professors. However, since the question was asked, I wanted to look at the 2014 Pew Religious Landscape Study which surveyed 35,072 Americans to see if I could extract any data that would provide any insight into the religious beliefs of professors. Unfortunately, there are no employment questions in the survey and the level of education question does not separate Ph.D.s from master's degrees.

However, I did get some interesting information about the highest level of education asked about in the survey: *What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received? Postgraduate or professional degree, including master's, doctorate, medical or law degree (e.g., M.A,, M.S., Ph.D., M.D., J.D., graduate school).* I wanted to see how religious affiliation and religious beliefs compared with the population as a whole; i.e., did having a graduate degree make one more or less likely to be religious?

First let's look at their self-proclaimed religious affiliation as shown in the figure below. The color key shows age range and cohort (i.e., representing all survey takers or only ones with advanced degrees or "Adv Deg").



We find (somewhat surprisingly, I think) that an advanced degree does not significantly change the distribution of religious affiliations. To read the figure, compare the blue bars with the red bars and the gray bars with the yellow bars. Some things to note:

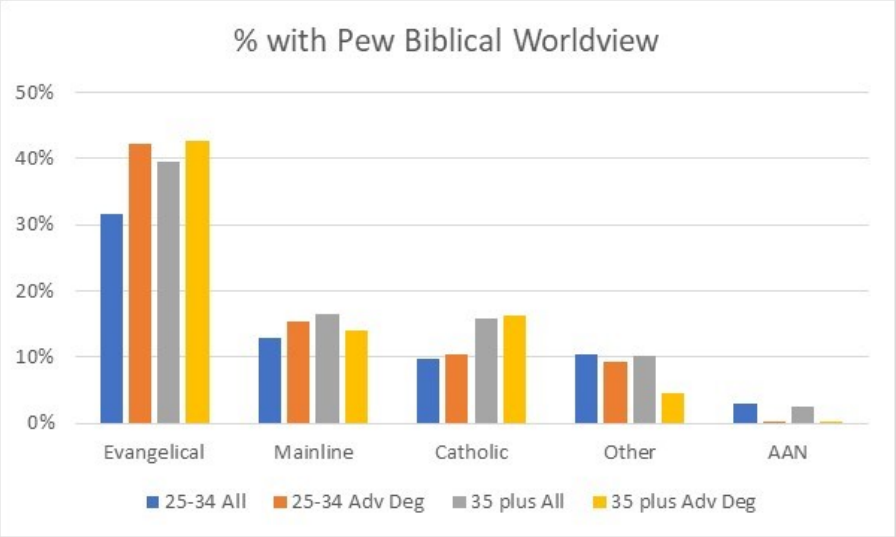
- Since there are very few people under the age of 25 with doctoral degrees, I looked at those 25 to 34 and those 35 and above
- AAN stands for Atheist, Agnostic, or Nothing at All
- The sum across each color for the first five categories adds up to 100%, i.e. for all 25 to 34 year olds, 27% are evangelicals, 12% are mainline, 16% are Catholic, etc. adding up to 100% of the population.
- Atheists are a subset of AAN and were added for their relevance to the question.

First, note that for Mainline Protestants, Catholics and AAN's, those with advanced degrees are essentially identical in percentage as the age group as a whole. Only for Evangelicals and Other Religions is there a significant difference. Those respondents with advanced degrees are a significantly smaller segment of the population for Evangelicals and a significantly larger segment for Other Religions. It is not surprising to find that a greater

percentage of those with advanced degrees are followers of a non-Christian religion than for the population of non-Christians as a whole. This result is because a great portion of immigrants to the U.S. with a Hindu or Muslim background are professionals with advanced degrees brought in to fill engineering and computer science positions.

It is interesting that for AAN's, those with advanced degrees are about the same percentage of the population as those without advanced degrees.

What about their religious beliefs? These are compared in the figure shown here.



A Biblical Worldview as defined by Pew Research questions is one that holds the following positions[1]:

- God is a personal being with whom people can have a relationship
- Our holy book is the word of God
- There is a heaven, where people who have led good lives are eternally rewarded
- There is a hell, where people who have led bad lives and die without being sorry are eternally punished
- When it comes to questions of right and wrong, I look to religious teachings and beliefs most for guidance

The primary take-away from the chart is once again the striking similarity between the religious group as a whole and the religious group comprised of those holding advanced

degrees.

It is interesting to note that Evangelicals with advanced degrees are somewhat more likely than Evangelicals as a whole to ascribe to the Pew version of a Biblical Worldview. Remembering that the first chart shows a drop-off in the percentage of Evangelicals with advanced degrees relative to the overall percentage of Evangelicals in the population gives us a reasonable clue as to the cause: perhaps those people who completed their advanced degree and still considered themselves Evangelicals were more conscious of what that means than the population at large.

I thought you might be interested in this data. However, it really sheds little light on the questions about college professors because college professors are a small percentage of the pool of people with advanced degrees in America. One study that does provide data on this question was done in 2006 by two professors.[2] It appears to be a well-done attempt to look specifically at college professors. It supports the view that many college professors (particularly at top-tier universities) are not supporters of and in many case actively ridicule evangelical religious thought. Note: “many college professors” does not mean a majority but rather a significant minority large enough that one could not spend four years at a university without spending semesters in several of their classes. It would be nice if there were a similar study from 2016 so we could see the trends between 2006 and 2016.

In summary, looking at recent survey results, we do not find a significant difference in the percentage of people who self-identify as Atheist, Agnostic, or Nothing at All who have an advanced degree relative to those without an advanced degree. However, there is a significant fall off in the percentage of Americans with advanced degrees who identify as Evangelicals. At the same time, those with advanced degrees who affiliate themselves with an Evangelical denomination are more likely to hold a biblical worldview than those without advanced degrees.

[1] These five positions have some wording issues from an evangelical perspective, but Pew selected the possible answers and these five come as close as possible within their question structure to reflecting a partial biblical worldview.

[2] Neil Gross and Solon Simmons, *How Religious are America's College and University Professors*?, SSRC, Feb. 6, 2007

Is Public School to Blame?

June 30, 2011

I was having a conversation recently about the reason so many students turn away from the church after high school, and it was suggested that it's because they don't get the proper biblical worldview/foundation in public school and only get an hour during the week at church.

It seems to me this is a big generalization since public school students can get a strong foundation in the home and Christian school and home school students don't necessarily get a good foundation (or it is a skewed perspective that actually turns them away from the church).

So I started thinking about the data that has been collected on this and wondered when the information is gathered and compiled if it takes into account what kind of schooling the student had – public, private Christian or homeschool. My guess is that the data wouldn't be significantly different if you did divide the three groups.

Also, does it make a difference if they go to a public college or a Christian college? I would hope that students who go to a Christian college are more likely to continue going to church and to have a more biblical worldview, but is that true?

Good question. Actually, studies show parents are the most influential in regard to the beliefs of young adults. So you're right, school really has little to do with it. As a kid who went to public school and loved it, I'm actually quite offended by this very unfair, very common stereotype about public school. Truth be told, public school forced me to know what I believed and why in a way a Christian environment couldn't have.

You're also right that going to a Christian college can be really helpful, but it depends on the college/university, and it depends on the person. I know going to a Christ-centered university where integration of faith (worldview) and learning was important was super-helpful for me. However, if I had gone to a public university, I know I would have been involved in a local church and a campus ministry; studies also show that such involvement significantly lowers the risk of faith abandonment during the college years. Community is key.

All that to say, public school, private school, home school… it doesn't really matter. When we grown-ups complain about the worldview issues of young adults, we really have no one but ourselves to blame because in both the home and the church, young people are watching how we walk the talk.

This blog post originally appeared at
reneamac.com/2011/06/30/is-public-school-to-blame/

Why Kids Leave the Church

After High School

The Youth Transition Network has released the results of research about why 70% of students in high school youth groups have left the church within a year after high school graduation.

One big reason is the unrealistic expectations that our young people sense from parents and church authority figures. When asked, “What does it mean to be a good Christian,” students responded with a long list of do’s and don’ts, always and nevers:

- No sex
- No secular music
- No fun
- No profanity
- No bad attitudes
- Be perfect
- Be a virgin
- Be wholly devoted to God
- Be righteous
- Be a role model
- Don’t doubt
- Have all the spiritual answers
- Always be positive
- Always be in a good mood
- Wear proper clothing
- Go to church all the time
- Always read your Bible
- Always be praying
- Know the whole Bible
- Get along with everyone
- Always be happy
- Never talk back
- Do not fail
- Do not fail

• Do not fail

Wow. And that's a PARTIAL list! If someone said to you, "This is what it means to be a Christian," would you want to sign up?

What's also heartbreaking is what ISN'T on the list:

Reveling in God's love for me
Appreciating His gifts of grace and mercy
Loving God back because I am so moved by His tender love for me

No wonder so many students live a "goody-two-shoes" Christian life on Sundays and Wednesday nights, and a completely other, separate life the rest of the week! No wonder they don't see the point of staying connected to a church once their parents stop making them go.

So many of our students feel that they can't be successful Christians. They think it's hopeless to live up to the expectations they sense. They think that being a Christian is just too hard.

Sounds like they need to be introduced to what grace looks like. Sounds like they need to have it modeled to them. Sounds like the rest of us need to embrace it ourselves and live it out so they can see it up close and personal, and see why following Jesus is so much more than checking off the boxes on our spiritual report cards!

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/why_kids_leave_the_church_after_high_school on April 28, 2009.

What's Happening to Our Youth? – Christians Should Be Concerned

You've probably heard for some time that the youth from our churches have been having a tough time when they make the transition from high school to adulthood, whether that is to college, the workforce or the military. Josh McDowell addressed this in his latest book, *The Last Christian Generation*, where he documented that research indicates that anywhere from 69 to 94 percent of our youth are leaving the church after high school. And few are returning.

Other organizations suggest the figure is between 55 and 88 percent. Either way, the picture isn't good. Our youth are in trouble and we need a vigorous and coordinated response. Recently I attended a meeting of national youth and college ministry leaders to help forge a response to this growing problem. Hosted by the folks at Youth Transition Network, YTN, (www.youthtransitionnetwork.org) some troubling observations emerged.

Many in our youth culture are living double lives. One life is meant to be invisible at church (they know the right behaviors and speak "Christianese" to pass as good kids). In the other life they follow worldly pursuits in secret, away from parents and church leaders among friends who accept them as they are. This is motivated by what YTN director Jeff Schadt calls a triangle of discouragement (see: www.liveabove.com/NewsReadyText.aspx?thispage=1)

One leg of the triangle is the burdensome sense of guilt over their moral failures coupled with a sense of isolation. They don't feel free to talk with anyone about their guilt. Basically they feel like a spiritual failure.

The second leg of the triangle involves what they feel is a disconnect between a gospel of grace and expectations of perfection from parents and church leaders. They're not smart enough, spiritual enough, attractive enough, etc. They just don't feel like they measure up.

The third leg brings all this together in an overall sense of not feeling trusted, believed in or accepted, warts and all. Thats a pretty nasty triumvirate.

Add to this the fact that 93% of graduating high school seniors can't name even one college ministry. Therefore, they mistrust what they don't know and fail to get connected. Most college freshman also feel unprepared for the level of freedom college affords and are frequently overwhelmed by the level and difficulty of work the university expects.

As Josh McDowell also points out, the majority of our graduating youth don't believe Jesus is the one true Son of God, don't believe Jesus rose from the dead, don't believe in Satan and don't believe the Holy Spirit is real.

I learned a lot at this meeting. What struck me the most was the universal reaction from both high school youth leaders and college ministers. They all admitted that the problem was not new, but that they didn't realize how large and universal it was. One college worker asked Jeff Schadt if any of the 800 students he interviewed said anything about being motivated by love. Without hesitation, he said "No!" This only increased my resolve for Probe Ministries to be a part of the solution and not part of the problem. Our week-long Mind Games Conference will continue to prepare high school juniors and seniors for the challenge of college—but with a greater emphasis on the available resources and an even bigger helping of trust, acceptance and love.

Check out these additional resources for more information and help in making this critical transition easier and more

fruitful:

• www.youthtransitionnetwork.org: Official site for Youth Transition Network.

• www.liveabove.com offers resources for youth leaders to help their students make the transition and offers help for students in locating a campus ministry and even a Christian roommate.

• college101seminars.com offers informational programs for churches and secular institutions on helping their students make a profitable transition.

• Conversations CDthis information page introduces a tool designed to help navigate the pitfalls of higher learning, construct a biblical worldview, answer life's toughest questions and make great grades. The well-done sections on making better grades hosted by Dr. Walter Bradley are worth their weight in gold.

• www.boundless.org/college contains links for articles designed to help Christians survive and thrive in college (and beyond). "Ask Theophilus" is particularly helpful.

• TrueU.org is a general site for students of faith.

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"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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Despite Media Claims, Condoms Don’t Prevent STDs

If terrorists were caught attempting to manipulate the environment at America’s colleges and universities so that 85 percent of all coeds would graduate infected with a life threatening virus, they would be vilified and prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Many media reports on a recent study about the effectiveness of condom use in deterring the spread of HPV have the potential to produce the same result. Irresponsible and/or ignorant journalism producing a false sense of security may be able to accomplish what the most sophisticated terrorist operation would be unable to pull off.

Human papilloma virus (HPV)—which can cause cervical cancer, genital warts and vaginal, vulvar, anal and penile cancers—is the most common sexually transmitted disease, infecting about 80 percent of young women within five years of becoming sexually active. One of the arguments for abstinence prior to marriage is that condoms have not been shown to be effective in protecting against HPV and other sexually transmitted diseases. A new study report, published in the June 22 edition of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, is titled “Condom Use and the Risk of Genital Human Papillomavirus Infection in Young Women”{1}. This study was structured to provide better information on the impact of male condom use on the likelihood of women contracting HPV.

What new insights are gained from this study on the

relationship of condom use and HPV? The most important result is that sexually active college women whose male partners used condoms 100 percent of the time (both with the women in the study and with other sexual partners) have roughly a 38 percent chance of contracting HPV within the first year of becoming sexually active.{2} If she has at least one different partner per year for four years, the probability that she will leave college with an HPV infection is greater than 85 percent. The obvious conclusion of the study is that **condom use is not an effective means of preventing HPV**.

The study did find that sexually active college women whose male partners used condoms less than 100 percent of the time had a probability of contracting HPV within the first year of becoming sexually active ranging from 62 percent to virtually 100 percent depending upon the regularity of condom use by their male partners. Although the study does show that male condom use did reduce the probability of sexually active women contracting HPV, it did not reduce it to a level that any thinking person would consider safe. Based on the study results, it is reasonable to conclude that any woman who is sexually active with multiple partners during her college years will almost certainly contract HPV whether she ensures their partners use condoms or not.

One would expect the headlines for the media reports on this topic to read, "Condoms Shown to be Ineffective Against HPV." The body of the article would point out that these results vindicate the proponents' of abstinence emphasis in preventing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. However, the exact opposite is being purported by the media. Here are some samples from the headlines:

• **Condoms Reduce HPV Risk After All, Without Increasing Likelihood of Sex**
(American Council on Science and Health)
• **Condoms Proven to Protect Against Virus**
(Associated Press, *Yuma Sun*)

• **Condoms Reduce Risk of Cervical Cancer, Survey Says** (*Dallas Morning News*, June 22, 2006)

These headlines take a half truth and present it in a way that is designed to further a political agenda while endangering the health of America's youth and young adults. Even more dangerous is the first line of the Associated Press report, "For the first time, scientists have proof that condoms offer women **impressive protection** against the virus that causes cervical cancer." I do not consider an 85 percent chance of catching the virus in four years impressive. I would consider it dismal! The AP report then adds insult to injury by including this quote from an obscure expert:

> *That's pretty awesome. There aren't too many times when you can have an intervention that would offer **so much protection**, said Dr. Patricia Kloser, an infectious-disease specialist at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey who was not a part of the study.*

The use of the words "impressive protection" and "so much protection" in conjunction with the results of this study borders on criminal. We need to hold our journalists to task for such biased (or, in the best case, shoddy) reporting. Even more important, we need to get out the real conclusion supported by the study: Abstinence or a completely monogamous relationship is the only effective protection against sexually transmitted diseases. As Christians, we would point to marriage as the only valid venue for a monogamous relationship, but that is outside the scope of the study.

To determine the number of coeds at risk, we need to consider how many are sexually active. In order to participate in this study, the college coeds had to have refrained from vaginal intercourse prior to the two weeks preceding the start of the study. In other words, the participants were virgins at the beginning of the study. Over the three year study period, 45

percent of those originally enrolled remained virgins. According to a report from the U.S. Center for Disease Control{3}, in 2002, 70 percent of never-married teens under the age of 18 had not engaged in sex. Taking the 55 percent from the study who started sexual activity in college with the 30 percent who were already sexually active, one would predict that 68.5 percent of college coeds would be sexually active. This tracks well with the CDC data that 68 percent of never-married females have engaged in sex before they were 20. Thus, if coed sexual activity remains at the same level and 100 percent condom use is practiced, we can expect approximately 60 percent of college coeds to graduate with an HPV versus 68 percent with 50 percent condom usage. In contrast, if we could cut the number of sexually active coeds in half, the HPV infection rate among graduates could drop to 33 percent or less regardless of condom usage.

Notes

1. *New England Journal of Medicine*, Volume 354, June 22, 2006, Number 25, "Condom Use and the Risk of Genital Human Papillomavirus Infection in Young Women," Rachel L. Winer, Ph.D., James P. Hughes, Ph.D., Qinghua Feng, Ph.D., Sandra O'Reilly, B.S., Nancy B. Kiviat, M.D., King K. Holmes, M.D., Ph.D., and Laura A. Koutsky, Ph.D.
2. Study actually calculates rate per 100 hundred at risk years which is somewhat different than the probability of occurrence since some women reported multiple infections over the course of the study.
3. "Teenagers in the United States: Sexual Activity, Contraceptive Use, and Childbearing," 2002, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, December 2004.

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Our Cheatin' Hearts (Radio Version)

From classroom to boardroom, from sports to shoplifting, people try to get something that's not rightfully theirs. What are the roots of dishonesty? Why do people cheat? How does cheating impact society? Is there a solution? Rusty Wright considers cheating.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

Cheating Ways

Cheating is rampant these days. Just ask the nation's retailers, educators, and investors. From classroom to boardroom, from filling stations to airplanes, folks everywhere are trying to get something that's not rightfully theirs.

The *Wall Street Journal* has reported a rash of petty personal cheating ranging from zipping through turnpike tollbooths without paying to pocketing restaurant silverware.{1}

One Los Angeles network television employee described the rush he felt from sneaking into an airline First Class seat from his coach section. "It was exhilarating," he explained of his stealth upgrade. "I felt like I robbed a bank."

A Las Vegas restaurant lost $10,000 in pilfered ashtrays during its first two weeks of operation. A New Jersey engineer refuses to pay automated tolls on the Garden State Parkway because he feels the toll plazas are poorly designed and irritating. The state established a bad system, he reasons, so "you have to abuse it." Convenience stores report massive

losses from “pump-and-flee” customers who fill their gas tanks and take off without paying.

A Knoxville-based theater chain watches for discount cheaters who purchase pay-by-phone automated tickets at undeserved senior discounts and hope ticket takers won’t notice. Shoppers buy party dresses and power tools, use them, and return them for refunds. A California bookseller laments the customers who try for full-price refunds on books they’ve purchased from discount outlets. “You want to send them to Miss Manners,” she says.{2}

Prominent sports figures have been flagged for un-citizen-like conduct. George O’Leary lost the head football coaching job at Notre Dame within a week of his hiring for padding his résumé. U.S. Olympic Committee president Sandra Baldwin resigned after confessing lies about her academic background.{3}

Golfers not only adjust the lay of the ball. Some duck pricey greens fees by sneaking onto the course.

I know something about golf ethics. My childhood Miami home bordered a golf course. Occasionally, stray balls landed in our back yard. Neighborhood kids decided a ball was fair game only after the golfer had walked by without retrieving it. But it was entirely ethical, we determined, to cover the ball with a large almond leaf until the golfer passed.

What are the roots of dishonesty? Why do people cheat? How does cheating impact society? Is there a solution, and what is it? This article explores these themes.

Campus Cheating

What part does education play in cheating? Duke University president Nannerl Keohane says that 45 percent of Duke students have cheated at least once during college. *US News and World Report* quoted one Duke student who plagiarized an assignment: “It’s not a big deal because it’s just a mindless

assignment. It’s not a final or a midterm.”{4}

The Center for Academic Integrity reports that:{5}

- On most university campuses more than 75 percent of students admit to some cheating.
- About one-third of students in one nationwide survey admitted to “serious test cheating.”
- Half of the students in that survey admitted to “one or more instances of serious cheating on written assignments.”

The Internet expands choices and convenience. Web access and a credit card can buy ready-made term papers or customized writing. Cybercheating can backfire though. Special computer searches sometimes allow suspicious professors to discover the original sources in only minutes.{6}

Cheating is bad enough when students do it to boost their academic standing. It’s a mess when teachers and administrators orchestrate it. So-called “high-stakes testing” has tempted some educators to cheat to retain their jobs, earn merit pay or even preserve their schools. Some states base financial allocations on school test scores. Administrators anxious over funding cuts prompt teachers to provide, shall we say, inappropriate assistance.

New York City teacher Stacey Moscowitz gave her students answers to tests, raising their scores and the school’s academic ranking. She says the school principal encouraged the practice. Later, Moscowitz felt she had betrayed her kids. Students needing remedial help did not qualify for it due to their artificially high test scores.

Moscowitz blew the whistle, prompting an investigation by Edward Stancik, the New York City School District independent investigator. Stancik found fifty-two educators implicated in thirty-two schools. Among the methods he uncovered was the “scrap paper” method: Students took the exam on scrap paper, a

teacher corrected the answers, then the answers went onto the standardized answer sheets, so as not to reflect erasures. In the "group testing" method, students called out the answers, the group agreed on the correct answer, and everyone filled it in.{7}

Cheating in school might seem fairly harmless to some. Lots of people do it. But what happens when corporate leaders cheat?

Corporate Cheaters

Corporate cheating has had devastating effects. U.S. corporate scandals have seen thousands of employees lose their jobs while stocks plummet and corporate executives are led off in handcuffs. Enron, WorldCom, Arthur Anderson, AOL Time Warner, Adelphia, Xerox . . . sometimes the patterns of financial scandals can be confusing.

Consider a simple illustration. Suppose you want your local bank to lend you money so you can purchase your dream house. The bank views you as a means for them to make money. They want to assess their risk of investing in you to be sure you can pay them back faithfully and with interest. So they check your credit, income, assets and liabilities, and get you to fill out lots of forms.

Suppose you deceive the bank into believing that your financial status is better than it really is. You lie about your income and indebtedness. They believe you and lend you the funds. You buy your castle, then can't make the payments. You default on the loan, declare bankruptcy, and the bank loses its money.

That's a snapshot of just one type of scandal plaguing corporate America. Corporations that cook the books look like better investments than they really are. Investors buy their stock, driving the price up and enriching leaders who profit personally from stock gains. When irregularities are exposed,

companies restate their actual earnings and indebtedness and lay off employees. Investors, realizing they've been hoodwinked, sell their stock. Stock prices plummet. Investors question the sincerity of other corporations and are reluctant to buy. The market system falters.

Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan summarized for Congress corruption's impact on the nation: "Fraud is theft. . . . It is indistinguishable from going into a bank and stealing something. . . . Our free market capitalist system cannot function in an environment in which fraud and misrepresentation are critical elements, because trust is so essential to making that system work."{8}

Corrupt CEOs wielded power similar to economic "weapons of mass destruction," said University of Minnesota accounting professor Brian Shapiro.{9} Consumer advocate Ralph Nader called it "greed on steroids."{10}

Moses, the great liberator of ancient Israel, once received some counsel on leadership from his father-in-law, who advised him to pick able leaders who "fear God" and "hate dishonest gain."{11} Not bad advice. As national scandals have shown, to do otherwise can be disastrous.

Cheating's Costs

Epidemic cheating has serious costs. Whom can you trust?

TIME magazine compared what executives of seven troubled companies received (in stock sales and severance) with what their shareholders got.{12} Adelphia's John Rigas gained $4.2 million in severance. When Adelphia filed for bankruptcy, its stock was worth 14 cents, a decline of over 99 percent in about a year. Enron's Jeffrey Skilling made $78 million in stock sales over a two-year period. Shareholders got a bankrupt company.

Have your medical insurance premiums been rising? Some of the

increase may be offsetting corruption losses. Big names in healthcare like Columbia/HCA, National Health Laboratories, and GlaxoSmithKline have paid millions in fines to settle billing or fraud charges or investigations. While corporate accounting scandals may seem complex, much of the healthcare crisis involves outright theft such as overcharging for hospital care. This profitable game has even drawn drug criminals and the Russian mafia. Some have called the healthcare industry terminally ill.{13}

The African Union claims "corruption costs Africa almost $150 billion a year." That's about one quarter of the continent's gross domestic product.{14} One Nigerian doctor told me bribery had become so commonplace in his country that corporations were including bribery allowances in staff budgets. They called it "public relations." Problems arose when employees began pocketing the "public relations" money instead of using it for bribes.

Identity thieves use computers to snoop. The biggest identity theft in U.S. history garnered information on 30,000 people. Thieves used pilfered data to siphon bank accounts and tap credit card accounts. The prosecutor described the situation as "every American's worst financial nightmare multiplied tens of thousands of times."{15}

Cheating that may begin in school can have disastrous results in society. Duke's president Keohane aptly summarizes: " (A)n education that involves cheating instead of learning . . . is no education at all. . . . (I)n the real world, when you set out to build a bridge or craft a legal document or begin brain surgery, just knowing what the result is supposed to be is of mighty little use in making it happen; pity the poor patients and clients!"{16}

Why do people cheat, and what is the solution?

The Psychology of Cheating

Why do people cheat? Some seek the thrill of beating the system. Others want to make ends meet, protest high prices or achieve difficult—perhaps unattainable—standards.

Actress Winona Ryder's shoplifting conviction prompted questions about why a wealthy person would steal items they could easily afford. Often anxiety or depression accompanies kleptomania. The rush of theft may assuage deep emotional pain. Young shoplifters have stolen on dares from their peers.{17}

Desires for approval, advancement, avoiding embarrassment—all influence self-esteem. People sometimes take foolish risks to feel good about themselves.

Self-centeredness and lax standards seem obvious roots of dishonesty. The Securities and Exchange Commission began requiring CEO's of major companies to personally affirm "in writing, under oath and for publication " that their corporate reports are "complete and accurate."{18}

Restructuring business relationships to avoid conflicts of interest could reduce temptation. Stiff penalties—suspension, expulsion, prosecution—may help slow moral hemorrhaging. Strong role models, peer support, and ethical codes are significant.

Ultimately, honesty is an individual matter. Alan Greenspan told Congress of "an infectious greed" that influenced corporate scandals. "Greed is not an issue of business," he emphasized, "it's an issue of human beings."{19}

My sophomore year in college, I swiped a plastic bucket from behind the lectern in the psychology lecture hall. It had been there every day during the semester. "No one wants it," I convinced myself. "It deserves to be taken." I used it to wash my car.

Two years later, I encountered a statement by an early follower of Jesus: “If we confess our sins to him, he (God) is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.”{20} I not only needed to admit my theft to God. I needed to make restitution.

My booty long since lost, I purchased a new bucket and carried it sheepishly across campus one afternoon. Finding no one in the psychology building to confess to, I left the bucket in a broom closet with a note of explanation. Maybe a janitor read it. My conscience was clear.

Solid spiritual commitment can help develop inner strength to resist temptation and act honorably. It can provide reasonable standards for civil society. And it can bring forgiveness and power to rebound from personal failure.

This article is adapted with permission from Rusty Wright, “Our Cheatin’ Hearts,” *The Plain Truth*, September/October 2003, pp. 6-10.

Notes

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"How Can I Prepare for College?"

Dear Mr. Bohlin,

I will be attending Cornell University in the fall of 2000. My declared major is pre-med, biochemical engineering. I will also attending the Mind Games conference in July. Can you suggest any Christian reading materials for me so that I can be prepared for the conference in July, but most importantly, so I can be prepared for Cornell in August as a Christian.

Good to hear we will see you in July! I am looking forward to meeting you and spending the week together.

I would recommend Jim Sire's book, *The Universe Next Door*, as a good place to start. Worldview is an essential concept to the conference and Sire maps out the different worldviews in a concise manner. Considering your future major, I would recommend *Darwin's Black Box* by Michael Behe and *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* by Phillip Johnson for starters. If Sire proves interesting reading to you and you are wondering where some of these strange ideas came from, you might look for a copy of Francis Schaeffer's *How Should We Then Live?* which briefly (258 pages) traces the historical development of philosophy, theology, art and science in the west. Though the book is over twenty years old, Schaeffer turned out to be an accurate prophet of where things were headed. So, read Sire first and take on the others as time, money and interest dictate.

See you in July.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.
Probe Ministries

Campus Christianity

Spiritual Wastelands 101

In the fall of my junior year in college, I had been a Christian for only a year. Since I had been involved in a Christian group on campus, however, I felt I had learned a great deal about my faith. As a science major I had completed most of my requirements for my degree, and I was looking forward to taking electives in my major of animal ecology. However, I still had a couple of hours in humanities to fulfill, not my most favorite subject. While I was looking for a humanities elective, I came across an English course entitled "Spiritual Wastelands." I remember thinking to myself, "That looks interesting. I wonder what spiritual wastelands this course is about?" With my newfound interest in spiritual things, I decided to enroll.

On the first day of class, I was horrified the minute the instructor walked into the room. He wore an old Army fatigue jacket, a blue work shirt open to the middle of his hairy chest, ratty blue jeans, sandals, long tangled hair, and a beard. He punctuated his appearance with a leather necklace containing what looked like sharks' teeth. To make it worse, he proceeded to go around the room and ask every student why he or she took this course. I don't really reember what the

other students said but when he got around to me, I sheepishly replied that I was a Christian and that I was interested in knowing what kind of spiritual wastelands he was going to talk about. Immediately, with a look of malevolent glee, he exploded: "You're a *Christian*? I want to *hear* from *you*!"

Needless to say, if there had been a place to hide, I would have found it. As you may guess, the only spiritual wasteland he wanted to talk about was Christianity. I was like a babe who had been thrown to the wolves. Our class discussions, more often than not, were two-sided: the instructor versus me. Hardly anyone else ever spoke up. To say that I found myself floundering like a fish out of water would be an understatement. Occasionally my questions and comments would hit the mark. But I am convinced, as I look back, that even that degree of success was purely the grace of God.

Since that time, I have spent twelve more years in the university environment as both an undergraduate and graduate student. I have learned a great deal about how a Christian student should relate to the academic community, and I would like to share with you four principles for effective Christian witnessing in that setting. I think you will also find that these principles will prove to be an effective guide in any sphere of life.

> ***Approach your studies from a Christian worldview.*** *We need to think Christianly. The only way to accomplish this is to be continually involved in the process of knowing God.*
>
> ***Realize that the job of the student is to learn****—not to preach. A teachable spirit is highly valued. This may seem obvious to you, but believe me, it isn't obvious to everyone.*
>
> ***Pursue excellence.*** *Every exam, every paper, every assignment must be pursued to the best of our ability, as unto the Lord.*
>
> ***Be faithful to the task****—leave the results (grades) to God. Do not get hung up on the world's definition of success.*

Think Christianly

All of our thoughts are to be Christ-centered, including those expressed in a university classroom. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 10:5 that “we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” All knowledge is to be encompassed by a Christian worldview. In other words, we should try to see all knowledge through the eyes of Jesus. This all sounds well and good, but how do we do that?

The only way to think and see as Jesus does is to know Him. This brings us to the basics of the Christian life. There are numerous demands on the time of a student. There are always experiments to do, books to read, papers to write, exams to study for, assignments to turn in, classes to attend. This is doubly true for graduate students, who spend their entire time seemingly three steps behind where they are supposed to be. Let’s not forget the demands of a girlfriend or boyfriend, family, exercise, and just plain having fun. How is one supposed to find time for regular personal devotions, worship on Sunday mornings, fellowship with other believers, and the study of God’s Word? These activities can all take a serious bite out of the time the university demands from a student. But this is the only way to draw closer to God and to understand His ways.

By being faithful in spiritual things, we trust God to honor the time spent and to bring about His desired results in our academic pursuits despite our having less free time than most non- Christians. Christian campus groups can be of tremendous help in these matters through training, Bible studies, and fellowship with believers who are going through the same struggles you are.

For those times when trouble does arise in the classroom, and you feel that your faith is being challenged and you are confused, an enormous amount of assistance is available to you. The manager of your local Christian bookstore can be a

great help in finding books that deal with your problem. Organizations such as Probe Ministries can also help steer you in the right direction with short essays, position papers, and bibliographies. Dedicated and highly educated Christians have addressed just about every intellectual attack on Christianity. There is no reason to feel like you have to do it on your own. That was my mistake in the "Spiritual Wastelands" course. It never even occurred to me to seek help. I could have represented my Lord in a much more credible way if I had only asked.

There are no shortcuts to living the Christian life. We cannot expect to emerge from the university with a truly Christian view of the world if we put our walk with the Lord on hold while we fill our heads with the knowledge of the world. Remember! We are to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. In order to do that, we must know Him; in order to know Him, we must spend time with Him. There were many times in my college career when higher priorities prevented me from spending the amount of time I felt necessary to prepare for an exam, paper, or presentation, but I always found God to be faithful.

During my doctoral studies, we moved into a new house and the boys were ages 4 and 2. The room they were going to share desperately needed repainting and we were having new bunk beds delivered on Monday, the same day of an important cell biology exam. The professor writing this exam was the one in whose lab I had hopes of working for my doctoral project. So I needed to do well.

The room was small and the beds were large, so they needed to be constructed inside the room. This meant the room had to be painted before the beds arrived. If I paint, I lose critical study time for an important exam. If I study, the room goes unpainted and I have an unhappy wife and a difficult task getting to it later. I chose to paint the room. I had a total of three hours of study time for the exam! I entered the exam

free of tension knowing I did my best and it was in God's hands. I had no idea how I did on the exam, but when the grades came out, I received the second highest grade in the class and the best exam score in my tenure as a graduate student! The professor was impressed enough to allow me to begin working in her lab.

Cultivate a Teachable Spirit

I have run across numerous professors whose only encounters with Christians were students who simply told them that they were wrong and the Bible was right. Most professors do not have much patience with this kind of approach. It is a great way to gain enemies and demonstrate how much you think you know, but it does not win anybody to Christ.

Some Christian students have the impression that when they hear error being presented in university classroom, it is their duty to call out the heavy artillery and blast away. This is not necessarily so. As a student, your job is to learn, not to teach. In my education, I reasoned that in order to be a *critic* of evolution, I needed to first be a *student* of evolution and demonstrate that I knew what I was talking about. Once professors realized I was serious about wanting to understand evolution, when I began to ask questions, they listened. In the end my professors and I often had to agree to disagree, but we all learned something in the process, and I built relationships that could grow and develop in the future.

The most effective tactic in the classroom is the art of asking questions. This approach accomplishes three things. First, you demonstrate that you are paying attention, which is somewhat of a rarity today. Second, you demonstrate that you are truly interested in what the instructor is talking about. All good teachers love students with teachable spirits, but not students who are so gullible as to believe unquestioningly everything they say. Third, as you become adept at asking just the right question that exposes the error of what is being

taught, you allow the professor and other students to see for themselves the lack of wisdom or truth in the idea being discussed. Truth is truth, whether expressed by a believer or a pagan. However, non-Christians will believe other non-Christians much more readily than they will a fanatical Christian waving a Bible in his hand.

As a graduate student, I was in a class with faculty and other graduate students discussing a new discipline called sociobiology, the study of the biological basis for all social behaviors. One day we were discussing the purpose and meaning of life. In an evolutionary worldview, this can only mean survival and reproduction. Disturbed at how everyone was accepting this, I said, "We have just said that the only purpose in life is to survive and reproduce. If that is true, let me pose this hypothetical situation to you. Let's suppose I am dead and in the ground and the decomposers are doing their thing. Since you say there is no afterlife, this is it. It's over! What difference does it make to me now, whether I have reproduced or not?" After a long silence, a professor spoke up and said, "Well, I guess that ultimately, it doesn't matter at all." "But wait," I responded. "If the only purpose in life is to survive and reproduce, and ultimately—now you tell me—that doesn't matter either, then what's the point? Why go on living? Why stop at red lights? Who cares?!" After another long silence, the same professor spoke up and said, "*Well, I suppose that in the future, those that will be selected for will be those who know there is no purpose in life, but will live as if there is.*" What an amazing and depressing admission of the need to live a lie! That's exactly the point I wanted to make, but it sank in deeper when, through my **questions**, the ***professor*** said it and not me. When Jesus was found by His parents in the temple with the priests, He was listening and asking them questions—probably not for His benefit, but for theirs (Luke 2:46).

We are all familiar with 1 Peter 3:15, which says, "Sanctify

Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." This verse is a double-edged sword that most of us sharpen only on one side or the other. Many are prepared to make a defense, but they leave destruction in their wakes, never exhibiting gentleness or reverence. Others are the most gentle and reverent people you know, but are intimidated by tough questions and leave the impression that Christianity is for the weak and feeble-minded. The latter need to go back and read a few important passages:

> *2 Corinthians 10:3-5*
>
> *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*
>
> *Colossians 2:8*
>
> *See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*
>
> *Acts 17*
>
> *(The story of what happened when Paul boldly proclaimed the gospel in Thessalonica, Berea, and the Areopagus in Athens.)*
>
> *Paul was a firm believer in the intellectual integrity of the gospel. The "staunch defender" needs to remember that Jesus told His disciples that the world would know that we are Christians by the love we have for one another (John 13:34-35) and that we are to love our enemies (Matt. 5:43-47). Paul exhorted the Romans not to repay evil with*

evil, but to repay evil with good and to leave vengeance to the Lord (Rom. 12:17-21). Finally, the writer of Proverbs tells us that a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up wrath (Prov. 15:1), and that the foolish man rages and laughs and always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back (Prov. 29:9,11).

Pursue Excellence

Nothing attracts the attention of those in the academic community as much as a job well done. There is no argument against excellence. In Colossians 3:17 Paul tells us, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." If we are to do everything in Jesus' name, He deserves nothing less than the best that we can do. How many of our papers and exams would we be comfortable stamping with the words, "Performed by a disciple of Jesus Christ"? I think I would want to ask if I could have a little more time before I actually handed it in! Yet Paul admonishes us to hold to that standard in all that we do. This does not mean that every grade must be an A. Sometimes your best is a B or a C or even just getting the assignment done on time. The important thing is to try. It's important to be able to tell yourself that, with the time, resources, and energy you had available to you, you did your best. The road to excellence is tough, exhausting, and even frightening. It is hard going. But our Lord deserves nothing less.

Ted Engstrom, in his book *The Pursuit of Excellence,* tells the story of a pastor who spent his spare time and weekends for months repairing and rebuilding a dilapidated small farm in a rural community. When he was nearly finished, a neighbor happened by who remarked, "Well, preacher, it looks like you and God really did some work here!" The pastor replied, "It's interesting you should say that, Mr. Brown. But I've got to tell you—you should have seen this place when God had it all

to Himself!”

It is certainly true that God is the source of all our strength, and all glory and honor for what we may accomplish is His. But, it is no less true that God has always chosen people to be His instruments—frail, mistake-prone, imperfect people. His servants have not exactly enjoyed a life of ease while in His service. Striving for excellence is a basic form of Christian witness. We pay attention to people who always strive to do their best. In the classroom, people may not always agree with what you say, but if they know you as a person who works diligently and knows what you are talking about, they will give your words great respect. And, if there is enough of the Savior shining through you, your listeners will come back and want to know more.

I am reminded of the impact of four Hebrew youths in the Babylonian culture during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (whom you may recognize by their Babylonian names: Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego). They entered the prestigious secular institution, “Babylon University,” and were immersed into an inherently hostile atmosphere. But Scripture says that

> *And as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams . . . And as for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm (Daniel 1:17, 20).*

You can be sure they were instructed in Babylonian literature and wisdom, not Hebrew, yet they excelled. If our God is indeed the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, then He can not only protect us as we enter the university, but He can also prosper us. Imagine the testimony for Jesus Christ if the best

philosophers, the best doctors, the best poets and novelists, the best musicians, the best astrophysicists, and on and on, were all Christians. That would be a powerful witness!

As you pursue excellence, do not be deterred by mistakes. They are going to come, guaranteed. The pursuit of excellence is an attitude in the face of failure. Thomas Edison, the creator of many inventions including the light bulb and the phonograph, was never discouraged by failed experiments. He simply reasoned that he now knew of one more way that his experiment was not going to work. Mistakes were his education. The wise man admits and learns from his mistakes, but the fool ignores them or covers them up. We all admire someone who freely admits a mistake and then works hard not to repeat it.

Strive for Faithfulness, Not Success

As students in the university learn to approach their studies from a Christian worldview, as they grow to appreciate their place as people who are there to learn and not necessarily to confront, and as they begin to pursue excellence in everything they do, it is tempting for them to believe that God will bless whatever they set out to accomplish. Their primary focus becomes whether or not all of their efforts are successful. It can become depressing if they do not see the kind of results they expected God to bring about.

Soon after Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize for her work among the poor in Calcutta, she was asked by a reporter in New York City how she could dedicate herself so completely to her work when there was no real hope of success. It was obvious she was not going to eliminate hunger, poverty, disease, and all the other ills of that densely populated city in India. In other words, he asked, if you can’t really make a dent in the conditions these people live in, why bother? Her reply was simple, yet profound; she said, “God has not called us to success, but to faithfulness.” How many times have we heard in witnessing seminars that our job is to share the

gospel and leave the results to God? What I hear Mother Teresa saying is that our responsibility is the same in everything we do.

Oswald Chambers, in his timeless devotional book *My Utmost for His Highest,* caused me to recall Mother Teresa and reflect on my own expectations. He said,

> *Notice God's unutterable waste of saints, according to the judgment of the world. God plants His saints in the most useless places. We say—God intends me to be here because I am so useful. Jesus never estimated His life along the line of the greatest use. God puts His saints where they will glorify Him, and we are no judges at all of where that is. (August 10)*

The main point here is that we should be faithful to the task God has given to us rather than worry about whether or not we are achieving the results we think God should be interested in. When we begin thinking that "God is wasting my time and His," we have probably stepped over the line. I spent five and a half years in the laboratory on doctoral experiments in molecular biology, experiments that never accomplished what I had planned. The most frustrating aspect was that these experiments did not result in work that was publishable in the scientific literature, which is the ultimate goal of any scientist. I had a great deal of confidence when I started this difficult research problem that the Lord and I would work it out. Well, we didn't. I never dreamed how much Mother Teresa's words concerning the value of faithfulness over success would be lived out in my own life. It has been a hard, hard lesson. And I don't believe I have a complete answer as to why God chose to deal with me in this way. Scientific publications seemed not just desirable but necessary in my future career; yet God is sovereign and He apparently has other plans. During those years, I learned a great deal about living the Christian life in the midst of difficult

circumstances. I can only pray that I will not forget what was so painful to learn.

Conclusion

In summary, orient your studies according to a Christian world view. Your main job as a student is to learn and to develop the skill of asking questions, and to keep the boxing gloves at home. Pursue excellence and remain faithful to the task to which God has called you, and leave the results to Him.

Suggested Reading

Oswald Chambers. *My Utmost for His Highest.* Westwood, NJ: Barbour and Company, 1963.

Ted Engstrom. *The Pursuit of Excellence.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1982.

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Preparing Students for College

In Colossians 2:8 Paul states that a Christian should

> *See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*

This verse has particular application for the young person who is about to engage in the intellectual and social combat that can be found on many of our campuses. Our colleges and universities are often “hotbeds” for non-Christian thought and life. The following examples bring this to our attention.

A sociology professor asked her students, “How many of you believe that abortion is wrong? Stand up.” Five students stood. She told them to continue standing. She then asked, “Of you five, how many believe that it is wrong to distribute condoms in middle schools?” One was left standing. The professor left this godly young lady standing in silence for a long time and then told her she wanted to talk with her after class. During that meeting the student was told that if she persisted in such beliefs she would have a great deal of difficulty receiving her certification as a social worker.

During the first meeting of an architecture class the students were told to lie on the floor. The professor then turned off the lights and taught them how to meditate.

At a church-related university a Christian student was surprised to learn that one requirement in an art class was to practice yoga.

At another church-related university a professor stated that “communism is infinitely superior to any other political-economic system.”

In an open declaration on the campus at Harvard, the university chaplain announced that he is homosexual.

As part of the resident assistant training at Cornell University, students “were forced to watch pornographic movies of hard core gay and lesbian sex.”(1)

At St. Cloud State University in Minnesota, students who believe that homosexuality is an unhealthy behavior are actually discouraged from applying to the social work

program.”(2)

In a nationwide survey of adults, 72% of the people between the ages of 18 and 25 rejected the notion of absolute truth.(3)

George Keller, chair of the graduate program at the University of Pennsylvania, has described many college professors in the following manner.

Most scholars have lost interest in the fundamental questions about character, people’s deepest beliefs, moral sense and values. They have become procedural and instrumental and many believe that they are value-free. They carry around all sorts of “faiths”—in the basic goodness of human nature, in humankind’s ability to master all of Nature’s processes and secrets, that more knowledge will result in a more harmonious society, that people can be made better by restructuring institutions or by smaller or larger government—without acknowledging the existence of these deep faiths.(4)

These are but a few of the many illustrations and statistics that could be cited as indications of contemporary college life. Are your students ready for such things? The following suggestions may be applied to help them in their preparation.

Develop a Christian Worldview

The first suggestion is to help them develop a Christian world view. A worldview is a system of beliefs about the world and ourselves that influences the way we live. What system of beliefs do your students embrace, and does that system influence their total life? For example, if young people claim to be a Christian, that assertion implies that they believe certain things and those things should influence all aspects of their lives, including their intellects.

College campuses are “hotbeds” for a multitude of worldviews. This does not necessarily mean there is an “openness” to the

variety of ideas. Academic and religious prejudice are very much alive. But it does mean that students should be prepared for the reality of this diversity. For example, they need to realize that the majority of their professors will be naturalists who leave God out of everything and have contempt toward those who think otherwise. So how can students begin to think with a Christian worldview? James Sire has suggested a series of questions that can help determine what your students' worldviews may be.(5) These questions are unusual and challenging, but my experience has shown me that once students begin to concentrate, the majority of them respond.

1. Why is there something rather than nothing?

> *Some say that something came from nothing. Others believe in an impersonal beginning. Or some assert that matter is eternal. Christians believe in a beginning caused by a personal God.*

2. How do you explain human nature?

> *One answer is that we are born neither good nor evil. Another answer is that we are born good, but society causes us to behave otherwise. Or others contend that we are evolved social animals who have instinctive traits that cause internal conflict. The Christian faith affirms that we are created in the image of God—but have a fallen nature.*

3. What happens to us at death?

> *Some believe that death brings individual extinction. Others presume that we are reincarnated. Christianity affirms that believers will spend eternity in heaven with God.*

4. How does one determine right and wrong?

> *Among the views held by non-Christians are these: ethics are*

cultural or situational; there is no free choice; "oughts" are derived from an "is"; or might makes right. The Christian position is that standards of conduct are revealed by God.

5. How do you know that you know?

Many trust in the mind as the center of knowledge. Others trust in the senses; we know only what is perceived. The Christian understands there are some things we know only because we are told. God has revealed Himself.

6. What is the meaning of history?

Some say there is no meaning. Some believe history is progressing to a heaven on earth. The Christian sees that we are being prepared for life with a loving and holy God.

If you can encourage your students to consider such questions, they will be much more secure in the college environment.

The Mind is Important

The second suggestion is to lead young people to understand that the mind is important in a Christian's life. The Bible puts significant stress on the mind. For example, Jesus responded to a scribe by stating the most important commandment:

The foremost is, "Hear O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." (Mark 12:29-30)

John Stott has written that "God certainly abases the pride of men, but he does not despise the mind which he himself has made."(6) Your college-bound students should be encouraged to see their minds as vital aspects of their devotion to God.

Make Christian Beliefs Their Own

Third, help your student make Christian beliefs their own. Too often Christian young people spend their pre-college years repeating phrases and doctrines without intellectual conviction. They need to go beyond cliches. It will be much better for them to do this with you rather than a professor or another student who may be antagonistic toward Christianity.

Paul realized that his young friend Timothy had become convinced of the truth of Christianity. Paul wrote to Timothy, saying "continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them" (2 Tim. 3:14). Paul praised the early Christians of Berea for the way they examined the truth. He wrote, "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

If a student has ownership of his beliefs he is going to be much better prepared for the questions and doubts that can arise while interacting with contrary ideas.

From the "What" to the "Why"

Fourth, encourage students to go beyond the "What?" to the "Why?" of their beliefs. As young people enter the last few years of secondary education, they begin to think more abstractly and begin to ask "Why?" more frequently. Paul Little speaks to this.

> *"Doubt is a word that strikes terror to the soul and often it is suppressed in a way that is very unhealthy. This is a particularly acute problem for those who have been reared in Christian homes and in the Christian Church."(7)*

The apostle Peter affirms the need to find answers to tough questions in 1 Peter 3:15. He writes, "Sanctify Christ as Lord

in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” If students are going to live and think as Christians on campus, they will be asked to defend their faith. Such an occasion will not be nearly as threatening if they have been allowed to ask their own questions and receive answers within the home and church.

Breaking the Sacred-Secular Barrier

The fifth suggestion is to help students begin to break down the sacred/secular barrier.

“All truth is God’s truth” is a maxim that should be understood by all Christians. To deny this is to deny a unified worldview and tacitly to deny the truth.(8) Arthur Holmes has addressed this with insightful comments:

“If the sacred-secular distinction fades and we grant that all truth is ultimately God’s truth, then intellectual work can be God’s work as much as preaching the gospel, feeding the hungry, or healing the sick. It too is a sacred task.”(9)

The first chapter of Daniel offers wonderful insights into this issue. Daniel and his friends were taught all that the University of Babylon could offer them, but they “graduated” with their faith strengthened. They entered an ungodly arena with the understanding that the truth would prevail.

Expose Them to Christian Scholarship

The sixth suggestion is to familiarize your student with Christian scholarship. “Christian students have available many books on Christianity and scholarship; they need to read these if they are seeking a Christian perspective in their studies.”(10) When I began my college career in the early 60s I had no idea there were Christian scholars who had addressed every academic discipline I might study. It wasn’t until many

years later that this ignorance was alleviated. Christian students need to know there is help. A Christian scholar has written something that will help them sort out the many issues that come their way.

Admittedly, this is probably the most difficult of the suggestions we have offered to this point. You may not know where to turn for resources. Begin with your pastor. If you don't get the response you need, call a nearby seminary or Christian college that you trust. Or call Probe Ministries and purchase one of our college prep notebooks. These notebooks contains numerous bibliographies.

Ask First, "Is it True?"

The last suggestion is to teach them to ask first, "Is it true?" not "Does it work?" Of course the truth about any subject should be applied. But the student should first be as sure as possible that it is the truth that is being applied.

There are things that are absolutely true, and the student needs to understand that, especially in a collegiate atmosphere that tends to deny truth. Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:3132). He also said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6). The Christian student who is dedicated to Christ has insights to the truth that many of his professors, tragically, may never possess.

How Do We Teach These Things?

In reading the preceding suggestions you may have begun to wonder how you could relate such ideas. The subsequent recommendations may be of help.

First, do role playing with your students occasionally. This

can be done either with an individual or a group of youth.

For example, if you are working with a group, find someone from outside your church or school that the students do not know. This person should have a working knowledge of the ways in which non- Christians think. Introduce him to the group as a sociology professor from a nearby college or university. Tell the students you recently met the professor in a restaurant, at a lecture he was delivering, or devise some other scenario. Also mention that the professor is doing research concerning the beliefs of American teenagers and he would like to ask them some questions. Then the "professor" is to begin to ask them a series of blunt questions regarding their beliefs. The six worldview questions we discussed earlier in this pamphlet are apropos. The idea of all this is to challenge every cliche the students may use in their responses. Nothing is to be accepted without definition or elaboration. Within ten minutes of the closing time for the meeting the pseudo- professor should tell them his true identity and assure them that he is also a believer. After the students gasp, tell them you are planning a teaching series on apologetics so that they can be better prepared for the issues that were raised during the role play.

Second, write to the colleges and universities that are of interest to your students. Ask to receive a catalog that includes course descriptions. Look through these descriptions and discuss the worldviews that are espoused. For example, the majority of course descriptions within the sciences are going to emphasize evolution. Read what is stated and talk about the assumptions that are inherent in the synopses, as well as the things that are left out that a Christian may want to consider.

Third, show your students, by example, how to ask good questions. For instance, if naturalist professors begin to decry the moral condition of society, they are borrowing such a position from a worldview other than their own. Thus it may

be legitimate to ask what brings them to the conclusion that rights and wrongs exist and how do they determine the difference? More role playing in this regard can be effective.

Fourth, send your student to a Probe Mind Games College Prep Conference. Or, better yet, organize one in your own community. We at Probe have begun to travel around the country to help older youth, their parents, and college students prepare for contemporary college life. If you are interested in this possibility, simply call us at 1-800-899-7762. God has been blessing this wing of our ministry, and we would be honored to share it with you and help in any way we can.

But whether it is through Probe, or through your energies, let's do what we can to help our students prepare for the intellectual challenges of college life.

Notes

1. J. Stanley Oakes, "Tear Down the System," *The Real Issue*, November/December 1993), 11.
2. Ibid.
3. George Barna, *What Americans Believe* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1991), 83.
4. George Keller, quoted in "Examining the Christian University," D. Ray Hostetter, *Messiah College President's Report* (September 1993), 3-4.
5. James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove, Ill.:InterVarsity, 1988), 18.
6. John R. W. Stott, *Your Mind Matters* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1972), 10.
7. Paul E. Little, *Know Why You Believe* (Downers Grove, Ill.:InterVarsity, 1968), 5.
8. Arthur Holmes, *All Truth Is God's Truth* (Downers Grove, Ill.:InterVarsity, 1977), 16.
9. Ibid., 27.
10. Brian J. Walsh, and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision* (Downers Grove, Ill.:InterVarsity, 1984), 185.

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