“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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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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http://abcnews.go.com/sections/business/DailyNews/plagiarismbusiness020507.html; Robert J. Bliwise, "A Matter of Integrity," *DUKE Magazine,* May-June 2001, p. 3.
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9. Nancy Gibbs, "Summer of Mistrust," TIME.com, July 22, 2002, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/printout/0,8816,320782,00.html.
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11. Exodus 18:21.
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13. Healthcare information taken from Carl Quintanilla, "Health-care industry rife with fraud," MSNBC.com, November 12, 2002, http://www.msnbc.com/news/833915.asp#BODY. The Web site dateline did not list a year for this article, but I accessed it in November 2002 and am assuming that 2002 is the correct year of publication.
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15. Larry Neumeister, "U.S. Charges 3 in Historic ID Theft Case," The Associated Press, *AOL News,* November 25, 2002.
16. Keohane, loc. cit.
17. Nadya Labi, "Why Did She Do It?" TIME.com, November 12, 2002, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/printout/0,8816,388993,00.html
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20. 1 John 1:9 NLT.

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Sheep Among Wolves

What's the Problem?

In Colossians 2:8, Paul states that a Christian should . . .

> See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Paul's words have particular application for the Christian student who is about to engage in the intellectual and social combat that can be found on many of our college campuses. Our higher educational institutions are often incubators for non-Christian thought and life. Christian students must be advised to be prepared. Too many of them are "taken captive." Consider these few examples:

> • A sociology professor asked her students, "How many of you believe abortion is wrong? Stand up." Five students stood. She told them to continue standing. She then asked, "Of you five, how many believe 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 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 at a large state university the students were told to lie on the floor. The professor then turned off the lights and taught them to meditate. (Be assured they were not meditating on Scripture.)

• At a church-related university a professor stated, "Communism is definitely superior to any other political-economic system."

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

• When asked how he responds to students who confess strong Christian convictions, a professor stated, "If they don't know what and why they believe, I will change them."

• In a university dormitory crowded with over 100 students I declared that Jesus is the only way to God. Many of the students expressed their strong disagreement and anger. One student was indignant because he realized my statement concerning Christ logically meant that his belief in a Native American deity was wrong. Even some Christian students were uncomfortable. They had uneasiness about it because it seemed too intolerant.

These are but a few of many illustrations and statistics that could be cited as indication of contemporary college life. The ideas that are espoused on many of our campuses can understandably bewilder the Christian student. What can be done to help them in their preparation? In this article I will offer some suggestions that can serve to give them guidance.

Develop a Christian Worldview

A critical component in the arsenal of any Christian heading

off to college is to develop a Christian worldview. Everyone has a world view whether they have thought about it or not. To understand how important a worldview is consider a jigsaw puzzle with thousands of pieces. In order to put the puzzle together you need to see the picture on the box top. You need to know what the puzzle will look like when you finish it. If you only had the pieces and no box top, you would probably experience a great deal of frustration. You may not even want to begin the task, much less finish it. The box top gives you a guide and helps you put together the "pieces" of life.

The box top in a Christian worldview is provided by the revealed truth of the Bible. The Bible contains the correct picture to help us assemble the individual pieces we encounter in life. Other world views will always get some portion of the picture right, but a few important pieces will always seem out of place. It's important for a young Christian college student to have some idea of which pieces are out of place in other worldviews as well as a foundational understanding of a Christian worldview.

Essentially a worldview is a set of assumptions or presuppositions we hold about the basic make-up of our universe that influences everything we do and say. For instance, within a Christian world view we wake up in the morning assuming that God exists and that He cares about what happens to you.

There are four essential truths that help us evaluate different worldviews.

The first truth is that *something exists*. This may seem obvious, but many people aren't sure. Many forms of pantheism argue that the material world is just an illusion. The only reality is spiritual. If this were actually the case, then physical consequences wouldn't matter. However, I have yet to find a pantheist who is willing to perform their meditation on a railroad track without knowing the train schedule.

The second truth is that *all people have absolutes*. There are always some things that people recognize as true, all the time. For Christians, God is the ultimate reference point to determine truth. Even the statement, "There are no absolutes!" is to declare absolutely that there are no absolutes.

Third, *truth is something that can't be both true and false at the same time*. This is critical in our current time. A contemporary idea is that all religions are the same. This sounds gracious, but it's nonsense. While various religions can often have some elements in common, if they differ in the crucial areas of creation, sin, salvation, heaven, and hell, then the similarities are what is trivial, not the differences.

Last, we need to realize that *all people exercise faith*. What matters is the object of our faith. We all use faith to operate through the day. We exercise faith every time we take medication. We assume it will help us and not harm us. Carl Sagan's famous statement that "The cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be" is a statement of naturalistic faith not scientific truth.

Take Ownership of Beliefs

Parents need to help their student headed off to college to take ownership of their faith. Too often Christian young people spend their pre-college years repeating phrases and doctrines without intellectual conviction. They need to go beyond clichés. A few of us at Probe have questioned Christian high school students about their faith by posing as an atheistic college professor. When pressed to explain why they believe as they do, the responses get rather embarrassing. They'll say, "That's what my parents taught me," or "That's what I've always heard," or "I was raised that way," or "That's what my pastor said."

If this is the best a student can do, they are simply grist

for the mill. They are easily ground down to dust. Paul wrote to young Timothy saying, “Continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them” (2 Tim. 3:14). Timothy was taught by his mother, grandmother, and Paul. He not only learned about his faith from them, but he became convinced that it was true.

This means you are to know not just what you believe but also why. Ask yourself or your student why he or she is a Christian? If this question stumps you, you’ve got some thinking and exploring to do. The apostle Peter said to always be prepared to give a defense to anyone who asks for an account of the hope that is in you. (1 Peter 3:15)

Peter wrote that we are always to be ready, and we are to respond to everyone who asks. These are all-encompassing words that indicate the importance of the task of apologetics. If the student is going to live and think as a Christian on campus he will be asked to defend his faith. Such an occasion will not be nearly as threatening if he or she has been allowed to ask their own questions and have received answers from their home or church.

For instance, how would you answer these questions if someone who really wants to know asked them of you? “Is there really a God?” “Why believe in miracles?” “How accurate is the Bible?” “Is Christ the only way to God?” “Is there any truth in other religions?”

Such questions are legitimate and skeptics deserve honest answers to their tough questions. How they receive the answer is between God and them. Our responsibility is to provide the answers as best as we can in a loving manner. To say, “I don’t know, I just believe,” will leave the impression that Christianity is just a crutch and therefore only for the weak and feeble-minded.

The Mind Is Important

A student needs to understand that the mind is important in a Christian's life. In fact, a Christian is required to use his mind if he desires to know more of God and His works among us. The acts of reading and studying Scripture certainly require mental exercise. Even if a person can't read, he still has to use his mind to respond to what is taught from Scripture. For example, Jesus responded to a scribe by stating the most important commandment:

> 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)

The use of our mind refers not only to Scripture. We need to abolish the sacred/secular barrier many of us have erected. Colossians 3:17 says, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to Him through God the Father." Paul pretty much covers it. It's hard to come up with anything additional after using the words "whatever" and "all." This includes our academic studies.

The first chapter of Daniel offers amazing insights into this issue. Daniel and his friends were taught everything that the "University of Babylon" could offer them; they graduated with highest honors and with their faith strengthened. God honored them in the task and even gave them the knowledge they needed to grapple with Babylonian ideas. (Daniel 1:17, 20)

If Daniel's situation is applied to a contemporary Christian student's life, there is an important lesson to be learned. That is, the young Jewish boys learned and understood what they were taught, but that does not mean they believed it. Many students have asked how to respond on papers and exams that include ideas they don't believe. As with Daniel and his peers, they should demonstrate their understanding to the best

of their ability, but they cannot be forced to believe it. Understanding and believing are not necessarily the same thing. But a certain level of understanding is crucial in knowing where these ideas fail to meet reality.

If Christian students have also been allowed to ask questions at home and at church, then they can apply the lessons learned by asking questions of those of differing faiths. This will allow them to expose the inconsistencies of these competing worldviews in a respectful manner.

Many Christian students enter an ungodly educational arena every year. They should be encouraged with the understanding that God's truth will prevail, as it did for Daniel and his friends. For all truth is God's truth.

How Do We Teach these Things?

Coming to the end of our discussion on preparing students to defend their faith in college, you may be asking, "How can I apply some of these suggestions in my life with students?" The following ideas are offered with the belief that you can use your imagination and arrive at even better ones.

First do role-plays with your students occasionally. This can be done either with an individual or a group.

For example, as alluded to previously, find someone from outside your church or school that the students don't know. This person should have a working knowledge of the ways non-Christians think. Introduce him to the group as a college professor researching the religious beliefs of high school students.

The "professor" should begin to ask them a series of blunt questions regarding their beliefs. The idea is to challenge every cliché the students may use in their responses. Nothing is to be accepted without definition or elaboration. After ten minutes or so, reveal who the professor really is and assure

them he is a Christian. Then go over some of the answers and begin to reveal what they could have said.

This would also be good time to implement a second suggestion, and that is to teach a special course on apologetics for upper high school students. You've definitely got their attention now and they will be much more attentive.

Another idea is if you live near a college or university, ask to be put on their mailing list for upcoming lectures from visiting scholars. After attending one of these lectures, discuss it with your student. See if they can identify the speaker's worldview and where what they said conflicts with a Christian worldview. This would also be a good place to model asking good questions if a question and answer period is allowed.

When considering a college or university, the student should not only visit the campus to investigate campus life but also the intellectual atmosphere. Visit with representatives of a local college ministry or a Christian faculty member and inquire of their opinion of the likely intellectual challenges they can expect to find. This would also be a good opportunity to ask about resources available for Christian students who face challenges in the classroom.

Finally, consider sending your student to a Probe *Mind Games* Conference. A schedule of all our upcoming conferences is available on our website at www.probe.org. Just click on the *Mind Games* tile on the home page to open a menu of information on our conferences. Or better yet, organize one of these conferences in your own community. Probe travels around the country in order to help youth, college students, their parents, and the church at large prepare for contemporary life.

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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

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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