

Welcome to College: Great Worldview Gift for Graduates

written by Byron Barlowe

The world is changing so quickly it's hard to keep up. Christians who take the Scriptures seriously as a guide for life and knowing God usually agree that we're sliding down a very slippery slope morally and spiritually. Non-biblical worldviews not only abound but gain star status. Christ-followers can easily feel overwhelmed, wondering how to make a difference. Nowhere is this cultural decay more manifest than on college campuses.

For years, my wife and I have seized the small window of opportunity of choosing a gift for a college-bound graduate. We realize this represents one good chance to help shape a still-moldable life and, by extension, potentially touch the culture for Christ. 'Tis the season of graduation right now and I invite you to consider following suit.

Our habit is to give college-bound graduates J. Budiszewski's excellent *How to Stay Christian in College: An Interactive Guide to Keeping the Faith*. I recently discovered a book by a new graduate that I'm adding to our graduation gift bag. It's a helpful-older-brother styled "guide for the journey" by a young man who has obviously been trained by some of the sharpest minds in contemporary Christian worldview thinking and apologetics.

If Probe ever hired someone to write an organizational brochure, it might be Jonathan Morrow. His book, *Welcome to College: A Christ-Follower's Guide for the Journey*, contains one of the most succinct rationales for what we do—*Christian apologetics*, that is, a defense of the faith—of anything I've read. Morrow's gift for profound insight coupled with brevity is keen. He shows a sweeping knowledge, yet he includes just enough material for busy students. "I have tried to keep the chapters short and sweet since this won't be the only thing

you'll be reading this semester," Morrow writes.

Morrow's experience as a recent college graduate and his unself-conscious approach should resonate with younger readers. I would have wanted to write this book when my street credibility with young readers was potentially higher, but I was nowhere near his level of maturity, awareness or comprehension in my 20s!

Of course, some would say Morrow's work is simply a *Cliff's Notes* version of all he's been taught at Biola University, Talbot School of Theology, and through apparent involvement with Campus Crusade for Christ. There is little or no truly original thinking here, perhaps. So be it.

Sure, this material is generally sprinkled throughout any well-read Christians' bookshelves, expounded profusely by the authors Morrow draws upon. But that's the genius of his book for today's graduate: a young yet well-schooled voice covering the gamut of worldview *and* personal life issues in brief, accessible terms.

The young man or woman being pummeled by secular professors—many of whose worldviews and intentions are in direct opposition to their Christian faith—need help *now*. This book makes that possible.

Welcome to College isn't filled with abstractions about controversial Bible passages or archaeological discoveries, interesting as that might be. Again, one strength of *Welcome to College* is its scope. Mixed in with the basic faith-defending ammunition like the problem of evil and suffering, Christology, ethics and so on, students will find a broad collection of pragmatic topics: health, sex and dating, finances, Internet use, alcohol, even a chapter on dealing with the death of a loved one. This provides unique and much-needed help for navigating the head-spinning new freedoms of college life.

Not content to simply write a how-to-get-by manual, Morrow challenges students

to consider the privilege of a college education and “spend it ‘Christianly’.” He discusses questions like:

- *How can you discover what you are supposed to do with your life?*
- *How do you share your faith in a hostile environment?*
- *How do you manage your time so that you can study and have fun?*
- *Is all truth relative?*
- *Are there good reasons to be a Christian?*
- *How should you think about dating and sex as a Christian?*[\[1\]](#)

Since the book offers in its beginning chapters a treatment of three major worldviews, I could have been reading one of our [Probe Student Mind Games](#) graduates. One of the first sessions in Probe’s basic student curriculum contains a session on *theism*, *naturalism* (with a sub-section on *postmodernism*), and *pantheism*. Morrow uses a nearly identical breakdown of worldviews: *scientific naturalism*, *postmodernism* and *Christian theism*.

As Morrow directly points out, these three systems of thought predominate at the root level for people of all cultures. You base your beliefs on one or more of these, knowingly or not. Great similarity between a new book and a worldview apologetics curriculum like Probe’s may be unsurprising. How many variations on basic themes could there be? Yet it is striking as a compact manifesto for what Morrow, his alma mater, Probe, and a growing host of authors and organizations are seeking to do, which is to *help people think biblically*.

The fundamental importance of another theme appears, as it should, in the book’s opening pages as well. College kids need to enter post-secondary classrooms with eyes wide open, being aware that the world at large (and academia in particular) scoffs at the idea of religion as possessing absolute, universal truth. Nancy Pearcey’s treatment of what she calls the *fact / value split* in contemporary culture has become a go-to concept of culturally aware apologetics.[\[2\]](#) It also informs Morrow’s book. This “two-realm theory of truth” places religious claims

into an upper story of noncognitive, nonrational values. They supposedly offer the individual some personal meaning but hold no truth-telling power over anything or for anyone else. “True for you but not for me” is the slogan. This “upstairs” portion of life is just opinions—private, personal preferences not fit for the public sphere.

In contrast, the supposed lower story is made up of rational, verifiable, scientific claims that are binding on everyone. This is not opinion; it’s truth by gosh. On this view, the only possible source of real knowledge is verifiable science. One professor in New York told his class that anyone who believed in the supernatural was “an idiot.” That’s why such war stories involving unwitting Christian students getting broadsided by scoffing professors abound. Academic authorities simply pronounce knowledge unattainable outside of the scientific method.

But understanding the anatomy of this view and its faulty presuppositions equips believing students to challenge prevailing campus biases. Though Morrow offers only a passing understanding, any student interested in pursuing further help will find direction here.

One example of Morrow’s agility with big, tough ideas is this statement rounding out his brief discussion of one major worldview: “Postmodernism is a fundamental redefinition of truth, language and reality.” Elsewhere he writes:

If the Christian worldview best answers the most profound of human questions (e.g., where we came from, who we are, how we should live, why the world is such a mess, and what our ultimate destiny is, to name a few) then it is true for more than just two hours on a Sunday morning.[\[3\]](#)

That’s just good writing!

Given its forty-two chapters, I only sampled the book. But that’s in keeping with the reality of any busy, overwhelmed new (or not so new) college reader. Its

usefulness lies partially in its accessibility as a reference. If questions arise in class or due to new life experiences, undergrads (others, too) can crack the book and get a quick, cogent, biblical viewpoint on it.

Chapter titles like “Ladies: Pursue the Real Beauty” may pull readers in before felt needs drive them there. Many others like “Discovering the Will of God,” “Ethics in a Brave New World” or “Science Rules!” lend themselves to future thumbing on an as-needed basis. The *Big Ideas* chapter summations will serve as a useful preview, refresher, and set of talking points for young faith-defenders.

One surprising thought I had while reading the chapter entitled “Getting Theological: Knowing and Loving God” was its value as an evangelistic tool. If I met an average inquirer or skeptic who is unaware of the unified biblical *metanarrative* (big story) of Christianity—asking, *What is it you Christians really believe?*—I’d hand them *Welcome to College* bookmarked here. Morrow gives the doctrinal summary of the story, anyway. Here once again, clarity and brevity meets with completeness and orthodoxy.

Kudos to Morrow and his editors, not to mention all the fine teachers whose wisdom permeates the pages: Dallas Willard and William Lane Craig, Craig Hazen and Nancy Pearcey and many others. Simply refer to the endnotes and Further Reading sections at each chapters’ end for a collection of apologetics resources for the ages.

And don’t forget to consider adding this book to your gift list for graduates and students at all levels. You may help a young person to understand Morrow’s charge that:

God has already defined reality; it is our job to respond thoughtfully and engage it appropriately. Don’t buy into the lie that you need to keep your Christian faith to yourself. It is personal, but not private. As a college student you have the opportunity to establish the biblical habit of living an integrated life for God’s glory. In other words, think Christianly! {4}

Notes

1. Jonathan Morrow, *Welcome to College: A Christ-Followers Guide for the Journey* (Kregel, Grand Rapids, MI, 2008), Amazon Kindle version locations 97-103.
2. Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth* (1995 Wheaton, IL: Crossway) p. 20ff.
3. Morrow, Amazon Kindle version locations 197-201.
4. Ibid, 222-226.

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