MEETING JESUS IN THE CLASSROOM:

TRANSFORMATIONAL INTEGRATION

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by

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APPROVAL SHEET

MEETING JESUS IN THE CLASSROOM:

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To all the students I have had the privilege of teaching.

We both learned, me more so. You are cherished.

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PREFACE

An extensive project is rarely accomplished alone, and in my case that has never been more true. I am thankful for the most precious and encouraging family always pushing me to be better and love Jesus more. My own children inspire me through their personal spiritual stories. My sweet husband is steady, supportive, and patient. I am so very thankful for all of them.

God tendered me two Godly men as guides through this process. Dr. Danny Bowen got me started, and Dr. Matt Haste pushed me to the finish line. Thank you both for your support, creativity, and patience.

I am also thankful for the Christian Academy School System that took a chance and allowed an inexperienced (but passionate) forty-year-old to teach Bible to high schoolers. My growth, joy, friendships, and desire for the kingdom will always be centered there. My cup overflows because of you.

These things I am thankful for (and so much more) have been gently woven into my life by Jesus himself, the one from whom all blessings flow. That debt I will never be able to repay, nor will I ever be required to . . . that is His beautiful grace.

Becky Wiley

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2021

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For as long as humans have been communicating, teaching and learning have been an essential part of life. In the ancient and biblical worlds, thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Moses, Jesus, and Paul gathered and taught their followers. In the Middle Ages and periods of Reformation and Enlightenment, it was men like Galileo, Michelangelo, Martin Luther, Isaac Newton, Benjamin Franklin, and Jonathan Edwards that continued the influence of thinkers as teachers. In our own time, the likes of Martin Luther King Jr., Horace Mann, Anne Sullivan, Booker T. Washington, Eleanor Roosevelt, Maria Montessori, and Stephen Hawking come to mind as influential teachers. The lineage of teachers and learners stretches all the way back to the beginning and it will stretch into the future. Today's educators are a part of this lineage. Education, regardless of motive, is the transferring of knowledge, morality, character, behavior, and information from one person to another, or more broadly, from one generation to the next. It is one of the ways people, God's crowning creation, are set apart from the rest of His design (Gen 1:26). We are made *imago Dei*, in the image of God, which allows us to reason, remember, create, experience emotions, communicate, and grasp meaning. Education is the catch-all system through which we experience the great stories of life.

Education Is a Story

Humans are wired for story. It is how we learn, relate, feel; it is what makes us human. God created humans for story, and he demonstrates this by using narrative as a primary means for communicating in His Word, the Bible. Furthermore, Jesus' chief teaching tool was the use of story. Sam Holston says of story,

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We're wired to remember stories better than facts, statements, rhetoric… basically anything. Our brains are hardwired for relational and analogical reasoning. Stories are neuroscientifically proven to be the most effective way to convey information. They are also the best tools for teaching. As a delivery mechanism for complex concepts, ideas or lessons, stories are ideal. Stories make ideas approachable, relatable and most importantly, memorable.[1]

In his book, *The End of Education*, cultural critic Neil Postman describes humans as a god-making species.[2] It is nearly impossible for humans to remain neutral, filling in narrative when explanation is not available. Humans' experiences, communities, relationships, and lives are always identifying with a grand narrative or story. He explains,

With some reservations but mostly with conviction, I use the word narrative as a synonym for *god,* with a small *g*…It is the purpose of such figures and images (gods) to direct one's mind to an idea and, more to my point, to a story – not any kind of story, but one that tells of origins and envisions a future, a story that constructs ideals, prescribes rules of conduct, provides a source of authority, and, above all, gives a sense of continuity and purpose. A god, in the sense I am using the word, is the name of a great narrative, one that has sufficient credibility, complexity, and symbolic power to enable one to organize one's life around it…The point is that, call them what you will, we are unceasing in creating histories and futures for ourselves through the medium of narrative.[3]

For centuries the enduring story in the West was the Judeo-Christian narrative of the Bible. Even as the age of science was birthed, the storytellers of the day did not see the story of the Bible as incompatible with their new story, but rather, a continuation of it. However, within the last century in the West, the Judeo-Christian story has been replaced. Theologian Carl Truman in his book, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, describes this new story as an inflation of "the self" as the primary character, rather than the objective story with God as the main character. He suggests this new story began in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the Genevan philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rosseau who wrote an educational exposition on the place of the individual in society. The ideas

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[1] Sam Holston, "Why I'm Learning Neuroscience Through Stories," *The Startup*, October 7, 2019, https://medium.com/swlh/why-im-learning-neuroscience-through-stories-be8b17a9a773.

[2] Neil Postman, *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 7.

[3] Postman, *The End of Education*, 5-7.

of Voltaire, Thomas Paine, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, and Charles Darwin added to and made possible this new thinking and allowed for the focus to become the subjective inner life of the individual.[4] Conflicting narratives are difficult to live; trying to marry the new story to the old one. It is not working because the two stories are diametrically opposed.

<div align="center">**Education in America**</div>

Creation of Public Schools

This conflict in narratives is visible in the history of the American public school system. The oldest ongoing school in America is the Boston Latin School. Congregationalist minister John Cotton founded the school in 1635. Cotton sought to emulate the Free Grammar School of Boston, England, which focused on humanities.[5] The goal was, "to ensure the Puritan elite of Boston developed strong biblical literacy and were held to the highest of academic standards."[6] The earliest American schools were religious in nature and taught the Judeo-Christian narrative using the Bible for learning.

Education reformer, Horace Mann, became the Secretary of Massachusetts Board of Education in the late 1830s. He proposed a new system of free education called the Common School which would be available for all students and serve as a neutralizing force for social status and religion. In the book, *Mindshift: Catalyzing Change in Christian Education*, authors Rex Miller, Bill Latham, and Brian Cahill explain the goals of the Common School, "The Common School aimed to redeem some of the social ills of the time by ensuring robust civic engagement, allaying class conflict, and accomplishing

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[4] Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 27.

[5] Boston Latin School, "BLS History," accessed December 21, 2020, https://www.bls.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=206116&type=d.

[6] M. Rex Miller, Bill Latham, and Brian Cahill, *Humanizing the Education Machine: How to Create Schools That Turn Disengaged Kids into Inspired Learners* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 28.

a host of other social aims by instilling moral habits based upon a Universalist religion doctrine."[7] The authors go on to state, "Many believe this movement stifled creative thought and individual growth, instead prioritizing uniform outcomes, achieved most efficiently for the taxpayer, a utilitarian legacy that schools—both public and private—have inherited."[8] And thus, the Education Machine was born, shifting the desired outcomes from creativity, individualism, and love of learning to uniformity, outcomes, and social order.

The process of secularizing the schools was slow and incremental. As America stretched westward, the demands of the agricultural calendar, among other things, contributed to parents' desiring the academic subjects be priority at school; religion could be taught at home. This plan worked as long as religion (i.e., Christianity) was valued, taught, and modeled in the home. Over time public schooling told multiple narratives which Postman identifies as, "The American Creed" (the story of democracy), "The Great Melting Pot" (various cultures coming together to form one), "The Protestant Ethic" (stay busy because laziness is a sin).[9] More recently the narratives are "The Politically Correct" (all ideas must be valued as equal), and "Feelings trump Facts" (one's reality is based on their emotions). Researcher, Rex Miller in his book *Humanizing the Education Machine* describes the current educational system,

> We all know that we live in perilous times. But, more than that, we live in the crumbling ruins of obsolete forms. An age is passing away (as ages always do). Don Berwick famously said, 'Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets.' The prevalent model of public education does what it was designed to do. And in a previous era, that served America very well. With the passing of that era, the model has become obsolete.[10]

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[7] Miller, Latham, and Cahill, *Humanizing the Education Machine*, 29.

[8] Miller, Latham, and Cahill, *Humanizing the Education Machine*, 29.

[9] Postman, *The End of Education*, 14.

[10] Miller, Latham, and Cahill, *Humanizing the Education Machine*, 1–2.

For decades this country has known its educational system was failing. Rather than do the hard work that accompanies change, each new era accepted the status quo with minor generational tweaks.[11]

Creation of Christian Schools

Out of this broken system came the Christian School Movement. Several reasons contributed to the desire for religious schooling in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries:

1. Increasing sentiment that democracy (uniformity) was of the highest importance;

2. Mainline congregations devaluing the authority of Scripture;

3. The growing belief schools should not encourage religion;

4. The misinterpretation of the separation of church and state;

5. The prevalence of educational leaders void of religious beliefs and convictions.[12]

Influential secular educator John Dewey is a formative figure on education in the twentieth century. In *A Passion for Learning*, Lockerbie describes Dewey's influence,

> Dewey (also) witnessed and helped energize the transformation of American public life from a God-conscious accountability to its present secular relativism. By his voluminous writing and his prestige of office, Dewey's educational theories swept aside pedagogical and moral tenets he considered outmoded or unscientific, replacing them with new doctrines based on scientific observation and the absence of absolute moral standards.[13]

Dewey rejected belief in a personal God and the need for Jesus' atonement for sin. Influenced by Darwinism, Dewey stressed the pragmatism of human experience and democracy. His educational methods and pedagogy also infiltrated private schools.[14]

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[11] See Miller, Latham, and Cahill, *Humanizing the Education Machine*, 1-12; Postman, *The End of Education*, 19-36.

[12] D. Bruce Lockerbie, *A Passion for Learning: A History of Christian Thought on Education*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Purposeful Design Publications, 2007), 284-85.

[13] Lockerbie, *A Passion for Learning*, 301.

[14] Lockerbie, *A Passion for Learning*, 304.

Christian education in America has a long history. For the purposes of this study, the focus is on the Christian School Movement over the last fifty years. It was during this time a surge in private Christian schooling took place. The motivation for alternative education seems reactionary, meaning Christian schools were viewed as the alternative because of reasons such as:

1. The loss of Truth (existence and pursuing of absolute truth).[15]

2. The decline of moral and academic standards.[16]

3. The rejection of authority.[17] And more recently:

4. The societal, anti-biblical definition of marriage, gender, and sex.[18]

5. The attempt at racial integration of public schools in the 1960s-1980s.[19]

The story being told in public education was simply not acceptable to many families.

Problems within Christian Education:
Are Christian Schools Really Working?

Within the last fifty years there has been much research about Christian education and the Christian school experience. Unfortunately, the evolution of this research and experience has not been linear. Like many disciplines, the current product looks more

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[15] Arthur Frank Holmes, *All Truth Is God's Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 4.

[16] Richard J. Edlin, *The Cause of Christian Education* (Blacktown, New South Wales: National Institute for Christian Education, 1999), 37.

[17] Glen Schultz, *Kingdom Education: God's Plan for Educating Future Generations* (Nashville: LifeWay, 1998), 26.

[18] For further study see R. Albert Mohler, *We Cannot Be Silent: Speaking Truth to a Culture Redefining Sex, Marriage, & the Very Meaning of Right & Wrong* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2015); Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay? And Other Questions about Homosexuality, the Bible and Same-Sex Attraction* (Epsom, Surrey, England: Good Book, 2015); and David Platt, *A Compassionate Call to Counter Culture in a World of Poverty, Same-Sex Marriage, Racism, Sex Slavery, Immigration, Persecution, Abortion, Orphans, Pornography* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2015).

[19] For further study see Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2016); Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020); Jennifer L. Eberhardt, *Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do* (New York: Viking, 2019).

like a large tossed salad made with various ingredients thrown in over time—sometimes the same ingredient with a slight variation, sometimes two of the same ingredients, or sometimes an abundance or absence of a main ingredient. The recipe is not clear or reproducible. Christian education varies from country to country, state to state, school to school, and can even vary within a school. While differences and uniqueness can certainly be good, consistency in criteria and common language within Christian education appears lacking. As a result, the spectrum of Christian schools is far-reaching. What one might expect from a Christian school depends on what kind(s) of Christian school(s) the individual experienced before, and whether or not the particular model was "successful." This section will identify several key problems in Christian schools today.

**Christian Education or
Christians Educating?**

Perhaps the main problem Christian education and schools have might be described as an inconsistent philosophy. John Hull wrote a fascinating article addressing this issue entitled, "Aiming for Christian Education, Settling for Christians Educating: The Christian School's Replication of a Public School Paradigm." He asserts Christian schools *want* to espouse a transforming Christian education, but without a clear break from the public school pedagogy, this cannot and does not happen. The "way of doing school" in America has not significantly changed. Using the same model (public school) and expecting different results (Christian school) seems futile. Along the way attempts have been made to bolster the "Christian" part of Christian schools—such as more biblical integration, teacher training, parent/school contracts, improving chapels, and making Christianity "cool." These attempts are often helpful but can feel like "add-ons" to the "real" part of school, understood to be academics. The cost is high, seemingly too high for the vast majority of Christian schools. The differences would be so radical (i.e. sports, scheduling, financial cost, testing, etc.) that the mainstream Christian public might not be willing to go along. Author John Hull explains,

Inside this status quo frame of reference, the distinguishing character of the Christian school revolves around what the teachers "add" to the students' educational experience by means of their moral integrity, devotional piety, and biblical insights into a select group of controversial topics. Whereas *Christian education* leads to a new and different model of education, *Christians educating* utilizes different people (people of faith) to elevate the academic and spiritual standards of the traditional public school model.[20]

It is quite possible the vast majority of Christian schools in America are *Christians educating.* They have an identity crisis; they espouse to be one thing, but really are something altogether different. Understandably, public school proponents might be right in assuming Christian schools are dressed up, condescending, holier-than-thou versions of public schools, because they are ultimately a public school with a Christian veneer.

Regardless of emphasis, Christian schools need to tell a better story. By telling Christ's story, Christian schools set themselves apart from other schools. With *this* story the hope is to show students what it might look like to follow Jesus right now, what it means to love their neighbor, how Jesus desires they live a holistic life through Him, how to redefine success according to Scripture, and how a love of learning is far more satisfying than a transactional grade for personal gain.[21]

Desired Outcomes and Mission Statements

Nearly all other problems with Christian education seem to flow out of the aforementioned inconsistent philosophy. Desired outcomes (also called expected student outcomes, portrait of a graduate, or end statements) along with mission statements are examples of the effects of the philosophical issue. The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), the largest Christian school accreditation organization in the world,

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[20] John E. Hull, "Aiming for Christian Education, Settling for Christians Educating: The Christian School's Replication of a Public School Paradigm," *Christian Scholar's Review* 32, no. 2 (Winter 2003): 204.

[21] Lynn E. Swaner, Dan Beerens, and Erik Ellefsen, *MindShift: Catalyzing Change in Christian Education* (Colorado Springs: ACSI, 2019), 32.

requires the development of desired outcomes. Assistant Vice President of ASCI Erin Wilcox explains these outcomes,

> An individual school's ESOs should reflect the character values, spiritual aspirations, cultural norms, academic goals, and other particular characteristics of the school. In fact, part of the benefit of developing them is the collaboration of faculty, staff, administration and possibly parents and students in order to define their distinctives. ESOs can be thought of as statements that operationalize the mission, core values, and the ends of the governing body in a way that will translate into instructional activities, strategies, curriculum, and even decisions that affect hiring, resources, and training. Good examples include character traits that are more general as well as competencies that are measurable so that teachers can determine how to work them into lessons and assessments.[22]

While outcomes are indeed important, realistic outcomes are essential. Likely desired student outcomes include the spiritual growth, maturity, and formation of students; all ACSI accredited schools require student outcomes. And many schools' mission statements are wholly based on spiritual development and maturity. However, is it possible some of the *Christians educating* are not qualified to carry the responsibility of children's spiritual formation? Or put another way, is this too much to expect of teachers? Can Christian schools, modeled after public schools, affectively reach these goals? Furthermore, the assessment of spiritual outcomes has historically been extremely difficult due to the nature of ascertaining spiritual affect and measuring heart change. All stakeholders, including parents, want assurances they can expect a school's mission statement to reflect reality. Assessment is necessary but often challenging.

Parental Motivation

There are many reasons to choose Christian schooling,[23] but chief among them should be to reinforce the Christian worldview, teaching, and commitment the student

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[22] Erin Wilcox, "Expected Student Outcomes: A Help, or Just Hype?" Association of Christian Schools International, May 6, 2019, https://blog.acsi.org/expected-student-outcomes-in-christian-schools.

[23] There are many reasons parents might choose a Christian school for their child's education. Some of the more common reasons against public school include potential exposure to ungodliness in worldly attitudes and behaviors, poor educational quality, and lack of a coherent worldview. Reasons for a Christian school choice might include safety, quality educational opportunities, smaller class size, Christian teachers, likeminded community, and the emphasis on biblical worldview.

receives at home. There are primarily two models of Christian school. Covenant schools *partner* with like-minded, Gospel-committed families to extend the Christian teaching in the home. Conversely, evangelistic Christian schools generally accept families with different religious backgrounds as long as the family agrees to *allow* the teaching of the school's Christian beliefs and principles. Ultimately, these two orientations should not affect the school's goals and outcomes but might affect their methods.

Problems arise when parents, and even students, do not uphold their commitment to the school. For instance, parents might agree to Christian teaching and principles, but then become upset when that same teaching rubs up against their true desires and beliefs. This type of inconsistency typically has a negative effect on all parties, but especially the student who is being taught two competing stories.

Teacher Training/Expectations

Naturally, ongoing teacher training is essential for effective teaching and learning of any type to occur. The massive advancements in technology and information retrieval, including social media, have made the generational divide between teacher and student (Generation Z) very wide. Cultural and social differences between generations seem equally as challenging.

Research from Kelly Hayes entitled, "Equipping Teachers for Biblical Integration at The King's Academy in Florence, South Carolina," found their teachers believe biblical integration needs to improve yet were not able to agree on the definition of biblical integration. They reported as areas most needing attention and training to be the use of Scripture (handling, understanding, and applying), application of worldview, and practical methods of biblical integration. Hayes also found a noticeable divide in teachers' biblical integration between language and humanities courses (more BI) and

math and science courses (less BI).[24] Although this is only one school's feedback, it is curious how pervasive these findings might be reported.

Research on professional development in Christian schools by Donald Finn, James Swezey, and Debra Warren found that 58 percent of Christian school teachers graduated from state (secular) university education programs. These programs likely produced well-trained teachers, but they could not prepare teachers for the philosophical and theological understanding needed for biblically integrated instruction.[25] Christian schools are assuming teachers have certain skills (i.e., the ability to biblically integrate their subjects and contribute to students' spiritual formation) *solely because the teachers espouse Christian beliefs.*

Raquel Korniejczuk and Jimmy Kijai found in their research on integrating faith and learning there is a substantial difference between teachers knowing *about* biblical integration and actually implementing it in their classes. Again, definitions of biblical integration varied among teachers.[26] Training teachers to teach in Christian schools seems to be of highest priority and asking them to do so *without* proper training seems unfair and unrealistic.

Lack of Common Language

Another persistent problem within Christian Education is the lack of overall common language. What is Christian education? A Christian school? Christian teaching? Integration? Definitions really depend on who is asked. They also may depend on the

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[24] Kelly Nathaniel Hayes, "Equipping Teachers for Biblical Integration at the King's Academy in Florence, South Carolina" (DEdMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 103.

[25] Donald Finn, James Swezey, and Debra Warren, "Perceived Professional Development Needs of Teachers and Administrators in PS-12 Christian Schools," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 19, no. 1 (2010): 21.

[26] Raquel I. Korniejczuk and Jimmy Kijai, "Integrating Faith and Learning: Development of a Stage Model of Teacher Implementation," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 3, no. 1 (1994): 99.

goal(s) and mission of individual schools. Definitions vary, which means goals vary,

which leads to outcomes that vary. The following definitions of Christian education

illustrate this:

1. Ronald Chadwick in his book *Christian School Curriculum* defines education as, "both the process of acquiring significant learning experiences as well as the product of a desired change of personality and behavior . . . integration of a personality with a worldview."[27] Therefore, Christian education, "will produce individuals who are not only capable of functioning within society but also capable of functioning effectively within the body of Christ."[28] However, he is also quick to say Christian education is *not* evangelism.

2. Christian education visionary, Frank Gaebelein, claims Christian education must be built on God's Truth through the process of integration.[29]

3. Christian education leader, Glen Schultz, is more focused in his description which he calls *kingdom* education, "a life-long, Bible-based, Christ-centered process of leading a child to Christ, building a child up in Christ, and equipping a child to serve Christ causing the child to know and glorify Christ."[30]

What is most notable about these definitions is they are not the same, not even

close to the same. While each has merit, and none are deceptive, it is difficult to ascertain

what Christian education is. Unfortunately, lack of common language leaves schools to

define and interpret for themselves the big questions and purposes for Christian

education.

Unintended Consequences

At first glance this problem in Christian education might seem insignificant.

However, it is extremely important. Unintended consequences are experiences that

develop into deeply formed patterns of behavior, understanding, thinking, or practice for

students that are the result of unintentional occurrences that happen throughout the daily

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[27] Ronald P. Chadwick, *Christian School Curriculum: An Integrated Approach* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1990), 11.

[28] Chadwick, *Christian School Curriculum*, 13.

[29] Frank Ely Gaebelein, *The Pattern of God's Truth: Problems of Integration in Christian Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 7.

[30] Schultz, *Kingdom Education*, 29.

life and rhythm of any school. Over time these unique, often unnoticeable, occurrences become solidified in students' minds and hearts. And because the students are attending a Christian school, these unintended consequences may potentially become associated as *Christian*—how a Christian ought to think and act. Depending on the message they send, these can be extremely confusing and even damaging to students and to the school's mission.[31]

Theologian and educator John Westerhoff coined the term "intentional religious socialization or enculturation," which he defines as, "a process consisting of lifelong, intentional and unintentional, formal and informal mechanisms through which persons and communities sustain and transmit their faith (worldview and value system) and lifestyles."[32] "This includes both the covert or hidden curriculum of communal life and the overt curriculum of the educator."[33] He believes much of our (Christian) teaching is transferred this way. If intentional and executed appropriately, this is a strong method for spiritual formation in Christian schools. However, it could also have reverse consequences.

Westerhoff describes components contributing to unintended consequences:

1. Participation in its rites (rituals and ceremonials);
2. Environment (what persons see, touch, taste, smell and hear);
3. Interrelational experiences;
4. Behavior observed, supported, and encouraged;
5. Role models presented (past and present);
6. Organization (how time is structured, what programs offered);

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[31] A benign and somewhat amusing example occurred in one of our K-12 schools. Soon after building the school the student body began to grow rapidly. It was quickly determined the cafeteria was inadequately small. In order to feed all the students, kindergarteners ate lunch beginning at 10:25 a.m. and high school seniors ate lunch as late as 1:30 p.m. As a result, it has become somewhat of a joke that graduates of the school are unusually fast eaters. Parents, teachers, and family members often comment on this. Over time, students became conditioned to eat fast—they had to because their lunch time was very short. Graduating fast eaters was never intentional; it is not part of the school's outcomes or mission. However, it still happened. This example is likely not harmful (except for indigestion), but other examples could be.

[32] John Westerhoff, "Formation, Education, Instruction," *Religious Education* 82, no. 4 (Fall 1987): 578.

[33] Westerhoff, "Formation, Education, Instruction," 579.

7. Naming (how language [is] used, what things are called.[34]

Christian school principal Shaun Brooker expounds,

> There are many aspects of our Christian schools which are intended for good. However, if unexamined, and if done without intentionality, these aspects can actually have the opposite effect—they can turn our students away from Christ. The overriding question to prevent this is straightforward: Is the way your students <u>experience</u> the "Christian things" you do align with the purpose for which you do them? And in answering this question, we need to consider what students learn about the principles of Scripture through our actions, not just our words.[35]

Sadly, many graduates leave Christian schools walking away from a false and misrepresented form of Christianity that was unintentionally and wrongly communicated and received rather than the life-giving, liberating gospel of Jesus Christ.

What Christian Schools Do Well

Despite the potential problems with Christian education, there are many positive results to report. David Sikkink, author of the "CARDUS Education Survey: Walking the Path: The Religious Lives of Young Adults in North America,"[36] from January 2018, found graduates from Protestant Evangelical high schools

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[34] Westerhoff, "Formation, Education, Instruction," 583.

[35] Shaun Brooker, "Becoming More Christian in Christian Schools," Association of Christian Schools International, December 10, 2019, https://blog.acsi.org/spiritual-practices.

[36] Sikkink writes,
Cardus is a think tank dedicated to the renewal of North American social architecture. Since 2011, Cardus has worked in partnership with researchers at the University of Notre Dame to administer the Cardus Education Survey (CES), the benchmark for data on independent Christian education in North America. CES measures the impact of school sector on graduate outcomes in Canada and the USA. The sectors studied are independent religious schools, independent nonreligious schools, and public/government schools. Cardus Education produces major national reports every two years which map the international terrain. In depth reports like this one are published in between which mine the data for insights on themes central to the flourishing of civil society. Cardus commissioned the CES because few were asking whether independent religious schools were meeting their mission objectives or collecting data capable of challenging the trends towards secularism and reductionism in education policy and practice. The result is a robust survey measure, capable of holding its own in the rigorous environs of academic scholarship and of meeting the demand for big data in education. (David Sikkink, "CARDUS Education Survey: Walking the Path: The Religious Lives of Young Adults in North America," January 30, 2018, https://www.cardus.ca/research/education/reports/walking-the-path-the-religious-lives-of-young-adults-in-north-america/)

1. "Reported significantly higher belief in orthodox Christian teachings, such as the belief that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation and the Bible is infallible in matters of faith and practice."[37]

2. Were much more likely to pray, read the Bible, attend church regularly and tithe.[38]

3. "Were less likely to switch religious affiliation or to turn from the faith of their childhood."[39]

4. Were more likely "to attend religious colleges and universities."[40]

5. Were "much more likely to say they hold a job that fulfills God's calling in their lives."[41]

6. Were "more likely to be married and have children."[42]

7. Were more likely to say their "spiritual experience is fulfilling."[43]

Christian schools are effective at communicating the tenets of Christianity (although communicating them is not the same as *living* them). "Evangelical Protestant schools continue to lead the way in socializing their graduates in religious practices and beliefs, which for the sake of strong families and civic engagement should not be ignored."[44]

Christian schools are nimble. Being more autonomous allows Christian schools to pivot quickly in response to unexpected challenges. For example, during the 2020-2021 Covid-19 school year, "Close to 90% of Christian schools delivered on their promises to open with in-person instruction," Lynn Swaner, ACSI Chief Strategy and

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[37] Ray Pennings, "Cardus' Cofounder Ray Pennings on Schooling & Spiritual Development," Barna Group, March 19, 2019, https://www.barna.com/schooling-spiritual-development-ray-pennings/, 2.

[38] Sikkink, "CARDUS Education Survey," 9.

[39] Pennings, "Cardus' Cofounder," 2.

[40] Sikkink, "CARDUS Education Survey," 4.

[41] Sikkink, "CARDUS Education Survey," 9.

[42] Sikkink, "CARDUS Education Survey," 7.

[43] Sikkink, "CARDUS Education Survey," 11.

[44] R. Pennings et al., *Cardus Education Survey*, 2014, accessed January 22, 2021, https://www.rainierchristian.org/2014%20-%2009%20-%20CES%202014%20Report.pdf, 6.

Innovation Officer said, adding that two-thirds of schools also offered distance learning in addition to in-person instruction.[45]

The Thesis of This Study

Based on the information and research presented, Christian education, particularly Christian schools, have some wide gaps. While academically, and even spiritually, Christian schools emerge successful when compared to public schools, more fundamental change must happen for Christian schools to continue their mission into the future. Many Christian schools are informational rather than transformational in nature. This means they *tell* students about Christianity and students walk away with knowledge, but ultimately with lives that look very much like the current culture. Behavior modification is not spiritual transformation.

Without a large upheaval of the Christian educational system, and accepting the limitations presented by Christians educating, *this study seeks to ascertain what components must be present in the Christian school classroom for authentic spiritual transformation to occur*. Understanding the Holy Spirit is responsible for heart transformation, and the presence of these components does not *ensure* transformation, what conditions are most likely to soften and prepare the soil of students' hearts and lives to receive the seeds of gospel transformation? The research clearly indicated five conditions all viewed through the overarching framework of relationship: the centrality of the individual teacher, viewing and treating students as image bearers, utilizing formative practices that may either undermine intentions or solidify mission, the presence of a secure and loving environment, and the effective use of storying in the classroom, specifically the metanarrative four-act Biblical story. The remainder of this study will examine the literature and practices within Christian education to determine the viability of the five

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[45] Lynn E. Swaner and Matthew H. Lee, "Christian Schools and Covid-19: 2020-2021 School Year Profile," Association of Christian Schools International, December 2020, https://www.acsi.org/docs/default-source/website-publishing/research/acsi-covid-survey-report-december-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=cf12f759_8.

conditions.

Definition of Terms

Biblical integration. "The living union of subject matter, administration, and even of its personnel with the eternal and infinite pattern of God's truth."[46]

Biblically integrated instruction. "Planning curricular activities that help the student think through subject matter and skill development in such a way as to develop the habit of connecting and contrasting all knowledge to a biblical worldview." [47]

Biblical worldview. Aligning one's conscious beliefs and assumptions about God, Creation, Humankind, Moral Order, and Purpose with the truth and teachings described in the Bible.[48]

Christian education. The shaping, molding, and forming of students "to be a certain kind of people whose hearts, passions, and desires are aimed at the kingdom of God."[49]

Christian school. A K-12 institution, or any combination of those levels, differentiating itself from other schools by approaching teaching, learning, and all other activities from a distinctively biblical worldview.

Christians educating. The concept that Christian education is essentially a reproduction of public school with Christians as teachers "adding" in Christian elements.[50]

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[46] Gaebelein, *The Pattern of God's Truth*, 9.

[47] Martha E MacCullough, *Undivided: Developing a Worldview Approach to Biblical Integration* (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design Publications, 2016), 30.

[48] Christian Overman and Don Johnson, *Making the Connections: How to Put Biblical Worldview Integration into Practice* (Puyallup, WA: The Biblical Worldview Institute, 2003), 21.

[49] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Cultural Liturgies 1(Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 18.

[50] Hull, "Aiming for Christian Education," 204.

Curriculum. The combination of learning plans (focused on content), learning activities (teaching delivery methods), and the learning community (classroom environment) used within an educational setting.[51]

Hidden curriculum. "The unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values, and perspectives that students learn in school. The hidden curriculum consists of the unspoken or implicit academic, social, and cultural messages that are communicated to students while they are in school."[52]

Integration of faith and learning. A term normally associated with Christian higher education congruent with biblical integration.

Philosophy of education. "Answering questions that are directly related to the human being and learning, the role of a leader/teacher and teaching, the nature of knowledge and knowing, and the aim of life that informs the aim of the school curriculum and education as a whole."[53]

Professional development. "Used in reference to a wide variety of specialized training, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help administrators, teachers, and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness."[54]

Spiritual formation. "The Holy Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ

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[51] Martha E. MacCullough, *By Design: Developing a Philosophy of Education Informed by a Christian Worldview* (Langhorne, PA: Carin University, 2013), 157.

[52] The Glossary of Education Reform, "Hidden Curriculum," July 13, 2015, https://www.edglossary.org/hidden-curriculum/.

[53] MacCullough, *By Design*, 3.

[54] The Glossary of Education Reform, "Professional Development," August 29, 2013, https://www.edglossary.org/professional-development/.

himself. To the degree spiritual formation in Christ is successful, the outer life of the individual becomes a natural expression of the character and teachings of Jesus."[55]

  Story/narrative/metanarrative. "A *master* story that gives a comprehensive explanation of human life and culture and how it came to be,"[56] and also provides a pattern or structure for people's beliefs that gives meaning to their experiences.

  Worldview. "A worldview is a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic makeup of our world."[57]

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[55] Dallas Willard and Don Simpson, *Revolution of Character: Discovering Christ's Pattern for Spiritual Transformation* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2005), 16.

[56] Harro W. Van Brummelen, *Walking with God in the Classroom: Christian Approaches to Learning and Teaching* (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design Publications, 2009), 33.

[57] James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 19.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION,
WORLDVIEW, AND BIBLICAL INTEGRATION

The progression of the Christian school movement of the last fifty years makes it difficult to fully understand its current landscape. Concepts like biblical integration and spiritual formation have evolved within the study of Christian education, sometimes dominating the research and practice, other times not. Education is a field full of initiatives. New ideas and techniques come along and seem to eclipse the current thought and practice. This approach can unintentionally spill over into Christian education with "new teaching techniques" melding with "how to disciple" Christian school students. The result is messy, unfocused, and often discouraging. For these reasons, it is imperative that Christian schools create a philosophy of Christian education to prevent the humanistic, post-modern (and other) philosophies of public school potentially becoming the default. This chapter serves to lay a foundation using the literature surrounding the related areas of philosophy of Christian education, worldview/biblical worldview, and biblical integration, three topics clearly differentiating Christian schools from public schools, and what importance they play in authentic spiritual transformation.

Philosophy of Christian Education

A philosophy of *Christian* education might very well be the missing piece; the reason many Christian schools struggle with their identity. Instead of developing a philosophy of *Christian* education, Christian schools (and the greater Christian School Movement) appeared to naturally adapt to the public school model. Since then, it has been patching and bandaging problems, but never getting to the root issue which is Christian education must be based on a *Christian* philosophy for education. The current

reality is akin to living "the way it is" knowing it is "not as it should be." In his book *Philosophy and Education: an introduction in Christian perspective,* author George Knight states of Christian education, "The entire superstructure of the educational system must be built out of materials and processes that are in harmony with Christianity. That is a difficult task in an overwhelmingly secular world in which even professed Christian institutions are often riddled with an aggressive and all-pervasive secularism and materialism."[1]

John Hull masterfully describes this tension and Christian education "the way it is":

> What emerges (Christian schools) is the general idea that Christian education refers to Christian teachers educating Christian students in a Christian environment for the purpose of promoting Christian thought and action. Efforts to transcribe foundational principles, biblical worldview and educational vision into a working Christian educational philosophy have sharpened our image of Christian education to some degree. Typically, Christian school educators compress their Christian philosophy of education into catch phrases like: a Christ-centered curriculum, an inner reformation of the sciences, a biblical perspective on all areas of learning, or a Christian world and life view. Over time these slogans have dove-tailed into one universal concept called Christian perspective, and this term more than any other has become synonymous with Christian education.[2]

Possible results of this faulty Christian perspective instead of an overall philosophy include adding *Christian* angles to an already broken educational system, acknowledging errors once they were too costly or too established to change, and failure to produce the expected number of gospel-centered graduates that live fully biblically integrated lives. It would be unfair and untrue to portray Christian education as *all* bad. Despite some foundational flaws, Christian education produces much good. The vast majority of Christian educators believe in their school's mission, work above and beyond job expectations, tirelessly plan and execute lessons that honor God, and make financial sacrifices to work in Christian schools.

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[1] George R. Knight, *Philosophy & Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 4th ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006), 164.

[2] John E. Hull, "The Gap Between Vision and Action in Christian Education," *Christian Educators Journal* 44 (April 2005): 23–27.

The *Handbook of Christian Education* includes essential concepts that must be defined in order to create a framework for a philosophy of Christian education: Biblical Christianity, purpose (of Christian education), recipient, responsibility, content, means (methodology and instruments), student, teacher, process, scope, differentiation, motivation, evaluation, and setting.[3]

Although schools should create a philosophy of Christian education, distinguished professor Martha MacCullough encourages individual teachers to develop their personal philosophy of Christian education. ACSI requires this of all certified teachers. In her valuable book, *By Design*, MacCullough explains,

> A disciplined exercise in developing a personal philosophy of education begins with a current educational viewpoint and proceeds to clarify, adapt, confirm, or change beliefs in order to develop an internally consistent and coherent (one that makes sense and sticks together as a whole) educational philosophy that is informed by one's worldview.[4]

A personal philosophy of Christian education could be very helpful in discerning potential teacher candidates, or conversely, Christian schools for which to apply. Examining the school's and teacher's philosophies would likely yield helpful information for like-minded partnerships.

Worldview

Dutch intellectual and theologian Abraham Kuyper famously said, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!"[5] Kuyper was explaining the Christian

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[3] Ronald A. Horton, ed., *Handbook of Christian Education* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2017), 3–26.

[4] Martha E. MacCullough, *By Design: Developing a Philosophy of Education Informed by a Christian Worldview* (Langhorne, PA: Carin University, 2013), 3.

[5] Barry H. Corey, "Christian Higher Education," in *Christian Worldview Handbook*, ed. David Dockery and Trevin Wax (Nashville: B & H, 2019), 305. Kuyper's quote can be found in most resources dealing with biblical worldview. Kuyper rejected dualism and viewed Christianity as a *whole* way of life.

worldview. A worldview is comprehensive, enveloping every part of who we are, how we think, what we believe, and why we act the way(s) we do.

James Sire in his now famous book, *The Universe Next Door,* defines worldview as, "A set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic makeup of our world."[6] In their article *A Three-Dimensional Concept of Worldview*, authors Katherine Schultz and James Swezey argue there are three conceptions of worldview: propositional (knowledge statements), propositional plus behavioral (worldview affects one's behavior), and propositional, behavioral, plus heart-orientation (the essence of one's being). The emphasis on a biblical understanding of *heart* in worldview was largely from philosopher David Naugle's book, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*.[7] As a result, Sire updated his definition,

> A worldview is a *commitment*, a fundamental *orientation of the heart*, that can be *expressed as a story* or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the *foundation on which we live and move and have our being*.[8]

In *Christian Schooling: Telling A World View Story*, Christian university president, Harry Fernhout explores the definition of worldview further, reviewing worldview literature and articulating others' thoughts. The thrust of his argument maintains that worldview is a metanarrative and ought to be lived as the "story of our lives." He outlines concerns from Nicholas Wolterstorff, American philosopher and theologian, who considers the *view* in worldview as too limiting. The Christian mind and

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[6] James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 5th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 20. Sire's original worldview definition can be found in the first three editions of *The Universe Next Door*. His updated definition and worldview questions can be found in editions 4 and 5 of *The Universe Next Door*.

[7] Katherine G. Schultz and James A. Swezey, "A Three-Dimensional Concept of Worldview," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 22, no. 3 (2013): 227–43. David Naugle is an expert on biblical worldview and is mentioned in this article.

[8] Sire, *The Universe Next Door,* 20, emphasis added.

thinking Christianly do not account for spiritual formation, the brokenness of the world, parts of life that bring joy, and the difficulty some students may experience that are not as cerebral as others.[9] This concept will be reviewed more deeply in other sections.

Sire considers one's worldview the answer to these basic "rock bottom" questions:

1. What is prime reality—the really real?
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?
3. What is a human being?
4. What happens to a person at death?
5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know what is right and wrong?
7. What is the meaning of human history?
8. What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview? (later added)[10]

Theologian Nancy Pearcey in her seminal work, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* writes, "Every system of thought begins with some ultimate principle. If it does not begin with God, it will begin with some dimension of creation—the material, the spiritual, the biological, the empirical, or whatever."[11] Pearcey provides a framework or story for a *biblical*[12] worldview that *must* be the metanarrative through which all of life is filtered: creation (everything is under God's created order), fall (all of creation is broken due to sin), and redemption (God renewing and reordering creation).[13] This framework is widely recognizable in Christian education and is seen as a succinct approach to outlining the biblical story.

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[9] Harry Fernhout, "Christian Schooling: Telling a World View Story," in *The Crumbling Walls of Certainty: Towards a Christian Critique of Postmodernity and Education,* ed. Ian Lambert and Suzanne Mitchell (Sydney, New South Wales: CSAC, 1997), 4, 5.

[10] Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 22–23. The last question was added as a result of the updated definition of *worldview* that includes *commitment* and *a matter of the heart* (23).

[11] Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, Study Guide ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 41

[12] For the purposes of this study, the term *biblical* is used to describe *Christian* worldview since the term *Christian* is no longer well defined or congruous with a biblical understanding of how one is to live in light of the Bible.

[13] Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 45–46.

In his comprehensive book, *Beyond Biblical Integration*, Christian school headmaster Roger Erdvig refers to a biblical worldview as "an organized framework of desires, assumptions, and habits that are submitted to Christ." He continues, "biblical worldview offers a unifying, ultimate desire. An expansive and complete set of biblical truth claims gives meaning and purpose to the whole range of human experience, all of which leads to a consistent way of living, moving, and being."[14] Authors Phillips, Brown, and Stonestreet in their book, *Making Sense of Your World: A Biblical Worldview* list the two central truth claims for a biblical worldview.[15] "1. That God exists and 2. that God is who he has revealed himself to be in creation, the Bible, and the person of Christ."[16]

Making the biblical big-picture story complete, Erdvig adds a last act to Pearcey's first three: restoration. He makes the four-act narrative even easier, "I like to substitute four simpler words which mean the same things: *ought*, *is*, *can*, and *will*. The original creation is the way things *ought* to be. The fall has given us the new reality that *is*. Redemption is the promise and power to transform things into what they *can* be. And at the final restoration, all things *will* be made right."[17] He further explains this in relation to worldview, "The biblical worldview is a way of thinking, desiring, and acting consistently within this four-word framework for human experience. It's a way of being in which we as human beings participate in God's grand plan to transform part of what *is*, to the way things *can* be, in anticipation of when all things *will* be as they *ought* to be."[18]

[14] Roger C. S. Erdvig, *Beyond Biblical Integration: Immersing You and Your Students in a Biblical Worldview* (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Ministries, 2020), 47.

[15] Erdvig defines a *truth claim* as "a statement or unstated assumption about what a worldview purports to be true." Erdvig, *Beyond Biblical Integration*, 243.

[16] W. Gary Phillips, William E. Brown, and John Stonestreet, *Making Sense of Your World: A Biblical World View*, 2nd ed. (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing, 2008), 17.

[17] Erdvig, *Beyond Biblical Integration*, 11.

[18] Erdvig, *Beyond Biblical Integration*, 11.

Unfortunately, a biblical worldview is not common. The religious research group Barna has been studying biblical worldview since 1995. For the purposes of their research they use propositional statements to measure biblical worldview as believing: absolute moral truth exists; the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches; Satan is considered to being a real being or force, not merely symbolic; a person cannot earn their way into Heaven by trying to be good or do good works; Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; and God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today.[19]

"The 2018 data, based on surveys conducted among a national sample of 6,000 adults, age 18 or older, revealed that the proportion of adults who have a biblical worldview dropped from 10% in 2016 to 9% in 2017 and 7% in 2018."[20] A subgroup defined in the study was "born-again Christian." Of that subgroup less than one out of every four (23%) professed a biblical worldview. One disturbing pattern emerged: "only one out of every twenty parents of children under 18 in their home (5%) has a biblical worldview."[21] Furthermore, Barna studies have determined a person's worldview is primarily in place by age 13.[22]

Formation of Worldview

Worldviews develop over time. It is difficult to ascertain one's worldview without spending considerable time with them, because worldview slips out slowly through actions, attitudes, values, and emotions. It is recognized through desires, heart

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[19] Barna Group, "Changes in Worldview among Christians Over the Past 13 Years," March 9, 2009, https://www.barna.com/research/barna-survey-examines-changes-in-worldview-among-christians-over-the-past-13-years/.

[20] George Barna, "Survey Reveals That Fewer Adults Have a Biblical Worldview Now Than Two Years Ago," October 18, 2018, https://www.georgebarna.com/research/7622/survey-reveals-that-fewer-adults-have-a-biblical-worldview-now-than-two-years-ago.

[21] Barna, "Survey Reveals."

[22] Barna Group, "Changes in Worldview."

orientation, and one's commitments. Erdvig suggests that, "even if students know and can repeat the truths of a biblical worldview, it doesn't guarantee they have any inclination to live out their implications in their behavior."[23]

Worldview Academy faculty member, J. Mark Bertrand in his book *(Re)Thinking Worldview* explains the way a worldview develops,

> First, things happen. Events occur. You observe them happening to other people; you experience them happening to you. These events produce emotional responses: joy, sadness, fear, worry, scorn, mirth. They also serve as catalysts for thought. When you think about what happens, you arrange events. You search for meaning, or at least for patterns, in what has taken place. You begin to draw conclusions about the way the world works. Based on these conclusions, you face the future with certain expectations and prejudices, hopes and anxieties. New experiences, new ideas, new people are all interpreted in light of the conclusions you've already reached. A kind of belief system emerges, and you are only partially aware of how it works.[24]

In many ways, educators have little control over certain aspects of their student's worldview; it is largely a result of others—families, communities, and cultures. Hopefully, the main influencers in life have a center for their worldview, a biblical orientation that leads to the biblical metanarrative.

Roger Erdvig spent hundreds of hours researching young adults (ages 18-23) to determine how a biblical worldview is formed. What he found was not a linear process. He describes it as, "A complex interplay of experiences and the means by which emerging adults process those experiences, all tempered and impacted by their past."[25] Erdvig organized the contributors to a biblical worldview into three categories: influences from the past (Christian mentoring/discipleship, strong evangelical family, having significant spiritual experiences); new experiences/prompts (leaving home, worldview training); and processing experiences (reflection, serving others, study). What was most influential

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[23] Erdvig, *Beyond Biblical Integration*, 12.

[24] J. Mark Bertrand, *Rethinking Worldview: Learning to Think, Live, and Speak in This World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 25-26.

[25] Erdvig, *Beyond Biblical Integration*, 67-69.

about these events was the ability to process them—talk them through with others, mull them over, try concepts "on" to see how they feel.[26] Pat answers and dismissing hard questions are not what leads to good processing for students. Often it is the *struggling with* students that is most impactful. One common denominator to all three categories is the presence and necessity of community. Each category involved highly relational connections for the development of a biblical worldview.

An underlying premise in Erdvig's book is that biblical integration should not be about whether or not Christian school students have a *strong* worldview, but rather if they have a *developing* worldview.[27] Although subtle, this difference provides the worldview with movement and a trajectory instead of immobility and the recalling of propositional statements. Building on Sire's worldview concept of heart orientation, behavioral alignment, and propositional truths, Erdvig's research also found present in those with a growing biblical worldview three dispositions (tendencies or proclivities):

1. Awareness—the knowledge of where the student's own worldview was inconsistent, deficient or aligned with the biblical story.

2. Meaningful processing—a commitment to pursuing biblical worldview continuity and not accepting easily placated conclusions.

3. Ownership—an acceptance of the responsibility of forming their own worldview.[28]

Bertrand notes that another's worldview is difficult to change because two core worldview changers are one's self and the Holy Spirit.[29] In summary, the task of worldview formation can be difficult due to outside influences, past experiences, the average age of worldview development, and one's desire to examine their personal worldview. Effective methods to develop students' biblical worldview, contributing to their spiritual transformation, will be discussed below.

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[26] Erdvig, *Beyond Biblical Integration,* 71.

[27] Erdvig, *Beyond Biblical Integration*, 14.

[28] Erdvig, *Beyond Biblical Integration*, 75-76.

[29] Bertrand, *Rethinking Worldview*, 40.

Biblical Integration

Of all the concepts floating around Christian education, biblical integration (BI) could be the most elusive. For the last several decades BI has been a buzz word in Christian education. It primarily describes what happens to make education distinctively Christian. Biblical integration is the process(es) of instilling a biblical worldview, and as such, the slide between biblical worldview and biblical integration is easy and never-ending. Furthermore, there are many opinions about the processes of instilling a biblical worldview making the term difficult to define. Most Christian education researchers agree teachers are more likely to talk about what biblical integration *is* than to achieve it in their classrooms.[30]

One problem with defining BI is how the word is used. It can be used as a noun, "Our biblical integration is improving;" as a verb, "We need to biblically integrate this unit;" as an adjective, "This biblically integrated lesson;" and even as an adverb, "My biblically integrated teaching is magnificent." When a school says they have strong BI, that does not mean much to a Christian educator. Only after spending time reading, observing, and living in that school will one determine their definition (and level) of BI.

A final reason for misunderstanding BI is that the work of BI is never completed. BI is part of the curriculum and the classroom and the teacher, all of which are always changing. Although the biblical story (worldview framework) never changes, the methods of teaching and biblically integrating the story do change. What we identify as biblical integration today may be different than what we call it in 2030 because methods and students change, and we must change with them. The following sections will define biblical integration and then examine practical methods for executing and implementing biblical integration.

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[30] Kenneth O. Gangel, "Integrating Faith and Learning: Principles and Process," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (June 1978): 99.

Definition

        A worldview is not static. It is a framework that expectantly evolves towards wholeness and completeness; the bringing together of parts to make a unified whole. Because biblical integration has a myriad of understandings, the definition(s) offered will come from different voices in distinctive stages of Christian education. From an early childhood perspective, professor Milt Uecker says, "They (the teachers) have the responsibility to lay the foundation for spiritual growth and provide the knowledge, skill, and dispositions that are the groundwork for academic success."[31] MacCullough's thoughts concerning K-12 schools include, "Planning curricular activities that help the student think through subject matter and skill development in such a way as to develop the habit of connecting and contrasting all knowledge to their biblical worldview, their integrating core out of which an integrated Christian will think and act."[32] Kelly Hayes, author of *Every Bush is Burning* states, "Biblical integration should be seen as the unification of truths. It is the restoration of relationship between heart and mind, special revelation and general revelation, and word and deed. It is a tearing down of the artificial divisions, which starts with the bringing together of the heart and mind."[33] Christian higher education expert, Kenneth Gangel expounds the concept as, "the teaching of all subjects as a part of the total truth of God thereby enabling the student to see the unity of natural and special revelation."[34] And lastly, authors Raquel Korniejczuk and Jimmy Kijai state that integration is making intentional faith connections within the

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[31] Milton V. Uecker, *Distinctively Christian: A Christ-Centered Approach to Early Spiritual Development* (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton Press, 2019), 12.

[32] Martha E. MacCullough, *Undivided: Developing a Worldview Approach to Biblical Integration* (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design, 2016), 30.

[33] Kelly Hayes, *Every Bush Is Burning: A Practical Theology for Biblical Integration* (Lexington, KY: CreateSpace Publishing, 2017), 66-67.

[34] Gangel, "Integrating Faith and Learning," 100.

curriculum.[35] All of these definitions are similar in their pursuit of bringing biblical unity

and integrity within all aspects of learning.

Just as important as what biblical integration *is*, is what it *is not*, and often

teachers find this to be easier to identify. Unfortunately, this list is not exhaustive.

Biblical integration is *not*:

1. Prayer in class, biblical bulletin boards or posters, reading the Bible, or discussing
    Bible stories.

2. A Christian devotion during class. MacCullough calls this the
    Interpersonal/Spontaneous Model. It is when the teacher looks for ways to
    spontaneously insert Christian _____ (stories, examples, testimonies, songs,
    etc.) in to the classroom.[36]

3. Associations. Example: studying fish in science and having the students look for
    "fish" in the New Testament.[37]

4. Analogies and object lessons. Example: when learning about light the teacher
    compares light to one's relationship with God.[38]

Often Christian schools and educators believe they are biblically integrating because their

intention is noble, and their *motives* are pure. Intentions and motives do not create

biblical integration or spiritually transformed students.

Methods and Models

      Locus of biblical integration. Just as the definitions for biblical integration

are many, so are the methods. They range from detailed to big picture, and from planning

to principles. The first distinction needed in biblical integration is one of locus—will it be

student oriented or curriculum oriented? Badley defines these: "Curricular integration –

the organization of teaching material to interrelate or unify subjects usually taught as

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[35] Raquel I. Korniejczuk and Jimmy Kijai, "Integrating Faith and Learning: Development of a Stage Model of Teacher Implementation," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 3, no. 1 (1994): 80.

[36] Maccullough, *Undivided*, 103.

[37] Christian Overman and Don Johnson, *Making the Connections: How to Put Biblical Worldview Integration into Practice* (Puyallup, WA: The Biblical Worldview Institute, 2003), 73.

[38] MacCullough *Undivided*, 28; Overman and Johnson, *Making the Connections*, 72.

separate academic courses or departments. Student integration – individual students assemble a meaningful whole from the various contents of the curriculum."[39] In reality the locus of biblical integration is likely a bit of both curricular *and* student oriented. Students with saving faith and the guidance of the Holy Spirit are logically better equipped to process and receive biblical integration. Prolific author Kenneth Gangel writes, "When properly implemented, such a Christian curriculum designed around the centrality of special revelation produces a student who is able, at the end of his education pattern, to demonstrate commensurate levels of wisdom, witness, holiness, and churchmanship as representative ideals."[40]

Principles for biblical integration. Gangel presents six principles for biblical integration in his article, *Integrating Faith and Learning: Principles and Process.* The first principle is *a commitment to the authority of Scripture*. He asserts this authority must be at the core of any biblical integration otherwise the moorings of understanding are unattached. His second principle is *a recognition of the contemporaneity of the Bible and the Holy Spirit*. The biblical integrator must believe that God (through the Holy Spirit) can and will meet a student in their current situation. The third principle for biblical integration is *a clear understanding of nature, source, discovery, and dissemination of truth*. To quote educator, Arthur Holmes, "All truth is God's truth," so there should be no fear when facing science, theories, and discoveries because they are all under God's truth. A fourth principle is *designing a curriculum which is totally constructed on the centrality of special revelation*. He maintains special revelation *is* woven through all subjects and it is the job of the teacher to illustrate this for students. A fifth principle on which biblical integration is based is *a demand for the development of a Christian world and life view*. This world and life view must be void of dualism (dividing sacred and secular) as much

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[39] Ken Badley, "The Faith and Learning Integration Movement in Christian Higher Education: Slogan or Substance?" *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 3, no. 1 (1994): 26.

[40] Gangel, "Integrating Faith and Learning," 102-3.

as possible, with a congruent biblical worldview being the goal. Lastly, the sixth principle is *that bibliocentric education extend to all areas of student life*. Similar to principle five, this principle asserts integration must happen in student life outside of the academic arena—sports, relationships, and daily living.[41]

Curriculum-based models of biblical integration. Many biblical integration models are curriculum-focused and involve a great many details. These would be used at the micro level—in the classroom, planned by the teacher. The first model is from educator, Harro Van Brummelen's book, *Walking with God in the Classroom.* His model is more of a process and is based on the four-act biblical metanarrative. It involves taking curriculum components and embedding biblical principles into the unit and individual lessons. This planning is a progression from broad to narrow: develop course outlines for each subject; plan units that usually have a theme; prepare daily lesson plans; make on-the-spot decisions and adjustments while teaching.[42]

His overarching guidelines for the planning process include:

1. How does this unit's topic or theme fit into the biblical metanarrative?

2. Knowledge involves the whole self, not just the mind.

3. "We do not choose learning experiences just for the sake of attaining cognitive and ability outcomes. Our aim is to develop tendencies and dispositions that encourage students to believe, value, and act on the basis of the biblical principles that Christ taught us."[43]

4. "For every topic, we ask which (biblical) value outcomes can be a natural part of the learning. We give reasons for endorsing certain values. We introduce cases that lead students to consider how such values apply in specific circumstances."[44]

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[41] Gangel, "Integrating Faith and Learning," 100-105.

[42] Harro W. Van Brummelen, *Walking with God in the Classroom: Christian Approaches to Learning and Teaching* (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design Publications, 2009), 78-79. A step-by-step process can be found in his book starting on p. 78.

[43] Brummelen, *Walking with God in the Classroom*, 76.

[44] Brummelen, *Walking with God in the Classroom*, 78.

MacCullough uses a curriculum-based approach as well that she calls the

Integrating Core Model, which allows for one's worldview beliefs, and involves three

steps:

1. The teacher "begins with a set of *examined* worldview beliefs. These core beliefs are biblical truths that address life's biggest questions."[45] (Sire's worldview questions)

2. "The teacher must intentionally look for natural opportunities to *connect* or *distinguish*."[46]

3. The teacher must, "move forward in continued study of the subject area and the Bible . . . in a direction that will ultimately allow for integrative activities . . . which are an integral part of the lesson."[47]

MacCullough's overarching guidelines for the Integrating Core Model include ensuring

student processing and critical thinking.

Christian education researcher and trainer, Annie Gallagher has built upon

MacCullough's work and developed a method of biblically integrated instruction (BII).

She defines this using MacCullough's words as "the process of instructional planning and

teaching 'that helps the student think through subject matter and skill development in

such a way as to develop the habit of connecting and contrasting all knowledge to a

biblical knowledge.'"[48]

Gallagher's model called PAQ includes three strategies from previous

research:

1. "To establish the underlying biblical *purpose* for the subject or underlying foundational biblical principles related to the subject matter." The *P* in PAQ.

2. Comparing, contrasting, and revealing underlying worldview *assumptions*. The *A* in PAQ.

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[45] MacCullough, *Undivided*, 104.

[46] MacCullough, *Undivided*, 104

[47] MacCullough, *Undivided*, 104.

[48] Martha MacCullough, *Undivided: Developing a Worldview Approach to Integration* (Langhorne, PA: Philadelphia Biblical University, 2010), 14, quoted in Ann L. Gallagher, "The Impact of Coaching on Teachers' Application of Biblically Integrated Instruction" (PhD diss., Columbia International University, April 2016), 16.

3. "Posing *questions* requiring students to consider the subject area from another perspective or a biblical context, focusing on biblical application of the content." The *Q* in PAQ.[49]

Gallagher's PAQ uses a combination of educational strategies from Robert Gagne and Kevin Washburn (Architecture of Learning model), and focuses on instructional best practices for teaching, intentionality and planning for the teacher, and high expectations for the student.[50]

Mixed Locus biblical integration. Badley proposes five paradigms that describe different types of integration including curriculum *and* student locus.

1. Fusion integration: A + (fuses with) B = (and results in) C
   In this model two separate elements come together to make an entirely new element. This is primarily curriculum based.

2. Incorporation integration: A + B = AB
   The difference here is that both A and B retain part of themselves when forming a new element. This is primarily curriculum based.

3. Correlation integration: The correlation(s) of A and B are pointed out by the teacher, curriculum, or student.

4. Dialogical integration: A has come to bear on B and a dialogue takes place. One of the components is usually an activity and the other is usually a framework (political, ethical, religious, etc.) This is largely student or teacher based.

5. Perspectival integration: the entirety of A is seen through the perspective of B. This is a worldview coherence model that is primarily student based.[51]

Student-based model of biblical integration. Many higher education models seem to believe they are student-based, when in reality they are likely mixed. The assumption appears to be once a student is in college they should have the ability to integrate on their own. While some students likely can, many cannot. Being college-aged does not qualify one with the skill and maturity to biblically integrate their learning. A study conducted by Burton and Nwosu attempted to answer what most influenced

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[49]Gallagher, "The Impact of Coaching," 69-70. For further details of the PAQ method of biblically integrated instruction, see www.transformedpd.com.

[50] Gallagher, "The Impact of Coaching," 78.

[51] Badley, "The Faith and Learning Integration Movement," 24-28.

students' faith integration. The study was conducted at a Christian college in education classes. Because of the students' responses, what seemed intended as a student-based locus ended as mixed locus. Overwhelmingly the students placed the onus for biblical integration on the professor. This was evident from the top answers to *what factors best led to their integration*: teaching approaches used in class, the students' expectation of professor integration, classroom climate (set by the professor), and the professor's role (caring attitude and exemplary life). The results were highly professor driven and professor dependent.[52]

Levels of Biblical Integration

There are many models of levels of integration, and they all, to some degree, strive to measure the quality and quantity of biblical integration occurring. They would likely be best used by teachers and administration to identify the strengths and weaknesses of biblical integration among teachers. The important factor in using any measuring tool is consistency. For optimal results any model should be used *exclusively* and *recurrently* by a school to ensure consistent and accurate measurements and comparisons over time.

Bryan Smith, author at BJU Press, defines biblical integration as "Christian worldview shaping."[53] He uses the four-act biblical metanarrative as the basis for biblical integration, and ranks it on the following levels:

Level 0: Relegating the Bible (no integration)
Characterized by relegating the Bible to devotions, prayer requests, and personal counseling. It is not part of the academic subject.

Level 1: Referencing the Bible

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[52] Larry D. Burton and Constance C. Nwosu, "Student Perceptions of the Integration of Faith, Learning, and Practice in a Selected Education Course" (research presented at the Biennial Symposium of the Coalition of Christian Teacher Educators, Grand Rapids, May 24, 2002), accessed January 28, 2021, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED476074.pdf, 4, 17-19.

[53] Bryan Smith, "Biblical Integration: Pitfalls and Promise," *Bjupress*, 2019, accessed December 29, 2020, https://www.bjupress.com/images/pdfs/bible-integration.pdf, 2.

The Bible is referenced while the subject is being taught usually with biblical analogies and biblical examples. This parallelism is not biblical integration and does not shape the student's worldview.

Level 2: Responding with the Bible
There are two separate examples in this level. The first focuses on serving through the academic discipline where the teacher encourages the student to connect the academic material to a biblical mandate or instruction. The second example involves worshiping with the academic discipline where the teacher shows the student how to use the academic material to declare God's glory.

Level 3: Rebuilding with the Bible
The sub-levels in this level are two steps in a single process. Step one is questioning the assumptions and step two is rebuilding the discipline. This involves redeeming the subject using the four act biblical story.[54]

Smith's model is helpful in that it *describes* biblical integration within each level. Other models are not as user-friendly. For instance, Korniejczuk and Kijai propose a hypothetical model in their research modeled after Arthur Holmes. They explain their seven level model is not linear or hierarchical and represents teachers' deliberate integration. However, the user(s) must understand and agree on the definition of biblical integration because it is not *within* the model. An example from their model: "Teachers have incorporated biblical integration into their subjects and are mostly comfortable with where they are but admit they could improve."[55] Both the teacher *and* the surveyor must have a similar definition and working understanding of "good" biblical integration for this model to be of any benefit. It seems to leave too much up to individual interpretation. Based on these examples, assessing BII can be difficult and potentially subjective.

**Distractors from Biblical Worldview
and Integration**

If much of Christian education is merely Christians educating, there must be ample reasons for this. There are likely as many reasons deterring teachers from transformational biblical integration as there are teachers. And these reasons range from

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[54] Smith, "Biblical Integration," 5-6.

[55] Korniejczuk and Kijai, "Integrating Faith and Learning," 84.

seemingly insignificant to very philosophical. This section will explore some of the most common reasons for neglecting biblical integration.

Nancy Pearcey writes, "The only way to stand against such a comprehensive naturalistic worldview, as Abraham Kuyper said, is by articulating a Christian worldview 'of equally comprehensive and far-reaching power.' We must prepare young people before they leave for college by teaching them that Christianity is not just religious truth but the truth about all reality. It is total truth."[56] This seems to explain a main reason for teachers not biblically integrating well—either they do not believe the truth and power of the biblical worldview is sufficient or they believe it but do not live it. In light of the research, a realistic conclusion must be that the majority of Christian teachers themselves do not have an integrated biblical worldview.

Culture is increasingly removing biblical thought from the public forum. J.P. Moreland writes,

> Most people have little or no understanding of a Christian way of seeing the world, nor is a Christian worldview an important participant in the way we as a society frame and debate issues in the public square. Three of the major centers of influence in our culture—the university, the media, and the government—are largely devoid of serious religious discussion. More often than not, [however], Christian perspectives are simply ignored and not covered at all.[57]

Inferiority and pride as a combined reason is presented by Moreland. On the one hand many Christians feel like they do not have "all the answers," and thus feel inferior and afraid to introduce biblical worldview into their teaching. On the other hand, many feel like their knowledge of biblical worldview is extensive since, "they've been a Christian so long," when in actuality, they do not know much.[58]

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[56] Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 11, quoted in Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 224.

[57] James Porter Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul*, rev. and updated ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 32.

[58] Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind*, 97-98.

Stress is another potential reason biblical integration is not happening. With the increase of culture stress (crime, pandemics, safety, secularism) and the rise of mental health issues, stress is seriously affecting teachers (and students).[59] If Christian teachers believe biblical integration to be "one more thing" to add to their already hectic days, it is not surprising it does not happen. Often from the teacher's perspective biblical integration requires time, planning, extra effort, and potential failure, and they may not have the mental or spiritual reserves to undertake this.

Dualism is a factor that stifles effective biblical integration. As previously discussed, dualism is the separating of secular and sacred. Francis Schaeffer uses the illustration of a two-story house to describe the dualism we encounter: reality, science, and facts comprise the ground floor, the foundation, and everything else (religion, values, etc.) gets relegated to the upstairs.[60] When Christian educators mistakenly adopt the two-story philosophy, genuine biblical integration will be difficult at best, impossible at worst.

Another distractor from biblical integration in Christian schools is legalism. Just by existing as a Christian institution, Christian schools are easily susceptible to legalism which can be defined as anything "added to" Scripture and interpreted as either *works* or *requirements*. Often legalism emerges when a Christian elevates their personal preferences to the level of Scripture. In his book, *The Lordship of Christ*, Vern Poythress describes legalism as, "Norms [that] can begin to function like extrabiblical standards that govern people's lives."[61] In a school setting these *norms* can inadvertently be communicated as dress code, certain behaviors, drinking, cussing, etc. And taken to the

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[59] Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure* (New York: Penguin, 2018), 143-61.

[60] Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy: The Three Essential Books in One Volume* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1990).

[61] Vern S. Poythress, *The Lordship of Christ: Serving Our Savior All of the Time, in All of Life, with All of Our Heart* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 148.

extreme, this type of legalism becomes associated not *with* Christianity but *as*

Christianity. At that point students who reject Christianity are at risk of rejecting a false

Christianity and the Christian school has failed in its mission.

Biblical Worldview Immersion

Fortunately, Christian education has some new concepts allowing Christian

schools and Christian school teachers to rethink transformational biblical integration. In

his book, *Beyond Biblical Integration*, Erdvig argues for a concept that redefines biblical

integration, making the much needed transition from biblical integration as a *thing to do*

towards biblical integration as a *way of being.* He illustrates the need for biblical

immersion by using this illustration,

> We perceive that, at some time in scholastic history, academic learning marched off
> into one corner, and biblical worldview sloughed off into another, and ever since
> then they've been detached, or dis-integrated. Now, almost like a referee in a boxing
> match, Christian educators are trying to bring the two back into the center of the
> ring, working hard to make sure they play nicely together. The idea here is that they
> have to coax the two from their respective corners. They only do that coaxing a few
> times throughout the day, when it's time for biblical worldview integration to
> happen. As a result, most of the time they're involved with learning out in the
> middle of the ring, while biblical worldview sits quietly in the corner by itself,
> waiting to be called up for the game. Then frequently, periodically, or only
> occasionally, they summon biblical worldview to center ring to have its rightful
> moments in the classroom. The frequency and effectiveness with which they do this
> is largely dependent on the teacher's prowess in the ring…This is not reflective of
> reality. It's a perception of reality, and the key is not merely adding a column of
> biblical worldview in lesson plans.[62]

Sadly, this has become the reality most Christian schools are facing. Erdvig

mentions other reasons why he thinks the current model of integration is not working.

Most of the models are very tedious, dealing with lesson plans and lots of preparation,

which takes up too much time for the classroom teacher.[63] It is not sustainable. Using

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[62] Erdvig, *Beyond Biblical Integration*, 24.

[63] Erdvig, *Beyond Biblical Integration*, 26-27.

Deuteronomy 6:7-9[64] and 11:18-20[65] as an example of how Moses instructed the Hebrews to fully educate their children (day-to-day, and integrated throughout their everyday lives), Erdvig depicts biblical worldview immersion as,

> When it comes to the actual day-to-day teaching, every teacher has been trained to think through the worldview implications of *how* they teach, not just *what* they teach…Teachers in this school also know that the truth needs to be deeply processed by students, not merely consumed. This processing by students is designed to help them develop their worldview and is done in the context of authentic relationships…All this takes place in classrooms that are physically, emotionally, and spiritually arranged to support worldview development…Lesson planning is as much about designing an environment for learning as it is planning content to transmit.[66]

Biblical worldview immersion addresses the how and why of what Christian teachers and Christian schools are actually doing—it is the difference between a public school with a Christian veneer and a school that educates Christianly with the desire to form disciples. It is ultimately a change of perspective that influences every part of Christian schooling.

The goal of this chapter was to lay a foundation for this study by means of an extensive literature review focused on the issues of Christian educational philosophy, worldview, and biblical integration. These three issues greatly contribute to authentic transformation in that they are philosophical in nature, essentially unknown to the student yet forming the student experience. In chapter three the emphasis shifts to the topic of Christian teachers and today's learners as they relate to strengthening transformation in Christian education.

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[64] Deut 6:7-9 says, "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" (NIV).

[65] Deut 11: 18-20 says, "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" (NIV).

[66] Erdvig, *Beyond Biblical Integration*, 29-30.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW:
TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

Teachers

Within formal education there is no disputing Christian school teachers are the biggest influence on students and biblical integration. Two stalwarts of Christian education claim the teacher is the most important component. Frank Gaebelein in his formative book, *The Pattern of God's Truth* states, "The fact is inescapable; the world view of the teacher, in so far as he is effective, gradually conditions the world view of the pupil…In one way or another, every teacher expresses the convictions he lives by, whether they be spiritually positive or negative…[there is] no Christian education without Christian teachers."[1]

Kingdom Education author, Glen Schultz echoes Gaebelein, "The most important factor in the development of a young person's worldview is the influence of his teachers."[2] This should be good news for Christian educators! It means regardless of whatever else is occurring (or not occurring) in a school, the teacher has control of what transpires in their own classroom.

Much has been written on "what makes a good Christian school teacher" and what follows will be a compilation of these contributions. They are organized using the model from educator and author, Joe Neff in his simple yet insightful book called, *Building Biblical Worldview: The Three Loves*. Neff's model for biblical integration is

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[1] Frank Ely Gaebelein, *The Pattern of God's Truth: Problems of Integration in Christian Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 37.

[2] Glen Schultz, *Kingdom Education: God's Plan for Educating Future Generations* (Nashville: Lifeway, 1998), 51.

the convergence of the following: the teacher's love for God, love for subject, and love for students. More will be explored about the *Three Loves* in a later chapter.

Love of God

In his book, *The Courage to Teach*, author Parker Palmer writes, "Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together."[3] The Bible takes seriously one's character and influence.[4] Titus 2:7-8 states, "Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us." This verse is a reminder of the seriousness of teaching and the impact of influence. In his book, *Philosophy and Education*, George Knight rightly states that, "Qualification number one for Christian teachers is that they have a personal saving relationship with Jesus."[5] Only from this saving relationship and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can other desirable characteristics emerge.

In Chadwick's estimation the "missing teacher ingredient" is integrity, in which he describes, "Integrity is wholeness…Many times we demonstrate certain qualities at certain times or in certain areas or even on certain days, but we do not do it consistently in the totality or in the whole of our life…A man or woman of integrity is not fractionalized."[6] Using the example of King David, Chadwick explains having integrity means when we become aware of our sin, we respond by pursuing wholeness

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[3] Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, 20th anniversary ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2017), 2.

[4] See 1 Cor 11:1; Jas 3:1-2; 2 Tim 2:15; Matt 5:19; Matt 28:20; Heb 5:12.

[5] George R. Knight, *Philosophy & Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 4th ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006), 220.

[6] Ronald P. Chadwick, *Christian School Curriculum: An Integrated Approach* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1990), 19.

through confession and sorrow. Proverbs 20:7 says, "The righteous who walks in his integrity—blessed are his children after him!" (ESV). The Christian teacher must be a person that models a life of integrity.

Palmer adds another characteristic for the teacher: identity. It is not only what we *project* that is important, it is what we *are*. For followers of Jesus our identity must be who we are in Christ. Palmer explains, "In every class I teach, my ability to connect with my students, and to connect them with the subject, depends less on the methods I use, than on the degree to which I know and trust my selfhood [my true biblical identity]— and am willing to make it available and vulnerable in the service of learning."[7]

A Christian teacher's biblical identity is formed through being a student of God's Word—striving for growth in Christ's likeness. This growth, and being used as God's instrument, is recognized as a vibrant relationship through the spiritual disciplines and by evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in the classroom and the life of the teacher. Through a life of integrity and identity the Christian teacher is equipped to assist students in their culmination of wholeness through reconciliation and redemption of *all* aspects of their lives.

Over time the teacher will serve many roles, some more difficult than others. Gangel lists several suggestions for integrating teachers. The first is, "Every teacher must at least be an amateur theologian."[8] By amateur he means *not professional* rather than *inexperienced.* Christian schools hire teachers that must be informed and knowledgeable about their subject. But teaching at a Christian school automatically makes the Christian teacher an *expert* on Christianity in the eyes of her students. These connections are made within the student regardless of how the teacher feels about it. Much damage can be done when students look at teachers as model Christians, and those teachers fail miserably at

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[7] Palmer, *Courage to Teach*, 10-11.

[8] Kenneth O. Gangel, "Integrating Faith and Learning: Principles and Process," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (June 1978): 106.

living like a Christian. Another suggestion is teachers need to "walk a carefully balanced line between openmindedness and unchallengeable doctrine."[9] Most schools have open-handed and close-handed issues which help the teacher know when there is room for opinions or interpretation of Scripture, and when something is not debatable.[10] These guidelines are also helpful for preventing legalism. Gangel concludes, "The task of integration should be approached with reverence, relevance, and relaxation."[11] One cannot get too anxious over integration. Jesus does not need defenders, just authentic followers.

Love of Subject

Love of subject within the Three Loves structure refers to everything a teacher does for their art—pedagogy, grading, assessment, presentation, training, critical thinking habits, good questioning, behavior management, etc. A teacher must be prepared for anything and surprised at nothing. Truly good teachers make learning joyful. And good Christian teachers have the task of biblical worldview immersion. Part of how one accomplishes that is through their love of subject—knowing how their particular subject fits into God's metanarrative and then communicating it in a way their particular students will understand.

Professor Howard Hendricks in his wide reaching book, *Teaching to Change Lives*, addresses the art of teaching. One of his "Seven Laws of Teaching" is the law of activity, which is, "maximum learning is always the result of maximum involvement."[12]

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[9] Gangel, "Integrating Faith and Learning," 108.

[10] Open-handed issues are those that can be viewed or interpreted somewhat loosely by denominations. Although it varies for every school, examples might be baptism, the Lord's Supper, and days of creation. Close-handed issues are usually seen as integral to Christianity and might include the Trinity, the virgin birth, and the resurrection of Christ.

[11] Gangel, "Integrating Faith and Learning," 108.

[12] Howard G. Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1987), 56.

The activity, however, must be *meaningful* which he describes as needing an element of freedom, put to use immediately, with an objective, providing a *what* and *why,* and relevant to the student.[13]

Hendricks also says, "Don't forget what business we're in—the business of communication. Communication is the reason for our existence as teachers. It's also our number one teaching problem."[14] In *Kingdom Education,* Schultz illustrates the three spheres of a teacher's influence through concentric circles. The smallest circle is content, *what* we say. The next circle is communication, or how we *say* it. The final outer circle is conduct, how we *live.*

It is true teachers need to know their subject thoroughly, however they also need to know how to leverage their influence for the greatest results. Educator, Stuart Fowler writes,

> Effective teaching relies on yet another way of knowing and another kind of knowledge. As a social artisan the teacher shapes the social environment to serve practical educational purposes. The factors that need to be considered in achieving an effective learning environment are infinitely invariable…Effective teachers must know their students, not as theoretical types, but as complex and unique individuals; they must know the educational context not as a school like all other schools but as a unique learning environment shaped in distinctive ways by the social context within which it is located.[15]

Teachers need to recognize *everything* contributes to learning. Sometimes this is referred to as hidden curriculum. Earlier in this study it was referred to as unintended consequences. Good teachers think through the learning experience of their students including aspects of lighting, seating, furniture arrangement, temperature, smells, wall hangings, décor, classroom procedures, and classroom rhythms. All of these components

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[13] Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives*, 61-69.

[14] Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives*, 69.

[15] Stuart Fowler, "Unearthing Gifts with Multiple Intelligences and Other Tools," in *The Crumbling Walls of Certainty: Towards a Christian Critique of Postmodernity and Education,* ed. Ian Lambert and Suzanne Mitchell (Sydney, New South Wales: CSAC, 1997), 139-40.

positively or negatively affect learning, and ultimately the biblical worldview example being modeled.[16]

Love of Students

Neff, author of *The Three Loves* states, "Without a love for God we will love students only in part or in the shallows, not all the time, and not deeply…Love for a student has nothing to do with the student…There is nothing that will sustain a teacher like love for students. And nothing that will be more obvious to students when it is absent."[17]

Another law of Hendricks is the law of the heart. "Teaching that impacts is not head to head, but heart to heart."[18] He goes on to list three things anyone can do to become a person of impact: (1) "Know your students," (2) "Earn the right to be heard," and (3) "Be willing to become vulnerable before your students."[19] These suggestions might seem counter-intuitive or risky. They are. But if the teaching and modeling of a biblical worldview is the objective, "realness" is the path. Palmer speaks of this vulnerability, "Teaching tugs at the heart, opens the heart—and the more one loves teaching, the more heartbreaking it can be. The courage to teach is the courage to keep one's heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able so that teacher and students and subject can be woven into the fabric of community that learning, and living, require."[20]

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[16] Roger C. S. Erdvig, *Beyond Biblical Integration: Immersing You and Your Students in a Biblical Worldview* (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Ministries, 2020), 218-19.

[17] Joe Neff, *Building Biblical Worldview: The Three Loves* (Little Rock, AR: Rooted Schools, 2016), 91-92.

[18] Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives*, 85.

[19] Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives*, 93-95.

[20] Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 11-12.

Another way to love students is through humor. Education professor Claudia Cornett proposes that humor enhances the learning process as it "stimulates creative problem solving, integrates the socially isolated, increases attention and retention across curricular areas, [and] reveals diverse cultural values."[21] Laughter promotes a positive social environment and also creates breaks in the instruction for processing and socialization. Shared humor solidifies community; selfish humor destroys community. The teacher's role is to model for the students age-appropriate humor for their specific classroom.

Author Clifton Taulbert highlights habits for loving students in his book, *Eight Habits of the Heart for Educators*,

1. Nurturing attitude—characterized by unselfish caring, supportiveness, and a willingness to share time,

2. Responsibility—showing and encouraging a personal commitment to each task,

3. Dependability—being there for others through all the time of their lives, a steady influence that makes tomorrow a welcome event,

4. Friendship—the habit that binds people together when we take pleasure in each other's company, listen, laugh, and share good times and bad,

5. Brotherhood—reaches beyond comfortable relationships to extend a welcome to those who may be different from ourselves,

6. High Expectations—believing that others can be successful, telling them so, and praising their accomplishments,

7. Courage—standing up and doing the right thing, speaking out on behalf of others, and making a commitment to excellence in the face of adversity or the absence of support,

8. Hope—believing in tomorrow—going beyond what we see because we have learned to see with our hearts.[22]

There are many ways of expressing love for students. Ultimately, teachers will [need to] find the best way to communicate love to their students. Neff concludes this concept,

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[21] Claudia E. Cornett and Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, "Learning Through Laughter . . . Again" (Bloomington, IN: ERIC Clearinghouse, 2001), 4.

[22] Clifton L. Taulbert, *Eight Habits of the Heart for Educators: Building Strong School Communities Through Timeless Values* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2006), 27.

Besides love for students being our motivation, love is also part of the content that we want students to learn. If students can see the love we have for God and the love we have for our subject, they will more likely catch the same loves. They will at least try to understand what makes a teacher so different, so passionate. A seed in some, a fertilizer in others, a greenhouse for all. We not only need to love students, but they need to know we love them. There is a difference, and a significant one.[23]

Research: National Collaborative Research on How Students Learn Integration

The research is clear about what factors best promote transformational biblical integration. Despite the consistency of the research results, multiple studies will be included to underscore the overwhelming data.

In 2004 a final report was released sharing results of the longest studies of integration ever performed. The "scope is national collaboration research spanning ten years and more than 5,000 data points drawn from student perceptions of over 80 faculty members at the four evangelical schools with the longest standing accreditation with the American Psychological Association (APA)."[24]

The studies desired to hear from students about how *they* say they learn integration. Collaborators, Randall Sorenson, Rodger Bufford, Kimberley Derflinger, and Mark McMinn write,

If anything at all is disturbing about what they have to tell us, it is that how they say they learn integration and how we think to teach it are often not the same and are sometimes even inimical. This is because our various substantive models of integration offer nothing by themselves to assure us that students exposed to these models will encounter the relational process that students say is necessary for integration to occur.[25]

It is abundantly clear that this group of studies, completed over a decade and with similar results, reveal the success of biblical integration lies squarely with the

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[23] Neff, *Building Biblical Worldview*, 95.

[24] Rodger K. Bufford et al., *National Collaborative Research on How Students Learn Integration: Final Report*, Faculty Publications - Grad School Clinical Psychology, Paper 55, 2004, https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/gscp_fac/55, 355.

[25] Bufford et al., *National Collaborative Research*, 355.

teacher/mentor.[26] Authentic spiritual transformation most likely occurs in classrooms with teachers relationally focused by modeling their own faith walk with authenticity and vulnerability, and personally caring for students. Part of what makes a great teacher is the desire to know and understand their learners. The next section explores the students, the nuances within this generation of learners, and why this knowledge contributes to authentic student transformation.

Learners

As Christian educators understand the great significance of teachers' relationships with their students, it is imperative for teachers to understand those students both individually and corporately. Part of the *love of students* is understanding their generation's characteristics, their culture, their challenges, and their promise.

Imago Dei

To teach Christianly is to view all aspects of teaching through a biblical ethic. Naturally, the way in which Christian educators view students' needs to be based in Scripture. Students should be regarded as made in the image of God (*imago dei* in Latin)

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[26] Several other studies attest to the same outcome. Elizabeth Hall, Jennifer Ripley, Fernando Garzon, and Michael Mangis discovered five traits regarding professors' ability to successfully biblically integrate: self-revealing, caring, welcoming, dedicated, and open-minded. Self-revealing was defined as a professor having a personal relationship with God that they communicated to students in an emotionally authentic way. Words used by the students to describe self-revealing included transparent, vulnerable, open, humble, and honest. M. Elizabeth Lewis Hall et al., "The Other Side of the Podium: Student Perspectives on Learning Integration," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 37, no. 1 (2009): 17. Another university study on the integration of faith and learning was conducted in 2007 by Michael Sherr, George Huff, and Mary Curran. The purpose of this study was to determine the most significant factors contributing to students' perception of integration by professors. The results were: passion for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; a sense of being accountable to the Lord; a commitment to the relationship that develops over time; faculty who remained committed to their beliefs; caring for the whole development of the students, not just academic; faculty that Creates a group culture that elicits feelings of belonging, acceptance, and commitment; and faculty efforts to integrate faith and learning appeared natural and authentic. Michael Sherr, George Huff, and Mary Curran, "Student Perceptions of Salient Indicators of Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL): The Christian Vocation Model," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 16, no. 1 (2007): 21-24. Deborah Moore conducted research with teachers of ACSI Christian schools to determine the most common teacher characteristics relating to intentionality in student spiritual formation (preK-12). The three variables most common among all groups were Christlike attitude, classroom climate, and the practice and/or modeling of spiritual disciplines. Deborah L. Moore, "Most Common Teacher Characteristics That Relate to Intentionality in Student Spiritual Formation" (EdD diss., Columbia International University, 2011), 169.

from Genesis 1:26-27. This includes *all* students regardless of their relationship with God, due to what is often called the *common grace* God bestows on all of his human creation. With this image, Christian teachers can better envision each student, uniquely designed, as reconciled, redeemed, and in right relationship with God.

It is also valuable to remember all of God's creation is fallen and sinful. That is how students and teachers alike fit into the four act biblical metanarrative—all are affected by the fall. This is often difficult to recognize in the daily routines of a classroom of students. It is the *big picture* teachers must keep in perspective especially on demanding days. The teacher's job is to help students understand their own fallenness, and therefore their need for a savior, *while at the same time* acknowledging their own sinfulness. This can be modeled authentically for students by asking for forgiveness when mistakes are made, by striving for peace in the classroom despite stressors and moods, and by demonstrating gentleness as the class authority figure.

In his book *Teaching Redemptively,* author Donovan Graham provides Christian educators several reminders. The first is that when redemption occurs in students (healing, renewing, restoring) it is God's doing; teachers are simply instruments in God's hands. Secondly, teachers must realize not all students will be recipients of God's saving grace. Many heard Jesus' message and chose to walk away. Christian school classrooms will have a mixture of students and the teacher's job is to teach and love them all as image bearers. Graham states, "Third, even though not all people will receive the ultimate blessings of redemption, in this age all of humankind benefits from God's gracious act. The rain falls on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45)."[27]

Through redeemed teachers, God can allow His culture to permeate classrooms in the following ways: healing, reconciliation, renewal, deliverance, justice, peace.[28]

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[27] Donovan L. Graham, *Teaching Redemptively: Bringing Grace and Truth into Your Classroom*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design Publications, 2009), 101-2.

[28] Graham, *Teaching Redemptively*, 104-5.

Actively experiencing and receiving these life-giving concepts, students are hopefully planted in healthy soil for the seeds of salvation to take root.

Gen Z

It is imperative for educators to understand the nuances of the students they teach. The generation currently in school right now (K-12) is Generation Z; anyone born 1999-2015. They are a generation of firsts, and the unprecedented generation to experience such a large divide between themselves and their parents. The following events have happened in their lifetime: creation of the internet, 24 hour cable news, smart phones, the celebration of LGBTQ+, racial tension, 9/11 attacks, human cloning, Harry Potter, global financial crisis, first black president, polarizing politics, 5G, self-driving cars, school mass shootings, social media, and a global pandemic. Barna research has identified six trends at play which form this generation: they are screen users, their worldview is post-Christian, they do not desire to cause offense, true safety is a myth, diversity is important, and their parents are both *over* and *under*-protective.

GenZ researcher Jonathan Morrow says this generation fears being intolerant which appears as judgmental. As a result, absolutes are uncomfortable for these youth. They are also experiencing a crisis of knowledge. Science is seen as "hard knowledge," but morality and spirituality are relegated to opinions, not facts.[29] GenZ also collects their knowledge through snippets of news and information primarily through social media. Many realize this information has been curated by groups with particular agendas, which seems to cause an overall distrust of any media, further perpetuating the problem.

Researcher Marc Brackett, author of *Permission to Feel*, reports,

> One in five American children is experiencing a mental health issue such as depression or anxiety, and over half of all seventeen-year-olds report having either experienced trauma directly, ranging from neglect to abuse, or witnessed it at least once as a child. By failing to recognize trauma's effect on learning, educators risk

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[29] Jonathan Morrow, "Jonathan Morrow on Building Lasting Faith in Gen Z," July 19, 2018, https://www.barna.com/gen-z-qa-with-jonathan-morrow/.

compounding the trauma and jeopardizing students' prospects in school. For many children, school might be the only place any of these issues are recognized and addressed.[30]

GenZ is accumulating many positive characteristics (like holding brands accountable, taking social issues very seriously, being digitally savvy, and being thrifty), but the research indicates the culture is capturing the hearts of our next generation.

Challenges

In his book *Think Christianly*, pastor and author Jonathan Morrow lists some challenges when working with today's students,

1. "Boredom and apathy"—living overstimulated technological lives, students find it difficult to focus and pay attention without entertainment.[31]

2. "Relational disconnection"—a meta study of the mental health of today's youth revealed that one of the main causes is the lack of meaningful relationships.

3. "Intellectual disengagement"—today's youth have not been taught how to think and left to their own devices, intellectual laziness abounds.[32]

The authors of *Hidden Worldviews*, Steve Wilkens and Mark Sanford divide their book into eight worldview stories being told to GenZ. The following stories are certainly recognizable and crucial to comprehend when teaching current students: individualism, consumerism, nationalism, moral relativism, scientific naturalism, the New Age, postmodern tribalism, and salvation by therapy.[33] The speed at which these worldviews have become *the* narratives in Western society should be alarming, but also a significant reminder to the teachers of this generation that the current students are

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[30] Marc A. Brackett, *Permission to Feel* (New York: Celadon Books, 2019), 192.

[31] Jonathan Morrow, *Think Christianly: Looking at the Intersection of Faith and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 54.

[32] Morrow, *Think Christianly*, 55.

[33] Steve Wilkens and Mark L. Sanford, *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories That Shape Our Lives* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), table of contents. Individualism—I am the center of the universe; Consumerism—I am what I own; Nationalism—My nation, under God; Moral Relativism—Absolute truth depends; Scientific Naturalism—Only matter matters; The New Age—Are we Gods or are we God's; Postmodern Tribalism—My tribe/My worldview.

growing up in a very different world, one many of their teachers have not experienced and cannot truly understand.

Moreland explains the difficulty in relating to and working with what he calls the *empty self*. He writes,

> In modern American culture, what psychologists call the *empty self* has emerged in epidemic proportion. The empty self is constituted by a set of values, motives, and habits of thought, feeling, and behavior that permits and eliminates the life of the mind and makes maturation in the way of Christ extremely difficult. There are several traits of the empty self that undermine intellectual growth and spiritual development.[34]

> The empty self is inordinately individualistic . . . infantile . . . narcissistic . . . passive . . . sensate . . . has lost the art of developing an interior life . . . is hurried and busy.[35]

It is distressing to imagine a generation growing up with these traits, however, Christian schools can be a refuge with accurate information and the desire to change what students experience while in their care. Gospel living is compelling, and students will be drawn to genuine models.

Opportunities

There are plenty of opportunities to better understand and positively influence GenZ. Recent Barna research describes trends that will affect how we teach and disciple the next generation.

1. "We must help the next generation wisely navigate screen time." Current students rank an all-time high for hours daily spent on a screen.

2. "We must integrate the response to injustice." Christian adults must engage with current students about diversity and particularly racial injustice.

3. "We must address issues of loneliness and anxiety in young adults." The statistics have even grown higher in the face of the pandemic. Mental health issues are reportedly epidemic.

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[34] J. P. Moreland, *Love God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul*, rev. and updated ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 88.

[35] Moreland, *Love God with All Your Mind,* 88-92.

4. "We must support and encourage resilient disciples to grow their faith." GenZ is less likely to be connected to a church, however we should focus on what has kept the 10% of Christian twenty-somethings that Barna describes as "resilient disciples."

5. "We must reframe the notion of outreach and faith-sharing with the next generation." In a recent Barna report 47 percent of practicing Christian millennials say evangelism is wrong.[36]

There is some debate about "how far" Christian education should go in discipling students since this role belongs primarily to parents and the local church. However, given the dire circumstances and the information known about GenZ, if the Christian school is *able* to make a difference in the spiritual formation of the next generation, then they should.

In his book *You Lost Me*, researcher David Kinnaman lists six themes that came from the research and individual stories of this generation's disconnect with the church. Kinnaman states, "I want to reiterate that people in every generation may experience similar feelings. However, the combination of our cultural moment and the discontinuity of the next generation, make these attitudes among young adults particularly combustible. Many twentysomethings are not hesitating, as have previous generations, to burn the bridges that once connected them to their spiritual heritage."[37] Kinnaman continues, "The following are broad reasons they are dropping out. They find the church to be overprotective . . . shallow . . . anti-science . . . repressive . . . exclusive . . . and doubtless."[38]

Thankfully, this research is readily available. Never before has a generation of

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[36] Barna Research, "Five Trends Shaping the Next Season of Next Gen Discipleship," August 19, 2020, https://www.barna.com/research/five-themes-to-frame-next-gen-discipleship/.

[37] David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church—and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 92.

[38] Kinnaman and Hawkins, *You Lost Me*, 92-93. The book goes into more depth addressing each of these topics, but the following makes them more clear: Overprotective—the church is seen as a creativity killer; Shallow—the church is seen as boring with cheesy platitudes and no way of integrating all of life; Anti-science—they have come to believe that faith and science are incompatible, and the church is not helping reverse that belief; Repressive—the church is seen as rule-oriented, especially around sexual mores; Exclusive—this generation has been raised to value tolerance and they see the church as intolerant; Doubtless—the church is not a place that allows doubts causing questioning young people to look for answers elsewhere.

adults known more about how to reach the next generation. Although answers to these systemic problems are challenging, at least the problems are known and can be addressed. Wilkins and Sanford report the answer to the question, "Why do some Christians leave college, and five to ten years later they have also left Christianity?" They state,

> *Without exception*, those who successfully integrated faith with life followed three practices. They developed a relationship with a mentor who practiced an active Christian life. Second, they met regularly with peers who were deeply committed to living out their Christianity. Finally, they had developed a Christian worldview sufficient to meet the challenges of the competing worldviews they encountered after leaving college.[39]

Each of these three practices is under the purview of Christian education, specifically Christian teachers. It is no small task to accomplish these practices, however what might result if Christian schools made it their mission to provide the environment for the practices to take root, and encouraged students towards these practices? If each student graduating from a Christian school developed these three practices, GenZ would and could potentially change the world.

The teacher-student relationship is vital for spiritual formation. The research is clear that the teacher—their personality, relationship with God, ability to create an environment, and attention to the tone in their classroom—is the strongest determiner for authentic student spiritual transformation. The love of God, love of student, and love of subject *all* need to be evident in the classroom. Learners need to be valued as made in the image of God. Particulars for each generation come and go, but the foundational truth of students as image bearers never changes. Chapter four will more deeply examine the literature surrounding formation and the big ideas and techniques teachers need to utilize to best maximize for authentic student spiritual transformation.

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[39] Wilkens and Sanford, *Hidden Worldviews*, 25. The authors are referring to Steve Garber's *The Fabric of Faithfulness*.

CHAPTER 4

UNDERSTANDING TRANSFORMATIONAL
INTEGRATION

The understanding of formation for educational and spiritual purposes is quite extensive and much is beyond the scope of this study. However, Christian educators must begin to talk about *formation* rather than *teaching* since formation is actually what is happening; and many would argue formation is exactly what *should* be happening. But until Christian schools recognize and restructure for effective spiritual formation, they will continue to merely *teach* and wonder why their students are graduating as nominal Christians eventually walking away from the faith. This chapter will examine formation from several different angles and how formation affects authentic spiritual formation in the classroom.

In 1976, theologian and educator John Westerhoff wrote a book entitled, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* Not surprisingly, the theme of the book was how Christian education could build faith in children while following the public *schooling* model of education. He said at that time, "All this must change."[1] Sadly, it did not change. The efforts of Christian educators, however sacrificial and sincere they may be, will not produce the desired results if they are focusing on the wrong thing.

Formation in Christian Education

Christian educator, Nicholas Wolterstorff explains the goal of education, "The education of a child is always, I would say, either tacitly or explicitly pointed toward a certain way of being in the world for that child…But always the educator is aiming for

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[1] John H. Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* 3rd rev. ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2012), 8.

certain changes in the child." In essence, teachers are teaching for tomorrow today.[2] Generally speaking, education is in the business of producing an end product. Much debate surrounds what this end product should know, do, be, contribute, affect, value, and believe. Educators can surely all agree that formation of students *is* occurring, perhaps just not the kind of formation that was intended. Wolterstorff continues the purpose of Christian education "is to lead the child into a life of keeping faith with the God whom we remember and expect. . . . The Christian way of being in the world is a life of responsible, worshipful, and appreciative gratitude. Education is for that."[3]

The Christian *way of being* can be ambiguous in the current culture. Perhaps this is why there are many denominations and statements of belief. Wolterstorff has some thoughts on the Christian way of being he envisions. Wolterstorff looks to Scripture in search of what God's goals might be. What he finds is God's kingdom here on earth with God reigning. This reigning of God produces peace, or the more biblical version— shalom, which is present when one is at peace within their various relationships: with self, God, family, community, and nature.[4]

Whether shalom as Wolterstorff describes it is the Christian *way of being*, or another biblical picture is the Christian way of being, formation is the process of getting there. Christian professor and researcher, David I. Smith explores this formation in his book, *On Christian Teaching*. He states, "An account of Christian education that focuses only on the truth of *what* is taught, and fails to address the meanings molded through *how* it is taught and learned is at best incomplete."[5] He goes on to explain a shift of focus to

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[2] Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, *Educating for Life: Reflections on Christian Teaching and Learning* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 92-93.

[3] Wolterstorff, *Educating for Life*, 99-101.

[4] Wolterstorff, *Educating for Life*, 101. Isa 11:6-8 used to describe shalom.

[5] David I. Smith, *On Christian Teaching: Practicing Faith in the Classroom* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2018), 4.

explore this kind of formation, "will involve a particular kind of attentiveness to embodied practice that does not let go of our more common focus on good thinking but expands its context."[6] Character formation of any kind is accomplished by practice. If this practice is not intentionally planned, it will not happen.

When asked in an interview about spiritual formation in Christian schools, spiritual formation authorities, Dallas Willard and Richard Foster both had concerns. Willard states,

> What sometimes goes on in all sorts of Christian institutions is not formation of people in the character of Christ; it's teaching of outward conformity. You don't get in trouble for not having the character of Christ, but you do if you don't obey the laws. It is so important to understand that character formation is not behavior modification. Lots of people misunderstand it and put it in the category of Alcoholics Anonymous. But in spiritual formation, we're not talking about behavior modification.[7]

Foster adds,

> Many Christian institutions have a system by which you find out whether you're in or out. Sometimes it's rules; sometimes it's a certain belief system. You just look sometimes at what they produce…Do they really love their enemies? If that's the case, great. If it's about the number of verses you can memorize of the answers you can give to a certain set of questions, while you're full of bitterness or pride—that's not spiritual formation.[8]

A metaphor used before in this study was of preparing the *soil* (the school environment, the formational practices, and the students) to best receive the *seed* (God's gospel of Jesus) to encourage and promote *growth* (spiritual formation, maturity of students, shalom).

Spiritual Formation

In its most simple form, spiritual formation is the process of becoming more Christ-like. Theologian Dallas Willard writes, "Although every human being is formed

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[6] David Smith and James K. A. Smith, eds., *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2011), 10.

[7] Agnieszka Tennant, "The Making of the Christian: Richard J. Foster and Dallas Willard on the Difference between Discipleship and Spiritual Formation," *Christianity Today*, October 2005, 2.

[8] Tennant, "The Making of the Christian," 2.

spiritually—for better or for worse—spiritual formation for the Christian refers to the *Holy Spirit-driven process* of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself. To the degree spiritual formation is successful, the outer life of the individual becomes a natural expression of the character and teachings of Jesus."[9] According to Willard, there are six basic elements of a person— six parts that make a whole. Spiritual formation must occur in each part to make a fully integrated person. He places these in the best order for spiritual transformation according to him:

1. Thoughts (images, concepts, judgments, inferences);
2. Feelings (sensations, emotions; thoughts and feelings always go together);
3. Heart, also called 'spirit' and 'will' (choice, decision; reflected as character);
4. Body (action; interacts with the physical world);
5. Social context (personal and structural relations with others);
6. Soul (the factor that integrates all of the above to form one life).[10]

Willard adds, "Spiritual formation in Christ is the process leading toward that ideal end (all six parts are attuned to God)—the self fully integrated and attuned to God. To mature in spiritual formation means to love God with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself."[11] There is nothing simple about spiritual formation, and there are several factors that never change. The first is spiritual formation takes *time*. The second is spiritual formation does *not happen accidently*; it requires effort and intention. Third is spiritual formation takes place through *relationships*; it cannot happen in a vacuum. Lastly, spiritual formation is *individual*; it does not happen the same way for everyone.

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[9] Dallas Willard and Don Simpson, *Revolution of Character: Discovering Christ's Pattern for Spiritual Transformation* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2005), 16.

[10] Willard and Simpson, *Revolution of Character*, 25.

[11] Willard and Simpson, *Revolution of Character*, 26.

Formation in Loves and Liturgies

Professor and researcher James K. A. Smith wrote a fascinating book about human formation called *Desiring the Kingdom*. He poses a series of questions at the start of the book, "What if the primary work of education was the transforming of our imagination rather than the saturation of our intellect? And what if this had as much to do with our bodies as with our minds? What if education wasn't first and foremost about what we know, but about what we love?"[12] His premise is we are all being formed (not just in classrooms, but all the time) and what forms us is what we love and, "liturgies— whether 'sacred' or 'secular'—shape and constitute our identities by forming our most fundamental desires and our most basic attunement to the world…liturgies make us certain kinds of people."[13] In this context *liturgy* is synonymous with worship, and *worship* means to love and value, regardless of any church context.

To put together Smith's line of reasoning,

1. Formation produces a certain kind of people.

2. People are formed by the liturgies they learn.

3. People learn the liturgies of what they love and desire.

Education, then, "is a constellation of practices, rituals, and routines that inculcates a particular vision of the good life by inscribing or infusing that vision into the heart (the gut) by means of material, embodied practices."[14] If the biblical metanarrative explaining life is *the* story of Truth and beauty that provides the *best* reality of the good life and flourishing, then we in Christian education are *not* presenting this story in a compelling enough way to persuade our students to deeply love it, live it, and be formed by it. Would this not explain how Christian school graduates can describe a biblical

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[12] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Cultural Liturgies 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 18.

[13] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 25. Smith uses the term *liturgy* to describe the rituals and rhythms of the institutions through which people choose to participate because they feel they promote their own flourishing, or "the good life."

[14] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 26.

worldview and cognitively understand what it means, and yet make a conscious decision to reject that worldview and live another? We have not failed to teach a biblical worldview, we have failed in forming a discipled follower of Jesus.

The next appropriate question is *how* do we fix this? How do we form students to love the liturgies of shalom more than the liturgies of the culture? There is no recipe for formation guaranteed to work. Also, shalom communities are formed in and through relationships, and will look different and require nuances that must be discovered by each separate school. It would seem however, in light of the research presented, Christian education in general and Christian schools in particular, must reevaluate the methods and motivations of educating. The following are suggestions and ideas based on research that might contribute to a starting point for rethinking Christian education as formation.

To take Willard's spiritual formation and join it with Smith's liturgies, the best way to form disciples might be by creating environments[15] and conditions for practices and routines most likely to produce joy and love through relationships with others. Such conditions should encourage and reinforce habits inextricably linked to biblical visions of the good life. The good news is that God through the Holy Spirit is responsible for this process. However, as fellow believers and sojourners, the responsibility to assist with this process to the best of our abilities is mandated by Jesus in the Great Commission.

Formation Through the Relational
Spirituality Model

As more becomes known about the inner-workings of the human brain, more

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[15] In *The Courage to Teach*, author Parker Palmer explains what he calls *paradox and pedagogical design* in an area likely to be overlooked in formation—space. Palmer's paradoxes for space include:

> 1. The space should be bounded and open, 2. The space should be hospitable and 'charged,' 3. The space should invite the voice of the individual and the voice of the group, 4. The space should honor the 'little' stories of the students and the 'big' stories of the disciplines and traditions, 5. The space should support solitude and surround it with the resources of community, 6. The space should welcome both salience and speech. (Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, 20th anniversary ed. [Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2017], 77)

information is available to better understand spiritual formation. Christian psychologist and researcher Todd Hall has spent most of his career developing a theory of spiritual formation called the Relational Spirituality Model. Hall's simple explanation of this model is "that theology, psychology, and brain science are converging in suggesting that spiritual development is about loving relationships with God and others, and that relationships change our brain, soul and ability to love."[16]

His theory is quite complex and builds on the premise that religious spirituality and mental health are intertwined and that religious spirituality is a predictor for positive mental health outcomes.[17] Hall draws from research on object relations theory, attachment theory, and multiple code theory.[18] He presents five central organizing principles forming the basis of his theory of implicit relational representations (implicit relational representations are a human's innate and involuntary ways of knowing how to do things with intimate others developed from infancy). The five principles explain *how* our brains set a *default response* (created when we were less than a year old through our experiences with caregivers) towards relationships in our lives with others *and* with God. This default response can be changed *directly* through the same code of emotional

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[16] Todd W. Hall, "Spirituality at a Crossroads," *Biola Magazine*, 2010, 17.

[17] Todd W. Hall, "Christian Spirituality and Mental Health: A Relational Spirituality Paradigm for Empirical Research," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 23, no. 1 (2004): 66.

[18] Lisa Fritscher writes, "Object relations theory is centered on our internal relationships with others. According to this theory, our lifelong relationship skills are strongly rooted in our early attachments with our parents, especially our mothers. Objects refer to people or physical items that come to symbolically represent either a person or part of a person. Object relations, then, are our internalized relationships to those people." Lisa Fritscher, "Object Relations Theory and the Mom Factor," December 3, 2020, https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-object-relations-theory-2671995. Attachment theory explains how the parent-child relationship emerges and influences subsequent development. Saul McLeod, "Attachment Theory," February 5, 2017, https://www.simplypsychology.org/attachment.html. Wilma Bucci has developed the multiple code theory based on current work in cognitive psychology and neuroscience, to provide a view of humans as having multiple systems of experiencing and processing the world. These systems include *symbolic* (language and imagery that may be verbal or nonverbal) and *subsymbolic* processes (visceral and autonomic responses, including sensory and motoric functions); these may operate within or outside of awareness and may sometimes be characterized as unconscious. Wilma Bucci, "Multiple Code Theory and the Psychoanalytic Process: A Conversation between Wilma Bucci and Eslee Samberg," January 8, 2019, https://nypsi.org/events/multiple-code-theory-and-the-psychoanalytic-process/.

information processing that formed it, or it can be changed *indirectly* through nonverbal experience.[19] In other words, formation can happen through certain purposeful practices.

Formation as Practice

Would it be possible, then, to use the information gleaned from Hall's relational spirituality and apply it to James Smith's explanation of liturgies to form pedagogical practices and habits within the context of a classroom for the purpose of spiritual formation? Systematic theologian, Miroslav Volf writes about practices,

> People come to believe either because they find themselves already engaged in Christian practices (say, by being raised in a Christian home) or because they are attracted to them. In most cases, Christian practices come first, and Christian beliefs follow—or rather, beliefs are already entailed in practices, so that their explicit espousing becomes a matter of bringing to consciousness what is implicit in the engagement of the practice themselves.[20]

Christian educators would likely agree students from homes that employ certain spiritual practices are more open to learning and implementing spiritual practices in the classroom.

In the 1970s, educator John Westerhoff referred to the process of "shaping" students within Christian education as "catechesis," using a church history definition and not a modern secular definition, which means, "All intentional learning within a community of Christian faith and life. . . . We spend the rest of our lives involved in a process of becoming more Christian. That lifelong process is one of catechesis."[21] Within this catechesis Westerhoff suggests three categories: Formation, education, and instruction. Formation forms the body of Christ, education reforms it, and instruction builds it up.[22]

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[19] Hall, "Christian Spirituality and Mental Health," 74.

[20] Miroslav Volf, "Theology for a Way of Life," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life,* ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 256.

[21] John Westerhoff, "Formation, Education, Instruction," *Religious Education* 82, no. 4 (Fall 1987), 580.

[22] Westerhoff, "Formation, Education, Instruction," 581.

Of these three Westerhoff believes *formation* is the least understood and utilized. His outline is helpful but not fleshed out. He does, however, list some "hunches":

1. There are some ends which can only be realized within formation. Examples are faith, character, and consciousness.

2. Christians need to be intentionally formed into the faith and life of the Christian community.

3. Formation requires an intentional faith community (that is more like a family) and shares a common sacred narrative.

4. Formation processes are: ritual life, role models, human interpersonal relations, environment, social organization, behaviors, and common language.

5. Ritual participation is the key to formation.

6. Formation focuses on the *intentional* community, not the individual, however, formation requires individual time to process, reflect, and respond to the formation process to allow for ownership and individuality.

7. It seems likely formation will provide the key to education and instruction that is *Christian*.

8. Formation is necessary if students are to be motivated to use what they have learned as *Christian* for positive contributions.

9. Formation is not a linear practice and will reflect times of growth and reflection as well as potential rejection.[23]

David Smith describes formation in a classroom setting when many things are happening simultaneously, most of which are unobservable. He explains,

> Teaching is complex because human beings are complex, and to teach is to try to help human beings grow. As people interact around learning tasks, they come to them with a range of motivations, limitations, beliefs, feelings, fears, expectations, gifts, and weaknesses. How the learning unfolds is limited by physical space: the layout of the furniture, sight lines, lighting, posture, and so on. It is also influenced by timing: pace, silences, repetition, anticipation, beginnings, endings, promises, reminders. The identities and imaginations of teacher and learner come into play along with their attitudes toward each other, toward learning, and toward the subject matter.[24]

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[23] Westerhoff, "Formation, Education, Instruction," 584-91.

[24] Smith, *On Christian Teaching*, 28.

It is in and through these practices that liturgies must be built. Smith explains this kind of practice must be, "Sustained over time (not just done once); developed and engaged in by a community (not just an individual); pursued intentionally in order to perceive some desired good (not just toyed with or fallen into by accident); and sustained by a shared narrative that makes sense of it (not just done mindlessly or randomly)."[25]

This kind of practice forms character. Christian educators must quit believing that merely *telling* students Christian things will make them Christians. The *telling* is a small part in a much bigger mechanism. Much of what Christian educators are viewing as "failure" is simply not addressing the entire educational experience. Since formation is always happening, and the end result is not what was expected, then a deep examination of the formation process is in order.

Graham in *Teaching Redemptively*,

> We assume, by virtue of students' outward conformity to our expectations, that internally they have an identity rooted in Christ, and that their good works arise from true spiritual maturity and strength. However, it may never have occurred to us that *unhealthy* persons can act in a positive way if the payoff looks good enough….We readily focus on the outward effects of the fall and believe our duty is to do all we can to control and eliminate sinful outward behaviors…We may never introduce our students to what *living the gospel* is all about. Instead, we teach them to *talk* about the gospel while *living under the curse of the law*.[26]

The educational process (teaching and everything that goes with it) must demonstrate for students how to *live* the gospel.

What is being described is often referred to as *hidden curriculum* which is a collective term referring to, "All the formal and informal influences through which persons acquire their understandings and ways of living."[27] Hidden curriculum is just as determinative as overt curriculum, and in some instances, even more so. Compliance

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[25] David I. Smith, "Seeing Anew, Choosing Engagement, Reshaping Practice," *On Christian Teaching,* May 1, 2013, https://onchristianteaching.com/seeing-anew-choosing-engagement-reshaping-practice/.

[26] Donovan L. Graham, *Teaching Redemptively: Bringing Grace and Truth into Your Classroom*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design, 2009), 9.

[27]Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith*, 14.

(behavior modification) is not character formation. It seems the very nature of Christian schools is arranged for behavior modification unless the school (teachers, administration, support staff, parents, and students) is actively and intentionally working against this default through practices for character and spiritual formation.

Hospitality

Considering the breadth of practices within an educational setting, it might be difficult to know where to start. David Smith approaches this reshaping pedagogy through the framework of *hospitality* in his language classes; however, it seems this hospitality theme would be effective in other subjects. Over time Smith worked out some "hunches" he intended to work into his hospitality framework:

1. Humans—treating people as image-bearers; not just the students in the classroom, but the people encountered throughout the curriculum used in stories, illustrations, pictures, and film in order to add meaning.

2. Stories—using more narrative and listening to the stories of others for more classroom depth and intimacy.

3. Moral Significance—"I wanted to touch my students' loves, not just their vocabulary, and so would need some way of engaging them affectively and involving them in serious reflection about their own lives and identities."[28]

4. Attentiveness—love of neighbor demands slowing down and paying attention to keep from making quick judgments from superficial data.[29]

This is a small step in a particular direction of reframing educational practices. The next objective(s) would be to create learning activities that fit the subject and grade, and to ensure a strong biblical worldview was woven through the unit and assessed.

Author and teacher Carolyne Call was asked the question, "What would be different about your teaching if you thought of yourself as a host and of your students as guests?"[30] Her answer was the following three practices: hospitality (a welcoming spirit

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[28] Smith, *On Christian Teaching*, 57.

[29] Smith, *On Christian Teaching*, 56-58.

[30] Carolyne Call, "The Rough Trail to Authentic Pedagogy: Incorporating Hospitality, Fellowship, and Testimony into the Classroom," in Smith and Smith, *Teaching and Christian Practices*, 61.

shown through a meal, a home invitation, and activities designed to make students feel welcome and honored; fellowship (sharing life experiences that promote community and can also serve to build a narrative identity for a class); and testimony (sharing experiences from the students and curriculum through story).[31]

Hospitality is simply one framework with which to insert practices into the classroom. These practices, it is important to remember, are not just for "show" while the teacher's routines and pedagogy remain the same. The long-term goal is to create practices that capture the hearts and affections of students in order to transform them into Christlikeness.

What If Learning

In brainstorming with curriculum designers from various countries, David Smith and team set out to provide an outline or structure for educators to use in reimagining teaching Christianly. Smith says, "In its briefest form, the model asks teachers to consider how to *see anew*, *choose engagement*, and *reshape practice*. The overall approach is called *What If Learning*, a name derived from the strategy of approaching concrete pedagogical tasks with a questioning mindset: what if they could look different in the light of faith?"[32] Although there is much to explore within this approach, the following is a brief summary[33]:

Seeing Anew – the focus is on imagination (stories we tell ourselves and our students about what we are doing and why). How do we want ourselves and our learners

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This question was first asked in Ellen L. Marmon, "Teaching as Hospitality," *Asbury Theological Journal* 63 no. 2 (Fall 2008): 33-39.

[31] Call, "The Rough Trail," 64-70.

[32] Smith, *On Christian Teaching*, 69.

[33] A more detailed explanation can be found in Smith, *On Christian Teaching*, 68-127.

to see things differently as a result of our practices together?[34] We need to reimagine our classrooms through a "What if?" learning framework.

Choosing Engagement – the focus is on how students are involved in learning. An appropriate example of this is how we build community within the classroom, and this involves many aspects we often overlook.

Reshaping Practice – the focus is on design, how we shape and arrange the material facets (gestures, postures, images, resources, rhythms, silences, pauses, repetitions, and omissions) of teaching and learning.[35]

Smith argues that Christian teachers must closely examine their practices and check those against a Christian pedagogy rather than focusing on what to add to curriculum to make it "Christian."[36] What has been described is a reorientation to how Christian education is done; it is moving away from *Christians teaching* for the sake of spiritual formation of students.

Formation: What Students Are Saying

Christian School administrator Todd Marrah researched ACSI 6th through 12th graders' perceptions of their spiritual formation and their school's impact on it. Marrah built his study on Hall's relational spirituality model for spiritual formation in which a basic premise is all spiritual formation takes place within relationships both with God and others. Results of his study revealed four primary findings: students generally did *not* connect with God through spiritual disciplines; nearly 75% of students experienced a significant crisis (within the previous year) and grew closer to God through that; the top spiritual influencers are immediate family, other adults, friends; and lastly, the top spiritual

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[34] David I. Smith, "Seeing Anew, Choosing Engagement, Reshaping Practice," May 1, 2013, https://onchristianteaching.com/seeing-anew-choosing-engagement-reshaping-practice/.

[35] Smith, *On Christian Teaching*, 69-73.

[36] Smith, "Seeing Anew," 8.

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formation contributors in school were praise and worship, retreats, chapels, Bible courses, and faculty mentoring.[37]

To conclude, relationships with Christian adults and activities promoting spiritual community are formative to students. Christian schools must be sensitive to and proactive during times of student crisis. Spiritual disciplines need to be modeled and practiced from a young age, created in an environment most likely to produce joy and love through relationships with others (as mentioned above) for spiritual formation. It is difficult to learn spiritual disciplines by hearing about them; they must be practiced and modeled. When students' spirituality is *dependent* on significant relationships with other Christians, it is likely not strong enough to endure challenges.

Formation and Brain Research

Right Brain

Brain research is an area that continues to reveal more and more evidence of God creating human beings in his infinite wisdom to function marvelously and miraculously. One particular discovery is the function and significance of the right brain in spiritual formation.

The popular narrative about the human brain is it is made of two equal hemispheres divided in the center; the left brain is responsible for language, and analytical thought while the right brain handles creativity, pictures, and music. People are referred to as left-brained or right-brained depending on their skills and passions. This thinking is both simplistic and inaccurate. The right brain appears to have an enormous impact on our relationships with God and others as well as spiritual formation.

It is now understood human beings process information in a particular way. Information enters the brain on the back right side, travels to the front right, moves across, somewhere around the right eye, to the front left and then to the back left, making

a U shaped circuit.[38] Everything is processed this same way: a song, the smell of hot cider, a bear charging, a loving glance, and the sound of a baby cooing. What is now understood is that the right brain processes information *before* and *faster* than the left brain. Researchers Jim Wilder and Michel Hendricks in their book *The Other Half of Church* describe this processing,

> The right side starts processing our surroundings and draws conclusions before the left side is even aware of what is happening…The right hemisphere is a more powerful processor than the left and samples our environment at six times a second. The left side samples at five times a second, so we often know things faster than we are conscious of them and definitely faster than we can speak about them.[39]

The right brain controls all things relational: connections to others, who and what we love, and character formation. Generally, what is commonly associated with the *mind*, is actually occurring in the left brain: problem solving, strategies, planning, reasoning. It is possible this novel understanding of the functions of each side of the brain will further the connection of spiritual growth and formation with God's specific design of the brain.

Attachment Theory

British psychologist John Bowlby is known for developing what is now called Attachment Theory. He proposed babies attach to their mothers (or primary caregivers) through facial expressions and emotions forming a relational filter that influences the individual throughout life and is a strong determiner of the healthiness of their relationships. Neuropsychologist Allan Schore and others took Bowlby's theory even further and determined attachment actually takes place implicitly in the right brain. The human mind through the right brain determines at a very young age how to interact within relationships depending on the effectiveness of the child's primary attachments to caregivers. And this process is automatic, innate, and not within human awareness. A

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[38] Michel Hendricks and Jim Wilder, *The Other Half of Church: Christian Community, Brain Science, and Overcoming Spiritual Stagnation* (Chicago: Moody, 2020), 20.

[39] Hendricks and Wilder, *The Other Half of Church*, 21.

person's attachment filter is understood through gut feelings, emotions, bodily sensations, and implicit memory. It is not an emotion, but the strongest force in the brain. Attachment affects relationships with others *but also* with God. It is reasonable to claim one's relationship with God is *the* attachment relationship in life.[40]

Joy

Schore went on to make two other valuable discoveries. One is attachment skills could be acquired later in life for those with damaged attachment through strong relationships with securely attached individuals. This is primarily accomplished with therapists but can be effective using other meaningful relationships or a loving community.[41] The second contribution from Schore is, "The emotional energy behind loving attachment that develops both the attachment and nervous system of the infant is joy…Relational joy, rather than individual happiness, builds attachments and emotional capacity."[42]

Joy is the language and emotion that solidifies attachment through face-to-face interactions. It is like the gasoline keeping the right brain running. Wilder and Hendricks write, "The left brain runs at the speed of words; the right brain runs at the speed of joy."[43] They go on,

> When (we) compared the many Scriptures that describe God's face shining on us with what we now know about how our brains were designed, we came to three important points of convergence: (1) Joy is primarily transmitted through the face (especially the eyes) and secondarily through voice. (2) Joy is relational. It is what

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[40] Hendricks and Wilder, *The Other Half of Church*, 22-25.

[41] E. James Wilder, Fernando Garzon, and Eric L. Johnson, "A Christian Multi-Modal Approach to Therapy Utilizing Inner Healing Prayer: The Life Model," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 39, no. 1 (2020), 53.

[42] Wilder, Garzon, and Johnson, "A Christian Multi-Modal Approach," 56.

[43] Hendricks and Wilder, *The Other Half of Church*, 24.

we feel when we are with someone who is happy to be with us. Joy does not exist outside of relationship. (3) Joy is important to God and to us.[44]

Causes for lack of joy include ineffective processing of emotions, unresolved trauma, addiction, narcissism, isolation, and use of screens.[45] Joy interacts and is enabled through another requirement for healthy right brain activity—a loving community.

Hesed

Spiritual formation is character formation—growing more into the character of Jesus. This desire to grow more like him comes from an attachment (love) to him which is partly based on one's instinctive attachment process. Research suggests this all takes place in the right brain. Left brained spiritual understanding includes thoughts, ideas, and beliefs, not emotion and "gut feelings." This is further evidence that spiritual formation developed through intentional practices happens in the right brain—but most of what transpires in the Christian classroom is left-brained.

Throughout the research within this study, evidence has been presented for the importance and necessity of relationships and community for spiritual formation. The biblical Hebrew word *hesed* has been used by some Christian psychologists to mean what has been described as attachment.[46] Hesed is somewhat difficult to translate; rich meaning gets lost in translation. Feeling confident of the importance of attachment to human thriving and the human brain, Wilder and Hendricks felt attachment could be found within Scripture.

> This Hebrew word carries the sense of an enduring connection that brings life and all good things into a relationship. *Hesed* is a kind and loyal care for the well-being of another…A high-*hesed* community is bound together by strong and lasting attachments. Ideally spouses, family, and close friends naturally enjoy *hesed* relationships…Recent findings in neuroscience are strongly supported in scripture. We get this in spades with *hesed*. Not only is love mentioned in the New Testament (348 times), *agape/hesed* is the dominant feature of a community living in God's

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[44] Wilder, Garzon, and Johnson, "A Christian Multi-Modal Approach," 56.

[45] Hendricks and Wilder, *The Other Half of Church*, 65-69.

[46] Hendricks and Wilder, *The Other Half of Church*, 79.

kingdom…This starts when God forms a *hesed* bond with us in Christ…God desires to lavish His love on His children. We are a spiritual family glued together by our Father's love.[47]

The ability to create *hesed* in the Christian classroom offers an encouraging aid for transformational growth and learning. It seems many are trying to say the same thing with different words—meaningful spiritual formation does not occur outside of a strong community, held together not by interests, but by love.

Parker Palmer gives much attention to relationships and community in his writings about teaching. An image of teaching and community he says guides him: "To teach is to create space in which the *community of truth* is practiced."[48] It is a web of relationships coming together that one must be *in* to understand. Good teachers create strong community in their own ways consistent with their gifts and personality, and while this is beneficial for students and learning, it is not necessarily *hesed*. Palmer suggests any true community necessitates a "third thing" which is transcendent and yet very real.[49] This community Palmer describes sounds very much like *hesed*; the third thing is love.

Formation Through Metanarrative

There is nothing as satisfying as a great story. Stories make us cry, laugh, love, hope, grieve, empathize, and experience every human emotion. This is not by accident—humans are wired for story. Advertisers and marketing companies certainly understand the impact of narrative. Not surprisingly, Jesus also understood the power of stories. In his book *The Storytelling God*, author Jared Wilson says of Jesus' favorite mode of storytelling, the parable, "When these oft-repeated stories from Jesus strike us as sweet, heartwarming, or inspiring in the sentimental sense rather than the Spiritual sense, we can be sure we've misread them…Every parable, long or short, is fathoms deep and designed

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[47] Hendricks and Wilder, *The Other Half of Church*, 79-86.

[48] Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 92.

[49] Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 119.

to drive us to Jesus in awe, need, faith, and worship. When we treat them as 'inspiring tales,' we make superficially insipid what ought to be Spiritually incisive."[50] Jesus meant to use stories to evoke deep emotion, arouse transformational thinking, and to change a people—and it was his primary method for teaching.

Aaron Weisser conducted some fascinating research with ACSI 11th and 12th grade students. His goal was to "assist students in connecting to the metanarrative of a God who is at work in all realms of academic pursuit. While unable to evaluate the long-term consequences of such a shift, this [his] study seeks to show the immediate relationship of such an educational framework on student motivation."[51] The results of his study found metanarrative *does* provide motivation and meaning for students, and Christian educators should not be reticent in finding multiple ways to incorporate the metanarrative into all teaching and learning.[52]

Made for Story

It is now widely accepted an individual has two ways of *knowing* and one of those ways is through *story*. Psychologist Todd Hall explains these two ways:

> Our brains have two distinct processing systems, which support two very different ways of knowing. Explicit knowledge—knowledge that is conscious, linear, and exists in images and words—is supported by what neuroscientists refer to as the "high road" brain circuits, based in the pre-frontal cortex (primarily on the left side), that are responsible for analytical and abstract reasoning. Implicit knowledge, in contrast, is "gut level" knowledge, or meaning, that is carried in our bodies, emotions, and stories. This form of knowing is supported by what neuroscientists refer to as the "low road" brain circuits (primarily on the right side), involving the amygdala and other circuits responsible for primary emotion.[53]

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[50] Jared C. Wilson, *The Storytelling God: Seeing the Glory of Jesus in His Parables* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 12.

[51] Aaron R. Weisser, "Metanarrative Fluency Levels and Motivation for Learning Levels in Christian High School Students" (PhD diss., Columbia International University, 2018), 14.

[52] Weisser, "Metanarrative Fluency Levels," 69-71.

[53] Todd W. Hall, "Psychoanalysis, Attachment, and Spirituality Part II: The Spiritual Stories We Live By," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 35, no. 1 (2007): 32-33.

Stories are the way the brain communicates, puts information together, sorts

emotions, processes new data, and organizes and evaluates one's own and others'

behavior. Hall again, "Stories are one aspect of our gut level memories that serve as

attachment filters. In other words, our attachment filters are stored in the form of stories,

and it is through stories that we access them. By the age of two-and-a-half, parents and

children create stories together at a rate of 2.2 per hour in everyday conversation."[54]

In her book *Wired for Story*, writing instructor Lisa Cron lists a "cognitive

secret" for each chapter:

1. We think in story, which allows us to envision the future.

2. We see the world not as it is, but as we believe it to be.

3. From birth, our brain's primary goal is to make casual connections—if this, then that.

4. The brain uses stories to stimulate how we might navigate difficult situations in the future.

5. Since the brain abhors randomness, it's always converting raw data into meaningful patterns, the better to anticipate what might happen next.

6. The brain summons past memories to evaluate what's happening in the moment in order to make sense of it.[55]

Stories form an internal working model individuals use to live by, and spiritual stories

work the same way.

The *social imaginary*[56] from which James K. A. Smith proposes people form

their liturgies (loves) "is not how we think about the world, but how we imagine the

world before we ever think about it; hence the social imaginary is made up of the stuff

that funds the imagination—stories, myths, pictures, narratives. Furthermore, such stories

are always already communal and traditioned. There are no private stories: every

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[54] Hall, "Psychoanalysis, Attachment, and Spirituality Part II," 33.

[55] Lisa Cron, *Wired for Story: The Writer's Guide to Using Brain Science to Hook Readers from the Very First Sentence* (New York: Ten Speed Press, 2012), table of contents.

[56] The term *social imaginary* was first coined by Charles Taylor and is the focus of his book *Modern Social Imaginaries*.

narrative draws upon tellings that have been handed down."[57] Social imaginaries work together with attachment at the gut level operating in the right brain. Hall writes how the two sides of the brain come together. The left brain "interprets and provides explanations, but in isolation from the right [brain], it cannot process the emotional and relational context or meanings…emotionally meaningful, or coherent narratives, require participation, and integration of both hemispheres of the brain."[58] Telling stories and using narratives reaches down into our emotional experiences (the gut) and allows for *more* meaningfully deep and lasting connections, understanding, and learning that goes beyond the classroom and into life.

Story and Education

University president, Harry Fernhout writes, "Education can be understood as a mutual undertaking (or covenant) between generations to learn a cultural way of life in the setting of the vast theatre of creation. In this covenant an older generation undertakes to share with a younger generation what [it] needs to know in order to live well and to carry forward a story-formed tradition into the future."[59] The teachers of one generation are telling the students of the next generation the cultural story of what has been deemed important and necessary for flourishing and the continuation of their story.

In his chapter "Christian Schooling: Telling A World View Story," Fernhout shares how theologian N.T. Wright sees a worldview like the foundation of a house, vital but invisible. A worldview is story-formed and provides a grid or framework made up of *memory* (remembering the story of the past), *vision* (responses to worldview questions),

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[57] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 66.

[58] Todd W. Hall and Steven L. Porter, "Referential Integration: An Emotional Information Processing Perspective on the Progress of Integration," *Journal of Theology and Psychology* 32, no. 3 (2004): 177-78.

[59] Harry Fernhout, "Christian Schooling: Telling a World View Story," in *The Crumbling Walls of Certainty: Towards a Christian Critique of Postmodernity and Education,* ed. Ian Lambert and Suzanne Mitchell (Sydney, New South Wales: CSAC, 1997), 88.

cultural symbols (what has been referred to previously as *practices*), and *ethos* (a way of being).[60] Fernhout believes education involves all four parts of this narrative worldview. So then, if education is a story, Christian education is the biblical story—and teaching is showing the next generation how to view their story *through* the biblical story. An obvious challenge is the *competing* cultural stories. Fernhout writes, "Christians need to ask *whose* memory, *what* vision, and *which* symbols and ethos are present in the education they offer."[61] Christians also need to believe that the biblical story is more attractive, compelling, and satisfying than the other stories culture offers. In the future the battle in Christian education will be over who tells the better story. Fernhout states clearly these matters cannot be met with indifference.

If learning and understanding at the deepest core is through narrative, then educators need to make space for stories as an avenue for both learning and spiritual formation. A significant way for this is to provide a safe place where students' stories can be told—both in a left-brained verbal way and in a right-brained implicit, emotional way. Stories are so impactful Christian schools should ensure the (corporate) story they are telling is the one they intend. Likewise, teachers need to look at the stories their curriculum, class and units tell.

Students are already heavily involved in stories outside of school. Their use of social media illustrates this—Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, and Tiktok are all forms of story. It goes against what is known about child development and learning strategies to sit students in chairs all day and ask them to be quiet. Author Fraser Hannam writes,

> Story inoculates against a surprisingly large number of common problems and criticisms of our modern classrooms: lack of engagement, structure, differentiation, etc. A curriculum based on such a foundation is incompatible with a bland mechanistic delivery system. It naturally differentiates and expands itself along the continuum of Bloom's Taxonomy and across Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences as each student locates themselves within its pages and create

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[60] Fernhout, "Christian Schooling," 84, 86-88.

[61] Fernhout, "Christian Schooling," 94.

individual responses in their own imagination. It brings light to bear on the hidden and null curriculum rendering our prejudices and limitations self-evident.[62]

Hannam concludes, "There is a shift taking place in education—a teaching asymmetry whereby knowledge is both free and freely accessible. All is known, and no information is hidden from our students. Ownership of information and arguably learning is now with the students. We are no longer the gatekeepers of learning and the option of being a transmissionist practitioner no longer exists. We are guides, facilitators, or better still, story tellers!"[63]

Story and Spiritual Formation

Before anything else, the Bible is a story—God's story. He is the author using others as narrators. Although made up of many smaller stories, there is one overarching story in the Bible divided into four acts: creation (ought), fall (is), redemption (can), and restoration (will). These acts have been explained above. The biblical story is ongoing, both communal and individual, old yet relative, inclusive, global, and sufficient. In Scripture, the signs of a true disciple are transformation that leads to obedience, which is exactly what spiritual formation is. Preparing the soil for successful planting means making sure to understand what the soil needs for growth to occur.

Author Syd Hielema explains, "Faith formation always occurs at the intersection between two stories: the story of God and the story of our culture. If we do not identify both stories, the story of our culture will hinder and choke our growth as a people shaped by the story of God's faithfulness."[64] In her article, "The Narrative Model for Teaching the Bible," author Karen Massey further explains this intersection as the place where three stories converge: the biblical story, the community's story, and the

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[62] Fraser Douglas Hannam, "Teaching Through Narrative," *Forum on Public Policy Online* 2015, no. 2 (2015): 4.

[63] Hannam, "Teaching Through Narrative," 5.

[64] Syd Hielema, "Wide and Long and High and Deep: Biblical Foundations of Faith Formation," in Keeley, *Shaped by God*, 15.

individual's personal story. The goal of this intersection is always transformation.[65] The teacher's job as master story-teller is to help students identify the stories, look for inconsistencies, compare them to *other* stories, and ultimately align them to God's continuing current story.

For spiritual formation it is critical students see the biblical narrative as *first* a story and *secondly* information. Memorizing facts and information will seldom form disciples. If that is the primary means for "teaching" students how to be a Christian, the results will be disappointing. Christian schools *must* decide to take spiritual formation seriously and research best practices for accomplishing it. Until then, Christian educators are just playing school with Christian information.

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[65] Karen G. Massey, "The Narrative Model for Teaching the Bible," *Review and Expositor* 107 (Spring 2010): 202-4.

CHAPTER 5

TRANSFORMATIONAL INTEGRATION AT CASS

In light of the information and research presented in this study, this chapter will document one Christian school system's journey towards authentic spiritual transformation. The Christian Academy School System (CASS), of which this author is a part, has been on the path to determining what components *must* be present in the Christian school classroom for authentic student spiritual transformation to occur. CASS is an example of how genuine failures and successes have led to our current understanding and practice of spiritual formation and biblical integration.

In all honesty, our path has been anything but straight. We have made countless mistakes, misunderstood many things, and muddled along often in our quest for authentic transformation. What we *have* been is persistent and genuine in our quest for making Jesus real in the classroom. We have been learning how to make disciples in a Christian school setting (along with schools all over the world) partly by figuring out what does *not* work. Which means we have often done it poorly. The collective understanding of spiritual formation in Christian schools has been a process and will continue to be as education and generations evolve. Although many people, making big and small contributions over several decades, and God's leading and prompting, have ultimately led CASS to where we are, the most relevant history begins in December 2006. At that time the school system was 30 years old and had four campuses housing eight schools and three preschools. Each school has its own principal and staff, and the system is led by a superintendent and executive director.

In December 2006 and January 2007, the CASS superintendent secured a spiritual formation audit from a faith-based executive firm. A team of educators came and

spent considerable time interviewing students, families, faculty, and staff. The Zigarelli worldview inventory/Spiritual Formation Assessment[1] was administered to students and faculty along with interviews, and the results were part of the audit. At that time the major findings were:

1. A high percentage of Christian Academy's students, parents, and staff stated a biblical worldview was evident in the classroom and the school overall.

2. The Zigarelli worldview index score was high: 9.3 out of 10.

3. The rapid growth the system was experiencing was cause for concern families might be enrolling that were not like-minded.

4. There seemed to be a disconnect between students' spiritual head knowledge and their heart knowledge.[2]

5. There was a lack of gratitude among much of the student body.[3]

The results indicated work was needed. What appeared as spiritual growth and formation was not what was actually happening. Sure, there were exceptions to this rule, but exceptions were not the goal; true Christ-like character and relationship were. However, the issues were not only difficult to pinpoint, they were difficult to fix.

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[1] The Zigarelli Worldview Index is a non-denominational survey based on the classic creeds of the church. It is comprised of twelve questions written by Michael Zigarelli. It can be found at www.assess-yourself.org. The audit consisted of three parts: the Christian Character Index (CCI), the Love for God Scale (LGS), and the Worldview Index. The CCI measures seven character virtues (joy, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gratitude, forgiveness, and compassion); the Love for God Scale measures three dimensions of one's spiritual condition (relationship with God, fearlessness of one's faith, and humility before God); the Worldview Index examines the extent to which one's worldview is Biblical or secular.

[2] A disconnect between head knowledge and heart knowledge indicates a vast majority of students knew the "right" answer to worldview questions but were not actually living those biblical concepts out on a daily basis. It was knowledge but not character formation.

[3] Gratitude is often linked with stronger immune systems, greater compassion, less loneliness, greater well-being, and stronger social relationships. Research indicates that as students grow in gratitude so does their sense of being connected to God. Resources on gratitude can be found at the following: Jeffrey J. Froh, Giacomo Bono, and Robert Emmons, "Being Grateful Is Beyond Good Manners: Gratitude and Motivation to Contribute to Society among Early Adolescents," April 30, 2010, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11031-010-9163-z; Kristin Layous and Sonja Lyubomirsky, "Benefits, Mechanisms, and New Directions for Teaching Gratitude for Children," December 27, 2019, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02796015.2014.12087441; Leading expert on gratitude, Robert Emmons, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/profile/robert_emmons.

A Decade of Transition

With the results from the spiritual formation audit, many areas were addressed. Biblical worldview training for teachers was implemented by our then curriculum director, Annie Gallagher. She began the biblical integration work that continues today. During the next decade CASS experienced a needed leadership change and continued to grow. With growth came new challenges. Our athletic programs improved, and the system was gradually acquiring state championships. This, in turn, shifted the focus. Although excellence in athletics is not bad, the unintended consequences began to change efforts, funding, expectations, emphases, and perhaps the motives of incoming families. These consequences were not purposeful; they were slow and gradual and difficult to see as they were happening.

Also compounding the issue were the efforts to make CASS a leading academic institution—earning the Blue Ribbon distinction.[4] There was never any individual(s) wanting CASS off mission, in fact, the mission continued. But in an institution, here is only so much energy and attention that can be expended. Working to bolster athletics and academics naturally depleted momentum in other areas. Maintaining the status quo regarding spiritual formation was the result. It seems in today's culture a Christian institution cannot simply "hold firm." The outside pressures from a secular government and a post-Christian culture are so strong and swift that to hold firm is to lose ground. A concerted effort must be made to withstand the damage both internally and externally by

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[4] The US Department of Education states,
The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private elementary, middle, and high schools based on their overall academic excellence or their progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. Every year the US Department of Education seeks out and celebrates great American schools, schools demonstrating that all students can achieve to high levels. The coveted National Blue Ribbon School award affirms the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content. The National Blue Ribbon School flag gracing an entry or flying overhead is a widely recognized symbol of exemplary teaching and learning. (US Department of Education, "National Blue Ribbon Schools Program—Purpose," accessed November 17, 2020, https://www2.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html)

purposefully heading upstream against the current towards biblical community and Christ-likeness.

During this decade of growth, CASS adopted a new mission statement for all schools. The statement is based on Luke 2:52, "The mission of Christian Academy School System is to develop students with a heart for God, who grow as Jesus did in wisdom, stature and in favor with God and men."[5] While not all mission statements have the impact they might, our wisdom, stature, favor mission statement has slowly become our guiding document running through everything we do.

This was accomplished by first having it posted in all classrooms and having teachers and students learn it. Over time it was used to determine goals and outcomes: Was this new idea in line with our mission? It was broken down and taught to all new employees; what do the words wisdom, stature, and favor mean? What did it mean in Luke's gospel? How does it look in different classes and different grades? Finally, it was the basis of our expected student outcomes, our "portrait of a graduate." It became real when it permeated all we were doing. Over time and with considerable effort, the mission statement truly became the mission.

Relationships Matter

In March 2010, Todd Marrah, Superintendent for Tree of Life Christian Schools in Columbus, Ohio, came to CASS and led a professional development on how to make the hiring of relational teachers a top priority.[6] He had recently completed his doctoral dissertation: *The Furnishing the Soul Project: A Portrait of the Spiritual Lives of ACSI Students.* One of his major findings was spiritual formation among 6th-12th graders

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[5] Christian Academy School System, "Mission and Vision," accessed March 10, 2021, https://caschools.us/system/about/mission-vision-2/.

[6] CASS has been very proactive about inviting experts to address particular needs. Some examples include specialists in biblically integrating particular subjects, administrators from other schools, and thought leaders in specific educational initiatives.

is developed and grown within relationships.[7] Although one's relationality seems implied within the desire to teach; many teachers would disprove that assumption. One of the philosophical beliefs I had come to believe about teaching (simply from my own experience and Scripture) was the development of personal relationships with students was *the* primary means I found to be an effective teacher, mentor, and communicator. Dr. Marrah stated he had changed his hiring practices to ensure he was hiring the most relational teachers available. He said he could coach someone how to be an effective teacher, but he could not make people love students and want to know them.[8]

This relational focus began a practice CASS continues to cultivate today. The first step towards intentional relationships was to change our teacher interview process to include more situational scenarios that might reflect how one would respond – their gut instincts. More personal questions were asked that might glean more precise information about the whole person (i.e. hobbies, favorite books, successes and failures). Most of the CASS teacher interviews are upbeat and relaxed. We began to highly value personal recommendations and current faculty feedback. At times a potential teacher might be observed in a real classroom or teach a mini-lesson in order to get a better feel for how they relate to students. Hiring decisions are made by the appropriate team, not solely by one individual. Also, the school principal/team has the final decision on a candidate since they best know their school culture and needs.

A second step was to communicate to current faculty the importance of relationship in the classroom. Overall, that included education on the subject. Trainings included book studies, small groups, professional development time, speakers, success stories, student feedback, and other means to shift the emphasis towards intentional relationships. In some instances, teachers who self-identified as lacking in this area, were

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[7] Todd R. Marrah, "The Furnishing the Soul Project: A Portrait of the Spiritual Lives of ACSI Students" (PhD diss., Columbia International University, 2009), 148.

[8] Todd Marrah, Professional Development presentation, CASS, 2010.

individually coached. Over the last several years the expectation has become for every teacher to share their *spiritual story* with their students.[9] This has been well received among students and is an effective tool for teacher vulnerability and authenticity.

Over time, teachers who could not or would not shift their focus to highly relational began to find other avenues for their skills outside of CASS. As new teachers were hired, and others left, relationship-oriented classroom teachers became the norm. *This focus was likely the single most foundational change we made, without which, all others could not have been successful.*

Bible Curriculum and Spiritual Formation Assessment

From our experience we have found Bible curriculum to be as good as the Bible teacher. Meaning if you have a trained, relational, Bible teacher they can teach any curriculum. And certainly, the Bible teacher(s) is the first hire needing to be relational. We did begin with our Bible departments in our transition to find qualified relational teachers.

Elementary bible curriculum has the most options. There are more and more on the market every year. Some helpful criteria we have found: 1. Curriculum that is comprehensive – all of the Bible is useful for teaching; 2. Curriculum that illustrates the grand narrative of Scripture – the focus is Jesus and redemption, start to finish; and 3. Curriculum that necessitates the appropriate explanation of bible stories and their place in the bigger picture –i.e., accurate and authentic diversity representation; the David and Goliath storyline is not about "slaying your giants."

Middle school options become more difficult. They seem to range from workbooks with fill-in-the-blanks to Sunday School/youth group material adapted for a school setting. Neither of these options worked for CASS. Although we are still working on this, we have written, from scratch, middle school bible curriculum we feel reaches

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[9] A *spiritual story* is one's life story woven with God's influence, presence, and love.

our students for this time. The guiding questions are: is it relevant to middle school students? Does it reach the heart as well as the head? Is it solely scriptural?

Although there is high school curriculum available, we have found it to be too light (not deep enough for our student body); too deep (seminary level); or too teacher-dependent (written by one teacher whose style and knowledge drove the class.) As such, this is where we have spent most of our time and energy for the last ten years. We made the decision to go to semester classes for high school Bible classes instead of year long. This allows for faster pacing, and we can fit eight classes into high school rather than four. All of the classes have been tweaked over time and have changed order. Alumni have helped determine the best placement of classes based on their needs after graduation. As with the younger curriculum, it is a constant balance of head and heart knowledge and making classes highly relational. Dr. Howard Hendricks in his book, *Teaching to Change Lives*, states, "It's the simplest thing in the world to take only the head trip. Taking the way of the heart is much more difficult. But it's also more profitable. In fact, it's life-changing."[10]

For far too long our Bible curriculum scope and sequence (grades K-12) was nonexistent with little focus on heart learning. There was no continuity between schools, no big picture thinking or planning, and no overall "owner." This has changed, and the communication and collaboration with Bible curriculum and therefore, spiritual formation has been very beneficial. It has allowed CASS to ensure the Bible curriculum is truly supporting our mission statement.

Spiritual formation assessment is one of the most difficult, yet important, aspects of what we do. It is imperative to all stakeholders the school is fulfilling its mission—actually accomplishing what it says it is. And yet, measuring affect and heart issues is extremely difficult. Measuring knowledge is easy, but knowledge is not transformation. We have looked at many external for-purchase assessments at CASS, and

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[10] Howard G. Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1987), 85.

while some are better than others, we have not found one to meet our needs. However, for accreditation and transparency, we must provide something that measures if our students are growing in their love and understanding of Jesus.

In the past, we have used the Bible add-on section to the Tera Nova test our elementary and middle school students take yearly. Unfortunately, this extra assessment was written to accompany particular ACSI Bible curriculum which we did not use. Consequently, students' scores did not accurately reflect students' growth. This caused much confusion and panic with parents, so we stopped using it with nothing to take its place.

In September 2016, a consultant came to meet with our Bible teachers and administration. Along with writing a high school Bible curriculum for a Christian school in the Chicago area, this consultant had developed a biblical worldview assessment called the Global Student Assessment (GSA).[11] It was concise, simple, and had been administered to thousands of ACSI students internationally. It was a great improvement over anything we had seen. Ideally the GSA is to be administered three times a year: beginning of school, mid-way through the year, and late spring. Our baseline test was given in the late spring of 2016 to all middle and high school students on all CASS campuses. The statements our students scored the lowest on (meaning they were least likely to affirm) were: (1) Absolute Truth exists; (2) The Bible defines Truth; and (3) Life begins at conception. These results were found across all campuses. The accuracy of the third statement results were questioned since many of the middle school students did not understand the meaning of "conception," and teachers were unable to assist students per GSA instructions. Over time we decided to stop assessing middle school as several terms on the GSA were too difficult for them to provide a valid answer.

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[11] The Global Student Assessment (GSA) is produced by Wheaton Press and Chris Browne and is a worldview evaluation tool used by Christian schools internationally. Wheaton Press, "The Global Student Assessment," accessed January 22, 2021, https://www.wheatonpress.com/global-student-assessment.html.

The GSA results allowed us to make necessary adjustments in our Bible curriculum and inform other departments of the need to integrate absolute truth where they naturally could. Over the three years we utilized the GSA, our results slowly increased in the Truth statements. Ultimately, we decided to stop using this assessment because we felt like we had received what we could from it. It certainly gave us a strong baseline and a better understanding of worldview evaluation, however, once again, it seemed tethered to a curriculum that was intended to improve GSA scores, and we ultimately felt like the curriculum was not a fit for our students.

In his book, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*, Don Whitney proposes we need to be ever increasing in our thirst for God, our experience of the spiritual disciplines, and our grieving over sin. He asks if we are more loving, more sensitive to God's presence, and more governed by God's Word than we were in the past.[12] This encourages readers to move from a "yes or no" type evaluation to a "process-based" one. It allows for one to evaluate themselves *against* themselves and not others. It is likely a more revealing and accurate approach to measuring spiritual growth than most tests.

In the midst of using the GSA, our high school Bible teachers were creating another instrument providing more individual feedback named the *Faith Self-Checkup*.[13]

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[12] Donald S. Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 10.

[13] Kyle Leman, CASS High School Bible Teacher, says,
In the same way a regular medical checkup is an important part of staying physically healthy, a regular examination of our faith is part of staying spiritually healthy. The Faith Self-Checkup asks the student a total of thirty questions that are designed to help indicate the health of their faith and are directly tied to the CASS Bible department curriculum standards. The questions are broken down into three categories (the head, the heart, and the hands and feet) that represented a full-bodied faith. The student responds to each question with a number reflecting their agreement with the question/statement. The numbers in each section are then added up and indicate to the student the general health status of their faith. This check-up is merely a guide and not a test to determine one's salvation or value to God. The Faith Self-Reflection guides students, in ten basic steps, in preparing for, taking, and reflecting upon the faith self-checkup. The reflection asks students to begin and end the spiritual discipline in prayer. After taking the checkup, the reflection asks students to think about the current status of their faith and what steps they could/should take moving forward. Before completion, students are invited to bring their family, friends, and teachers into the reflection process

This is a hard copy student evaluation attempting to measure the student's spiritual life using the head, heart, and hands model. This assessment follows the student throughout high school and allows students to compare their answers to previous semesters. This provides the Bible teachers a more comprehensive look at the whole student including a personal evaluation of their growth. We have found students to be extremely candid and reflective using this assessment, and we now exclusively use this faith check-up for high school and are reworking it for use in middle school. Plans are underway to make it accessible online, so we can better track trends, compare campuses and grades, and more closely monitor curriculum changes and tweaks.[14]

CASS is currently piloting Spiritual Portfolios in elementary school for use as a spiritual growth assessment. We borrowed the idea from another Christian school that has implemented them with much success. A spiritual portfolio is simply a file folder following a student from kindergarten through 5th grade. Each year the classroom teacher adds "God sightings" or "stones of remembrance" focusing on the child's heart and spiritual development. Most Christian school classrooms have plenty of examples of this type of assessment. This is just a formal way of capturing the individual's spiritual growth over time. The portfolio is gifted to the family when the student leaves the school.

New Teacher Training

Along with spiritual formation assessment, beginning with the 2016-17 school year, CASS introduced a new teacher training entitled *Called to Teach*.[15] This is a three-year induction program comprised of numerous full training days spread over the three

by asking if they'd like to meet to discuss their results. The self-checkup and the self-reflection are then turned in for the teacher to understand the current faith status of the student and discuss it with them if they so desire. (Kyle Leman, CASS High School Bible Teacher, email to author, February 3, 2020)

[14] During spring 2020, due to the COVID 19 quarantine, the assessment was made available online.

[15] This is a teacher induction program created by CASS for CASS teachers.

years. The focus is to introduce new employees to CASS culture, mission, and values. The sessions include classroom management, technology use, planning units and writing lesson plans, biblical integration, biblical worldview training, relationship building, and the CASS story. Embedded also are the activities ACSI requires for teacher certification. Each school year a new cohort begins and continues through the program in sequential order.

Since its inception in 2016 the program has been fine-tuned with the help of past participants and new administrators. The biggest modification has been in the area of biblical worldview training and integration. As CASS has increasingly focused on these, our training for new teachers has reflected this emphasis with more time and personal attention allowed for participants. Although our new teachers come from different backgrounds (brand new teachers, public school teachers, and other Christian school teachers), the training is the same for everyone. We have found public school teachers in particular need this training as their career in public school has been markedly different from CASS. It is also imperative to give new teachers space to examine their own worldview and relationship with Jesus. We want to help paint a picture; a vision of what transformational teaching could look like and the lives of students that have been transformed by being planted in the rich soil we have diligently prepared for growth. Teaching that inspires transformation can only come from an overflow of a transformed heart, full life, and belief we can participate in God's work.

The results have been encouraging. Our newly trained teachers are some of our best biblical integrators—meaning transformational teaching is more natural and consistent in their classrooms, and there is a desire to continue to grow in this area. Also evident is a better understanding of the sheer magnitude and weight of what we are trying to accomplish. These results have led us to create a one-day training for *any* employee new to CASS to understand the eternal consequences of our mission and how their job,

although not directly in a classroom, is of vital importance to developing students with hearts for God.

Kingdom Education

In February 2017 our entire system attended a two-day training with Glen Shultz, author of *Kingdom Education: God's Plan for Educating Future Generations.* Shultz defines kingdom education as, "the life-long, Bible-based, Christ-centered process of leading a child into a new identity with Christ and developing him/her according to the specific abilities given to him/her by Christ so that the child will be empowered to live a life characterized by love, trust, and obedience to Christ."[16] Shultz feels the primary educators of children are their parents, and that Christian parents need to be exceptionally cautious with whom they partner. He is a strong proponent of Christian schools stressing evangelism (leading a child to Christ) and discipleship (teaching them to become more like Christ).[17] Shultz understands the power of one's worldview, and strongly believes Christian parents should not allow any worldview other than a biblical one to be taught to their children. This essentially leaves Christian families only two options: home-schooling or Christian education. He sees Christian education as a three-legged stool supported by the church, the school, and the family.[18] Shultz does not leave much room for options; he believes the stakes are too high. Education always has an agenda because education is people; people have beliefs and ideas; beliefs and ideas have consequences. This should not be surprising. There are no neutral teachers, school systems, worldviews, or curricula.

Kingdom education puts great emphasis on the teacher.

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[16] Glen Schultz, *Kingdom Education: God's Plan for Educating Future Generations* (Nashville: LifeWay, 1998), 155.

[17] Schultz, *Kingdom Education,* 61, 33.

[18] Schultz, *Kingdom Education,* 115.

The most important factor in the development of a young person's worldview is the influence of his (her) teachers. . . . Personal conduct is one of the most powerful influences a teacher can have on another person. . . . When there are contradictions between a teacher's conduct and/or communication and his or her content, 95% of the time students will reject the content and accept the conduct or communication they observed.[19]

A teacher is a powerful tool and has greater influence than likely any other person outside a student's immediate family. James 3:1 is quite straightforward about the responsibility of teachers, "Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." A shift occurred over the two days of Kingdom Education training allowing our system to re-focus efforts towards these outcomes. As a result, Kingdom Education is taught to all new teachers and system employees in their training so everyone understands the basis for what we do.

CASS Biblical Worldview Commitment

The Glen Schultz visit began a dialogue between several school administrators within CASS. Although many CASS graduates were serving in ministry capacities, overall, we were not satisfied with our efforts. As a senior Bible teacher, I had the privilege of closely examining the results of our (CASS) mission. Although we had great kids— responsible, respectful, academically successful—a large percentage of them did not know and obey Jesus. Of course, if asked, they would likely tell you they were Christians, but the fruit simply was not there. Without sounding overly pessimistic, we did have some amazing kids following Jesus and living out their faith; but would they have been this way without CASS? Most of these students primarily came from very strong families providing a biblical upbringing and authentic Christian models. A larger percentage seemed to be nominal Christians viewing their belief system through the eyes of their parents and the school they attended. A troubling issue was perhaps many students might be basing their understanding of following Jesus *only* on what they had seen at home or

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[19] Schultz, *Kingdom Education*, 51, 54.

school. A fear was they had never really seen an authentic, transformational faith that desires to obey, love, and serve Jesus unconditionally.

Through a series of interviews and surveys of current students and graduates, some patterns emerged. Many had a head knowledge (they knew the answers to biblical questions and could *speak* the language of Christianity), but their hearts were unconvinced (they did not desire to obey Jesus by making him Lord of all aspects of their lives). Some were just hard-hearted from the years of witnessing cultural Christianity as dressed-up morality. Many were disillusioned, fearful, cynical from hypocrisy, and uninterested. They did not fully understand the whole of Scripture and the overarching themes. To most, it was just a bunch of unrelated stories written as one book. They were one experience away from transformation – meaning they believed Jesus had done a work in the lives of their grandparents (the closest relative most identified as following Jesus), some missionaries, and some celebrity Christians, but they had never seen or felt it for themselves! It should not be surprising when these students walk away from their faith in college. It was never their faith, always someone else's. They did not truly *know* and *love* Jesus. As a Christian school system, we were discovering *poor* biblical integration was perhaps worse than no biblical integration at all. CASS was ready to make the changes necessary to address spiritual formation comprehensively.

At the beginning of the 2017-18 school year a job position was created at the district level to address the areas of biblical worldview training and spiritual formation. It is beneficial to have one person focus on Bible curriculum at all levels, curriculum scope and sequence, teacher training, and spiritual formation. As a large school system, we feel the need to help other Christian schools in any way possible. Most do not have the resources for such a position, and they benefit from collaboration and shared learning. We have found most Christian schools have the same type of issues and concerns we have seen in our student body, and we are all working to raise the next generation to live authentic faith.

CASS Biblical Worldview Standards

Much transpired during the fall of 2017. In short, the energy was focused towards turning over the biblical worldview stones. Through a series of gatherings over some time, the system administrative staff and directors took a list of student aims (outcomes) recommended from the school's board in order to make them a reality. The majority of these aims involved spiritual development for students. The goal was to break down the desired outcomes and marry them with biblical worldview statements to be used with unit planning and writing. This would ensure biblical worldview would weave through every unit in every class. The process included researching and reviewing many biblical worldview statements and categories; too many would be overwhelming and too few would be restricting. Slowly five categories or strands emerged:

Strand 1: God's Character—The one true God exists eternally in three Persons, and His character and nature are revealed in absolute Truth.

Strand 2: God's Creation—God is the creator and ruler of all things.

Strand 3: God's Truth—Absolute truth exists and is revealed through God's Creation, His Word, and the person of Jesus Christ.

Strand 4: God's Love/Mankind/Identity—Man is created in God's image, but has a sinful nature, and needs the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Strand 5: God's Design—Man has a specific purpose to glorify God and serve others.

Within each strand is a list of biblical worldview statements (and supportive Scripture) used as standards and falling into each appropriate category. This is by no means an exhaustive list; it is not intended to be. One entire strand is devoted to absolute truth since we felt this needed to be an entire system focus. The standards were crafted with our students and teachers in mind and creating them was the easy part.

Requiring standards within instructional units is not difficult. The difficult part is ensuring they are being taught. And with biblical worldview standards they cannot simply be stated; they have to be creatively woven, taught, and assessed within the curriculum. We had to determine the best methods for weaving biblical truth within the classroom naturally, and then instruct our teachers how to do that. Essentially, we were

asking they forget everything they previously thought about biblical integration and try a new way. We found most teachers do not know how to do this naturally. To many it feels clunky and out of place, even inauthentic. So, we have been teaching this model:

1. It all starts with relationship!!! This has to happen, and it takes time.

2. Think about the unit and what you want the students to know or learn.

3. Create a biblical worldview essential question – it must be big picture, open-ended, relevant, and thought-provoking. The student must be responsible for the critical thinking, not the teacher.

4. Find an appropriate biblical worldview standard.

5. Plan and/or create curricular activities that help the student think through the subject matter and skill development in such a way as to connect and contrast this new knowledge to their biblical worldview, their integrating core out of which an integrated Christian will think and act.[20]

6. *Weave* the biblical teaching throughout the unit. Do not plop a "Jesus bomb!"[21]

7. Assess. If assessment of some kind does not happen students are slowly being taught "the Bible stuff" is not important.

8. Lastly, and most importantly, transformational teaching and effective integration comes from teachers that know Jesus and are growing in His likeness.

One of the most difficult aspects of biblical worldview integration is the simple fact that the majority of Christians do not have a biblical worldview. One cannot teach a biblical worldview if they themselves do not have one. If worldview integration is to be successful, the teachers must be trained, not only in their teaching, but in their own spiritual lives. Spiritual growth opportunities must be provided, encouraged, and ongoing. It cannot be assumed our teachers will simply know how to do this once they have a model. Even with all the best tools and training, true biblical worldview teaching must come as an overflow of one's life, personal beliefs, and intimate knowledge. We cannot

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[20] Martha E MacCullough, *Undivided: Developing a Worldview Approach to Biblical Integration* (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design Publications, 2016), 30.

[21] A "Jesus Bomb" is when biblical integration is done poorly. Typically, it is when a teacher attempts to biblically integrate but tries *too* hard; it is not natural or perhaps infrequent and the whole room "smells it." Instead, the goal is for a classroom to have the aroma of Jesus—an enjoyable presence that is simply part of the class and very authentic when pointed out.

teach what we do not know. And students know the difference! There is a disconnect and incongruency that reeks of inauthenticity and forced obligation. True damage is done to our students when we imply, "This is how a Christian adult thinks/lives/talks/loves/teaches," but it is a false representation. Perfection is not the goal, but rather authenticity.

Parent/School Commitment

One of the areas we reexamined was our family partnerships. CASS schools are covenantal, meaning families desiring admission must agree with CASS core beliefs. During the admission process, these beliefs are clearly explained. Each year when re-enrolling their child, parents are electronically asked if they agree with our core beliefs. We discovered once admitted to the school, it was possible for our families to never have a way to renew their covenant other than to check a box online. Due to this and the cultural changes and shifts, we felt it necessary to more formally verify our commitment with families.

A new document was created highlighting what was expected of a CASS family, and what the family could expect from CASS. It was a partnership agreement. Every family in our system was mailed a paper copy and asked to initial *every* separate expectation. Although there was nothing in this new document the families had not seen before, the attention it took to read and initial each statement gave greater weight to what our partnership entailed. We had several productive conversations with families, and most of the feedback was positive; families expect other like-minded families. And, as expected, we also lost a few families. For total transparency, we created a similar document for all CASS employees and concentrated on our own commitment before asking it of our families.

Our procedure going forward is to require this separate initialed document to be resubmitted as a student moves from one school to the next (i.e. 5th to 6th and 8th to 9th grades), as well as any family new to CASS. Although we acknowledge this is just a

small piece of a larger commitment, it is an important touch point with our families and an avenue for questions and discussions about what it means to pursue a kingdom education.

The Three Loves

Another big piece to our transformational teaching and biblical worldview puzzle occurred in the fall of 2017. We discovered the book by Joe Neff entitled, *Building Biblical Worldview: The Three Loves*. Neff has had a long career working in Christian Schools and teaching overseas. His experience and candid writing style made his message non-threatening. It is amazing how simple his model was, and yet it was what I personally had been thinking and observing but enable to articulate for several years. His answer to what a biblical worldview does: "1. Points to Jesus; 2. Makes the Bible foundational; 3. Pursues Truth; 4. Draws to God; 5. Excites learning; 6. Brings unity; 7. Asks and answers questions."[22]

He gives explanations of each of these, inserting personal examples and experience. His model is simple, and he explains it this way:

> The best biblical worldview happens when there is a living convergence in a teacher of a love for God, a love for subject, and a love for student. . . . The concept is simple enough to learn quickly. But, if done right, it takes a lifetime to discover that you never really get there, that the love and depth of God, subject, and student never ends and is always tantalizing you to go just one more step. . . . It is deep and worth giving your life to. . . . And go beyond the fences of a curriculum map to gather everything in the map in (your) arms, hold it close, and run to new places with students following.[23]

The convergence of the three loves he describes is called the "sweet spot." The sweet spot does not come easily; it is a vibrant, living passion for God, subject and students. It requires a growth mindset, a teachable heart, persistence, and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. It encompasses many things hard to quantify: a growing knowledge of the

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[22] Joe Neff, *Building Biblical Worldview: The Three Loves* (Little Rock, AR: Rooted Schools, 2016), 33-41.

[23] Neff, *The Three Loves*, 45-47.

changing students one teaches, a desire to experience life with them, an understanding of the issues and problems they face without becoming calloused. As Neff explains, "Two of three [loves] don't cut it!"[24]

When love of God and love of students exist but not love of subject, Neff calls that "shallow;" when love of God and love of subject are missing love of students that is the "scholar;" and love of students with love of subject without love of God is "secular."[25] This small but powerful model is on which we have built our transformational teaching.
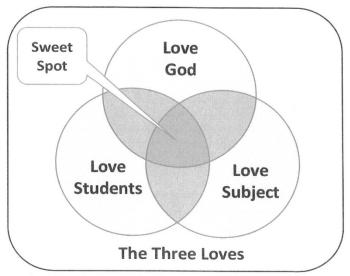

Figure 1. Joe Neff's "The Sweet Spot"

During the spring of 2018 our entire school system read *The Three Loves* book. Even non-teaching directors and their departments participated and applied the model to their respective departments. When a new teacher is hired to CASS they immediately receive the book from their principal. It is the first topic we address in our *Called to Teach* training program. It has given our system a common language and allowed

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[24] Neff, *The Three Loves,* 50.

[25] Neff, *The Three Loves*, 51-53.

teachers to self-assess. We have adapted our evaluation process and goal setting to reflect *The Three Loves* language, and we have found it much easier to address issues and concerns using the model as a guide. CASS teachers will readily identify which "love" they are working to improve, and it allows them to not feel the pressure of being perfect, understanding we are all developing in one category or another. The more we use *The Three Loves* model, the more we incorporate it into everything we do.

A Great Model

In January 2019 I was attending a Christian Education conference and stumbled into a breakout session led by a teacher from an international Christian school. The title of her session intrigued me, "Authentic Spiritual Transformation," and I admit I was curious, yet skeptical. I had been on this path for some time and knew *no one* had answers that could be conveyed in a forty-five minute breakout session. I was wrong.

The first thing that struck me was the woman's story was almost identical to mine: teaching Bible to seniors for ten years, confused by the lack of Christ followers, desperate to change it. As I listened to her describe what had occurred in their school, I could really identify. She was telling my story… until she got to the part where it all changed and true authentic transformation had begun. I peppered her with questions throughout the remainder of the conference and could not stop wondering if they had actually stumbled across answers to so many of our questions. Although I believed what she said, I felt very strongly I needed to see for myself.

Six weeks later a colleague and I were making the trek to visit the Dalat International School in the city of Penang, Malaysia, a hub for evangelical ministries within Southeast Asia. Dalat had a combination of Asian and Western students from all backgrounds and religions. We spent a week at Dalat speaking to administrators, teachers, students, and parents. We observed classes, ate in the cafeteria, and participated in the daily school routine of Dalat. What we found was a welcoming school situated on a beautiful ocean-side property that was state-of-the-art, while catering to the tropical

climate and culture. We spent considerable time with senior students who were freshmen when the spiritual transformation began. We went to Dalat knowing there was not a special formula for transformation, however, we knew there were some specific steps taken allowing hard ground to become fertile and prepared for growth.

Susan Allen was the teacher that had led the breakout session at the conference and had been struck with disappointment and confusion Dalat was graduating only a small percentage of students with a vital, personal relationship with Jesus. As with many Christian schools, Susan wore many hats, one of which was curriculum director. She was also a graduate of Dalat, a child of missionaries, and now had her own three children there. She was deeply invested.

Over the previous five years she had taught spiritual disciplines to senior Dalat students. Slowly, through one-on-one mentoring and practice, the students were having personal spiritual breakthrough using the spiritual disciplines. Concurrently, Susan formed a small group of colleagues at Dalat to research, examine, evaluate, and pray about spiritual transformation. Over time and armed with data and information, they determined what Dalat already did that was supported in the research and/or producing positive results. Then they began to make changes. This process resulted in very evident spiritual transformation for the student body, beginning with the high school and trickling down to the lower grades.

When asked to best summarize their experience, Susan explains,

I'm understanding spiritual transformation is a process that goes on for a long time and that you never graduate from any of the below stages, but there is an order to this flow that I think is important. With that flow in mind, here's what I would say was most impactful:

Students and staff encountering the love and grace of God in tangible, personal ways and being equipped with spiritual practices, like listening prayer and Scripture engagement, that enabled them to develop a living, two-way relationship with God.

Students and staff being invited to authentic Christian community. Getting to do life on life together in small groups, mentoring, and regular worship/prayer/Word gatherings. Vulnerability, honesty, healing, and learning to walk with God together.

Students and staff being equipped to engage in their vocation/passion in the power and strength of the Spirit. Seeing all work as God's work and bringing down the

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wall between sacred and secular to see that He is in it all. Capturing a vision to be God's hand and feet on the earth.[26]

For fear of making things too simple, Dalat is quick to say it was a total moving of God that produced the results. I would certainly agree with this, however I want to include a few more observations that may have contributed. First, the team at Dalat was committed to prayer. They bathed the whole process in prayer and met often and regularly to pray specifically for authentic change. Secondly, they were committed to go wherever they felt God was leading. The willingness to "do whatever it took" was present throughout the team and extended to other administrators and leaders. Finally, they *did* encounter strong opposition. Miller, Latham, and Cahill refer to this opposition as *shadow cultures* in their book, *Humanizing the Education Machine*. "Shadow culture says, 'This is how we really do things around here.' If a new plan, program, teaching model, of software program cuts across the shadow culture it says, 'No, thank you. We're happy doing things the old way.' Shadow culture is happy to outlast, outlive, act out, passively resist, and even sabotage a new strategy to preserve itself."[27] Dalat's team was very cautionary about this, suggesting shadow cultures would reveal themselves as idols and strongholds of the enemy, and would rise up at unexpected times through unexpected ways. It was necessary for them to identify and dismantle (as much as possible) these shadow cultures in order to move forward.

CASS Today

Having come back from Malaysia with renewed purpose and vision, my colleague and I prayerfully considered how to proceed. In our discussions with our Dalat friends, we compared the similarities and differences between our situations. It became apparent our four separate campuses have distinct demographics and cultures, which

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[26] Susan Allen, email to author, January 2020.

[27] M. Rex Miller, Bill Latham, and Brian Cahill, *Humanizing the Education Machine: How to Create Schools That Turn Disengaged Kids into Inspired Learners* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 150.

dictated that as we began looking at spiritual transformation the way Dalat had, we would need to focus on one campus at a time.

Currently we have gathered a team of self-identified employees at our largest campus to begin the process of making our ground as fertile as possible for spiritual growth. We have spent many months together taking an honest look at our school. We have read much research on transformation and how to spiritually form, rather than inform, students beginning in preschool. These efforts, along with the accumulation of our other previously mentioned strategies, have begun to take root and yield results. We celebrate in small evidences and pray through difficult days. We do not need to question if this is God's will; He wants his children to have an intimate relationship with Him. We just need to prepare the soil in our schools, our hearts, and our cultures for the great work He will do.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL
INTEGRATION IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Principles for Transformational Integration

True spiritual formation is not easy. It requires perseverance, consistency, creativity, dedication, relationship, community, and the work of the Holy Spirit. All of which can be messy and tiring. Most teachers are not educated or trained for much of what leads to transformational integration in their students. The purpose of this study is to ascertain the components that *must* be present in the Christian school classroom for authentic student spiritual transformation to occur, acknowledging the presence of these components alone does not ensure transformation. The goal was to determine exactly what ingredients need to be present in the soil (our classrooms and schools) in order to aid the work of the Holy Spirit in germinating, sprouting, growing, blossoming, and blooming the seeds (our students) He sees fit to plant.[1]

In a very general way, what *must* be present for spiritual transformation (not information) in the classroom is a love of God, a love of students, and a love of subject. There are obviously varying degrees of these loves and some principles that enable, facilitate, and strengthen them.

Based on the research and information presented above, there are five principles recommended for transformational integration (soil preparation) that strengthen these three loves. Each of these principles has a biblical foundation and practical application. Most importantly, every principle *must* be understood through the overarching principle of *relationship*. Genuine relationship is the underpinning of a

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[1] To be clear, this analogy is not referencing Mark 4 (and similar passages) of the Parable of the Sower. It is entirely separate, although both use references to planting and growing.

transformational classroom and the three loves; each principle has relationship as it's process and ultimate goal. Biblical integration will naturally occur if these five principles are present and ever-growing. Although it is ideal for an entire school to aim for these principles together, *transformational spiritual formation can be accomplished in a single classroom by an individual teacher*. Every principle is under the direct influence of the classroom teacher, allowing teachers in *any* school to cultivate a transformational classroom.

Principle 1: The Teacher Is the Key
(Mark 12:28b-31)

It all starts with the teacher. The classroom teacher determines what does and does not transpire in the classroom. In many ways that is risky—so much responsibility lies with one individual. James 3:1 warns about this responsibility: "Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." The teacher must acknowledge the natural power dynamic in a classroom setting and work to temper that dynamic by demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit and by modeling collaboration and cooperation as community standards. Participating in spiritual disciplines organically within the class is another way to display a Christlike atmosphere.

Using the Scripture above from Mark as a guide, the greatest contribution a teacher can make to any classroom is having a passionate, growing, recognizable loving relationship with God through Jesus. The research indicates a genuine personal relationship is what students most believe contributes to their own spiritual formation. This relationship can be expressed in countless ways through any personality type, but the key factor is *authenticity*. Pearcy states, "Once we discover that the Christian worldview is really true, then living it out means offering up to God all our powers—

practical, intellectual, emotional, artistic—to live for Him in every area of life."[2] Whether or not they choose to be, Christian school teachers are Christian exemplars for students. As a result, misleading, misguiding, or misrepresenting biblical truth and witness to students can be more harmful than if the student were in a non-Christian school.

Christian teachers should be cautious in assuming they themselves are growing spiritually simply because they are working in a Christian environment. This is an easy trap in which to fall. The loveliness of a changed and redeemed heart, and the attractiveness of a renewed mind and spirit is incomparable. To paraphrase Romans 10:15, "How beautiful are the tired and achy feet of those overworked and weary teachers who bring good news to God's special children each day!"

Principle 2: Students Are Image Bearers
(Gen 1:26-27)

The students filling the chairs, gyms, cafeterias, playgrounds, and ball fields of our schools are made in the image of the One True God. God sees them as precious in his sight, and so should their teachers. Part of the Christian teacher's responsibility is to help students see themselves through a biblical identity. This is most easily accomplished by modeling and practice. Teachers can (and should) set expectations and create procedures for reinforcing behaviors leading to respect and biblical identity, however students should be explained the *why* consistently and receive constructive feedback both when they *do* and *do not* live out these expectations. It is important for the teacher to model an "image bearer philosophy" in various situations so students can imagine themselves performing in the same way.

Students do not come to school as empty vessels, and school is likely not the most important aspect of their lives. Treating students as image bearers means understanding them as whole people—with experiences, emotions, ideas, assumptions,

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[2] Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, Study Guide ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 55-56.

interests, abilities, joys, and pain. They deserve consistency in the classroom and strategies to help them flourish. Although teachers are not trained counselors, understanding childhood wounds and trauma is part of *loving students*. In many ways teachers are the students' gatekeepers. They may be more aware of a child's rhythms and patterns than other adults in the child's life and are often the first to notice changes and potential hazards. Regardless of the student's attachment history, they will benefit from a strong, loving connection to their teacher, and these benefits are not just within the classroom. The impact of a teacher is far-reaching. But the impact of a Christian teacher is biblical, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Principle 3: Practices Are Forming
(Deut 6:4-9)

There is so much that goes into the teaching and learning experience beyond what is traditionally understood. Because of this, it is essential teachers utilize the hidden curriculum (unintended consequences) to spiritually form students. It is hidden because it is not obvious to students, but it should not be hidden from the teacher. Formation is happening, hidden or not. A useful way to differentiate between curriculums is what is being *taught* and what is being *caught*. What is *caught* David Smith refers to as practices—*how* the teaching happens. He states, "An account of Christian education that focuses only on the truth of what is taught, and fails to address the meanings molded through *how* it is taught and learned is at best incomplete."[3] Practices include rituals, traditions, environment (what the students see, smell, hear, touch, and taste), how time is structured (is the day rushed?), what words are used and their meanings, inside jokes or understandings, lighting, temperature, furniture arrangement, what behaviors are encouraged or discouraged, how consequences are conveyed, the teacher's tone of voice,

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[3] David I. Smith, *On Christian Teaching: Practicing Faith in the Classroom* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2018), 4.

posture, and body language. All of these aspects contribute to the students' formation. *They are not neutral*, and to ignore them is to potentially compromise the mission.

Another way of thinking about practices is to focus on a classroom's *culture*. Practices are how that culture developed. In *Humanizing the Education Machine,* the authors explain culture provides "an unprompted, unscripted *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* to help me fit in."[4] Culture is the "feel" of the classroom—those things the right brain perceives but the left brain may not process. They evoke emotions, feelings, and reactions within a person, but they may not know why. James K.A. Smith refers to these as *social imaginaries* that aim students' love and desire towards something ultimate.[5] The charge of the Christian teacher is to ensure the *something ultimate* is the God of the Bible and living God's story.

Principle 4: *Hesed* Community Is Love
(John 13:34-35)

Community is vitally important for spiritual formation. Without it formation cannot happen. And practices are communal; humans learn through their "socialness." Much like practices, communities form students as well. An otherworldliness often occurs within community as a group or class takes on a unique personality. Ask any teacher if their classes are all the same—they will answer with a resounding "no." Each class has its own distinctiveness. Teachers need to direct, guide, and lead community towards *hesed*. To review, *hesed* is another word for love—the kind of attachment the right brain "senses" is secure, safe, protective, and loving.

Any classroom is likely made up of students with varying degrees of attachment capabilities, the causes of which will generally be unknown, but the results of

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[4] Rex Miller, Bill Latham, and Brian Cahill, *Humanizing the Education Machine: How to Create Schools That Turn Disengaged Kids into Inspired Learners* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 148.

[5] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Cultural Liturgies 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 40.

which will eventually be apparent. *Hesed* done correctly should improve the entire community of participants' attachment to others and God. Key factors for *hesed* are unconditional acceptance, no sense of favoritism, genuine care for the whole person, community based on love not interests, freedom to express one's true self, expectation for the Holy Spirit to transform. *Hesed* is sometimes described as, "It's just something I can't put my finger on," or "I can't really explain what's so different." Much of what occurs in *hesed* is right brain based and therefore difficult to express. It is more of a *feeling* than an *activity*. Distinct about *hesed* is the understanding the community is not common—and will likely be mourned when it ends.

Principle 5: Stories Teach Best
(Matt 13:3-9)

Stories are the language of peoples' deepest instincts and loves. They can weasel into hardened hearts, wounded spirits, uninterested minds, and weak bodies. Stories soften life experiences by making them more easily integrated into individuals' right brain storage systems. They make things *stick* and stick deeply. Stories *change* us.

Educators are not trained to be story tellers, but they should be. Christian teachers should recognize and comprehend the biblical story (four acts) well enough to link their subject and teaching to it. They should also understand the strong (current) cultural stories and have the ability to critique them. Lastly, they should work to appreciate their own story and be willing to share it with their students—and listen when they share back.

Ultimately, teachers are the heart of teaching; they set the tone for the practices, relationships, freedom, expectations, and spiritual tenor of their classroom. For good or ill, the spiritual formation of students lies within their influence. They can and do make small decisions every day that lead to learning and growth.

Working of the Holy Spirit

Christian schools and teachers can labor to make the soil in their school as fertile as possible for spiritual formation, but ultimately it is the work of the Holy Spirit to change hearts and lives. This outworking has two extremes: one is a school or teacher can do everything *right* for spiritual growth and then it *not* happen. The other extreme is very little effort is given to encourage spiritual growth and it *does* happen. With these two opposite ends of the spectrum, there lies a lot in between. Similar to the reasons Christians participate in the spiritual disciplines, so must Christian educators participate in creating the *conditions* most likely to produce disciples. That is the emphasis of this study.

God intends for Christian schools to produce disciples. This is something that is biblical, and one need not question. If it is God's will for students to know him, it is critical to allow God to lead in the best way to accomplish this. Individual schools and teachers must seek God's guidance for their particular situation.

Although it might be understood within Christian schools that the Holy Spirit is how spiritual regeneration takes place, this may not always translate into day-to-day activity. As with the discussion about biblical integration, Christian educators must not view the Holy Spirit as an "add-on." In her article, "Educating in the Spirit," Carol Lakey Hess explains how this add-on might appear,

> The Spirit is almost seen as a relief pitcher who comes in at the ninth inning to sustain a win (or perhaps even reverse a loss), but who is otherwise on the periphery. Even when the Spirit is seen to be more integral to the educational process, there is little understanding as to what this really means. Rather than being the center of Christian education, the Spirit is simple referred to as being involved in the enlightening process that education seeks to foster. While this may produce a devotional attitude within Christian education, it can degenerate into a seal of approval that one can slap on one's means and ends—or an excuse for neglecting means and ends altogether.[6]

Despite the importance of teachers, environment, practices, storying, and biblical integration, the ultimate goal of Christian schools is to direct students towards

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[6] Carol Lakey Hess, "Educating in the Spirit," *Religious Education* 86, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 385.

God. The contributors to this goal are *not* the goal—they are just illuminators or road signs pointing the way. Christian schools should be places of prayer in and for all aspects of the school's mission. Praying for the Holy Spirit's presence, guidance, participation, and protection should be the top priority above all else.

Recommendations for Educators

This section serves to clarify best practices for the different components mentioned throughout this study that contribute to authentic student spiritual transformation.

Philosophy

Although schools should create a philosophy of Christian education, distinguished professor, Martha MacCullough encourages individual teachers to develop their personal philosophy of Christian education. ACSI requires this of all certified teachers. In her valuable book, *By Design*, MacCullough explains,

> A disciplined exercise in developing a personal philosophy of education begins with a current educational viewpoint and proceeds to clarify, adapt, confirm, or change beliefs in order to develop an internally consistent and coherent (one that makes sense and sticks together as a whole) educational philosophy that is informed by one's worldview.[7]

Ultimately, creating a unified Christian philosophy of Christian education will help the teacher focus on the big picture and also reframe education through a biblical understanding, especially if the teacher has spent time attending public universities or teaching in public schools. The daily routines and demands of teaching often distract from the ultimate goal(s). The ability to reflect on the overall *why* and *how* of Christian education will serve the teacher well during natural times of weariness and frustration.

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[7] Martha E. MacCullough, *By Design: Developing a Philosophy of Education Informed by a Christian Worldview* (Langhorne, PA: Carin University, 2013), 3. This is a great resource for teachers desiring to write their own philosophy of Christian education. The book is laid out in workbook form and allows the reader to slowly think through the issues MacCullough presents for a coherent philosophy.

Worldview

Christian Educators must acknowledge the majority of their students *do not* have a biblical worldview. Based on the research, elementary schools need to appreciate the weightiness of their influence in forming students' worldviews and take steps to ensure their practices and methods are *mind* and *heart* forming. Secondary schools should give more attention to forming students in ways *other than* thinking. Pearcy reminds, "We think *with* our worldview and *because* of our worldview, not *about* our worldview."[8]

Due to the low percentage of biblical worldview in adults, schools would be prudent to invest in worldview training for their teachers and not assume their teachers have one. The research just does not support that. Individual teachers should examine their own worldview, acknowledging where there is confusion, inconsistencies, and contradictions to a biblical way of life and seek wise counsel and resources to address these issues.

Biblical Worldview Integration

Since its definition is not universal, biblical integration needs to be defined. An effective way of training for biblical integration is by using examples of what it *is* and what it *is not*. In order to shift from preconceived perceptions and experiences, biblical integration might be better accepted and understood by instead using the term *spiritual formation*. Biblical integration has as its goal spiritual formation, and the emphasis on *forming* might imply for teachers, parents, and students a more comprehensive and on-going process than biblical integration. Emphasizing spiritual formation as the goal might also more easily incorporate other processes contributing to formation such as classroom practices, environment, teaching techniques, and teacher spirituality.

In her research, Annie Gallagher found teachers indicate the need for training

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[8] Pearcy, *Total Truth*, 143.

in biblically integrated instruction. Gallagher further determined BII is best adapted with the use of teacher coaches—trained teachers and administration in BII.[9] Educators must make space in their budgets, professional development calendars, and regular training to assist teachers in this area. If biblical integration is the defining difference between public and Christian schools, it must be of highest priority.

The best assurance for transformational biblical integration in the classroom is the presence of a teacher that has an authentic relationship with Jesus willing to share it with the students. Luke 6:45 speaks to this, "A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."

Teachers

Investment in teachers' spiritual formation *is* an investment in students' spiritual formation. Teachers are the frontline; all research indicates the success (or failure) of classroom transformation lies with the teacher, and more specifically *who* the teacher is. Generally speaking, Christian schools assume their teachers have a strong biblical worldview and are growing in their faith. However, research indicates that is not necessarily true. Additionally, as younger teachers (GenZ) graduate from teaching programs and join Christian school faculties, more emphasis will be needed in this area. Teachers are likely not prepared for the spiritual battle that is currently and will increasingly be vied for Christian school students' hearts and minds.

In her book *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators*, author and coach Elena Aguilar proposes teachers need to build individual resilience in order to have the energy and dedication to (re)build schools.[10] Although it is widely reported that

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[9] Ann L. Gallagher, "The Impact of Coaching on Teachers' Application of Biblically Integrated Instruction" (PhD diss., Columbia International University, 2016), 210-12.

[10] Elena Aguilar, *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2018).

teachers have very difficult (nearly impossible) jobs, the disruption and upheaval COVID-19 brought to education has shone a spotlight on its fundamental deficiencies. There has never been a better time to justify the potential costs associated with teacher care and wellbeing. Investment in teachers, especially after the 2020-2021 school year(s), is critical for the mission of Christian schools and the assurance there will be the energy and commitment needed to battle issues that might be headed for Christian education in the future.

Learners

It is true that educators, particularly Christian educators, have an enormous task facing them. The current generation of students represents more change, technology, and culture shifting than any before it. However, the Great Commission Mandate has not been rescinded. Christian schools and teachers have an opportunity for meaningful eternal impact on their students, but it might require changes in "the way we've always done things."

Based on the current research on GenZ and what they need to flourish, Christian educators would be wise to instruct their faculties in better understanding GenZ and also how to mentor students.[11] By learning the hidden worldviews, motivations, perspectives, and challenges facing the current generation of students, teachers would benefit personally as well as in the classroom. Mentoring is a pursuit that, if done poorly, could do more harm than good. Obviously, not everyone will be receptive to or capable of mentoring students. However, for those who can, proper training, encouragement, and the space and time to allow it to happen organically could benefit everyone.

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[11] Many excellent sources are available about mentoring and the impact it has on upcoming generations, discipleship, and spiritual formation. One in particular is Jeff Myers, Paul Gutacker, and Paige Gutacker, *Cultivate: Forming the Emerging Generation Through Life-on-Life Mentoring* (Dayton, TN: Passing the Baton, 2010).

Formation

The most significant understanding regarding formation is the awareness that *everything* influences formation. Students are being formed everyday—the question becomes whether or not the teachers and educators know *what* is doing the forming and *how* the formation is affecting students. To borrow the example from earlier in this study…are we creating fast eaters because the cafeteria is too small?

Unintended consequences occur as a result of day-to-day activities in any organization, but even more so in schools due to the repetitive nature and age of participants in the school setting. It is, in fact, the *purpose* of school to form students. Christian schools need to use the formation process to their advantage by first examining the formative practices in their own setting—both good and bad. The next step is evaluating what negatively forms students and replacing it with what positively forms students. Although formation happens on many levels, the primary emphasis and energy for Christian schools should focus on spiritual formation.

Another aspect to formation that should be highlighted is formation needs to start young. Spiritual disciplines should not be introduced in high school; they should be taught to young elementary students with room provided in their schedule for practice. Due to the emphasis on the *mind* in education, many topics are saved for older students because of the inability to consider younger students can understand them. While younger students may not mentally *comprehend* the spiritual disciplines, they are certainly able to *experience* them.[12] Spiritual formation needs to start young. The reality

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[12] Kevin Lawson writes,
Children have an inherent spiritual awareness and genuine spiritual experiences…Research does show that children are not empty, passive vessels to be filled with religious instruction. Instead children are active agents with spiritual awareness of their own, trying to make sense of their experiences and what they are taught. Spirituality is not something that happens later in life but is a part of human experience throughout our lives and should be taken seriously at all ages. . . . Recent research challenges us to take the spirituality of children seriously instead of dismissing it because it is not as 'mature' as that of adults. (Kevin Lawson, "Growing in Wisdom and Stature: Recent Research on Spirituality and Faith Formation," in *Shaped by God: Twelve Essentials for Nurturing Faith in Children, Youth, and Adults*, ed. Robert J. Keeley [Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2010], 141)

is formation *does* start young, educators just need to acknowledge this by making efforts to use it for spiritual development.

Story

There are two aspects of storying within authentic student spiritual transformation. The first aspect is the implementation of the four-act narrative and the second is the benefits of using story as a teaching technique.

The four-act framework provides an avenue with which to connect the individual, school, and cultural stories to God's story. It breaks the overall biblical story down so it can actually be seen and understood as a whole. The four acts invite teachers and students to explore their content within a narrative framework and then determine *how* and *where* their content fits into the larger biblical story. Pearcy states, "Each major worldview has its own metanarrative, its own master story…Christianity, with its pattern of creation, fall, redemption, and glorification [restoration], is a master narrative."[13]

If we are a storying people then it is essential for Christian educators to both *tell* and *live* the biblical story as well as illustrate how all of life, including the classroom, can be viewed through this grand story. Erdvig's use of additional words for each act is very helpful: creation/ought, fall/is, redemption/can, and restoration/will.[14] This worldview framework is more powerful when used consistently and in various situations. It is a formative practice that can be implemented in any Christian school at all grades.

Stories are the basis for how humans learn and live. They incite emotions, encourage connections, and provide meaning. So important are stories to human processing, that in the absence of story the mind fills in the gaps. Unfortunately, in Western society stories have been relegated to young children and moral myths. However, with innovations like Audible, podcasts, and TED Talks, the power and use of

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[13] Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 145.

[14] Roger C. S. Erdvig, *Beyond Biblical Integration: Immersing You and Your Students in a Biblical Worldview* (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Ministries, 2020), 49-52.

stories has been rejuvenated. Educators should test the use of stories in their own classrooms, regardless of student age; the power of story will speak for itself.

Conclusion

Education is at a crossroads. The "old" way of doing school is not producing the learning and students for current and future cultures. Major innovation is required if our country's educational system will produce viable results. Unfortunately, positive change is still change, and by our very nature we resist change. Viewing and treating education differently will take bravery and resolve that there *is* a better way. Things may get worse before they get better, and Christian schools need to be prepared for the consequences and convinced change is the best for teachers and students.

John Hull describes what is at stake,

> Will we persist in thinking that Christian education must be different by intent, or should we be content with difference as a consequence only? If the ultimate test for Christian education rests with its fidelity to Scripture rather than adding to or being fundamentally different from the status quo, then we must figure out what faithful education looks like at the school level. It seems probable to me that a faithful education can express itself in many ways. If faith is another word for biblical perspective, then we need more and better examples of what teachers and students actually 'see,' 'hear,' 'know,' and 'do' by faith. Should the impact of faith result in transforming, healing, cleansing, sorting, affecting, affirming, deepening, focusing, separating, and prioritizing, then we must be able to show how in our teaching, curriculum planning, student evaluations, goal selection, and in the way we structure the school situation. If we cannot describe faithful education in these concrete terms, Christian perspective will continue to perform like bookends—God talk will appear at the beginning and end of lessons, units, courses and school years, but what lies in between will remain largely unaffected.[15]

There has never been a better time to overhaul *everything* we do – including how to raise children to love and obey Jesus. This is no easy task, and the enemy will be reluctant to give up conquered territory. But there is no higher calling than fighting for the hearts and minds of generations to truly know the Trine God.

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[15] John E. Hull, "Aiming for Christian Education, Settling for Christians Educating: The Christian School's Replication of a Public School Paradigm," *Christian Scholar's Review* 32, no. 2 (Winter 2003): 222-23.

APPENDIX 1

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

Philosophy

MacCullough, Martha. *By Design: Developing a Philosophy of Education Informed by a Christian Worldview*. Langhorne, PA: Carin University, 2013.

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APPENDIX 2

SMALL TEACHINGS FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

This appendix is designed specifically for classroom teachers and is formatted "small teaching" style.[1] Teachers are so inundated with information, ideas, initiatives, and requirements it often either overwhelms the teacher with "paralysis of analysis" or pushes the teacher to exhaustion from the tyranny of perfection. What follows are ten bite-sized suggestions teachers can implement immediately for increasing authentic student spiritual transformation in their classroom.

1. Introduce Erdvig's four-act biblical metanarrative (creation/ought, fall/is, redemption/can, and restoration/will) and practice with students by placing different topics, issues, and situations within the biblical story. As class topics and new material surfaces, discuss it in relation to the biblical metanarrative.

2. Find one way to use (a) story to replace a teaching segment, begin a unit, or synthesize new information. Even 12th grade students will enjoy a story (made up, read from a book, or personal from the teacher) that is intended for younger audiences. If it relates, they will appreciate it.

3. Arrive to school a few minutes early (or stay a few minutes late) with the expressed purpose of praying over your classroom and for your students. Walk around your classroom and stop at each seat praying for the student(s) that fill(s) it each day. Pray for the aroma of Jesus to penetrate your space.

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[1] *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning* by James Lang emphasizes small teaching activities that boost and energize student learning. I use this style to present ideas to teachers that are not overwhelming and can be used in the classroom within days. James M. Lang, *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016).

4. Practice imagining of your classroom through the lens of hospitality. What would change if you saw yourself as the host, and your students as guests?

5. Examine the times you might be practicing dualism. Think through your day or week and focus on times you might *silo* anything biblical. For instance, not discussing biblical or spiritual topics outside of "Bible time," not bringing up chapel or Bible curriculum during *academic* time; treating academics more importantly than character formation; rewarding students for outward behavior without regard to motives or intentions.

6. Think of ways to creatively teach and add spiritual practices to your classroom. When you pray, let your prayer be authentic, spontaneous, and relevant; allow students to go to a predetermined place in your room to pray by themselves; teach your students to "look" for God throughout their day and talk about it; teach your students about meditation and quiet breaks and lead the class through them regularly.

7. Teach the biblical definition of joy and allow joy to be the prevalent emotion in your classroom despite the ups and downs of life. Practice celebrating small victories; seek and model gratitude; allow students to pray for each other; encourage healthy competition for students *with themselves,* not other students; illustrate and model through your own actions that feelings like love, friendship, encouragement, forgiveness, etc. are not finite that will one day run out—but there is always more, and we are able to give freely and generously.

8. Create an "image bearer" classroom where each student is taught the value of one another through a biblical lens, celebrating diversity, differences, uniqueness, and giftings as well as our likenesses.

9. Work diligently to know and love your students well. Seek to learn at least one new thing about each student every week; ask about their lives outside of school;

let them know you thought about them when you were not together; pray for them privately and publicly; laugh and smile and celebrate them.

10. Make your relationship with Jesus the most important part of your life. Strive to grow, study, pray, gather, and live more in his likeness every day. There is nothing that will spiritually transform your students more than this.

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ABSTRACT

MEETING JESUS IN THE CLASSROOM:
TRANSFORMATIONAL INTEGRATION

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Matthew D. Haste

This study explores how to best create the conditions for authentic spiritual formation in the Christian school classroom. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the history of Christian education in America, and the strengths and weaknesses of current Christian education. Chapters 2 and 3 offer an extensive literature review of the topics of philosophy of education, worldview, biblical integration, teachers, and learners. Chapter 4 presents an understanding of transformational integration through formation. Chapter 5 chronicles one Christian school system's experience in striving to reach authentic spiritual transformation in the classroom. Lastly, Chapter 6 culminates in offering best practices and principles for authentic transformation. Appendices include book recommendations and small suggestions for teachers they can implement immediately in their classrooms.

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