

Preface

Ask nearly any elementary student what their favorite school subject is, and the likely answer is “recess” or “gym.” Ask a middle or high school student the same question and the answer may come back, “lunch” or “study hall.” Recess, snow days, and summer vacation are greeted with shouts of joy, while having to go to school and do homework are viewed as drudgery and punishment by a frightening percentage of students.

We do not mean to paint a dreary picture of the classroom (truth be told, we’ve cheered on snowy mornings when school has been cancelled), but having spent a combined fifty years in the elementary classroom, middle and high school administration, and school board service, we are confident you understand what we’re talking about.

“Why do we have to learn this?” moan students when the topic at hand is less than interesting to them. Teachers generally answer this maddening question in one of two ways: waxing eloquent about why the study of square roots is a critical exercise or simply trying to silence the questioner with a response like “because it’s good for you,” or “you’ll need it when you grow up,” or (on more frustrating days) “because I said so.”

If you think about it, though, it’s a great question. What *is* the point? What is the value of knowing what integers, linking verbs, and ionic bonds are? Why do we think students need to learn the dates of the American Civil War, the structure of haiku, and the literary themes in *Romeo and Juliet*? What do these things have to do with the everyday lives our students lead?

We may as well admit it—many of the things we teach have little or nothing to do with the everyday lives of our students, both now and in the future when they become adults. This does not mean, of course, that we should excise them from our curriculum, because you know as well as we do that the process of learning is as important—and sometimes even more important—than the actual content. Through the schooling process, students learn facts and skills that hone their interests, but more importantly, they develop a set of values through which they see the world.

As our students journey through elementary and secondary education, they develop, without even realizing it, a worldview that influences every decision they will make as adults.

In light of this, an even better question for Christian school teachers is, “What worldview am I shaping in my students by what I teach?” What makes Christian education any different from its non-Christian counterparts?

In theory, at least, the hallmark of Christian education is the integration of the Word of God and the God of the Word with all academic areas. There was a time in our country when education and the Christian faith stood side by side in the classroom. God was the Creator, and students of the natural world marveled at His vast wisdom in its design and operation. Every subject area was permeated by the Judeo-Christian worldview, which provided a Christian focus to our understanding of man and his world.

But times have changed, and rather than God being honored as Creator and the source of all wisdom, human reason is believed to be completely adequate for discovering the secrets of the physical world and solving all the problems of humankind.

Out of this cultural shift arose Christian schools, seeking to preserve the Christian worldview in the upcoming generations by teaching a unified view of truth—God’s truth. In the Christian school, secular knowledge should be as sacred as sacred knowledge because both are part of God’s massive body of truths that fill this universe. All truth is God’s truth.

Students receive an education of sorts in *every* Christian school when they learn to read, write, solve mathematical problems, study the natural world, and understand how people live together as families, communities, and nations. But if students do not also learn how each of these vital areas flows from the Word of God and how each is related to God, we are just teaching truth, and not God. The Christian school must do both simultaneously.

This monumental task has been helped, in part, by Christian publishers who have taken up the challenge of producing materials from within a Christian worldview. Such materials provide an alternative to the secular publishers’ curricular materials that are devoid of Christian content and truth.

But while these Christian textbooks have helped meet an urgent need, they are not enough because the greatest influence on the worldviews of the next generation is the worldview of those who instruct them. Your ability as teachers to integrate the truths of God’s Word with every facet of the curriculum, regardless of what textbooks you use, is what guarantees or jeopardizes the possibility that your students will receive a truly Christian education. Teachers, beginning in the kindergarten classroom and going all the way through high school graduation, carry the heaviest responsibility for the primary task of the Christian school—day-by-day, subject-by-subject integration of curricular material and biblical truth.

It all sounds great, doesn’t it? But we know better. We know that in the flurry of classroom activity, you are often happy just to get through the day’s lesson. We know that when you are turning somersaults to meet ever-increasing standardization requirements, the thought of trying to meet one more expectation is overwhelming. We know that in the normal classroom the forest gets easily lost for the all the trees that are growing there.

This book is to help you see the forest again, or perhaps for the first time. We want to help you understand how God’s truth, His bigger Story, shapes every aspect of what your textbooks contain. And we want to gently help you understand that if you fail to integrate everything you teach with that Story, you fail to teach Christianly.

In short, we want to give you a better answer for the question, “Why do we have to learn this?” that students ask, and for the question, “What worldview am I shaping in my students by what I teach?” that you should be asking every time you stand in front of your class. To accomplish this, we will walk through the pages of God’s Story and help you see how each subject you teach flows from these pages. This book is meant to be comprehensive, but at the same time, it is only the beginning of what we hope will be an exciting career-long journey you take with your students.

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