

## **24C EDUCATION THOUGHTS -2**

(by Paul)

### **11 Commandments for Educators**

1. Thou shalt not fake it.  
When you don't know something, simply say-"I don't know. I'll try to find an answer for you."
2. Thou shalt not make students feel dumb.  
Remember when you didn't begin to understand this stuff.
3. Thou shalt not change the rules in the middle of the course.  
If you really want a revolt on your hands increase the original number of assignments and tests.
4. Thou shalt not single out a student in front of the class.  
Arrange to talk after class or during office hours.
5. Thou shalt not show favoritism or prejudice.
6. Thou shalt come to class prepared.
7. Thou shalt not waste the students' time.
8. Thou shalt not bore a class and diminish their enthusiasm for the subject.
9. Thou shalt not require a textbook that students will never open.
10. Thou shalt make an effort to learn students' names and important things about them (interests and goals, not GPA's.)
11. If you are a follower of Christ thou shalt pray regularly for your students.

### **EDUCATIONAL MYTHBUSTERS**

(From Faculty Workshop August 2017)

What have I learned about teaching at LeTourneau University?

A lot of what I had thought- or what faculty or students thought-was clearly incorrect.

MYTH: Christian higher ed is just college education with a Bible verse tacked on.

FACT: There really is such a thing as the integration of faith and learning, an examination of the areas where Biblical truth and our disciplines intersect. It is unique to CCCU schools and very important. After all these years, I still find it difficult to do. (We need to keep learning about this and practicing it.)

MYTH: Since we're believers working at a Christian school everything should always go wonderfully.

FACT (reality check): Sometimes -We will get sick. Our kids will get hurt. Things will break. We will fail at some tasks. We will get crosswise with a brother or sister.

Which means that---

We need to pray constantly with each other and for each other. We need to seek forgiveness and make things right.

MYTH: Every student we encounter will be a growing, mature Christian. (Some new students and some new faculty may think this.)

FACT: Our students will be all over the spectrum. Some have a powerful walk with God and will bless us enormously by encouraging us and praying for us. Others have never seen a Bible. A few may be running away from the Lord. Sadly, a few will try to cheat- which is always painful for everyone. Every student needs respect, love, and being told the truth.

MYTH (Students often believe that): Since this is a Christian school and since faculty believe in love and grace they will excuse anything, including failing work, bad behavior, and multiple absences.

FACT: Encouraging bad behavior or failure is not a loving attitude.

One way to help with the absence issue is to build in a buffer for assignments - beyond the official excused absences. I tell students that I'll drop their lowest five daily homeworks and their lowest two weekly quizzes. That way, if they really want to sleep till noon twice or to attend their friend's wedding, they can choose to use their buffer that way.

MYTH (Some students believe that): Once students get to college they'll never need to memorize anything ever again.

FACT: While we encourage higher level thinking skills, there are a handful of key ideas in every discipline that need to be absorbed and "known by heart". Also, we're told to hide God's word in our heart, not just in our iphone.

MYTH: The primary task of a faculty member is to stand up and talk.

FACT: Faculty have a variety of tasks-

- Take a large subject and break it into 30 or 40 bite-sized pieces

- Explain the difficult parts

- Help the students to connect with the material

- Provide students with feedback on their understanding

- Encourage students in their learning

If we're only talking, it's not an active classroom. (At least stop and ask for questions.)

MYTH: Faculty give students grades.

FACT: WE should never give a student a grade. I sometimes tell students that I've never given a student an F....and I've never given a student an A. They've always earned those grades fair and square. If they want to question a grade we can look at the numbers.

MYTH: Faculty only relate to students as teachers.

FACT: We do relate to the students as teachers, but also in multiple ways.

Note what the Bible says about teachers.

We also relate to many of the students as fellow brothers and sisters (We're all learning and growing.)

At times we relate to them as quasi-parents. (Note what the Scripture says to parents.)

We also relate to them as elders (See 2 Peter about elders.)

MYTH: Once faculty learn something well we can coast; we can wing it in class.

FACT: Trying to wing it is dangerous. Ideally we have substantial prep time, but it's important that we review what we plan to present. Somehow we need to keep the presentation fresh and dynamic.

## **SEVEN MYTHS OF CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP**

Mark Noll has decried the lack of deep scholarship among evangelicals.

“Medieval monastics, the Reformers, the Puritans, and Jonathan Edwards himself had determined to bring every aspect of life under the guidance of Christian thinking. Noll even finds the efforts of certain late-nineteenth-century giants like Charles Hodge and Augustus Strong compelling because of their determined effort to embrace the knowable world within Christian categories.” [1]

Myths:

1. Scholarship will mean that we all need to be doing funded research and following a model nearly identical to that of Dr. Roger Gonzalez, who has shown great skill in research. Scholarship will look different in every area of campus. Our starting point will probably be to define what scholarship means in each given discipline.

2. Scholarship is unnecessary in the Christian academic community.

Actually, scholarship is desperately needed in the Christian community.

The mission of the CCCU (Council of Christian Colleges and Universities) is “to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help its institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth.”

Lewis Duncan, president of Rollins College has made the case [2] that true liberal education as originally developed in universities was always applied knowledge

(knowledge and related skills) – artists produce art, literary experts write, scientists perform experiments, mathematicians develop proofs, historians develop methodologies, philosophers develop theories. The idea of knowledge so pure that we can only admire it from a distance comes from Platonism and English humanism.

Knowledge pursued only as an end in itself cannot ultimately fulfill –It is also “vanity”, according to the preacher.

Faculty should be models of the same “lifelong learning” that we urge our students to pursue.

Joel Carpenter's chapter on the mission of Christian scholarship offers some history of the role of higher education in Christian mission and argues that Christian scholars need to recover a sense of themselves as missionaries to the culture in which they work.

Parker Palmer, concluding the book's first section, reprises the themes of his book *To Know as We are Known*, arguing that we need to oppose objectivism with a 'gospel epistemology' that emphasizes the personal, communal, reciprocal and transformational dimensions of knowing. He questions the notion that the academy is concerned with the 'pursuit of truth', countering it with the Christian idea that the truth pursues us, while we typically seek to evade it. [3]

George Marsden has written-

*I would argue that if Christian-consciousness is raised, we will find that belief in a God of the magnitude and qualities of the God of Christianity will make a substantial difference in the way people think about many aspects of life.*

*For instance, if we believe that all reality is created by a God who cares for us and reveals himself to us, then we cannot view human moral ideals in a simply functional light as nothing more than arbitrary constructions of the powerful or as survival mechanisms of the oppressed. Rather we would see that whatever else they are the most important things about human constructions of moralities is how well they conform to divinely instituted standards. Putting God in the picture will change the picture. Putting God in the picture may not essentially change our analysis of the cultural functions of*

*morality. But it will change the picture substantially to recognize that the cultural functions of morality are not their only functions.*

*The belief that God has created us provides us with a place to stand in evaluating the cult of self in modern and post-modern culture. With God the Creator out of the way as a serious component of our thought, views of human capacities have become immensely inflated. Much of the history of modern and post-modern Western thought could be written as the elimination of the Creator and the consequent inflation of human ego and achievement...*

*The point is that with God in the picture we have a very different perspective. For one thing, if we remain keenly aware that God is in our intellectual picture, the dimensions of the rest of the picture will shrink drastically. For another, if God is in the picture, then God will be at the center of the picture. Rather than seeing ourselves or our kind, as we normally do, as at the center of reality, we will see that we are on the periphery and no more significant than anyone else.*

*So what I urge each of you, who is a committed believer, to do is to prayerfully think about what it would mean to keep God in your intellectual picture. [4]*

To paraphrase Martin Luther, “Why should the devil have all the good scholarship?”

3. Scholarship will conflict with our teaching.

Ideally, scholarship will involve our students directly.

4. Scholarship will compete with our spiritual mission.

As evangelicals we do believe that Christ died and was resurrected first and foremost to redeem us as sinful humans from death and hell. Redemption was first of all for our behalf. With that in place, I’m convinced that many of our human activities can be seen as cooperating with God in alleviating results of the fall, particularly human suffering (Amos, Isaiah.) In such cases we are acting as "agents of redemption," to use Harold Heie’s terminology. In another sense, I think we can talk about "extending the kingdom

of God" both into geographical territory and into professional areas where non-Christian influence has had sway for years- politics, the media, university arts and sciences.

We were created to glorify God, and we glorify God in many ways – by worship, by carrying out His will, by making Him known to others, by demonstrating His reality and nature, by using the gifts He has given us, by working well, by meeting needs. Bill Graff has emphasized that whatever we do should be done well –this glorifies God and attracts people to Him, rather than repelling them. Part of doing our work well for the Lord is the whole area of scholarship. Scholarship in some form is an expectation in our profession.

The goal is not at all to elevate scholarship above evangelism; it is not to replace our personal walk with the Lord with scholarly activity. It is never an either-or choice.

They're not in the same category of living.

Scholarship should not have first priority in our lives (only the Lord should), but should have priority in the professional part of our lives. If something needs to give way to allow for scholarship, it needs to get carved out of the area of life called career/ profession /teaching and the time and effort allotted to that area.

Scholarship, like everything we do, can be done to the glory of God. Beyond this, good scholarship (and it must be good) opens the door to many new professional contacts, some of whom need Christ. While they may not all come to salvation as a result of interacting with us, they should all receive a blessing as a result of interacting with us.

##### 5. Scholarship will become an enormous burden.

Not if we manage our time well. Faculty assigned to full-time teaching have often spent a summer writing grant requests and "purchased" release time with funds built into the grant, once awarded.

##### 6. Scholarship will push us into a "publish or perish" mentality.

The administration at a Christian college will typically make sure that this doesn't happen.

## 7. Scholarship will cost us too much.

Serious involvement in scholarship will cost us money. Faculty who propose valuable scholarly projects should be given the resources to develop them. Here's where we need to put ingenuity to work. Where could we find new sources of funds to make these activities happen?

*We do not stand paralyzed with one foot on the dock and one foot in a boat which is slowly drifting away. Rather we take our priorities and values from the church and we fully engage the academy. We discover our fundamental life commitments in Christian practice and we work them out in our scholarship. We have our life priorities set by the concerns of the community of the Kingdom of God and we live out those priorities in the arena of the world. It turns out that there is a better metaphor to describe the relation the Christian scholar has to the two communities. It is not original. In fact, St. Paul applied it to his own ministry as well as to ours. We are ambassadors. [5]*

## References

1. Wacker, G., et. al., "The Scandal of the Christian Mind, a Symposium," *First Things*, March 1995.
2. Duncan, L., address, ASEE Conference, June 2006.
3. From David Smith review of Henry, D. and Agee, B., *Faithful Learning and the Christian Scholarly Vocation*, Eerdmans, 2003.
4. Marsden, G., *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, Oxford University Press, 1997.
5. Ganssle, G., "The Two Communities of the Christian Scholar," CRU Leader.

## KNOWLEDGE FOR GOD'S GLORY

Background: I had some early encounters with a youth ministry which felt that higher education was a waste and even displeasing to God.

Some troubling verses:

James 3:1 – “Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.”

I Cor. 8:1 – “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.”

My understanding of these verses-

Teaching is a calling –Some have entered it for the wrong reasons. (James is referring here to teachers of spiritual truth.)

Teachers run the risk of misleading students and wielding power and control over students.

Improper use of knowledge can make us proud – exalting ourselves over others, not relying on God.

Is knowledge good in God's sight?

It can be--

God's Spirit was on Bezalel and Oholiab for knowledge and skill to make the tabernacle. (Exodus 36)

Solomon –was given wisdom to understand animals, birds, fish, trees, economics,... (1 Kings 4:33)

Daniel –was given wisdom and intelligence in every branch of learning. (Dan. 1:17-20)

Mt. 22:36 –“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, **mind**, and strength.”

“Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” –I Cor. 10:31

God gave us minds, curiosity, creativity –“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; it is the glory of kings to search out a matter.” (Prov. 25:2)

Ignorance is never spiritual.

Under what circumstances can human knowledge glorify God?

1. Knowledge can glorify God if we approach it with humility; knowledge is improper if it makes us proud.

“If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.” (I Cor. 8:2)

Dewey was correct in this: Education does make for an informed citizenry, better prepared for living.

However-

We’re often told that knowledge /education is the only light in the darkness, bringing us from savagery to society and freedom, triumphing over our basic/baser nature. We hear that it’s only a matter of time before we can conquer all diseases, solve all our social problems, and understand all the secrets of nature.

Let’s be humble and realistic-

Our minds are limited; our reason is fallen; there is much we don’t know –but we can use our knowledge for the Lord and enjoy learning about His world. We can make a contribution to the betterment of humankind in the name of Jesus.

2. Knowledge can glorify God if God is acknowledged as its source; knowledge is improper if it attempts to dethrone our Creator.

Rom. 11:33- “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!”

I Tim. 1:17 – “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Col. 2:3 –“In whom [Jesus] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

I recall a story (from the days of early work on the genetic code) of the laboratory rats that ran through mazes. One day the smartest rat finally made it through the most difficult maze ever developed –He returned to tell the other rats, “There is no scientist.”

3. Knowledge can glorify God if it is obtained in a legitimate manner; knowledge is improper if we obtain it by unlawful means.

Learning requires effort and perseverance

Learning the minimum to get by (“Just teach me what I need to know to pass your tests and get a job”) doesn’t sound like doing all we do “with all our might.”

Knowledge obtained by cheating is stolen knowledge, not learned knowledge.

4. Knowledge can glorify God if it is true; knowledge is improper if it is knowingly false.

Phil. 4:8 – “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

We often hear that “All truth is God’s truth”-Yes, but be careful here–“All truth is God’s truth, but not all teaching is true.” (Naturalistic explanations for the cosmos, false religions, Marxism, encouragement to sin –these are all false.)

That which is true corresponds to the reality of God’s world.

The modern media continually suggests that “Just because something isn’t true doesn’t mean you can’t believe it.” [1]

“We love comfortable thoughts, and somehow believe that being comfortable with them is what makes them true.” [2]

5. Knowledge can glorify God if it is used; knowledge is improper if not used.

Hebrew concept of knowledge: To know is to do.

Consider Jesus' parable of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30) – to deliberately “bury” what the Lord entrusts to us –is wicked, lazy, displeasing to God

Knowledge pursued only as an end in itself cannot ultimately fulfill –It is also “vanity”, according to the preacher.

5. Knowledge can glorify God if used for a good purpose; knowledge is improper if put to an evil purpose.

It is sobering that the terrorists/hijackers of 9-11 used their knowledge of engineering and aviation (two of our specialties) to destroy the World Trade Center.

Knowledge without moral character produces monsters.

In many ways knowledge is similar to money (riches) –

It originates with God, is entrusted to us, should be gained lawfully and used for righteous purposes, takes effort to obtain, should be used and not hoarded, should be budgeted, should be diversified, should not be where we place our ultimate trust.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” (Prov.3:5-6)

The Lord can provide money when we need it; the Lord can also provide knowledge when we need it (including as a spiritual gift).

In the sense that knowledge is entrusted to us by God, we are “stewards of knowledge.”

Knowledge is more than facts –Knowledge ties facts together in a coherent matrix.

We are never told to seek knowledge (It is assumed that we need/seek some knowledge.)

We are told to diligently seek wisdom.

Wisdom is more than knowledge –Wisdom is the use of knowledge, the ability to make good choices for life, seeing life from God's perspective.

True wisdom comes from God- “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (Prov. 9:10)

Highest knowledge: knowledge of God –personal, intimate knowledge of the Lord.

Phil. 3:8 –“More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”

Hosea 4:6 –“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you...”

Contrast—I Tim. 2:4 – “[God] wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

Recall that the “Rich fool” in Jesus’ parable (Lk. 12:13-21) was not rich towards God. Today we have many “educated fools” in society- not educated towards God.

We need to help students discover knowledge, motivate students to seek wisdom, inspire students to know God (personally.)

We trust in God because of what we know about God (not because of what we feel about God.) Knowing God will affect our feelings, but our starting point is “knowledge of the truth.”

Francis Schaeffer wrote, “Knowledge precedes faith-This is crucial in understanding the Bible. To say, as a Christian should, that only faith that believes God on the basis of knowledge is true faith is to say something that causes an explosion in (today’s) world.”  
[3]

We must be more than dispensers of facts – Computers can do this more powerfully than we can, and videos can be much more entertaining.

At its core, teaching is relational (ideas from Parker Palmer)– teacher, content, student – interacting.

Ultimate goal: “Speak the truth in love.” (Eph. 4:15)

Not just when evangelizing.

Not just when confronting another.

Not just in the family or congregation –all the time.

Teaching is speaking the truth in love.

May the Lord help us to do exactly that.

#### References

1. Attributed to John Blankenmyer.
2. Ibid.
3. Schaeffer, F., *The God Who is There*, IVP, 1968.