

Special Education & the Difficult Student

Beth Ackerman, Ed.D., Adjunct Professor, School of Education

One of the greatest challenges that teachers face in the classroom is the student who has special needs or challenging behaviors. If our Great Teacher were in a school today, you would probably find him surrounded by students with special needs (Psalms 72:12-13; Job 29:14-16; Luke 14:12-14). People with special needs are a representation of God's ability to make great the least of these and that beauty is in all things wonderfully created for his purpose (Psalms 139:14; Romans 12:3, 6; Matthew 25:40 2 Corinthians 12:9).



It is often easier to grasp this great story of beauty and redemption in the disabilities and abilities that are seen and better understood. But one of the greatest challenges for a teacher lies in the unseen afflictions of the difficult student. Teachers often feel priority should be given to the 99 other students that are doing as they should. However, the Good Shepherd left the 99 sheep to save the one sheep (Luke 15:4; Matthew 18:12). As much as the difficult student can try and challenge our faith (James 1), our other students are watching how we demonstrate God's grace and love. As demonstrated in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15, this difficult student may need the discipline of a loving father, but celebration and favor follow the son's return. Teachers should – "warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, and be patient with everyone" (1 Thessalonians. 5:14).

Conflicts Between Science & the Bible

David Beck, Ph.D., Adjunct Professor, School of Divinity



The key question for the university, from its medieval beginnings down to today, has been how to coordinate science, understood as the analysis/synthesis of the data of our natural world by the use of our natural capacities of observation and reason, and Scripture, that is, God's special revelation in the Bible. The standard answer of medieval Christian philosophy is epitomized in Thomas Aquinas and, I think, remains valid today.

He begins with a definition of science in its broadest sense: It is a specified set of data that is approached by a specified methodology. Next question: Is theology a science? Yes, he answers, it is the use of our critical methods that allow us to analyze (exegete) and synthesize (form biblical/theological statements and systems) the biblical data. These methods are really no different than those used by other scientists who deal with original documents, say Shakespeare scholars or Egyptologists, for example.

Then what do we do when a proposition of theology is in conflict with a proposition of any other science? The answer is straightforward: You deal with it the same way you deal with conflict within or between sciences, including theology itself. That is, you just keep working at it till you see where exactly the conflict lies and find a way to resolve it. Sometimes that is easy, and sometimes it takes centuries. Sometimes we have misinterpreted Scripture, sometimes the facts of science, sometimes both, and often there is a resolution that allows both our interpretations to be correct. Just look at the historical record.

Does inerrancy play a role? Of course God has the final word here. The problem is that inerrancy does not prevent us from misunderstanding, misinterpreting, and misapplying Scripture. Scripture is inerrant but our interpretations and theology not so much. The obvious evidence is that theologians so frequently disagree. So we need to proceed cautiously when these conflicts arise and patiently work on solutions, as we continue to give a reasoned defense of the truth of Scripture.

Sharing Faith with International Students

Bruce Bell, Ph.D., Adjunct Instructor, College of Arts & Sciences

Teaching English grammar and composition to international students has its own unique challenges, but as a Christian professor charged with and privileged to share his faith with those students, I seek to reflect Christ's love and grace in each class. That includes—but is not limited to—my dealings with the students in and outside the classroom. Can they see “Christ in me, the hope of glory”?



Additionally, I introduce Scripture at the beginning of class before prayer. Those Scripture passages are chosen carefully for what they say about the nature of God, humankind, sin, and redemption, but they are also used to introduce the day's lesson. For example, to introduce the lesson on pronouns I highlight subjective, objective, reflexive, and possessive pronouns, reading from Colossians 1:15-20, *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”*

Similarly, when we discuss definition paragraphs, I take these international students to 1 Corinthians 13, Paul's exquisite definition of love. While emphasizing that the Scriptures were not written just to teach grammar and composition, they can reinforce the subject for students new to this country and often new to the claims of Christianity.

History and Literature "Describing the Indescribable"

Stephen J. Bell, Ph.D., Professor of English, Department of English



Theodor Adorno famously declared that there could be no more poetry after the Holocaust, insisting that such a horrific subject could all too easily be sentimentalized or aestheticized and thus stripped of its power. In my ENGL 222 World Literature class, we attempt in fear and trembling to “describe the indescribable” by respectfully, yet realistically, approaching the subject of Holocaust-era literature.

One of the most important points I seek to communicate is the primacy of memory. God continually urges His people to call to mind His redemptive acts in history and to continue telling them to their children and grandchildren. To aid the memory, memorials constructed of standing stones were often erected to commemorate a great miracle done by God. Peter in the New Testament describes all believers in the same language—our lives are ‘standing stones’ in a sense, testifying to God’s great work in our lives (1 Peter 2:5).

But how do we go about confronting a period in history when too many people it seemed as if God was silent or inactive? All too often, those “standing stones” appear to only point to absurdity and man’s inhumanity to man. At this point, I solicit volunteers to read aloud testimonies of 12 survivors of the death camps in order to hear their dehumanizing experiences, but more importantly to capture in their voices the rich and priceless existence of individual lives that the Nazis would have been all too happy to erase. I conclude class by reminding students that as Christians, we imitate God through exercise of our memories since God tells us that He has engraved our names in His hands (Isaiah 49:16). I encourage students to do the same as the names of children killed during the Holocaust scroll silently on the screen, an experience that replicates the Children’s Memorial at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Business and the Bible

David Duby, Ph.D., Professor, School of Business



When a business concept is first introduced, we often note the research behind the concept and end up relating best practices for applying the concept. But some students inevitably wonder, “What does this really look like in a real-world organization?” Thus, in most business curricula, case studies are incorporated to help us connect theory to actual practice. Case studies present outstanding opportunities for students to see the practical application of the terms and concepts discussed in class. Case studies provide an excellent way to integrate biblical principles by allowing us to examine their “real world” applications via studies from Scripture.

We know that the Bible is not a book of theoretical concepts. It is a vibrant account of real-world people, organizations, and events—or “cases”—that we can learn from. For example, studying Exodus 18 allows us to see the wise counsel of Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, as he discussed such important principles as leader burnout, delegation, and managerial integrity. In Genesis 33, we read a fascinating account of the risk management Jacob demonstrates when meeting his estranged brother Esau. And in Acts the interchange between Paul and Barnabas regarding John Mark gives us an animated example of conflict within a Christian organization and how the organizational mission is best carried out. These descriptive accounts in Scripture provide a rich context for seeing how both biblical principles and business concepts play out in the “real world”—and this provides an excellent context for meaningful classroom discussion.

Naturalism, the Gospel, and the Minimal Facts Method

Gary Habermas, Ph.D., Distinguished Research Professor, School of Divinity

In the “Western” academic world, dominated by universities in Western Europe, North America, and Australia, among others, Naturalism is the dominant worldview perspective. There are all sorts of naturalists, but at the core, they generally hold that the natural, visible world is all there is. Although there are many nuanced versions, the scientific method remains the dominant means of learning about our world.



In order to relate better to these sorts of often-dominant intellectual sensibilities and still get across the Gospel message centering on the deity, death, and resurrection of Jesus, I developed what I term the “Minimal Facts Method.” It proposes using only data that exhibit two characteristics:

- 1) Each fact is well-established by multiple arguments from various angles, arrived at by accepted historical standards.
- 2) As a result, virtually all specialists who work in the relevant areas of research acknowledge and allow the truth of these facts, regardless of their religious belief or unbelief.

This “Minimal Facts Method” is an approach that is designed to establish common ground between believers and unbelievers. The goal is establishing an effective foundation to build towards a more crucial discussion with regard to the Gospel data. It does all this with a “lowest common denominator” type of approach, adding one brick (or fact) at a time, until the resulting wall takes shape. It has been received quite well even by specialists who do not share the underlying Christian beliefs.

Corporate Formation

Melanie Hicks, D.B.A., Associate Dean, School of Business

Businesses have to choose the right method of corporate formation; whether that is a C Corporation, S Corporation, Partnership, LLC, or Sole Proprietorship. The way a business is formed will have a direct impact on an individual's personal taxation. After discussing the various forms of businesses in ACCT 412 Taxation II: Corporate Formation, students are asked a variety of questions to determine if the students fully understand the individual ramifications for each form of business entity.



We continue the discussion with the different rules and regulations and corresponding tax benefits and consequences. There are several different biblical truths that come out of these chapters. One of these truths deals with the Parable of the Three Servants in Matthew 25:14-30. God commands us to invest what He gives us wisely. The formation of a corporation allows us to use the money and resources that God has blessed us with to further His kingdom. The proper formation legally minimizes the amount of taxes paid (i.e., still render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25) and provides the owners with the legal protection needed to further invest in His kingdom. By choosing the proper business entity, we allow our money to grow and invest, much like the servant who was given the five talents and the two talents.

Integrating Biblical Concepts and Scientific Mechanisms

Gary D. Isaacs, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Biology & Chemistry

Lectures, laboratory sessions, and office hours provide (a) openings to pray and thank God for the privilege of interacting with students, (b) opportunities to relate scripture to learning, and (c) chances to discuss the truth of the world around us. It is easy to see parallels between Biblical concepts and the scientific mechanisms of the natural world. Science is rich in opportunities for illustrations and integration. Science is grounded in facts and truth. Truth is important, and steps must be taken to preserve it.



1 Corinthians 15:1-4 describes the accuracy of the gospel message as it was passed down from person to person. When teaching genetics, this serves as an exceptional introduction to DNA replication during cell division which requires high fidelity processes to copy DNA in order to sustain the life of an organism. Certain enzymes are responsible for the copying process; others monitor the process to remove mistakes and promote the fidelity of the message.

These molecules, like the body of Christ, all have important roles that, when brought together for a unified purpose, promote life. Other genetics topics (mutations, disease, pregnancy, old age) can be approached from a biblical worldview, and Scriptural principles used as the template for classroom discussions. For example, one illustration can be made from genes. Although cells contain genes which promote life, a cell is only alive because it actively uses those genes, rather than just having the information stored inside. In similar fashion, James 1:22-25 calls Christians to be “doers” of the Word and not just “hearers.”

Economics and the Bible

Andrew Tsung-Hui Light, Ph.D., Professor, School of Business



One of the most common disciplines referenced in the Bible is economics. The Word provides us guidance, caution, and relevance that allow us the opportunity to easily integrate and apply Biblical principles into economic lessons. In Principles of Economics, each topic can be fully explained in an economic sense from a biblical worldview. When examining the production, it is important for a producer to use resources efficiently to maximize

the output and to minimize the cost. But it is equally important for them to use their resources wisely, meaning for good purposes. The Bible gives/shares a lesson about efficient production for unwise purposes in the parable about the folly of idolatry, “He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar, and the rain nourishes it. Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also, he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it” (Isaiah 44:14-15).

In the parable, the carpenter is wise in planning and replenishing natural resources. Because of his effort, he was able to use the wood for fuel to provide much-needed heat. He was efficient in using the same wood to prepare his meal. But, like many people, he then became unwise and fashioned a false idol. In today’s economy, too often, producers – although efficient – are unwise in using God-given resources to produce harmful products.

Determining Parentage

Rena M. Lindevaldsen, J.D., Professor, School of Law



When discussing parentage in LAW 601: Family Law, the issue of alternative family structures present challenges. A common challenge occurs when two women or two men form a relationship, and one of them has a biological child during the relationship. A custody battle ensues when the couple separates. In exploring this situation with students, we start with the questions of who is a parent and who makes that determination?

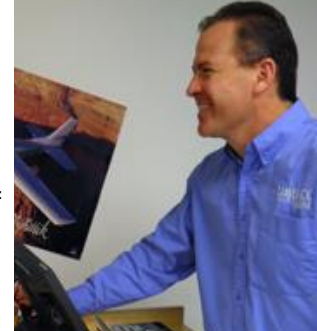
We first examine God's design for marriage and family. In Genesis 2:24, the Bible states, "a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife..." Genesis 1:28 continues with God's command to "Be fruitful..." We then discuss God's view of same-sex relationships as sexual sin. The students realize that it was not God's plan to deprive a child of a mother and father through same-sex households.

What is the state's role in resolving custody in this situation? Students learn civil government is God's servant to promote good and punish evil (Romans 13:1-4). Because God's standards for family and parentage are clear, government should not advance a family paradigm contrary to scripture. What role should government play in determining parentage? Students learn the parent, not government, is responsible to God for training a child (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:1-3). With the exception of abuse, the government lacks the authority to interfere with parenting decisions, including limiting visitation of a former same-sex partner.

Prayer in the Pre-flight Checklist

James Mashburn, M.C.A., Associate Professor, School of Aeronautics

Aviation instruction has a unique advantage over traditional classroom instruction in that there is a lot of one-on-one time with instructors. Our goal is to utilize this time to not only teach our students the technical skills they need to excel in the cockpit, but also to mentor them for success as a believer in Christ. Years ago, we published an Aviation Devotional that has now become a part of our training curriculum. It encourages our pilots to integrate their faith with real-life situations. We also have an active mentoring program led by advanced students for lowerclassmen.



Almost everything a pilot does is part of a checklist. From preflight to landing, our students learn to do it properly and precisely by following a checklist. Part of our Pre-start checklist is prayer. Every single classroom lesson, simulator lesson, and flight begins with prayer. Over the years, we have actually canceled or delayed flights because of serious prayer needs that arose during the preflight prayer.

Once our students are ready to earn their pilot certificates, they are sent to an FAA representative for testing, and they always include prayer in their checklist criteria. We teach our pilots that they are not only being observed for their flying skills, but also in their walk with Christ. Some of the examiners are not professing believers, but we have had a tremendous amount of feedback on the students' positive attitude and Christian walk.

Acting Uncut: Abroad

Chris Nelson, M.F.A., Associate Professor, Theatre Arts



"I want you to learn stories, not as an exercise in fiction, but in order to walk in mercy. Stories will help you find your way."

J.R.R. Tolkien

Within the Theatre Department, we strive to refine our students' performance and production skills, keeping in mind that the stories they create and re-create have great potential to influence others. This semester I took a team of students to Kitale, Kenya to minister to young people as part of our Acting Uncut: Abroad program. The project brought to life Mark 15:16, "And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.'"

In preparation, Barry Gawinski, who teaches our Drama in the Church class, teamed up to provide his students with an opportunity to utilize assignments as a way to enhance storytelling. Students were asked to create stories that would effectively grab the attention of young people, present the work of Christ with clarity, and demonstrate effective performance and production techniques. The class was provided with a basic overview of the potential audience: young street children in the heart of Kitale. Then, two teams within the class went to work preparing wordless dramas, using scripture as their foundation. Students grappled with making theatrical choices that would not only work within the confines of international travel, but also with an audience with a different cultural background. The wonderful part was the end result: students created stories to be used outside the walls of the university for the sole purpose of active, theatrical ministry.

Design in Chemistry

Nancy Richardson, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Biology & Chemistry



Chemistry highlights how God's unique, incredible design can be found in every aspect of matter. This design underlines the truth that everything has a purpose. The complexities and intricate details surrounding God's work prove that He is the Creator. His character can be shown in exhibiting order, beauty, and purpose - contrary to the statements of secular science.

In discussing liquids, the properties of waters fit within the design of life. Using Thermodynamics, one is able to note the problem of entropy and age of the universe. In Biochemistry, the building blocks of proteins (all left-handed amino acids) substantiate that life was purposely designed, not left to chance. Unseen details inside of atoms deliver no less wonder and evidence of God's intervention: positive protons stay together in the nucleus, while negative electrons remain moving in the space beyond the nucleus. The elaborate system of forces and principles inside a single atom demonstrates that laws of physics at the atomic scale (quantum phenomena) have particular nuances. "By Him, all things consist." (Col 1:17).

Every area of matter, every chemical and physical process, exhibits these details. Beauty, design, and order are evident. Unspectacular metals, at the macroscopic level, are found to be ordered crystals of various sorts at the microscopic level. The crystalline property permits the addition of other materials to make the properties we desire. In God's brilliant design, He even allowed for us to "take dominion" of the earth with the existence of discoverable principles. Chemistry highlights His majestic design.

Integration of Faith and Learning within Relationships

Beth Sites, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Psychology



Much research has focused on the best ways to integrate faith and learning. The curriculum must reflect a Biblical worldview. In addition, many researchers found that integration is “caught [more than] taught” (Sorenson, 1994, p. 342). Students are more impacted by the people with whom they share a relationship. “Integration is as much about a who as a what: affectively engaged relationships seemed to shape how students learn integration, with current mentoring relationships” (Sorenson, Derflinger, Bufford, & McMinn, 2004, p. 356).

To encourage integration, even in large classes, I strive to get to know the students as people: their names, where they are from, their major. I try to arrive at least 15 minutes before class and stay after class so I can interact with the students, checking on their prayer requests and their lives. We begin class each day building connections with the Lord through the Bible and sharing prayer requests. I pray for and with my students as they need it, in class, in the hall, in my office, and through emails. I encourage the students to connect with each other through group work, problem-solving, and critical thinking, even in the large classes. My family and I invite the classes to our home once a semester for a big pot of something and lots of fellowship. We try to attend their events outside of class, including basketball, theater, and music. Building relationships with students is as integral to integration as sound curriculum.

Critical Thinking

Samuel J. Smith, Ed.D., Professor, School of Education



In Educational Philosophy for Teachers, we implement critical thinking by evaluating theoretical assumptions through a biblical lens. For instance, various learning theories assume that the nature of the learner is basically good (Rousseau and Dewey), sinful (Aquinas and Calvin), or neutral (Locke and Skinner). These assumptions hold clear implications for instructional practice. In light of Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:23, and Romans 7:23, students typically conclude that a biblical perspective assumes that the nature of the learner is basically sinful. When we do the following activity, however, they also consider the instructional implications of considering that their students are created in God's image.

Francis Schaeffer provided a grid to evaluate worldviews. We apply his following questions to several theories: (a) What does the theory claim is right with the world? (b) What does the theory claim is wrong with the world? and (c) What does the theory propose be done to correct the wrongs of the world? When students apply these questions to diverse theories, they begin to understand the distinctive differences—especially when they apply the three questions to a biblical worldview that would answer the questions with (a) all people are made in God's image, (b) all are sinful as a result of the fall, and (c) Christ's redemption is needed to restore humanity. After applying this grid, future teachers begin to see the importance of considering, first of all, that their students are made in God's image and can therefore reason and create. A perspective of the nature of the learner is skewed if it focuses solely on sinfulness, neglecting that learners are made in God's image.

As we prepare future teachers, we encourage both those in public and those in Christian schools to instill critical thinking skills, so their students are prepared to compare and evaluate all worldviews.

Faith Integration in Spanish

David Towles, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Modern Languages



During the early days of the university, Dr. Falwell used to talk often about our “action-oriented curriculum.” Spanish classes provide an excellent opportunity to demonstrate this kind of action orientation.

- Grammar features a purpose that stretches beyond that of learning a skill and getting good grades to the essential outcome of communicating God’s word and love through Spanish (Psalms 19:14).
- Culture highlights the distress of a deprived Latin American people in need of Christ (1 Timothy 2:1-2).
- Literature seeks to measure the futility of seeking fulfillment according to a worldly rubric that falls far short of God’s standards (2 Peter 3:16).

One of my favorite activities features prayer partnerships that I form with individual students (James 5:16). All it entails is the sharing of prayer requests, praying for each other separately, and then meeting briefly before or after classes to share updates. What results is a beautiful array of spiritual relationships without the complexities that can arise from frequent office visits.

In following the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), this action-oriented curriculum seems to appear most fully in Guatemala, where students spend two months each summer participating in intensive language instruction and equally intensive efforts toward sharing the Gospel in Spanish. Typically these labors result in eternal outcomes as each summer, dozens of destitute Guatemalans accept Christ as their Savior.

Engineering Equation for the Christian Life

John Vadnal Ph.D., Professor, School of Engineering

In ENGI 220 Engineering Economy, I give the students an assignment to explore biblical references to financial resources, contrast these with how society portrays money, and discuss how Biblical and societal influences affect the financial decisions in their life. In ENGR 110 Introduction to Engineering and Problem Solving, the students review selected sections of the National Society of Professional Engineers Code of Ethics and develop plausible scriptural references that could be used as a basis for the ethical statements. The students also develop a biblically-based position paper dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace. In ENGR 131 Calculus for Engineers, I show the students that a Christian's life can be summarized in a simple, standard calculus equation (which can be found on the inside cover of many calculus textbooks):



$\int du = u + C$ (note: it is always lower case u and upper case C)

Here, u is the independent variable, C is the constant of integration, and the symbol \int represents the sum of the infinitesimal parts (du). We, as Christians, have lives filled with infinitesimal moments and are independent variables with free will. The best way to live life is to join with the only constant in our life, Jesus Christ, and remember John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease." If Christ is increased in your life (upper case C = Christ) and you stay small (lower case u = you), you will live a sum of infinitesimal moments that will glorify the King of Kings.

Service Learning

Robert Van Engen Ph.D., Professor, School of Divinity



“Why serve?” is a question I ask students in GNED 102: Contemporary Issues II, when teaching the topic of community service. The idea of service is embedded in the scripture from Genesis to Revelation. The Genesis account gives Adam and Eve creation ordinances or rules to live by. One command is to care for His creation and each other, but Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. This rebellious act caused a shift in humanity’s thinking, from taking care of creation and each another, to a more self-centered focus. Service chases away selfishness and returns the focus to God’s original intent.

Service has a direct connection to the Christian faith. This metanarrative is God’s story embraced by and embodied in Jesus Christ. Jesus came to earth to set an example of a life lived for God, and service was a fundamental part of His life. I challenge the students with Jesus’ motto, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). As students think redemptively, their mindsets are motivated toward service. Through Jesus’ example, students recognize that serving is more than a graduation requirement; it is a lifestyle transformation. When students learn to be the salt, light (Matthew 5:13), and leaven (Matthew 13:33) they become a godly influence wherever God places them.