INTENTIONAL INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING: HISTORICAL NECESSITY AND INDIRECT APPROACHES

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ABSTRACT

Effectively integrating faith into a Christian university classroom presents a difficulty for many instructors. Doing so in a manner that is natural and authentic for the course being studied is even more of a challenge. This article first presents an historical background to provide a perspective on the issue and to illustrate the need to be intentional. Second, it introduces the indirect approach championed by Kierkegaard and often used by Jesus through his use of parables. Last, the article provides examples to show some ways the indirect approach may be used to challenge students to think for themselves and discover and apply concepts they perhaps have never thought of before.

Keywords: integration of faith, intentional integration, indirect teaching, Kierkegaard, parables

INTRODUCTION

The issue of integrating the Christian faith with learning was perhaps first raised by the early church father Tertullian (2015) who famously wrote, "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?" (p. 13). As it turns out, this is not easy to answer. The challenge to integrate faith and learning is one that every Christian educational institution must consider carefully or ignore at great cost.

This study of intentional integration begins at the foundational level with some historical, philosophical, and biblical underpinnings that illustrate the necessity of integrating faith in the classroom. Then it turns to the writings of Kierkegaard, which were decidedly indirect, to provide the background for the indirect approach for the integration of faith and learning. This approach is further strengthened with the teachings of Jesus Christ who used parables, a clearly indirect approach that allowed the listeners to ponder the story and the meaning for themselves. Helping students to understand the Christian worldview and how it adds depth and value to every aspect of learning needs to be a priority in all Christian classrooms be they traditional or online. The indirect approach is presented here as one educators could use toward that end.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

A definition of worldview has been concisely stated by Tim Keller as "the comprehensive perspective from which we interpret all of reality" (2012, p. 157). Perspective matters, for this is how we see the world, other people, and ourselves, as well as how we process knowledge and gain wisdom. Worldview, therefore, includes elements of metaphysics (What is the source of our existence?), epistemology (What is the source of our knowledge?), and ethics (What is the source of our moral principles?). For Christians, "All three components of a biblical worldview proclaim the autonomy and authority of God, not of man" (Nickel, 2001, p. 9).

Historical Decline

Many books have been written addressing how former beacons of Christian higher education

such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton slid into secularism by the 1920s. According to historian Adam Laats, "From the seventeenth century until the late nineteenth century, the assumption at most American colleges was that learning could not be separated from Christian morality. By the onset of the twentieth century, that assumption had changed radically" (2018, p. 12). George Marsden explains that over time the "reverence for scientific authority" became prominent even as "moral philosophy replaced theology as the primary locus for defining collegiate Christian intellectual life" (1994, p. 99).

This trend has continued over the past century to the point that many colleges and universities have drifted well beyond neutral to being now often openly hostile toward Christianity. There surely are many factors that contribute to this change. It may simply be that with growing in size and increasing the number of programs of study over time schools tend to loosen faculty qualifications. But regardless of the reasons, Christian schools must cultivate and promote robust integration of faith and learning even as they must continually strive for academic excellence. The challenge is greater in 21st century America as Glanzer et al. (2017) point out:

> In a post Christian culture, Christians in higher education must recognize that pursuing academic coherence and excellence without idolatry requires increased intentionality, courage, and wisdom. It will require more intentionality since the standards of excellence in the broader culture for various academic practices will more and more undermine the pursuit of faithful excellence for Christians. (p. 321)

Clearly, intentionality is what is needed for Christian students to hold on to their beliefs in an increasingly secular society, but it is also true that Christian educational institutions need to be intentional, not only for holding onto their foundational beliefs and values but also for providing the necessary platform for instructors to teach from a Christian worldview.

In order to keep current, an institution's philosophy and practice of integration must be revisited regularly. Technological advances and cultural changes have spurred new methods of teaching that present educators with an abundance of opportunities and challenges. And along with new technologies, perhaps the biggest hurdle of all is that the realm of knowledge itself is growing exponentially. Daniel's prophecy is coming true for "the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (English Standard Version Bible [ESV], 2001, Dan. 12:4).

Yet, although methodologies must change, the on-going need of faith-integrated education remains the same and is becoming a threatened heritage that needs preserving. This integration hope is perhaps best expressed by Tennyson, who wrote:

> Let knowledge grow from more to more,
> But more of reverence in us dwell;
> That mind and soul, according well,
> May make one music as before,
> But vaster. (Preface, 1849)

The Value of Truth

Intentional integration of faith and learning is on firm footing when truth is embraced in accord with the Christian worldview. J. Gresham Machen, an early 20th century theologian and founder of Westminster Seminary, said:

> A Christian boy or girl can learn mathematics, for example, from a teacher who is not a Christian; and truth is truth however learned. But while truth is truth however learned, the bearing of truth, the meaning of truth, the purpose of truth, even in the sphere of mathematics, seem entirely different to the Christian from that which they seem to the non-Christian; and that is why a truly Christian education is possible only when Christian conviction underlies not a part, but all, of the curriculum of the school. (1987, p. 8)

Today one must go even deeper, not just to realize the importance of supporting truth along with its meaning and purpose but to also defend the very existence of objective truth. In our relativistic postmodern world, truth has been relegated to the realm of opinion and conjecture. It is as if the entire foundation of Western thought is being undermined and replaced with sand.

When Jesus told Pilate that he came "into the world to bear witness to the truth," Pilate responded,

"What is truth?" (ESV, John 18:38). Earlier Jesus tells his disciples that when they follow him they will know the truth and the truth will set them free (ESV, John 8:32). We become freed from the burden of sin and free to become all that God created us to be. More succinctly, Jesus said later in his Upper Room discourse, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (ESV, John 14:6). And perhaps in the most expansive sense the psalmist prayed, "The sum of your word is truth" (ESV, Ps. 119:160).

The Value of Faith

Written late in the 11th century, Anselm's Proslogion, chapter 1, ends with this prayer, "I long to understand in some degree thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand" (ca. 1077/2013, p. 23). That last phrase is most often quoted as a maxim, which taken by itself may easily be construed to mean blind faith, which is unreasonable faith, like darting across a street without looking or trusting in a cult leader due to his charisma. Biblical faith is reasonable faith based on the historical life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, along with the many fulfilled prophecies, eyewitness accounts, and extensive archaeological evidence, all of which manifest the veracity of the Bible.

Over 500 years later, Blaise Pascal wrote, "the heart has its reasons, which reason does not know" (Pensee 277, 1670/1958, p. 78). Again, this saying is often misunderstood to elicit blind faith. Pascal goes on to say "that the heart naturally loves the Universal Being, and also itself naturally, according as it gives itself to them; and it hardens itself against one or the other at its will. You have rejected the one, and kept the other." So although the heart may naturally love God since God is our Creator and lover of our souls, the fall of humanity has so damaged our will that we choose to love ourselves above him or instead of him. So what Pascal is advancing here is that the innermost part of us, our spirit, is what connects with God at the deepest level. Indeed, he goes on to say that, "it is the heart which experiences God, and not the reason" (Pensee 278, 1670/1958, p. 78). As Proverbs 4 states, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life" (ESV, 4:23).

So faith, a trusting heart, is a vital part of our human experience, one that needs to be protected, cultivated, and challenged to grow more. Protecting it includes using our minds to be careful of what we believe. Mind and heart must work together in harmony.

Harmony of Mind and Heart

A statement Pope John Paul II made at the beginning of his Encyclical Letter on Faith and Reason helps to illustrate the crucial relationship between these two primary functions of humans made in the image of God:

> Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (John Paul II, 1998, p. 1).

If the heart has such capacity to impact for good, we must surely keep it tuned to God's heart. But where do we begin? Proverbs 1:7 states that, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge," meaning that one cannot hope to gain any real depth of knowledge without first fearing God; that is, having a healthy reverence for and trust in the Almighty. Likewise, Scripture makes it clear that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (ESV, Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10). Thus, fearing God is the foundation of faith, and this is what leads to true knowledge and wisdom and a life of success.

One might even say that, "there is a priority of faith in the intellectual task" (Green, 2002, p. 81). Indeed, all knowledge and understanding involves faith: faith in our senses for what we have experienced, and faith in our sources that they are factual and reliable. Another way to look at this philosophically is to say that ontology precedes epistemology, and James Sire expounds further that "ontology—the existence of an omniscient God who creates us in his image—is the foundation for epistemology" (Sire, 2004, pp. 56–57). Only with a true understanding of God, our ultimate reality, are we then able to grow in true knowledge that forms our worldview, our view of life.

Kierkegaard is one who understood this and spoke much of what he termed a "lifeview" (Danish livsanskuelse). In Worldview: The

history of a concept, David Naugle points out that this word was "minted by Kierkegaard" along with verdensanskuelse (worldview) in his 1838 publication, From the Papers of One Still Living. Kierkegaard evidently preferred "lifeview" since it "best captured the existential character of his philosophy, though on a few occasions he uses the terms synonymously" (Naugle, 2002, p. 75). In that publication Kierkegaard posed the question of "how a life-view comes about" by stating that for one

> who tries insofar as possible to balance the individual events of life—that for him there must necessarily come a moment of unusual illumination about life . . . a moment when as Daub observes, life is understood backwards through the Idea (McCarthy, 1978, p. 144).

INTENTIONAL AND INDIRECT MODELS FOR TEACHING

One's "lifeview" or worldview provides the perspective from which to better understand life. For Christian teachers the perspective of being called of God to follow Christ provides all that is needed to live with purpose and with the goal of being salt and light in the world and in the classroom. Peter introduces one goal or strategy:

> But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect … (New International Version Bible [NIV], 2011, 1 Pet. 3:15)

Peter's admonishment to always be ready with an answer assumes that questions will be asked. How does a Christian evoke questions? How can a Christian teacher integrate faith and learning in a way that does not just impart knowledge but elicits a response? If the goal is to change minds and change lives, then a blueprint for that integration can be found in Jesus's teaching through parables and in the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard. They presented truth in a way that divided people by their response—those who hear only, and those who ask, seeking answers to gain wisdom.

The Old Testament Teacher

In the Book of Ecclesiastes, the reader is introduced to the wise teacher whose program is to impart wisdom to his audience. Hebrew wisdom literature imparted practical knowledge that pointed the way to living a blessed life in God's world. In Ecclesiastes, the teacher reminds: "The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by one shepherd" (NIV, 12:11).

The writer acknowledges the task of the teacher and their qualifications. The writer then likens the words of the wise to two seeming contradictions, sticks used to drive oxen and nails driven by master carpenters. The one is a sharpened stick used to move the ox/listener forward to action. Wisdom is also like nails that are used to hold the structure together. The wise teacher is then to prod a student toward truth, truth that is best discovered.

The Kierkegaardian Model

One example of the prodding teacher is Soren Kierkegaard, who saw his mission as rescuing Denmark from Christianity—at least what it had become in Denmark. He saw that the church had lost the harmony between mind and heart and merely embraced a Christianity of the mind only. He wanted to make Christianity difficult again because in Denmark it had become common and tame. In *The Point of View for my Work as an Author* (Kierkegaard, 1973) he rails against the fact that in Denmark all are "Christian," even those who "assert that no God exists"—that all are "Christians, call themselves Christians, are recognized as Christians by the State, are buried as Christians by the Church, are certified as Christians for eternity" (p. 331).

In 1854, near the end of his life, Kierkegaard asked, "And what is the sum total of what I have done? Quite simply, I have injected just a little bit of honesty" (Kierkegaard, 1970, X1 A474). After discussing the dishonesty of Christendom, he explains:

> But I admit that what dishonesty does is, it says to itself, the safest way: It is the safest way. Above all, let us not meddle at this point. At one time, and happily continued through many generations, there was brilliant success in fooling God and, to use the most affable expression, putting a wax nose on him—so let us not be crazy enough to stir up anything now. (Kierkegaard, 1970, X1 A474)

In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard, using one of his pseudonyms, Johannes Climacus, reflects upon what to do with his so far uninspiring life. Seeking to accomplish something, anything of prominence, he despairs that it is beyond him to accomplish something to benefit humanity. Then a thought flashes: "You must do something but inasmuch as with your limited capacities it will be impossible to make anything easier that it has become, you must, with the same humanitarian enthusiasm as the others, undertake to make something harder." He embraces his life's work, proclaiming: "I conceived it my task to create difficulties everywhere" (Kierkegaard, 1973 p. 194). That was Kierkegaard's life work, to arouse the dishonest and destroy the comfortable through indirect communication.

Kierkegaard's Indirection Defined

Indirect communication is a "deliberate presentation of a paradox to the listener" (Edwards, 2017, p. 284). The listener is intrigued to the extent that they engage with the material in a unique way that may not have been possible had they been presented with the same material in a straightforward manner (Edwards, 2017). This existential engagement/involvement with the message is diminished if the material is presented directly.

> For example, it is indirect communication to place jest and earnestness together in such a way that the composite is a dialectical knot . . . If anyone wants to have anything to do with this kind of communication, he will have to untie the knot himself. (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 133)

The appropriation of truth is grounded in individual choice; this process of truth-producing communication cannot be "carried out directly or objectively because this would override the autonomy and freedom to choose that is essential to genuine appropriation of the truth" (Law, 1993, p.112). With direct communication, the message is grasped immediately without much effort or reflection; in indirect communication "a recipient's capacity for interpretation . . . is put to work" (Mooney, 1997, p. 133).

Kierkegaard's Indirect Program

Two quotes from Soren Kierkegaard's journals explain his preference for indirect communication in his program of sharing his faith with those apart from Christ. He writes:

> There are two kinds of education. The one is Socratic—to question in order to starve out hollow knowledge. The other is the opposite: the learner asks the questions … instruction by questioning the child is wrong; it is the child who should be permitted to question. (Kierkegaard, 1970, XI A647)

Kierkegaard chose his role as one who should force his audience or student (or the child of the previous quote) to seek and work out problems for themselves. To help people reach their conclusions, however, he would resort to indirection. He says, "a man cannot seduce men and cannot save them either" (Kierkegaard, 1970, IX A 383). His prolific writings are his attempts to entice his generation to think deeply and critically and ultimately to make a choice to follow Christ.

It is absurd (one of Kierkegaard's favorite terms) to attempt to sum up Kierkegaard's writings. In fact, a major problem of Kierkegaard scholarship, according to Roger Poole (1993), is the misguided attempt to arrive at a consistent, systematic philosophy of Kierkegaard (1–14). His works, especially his "aesthetic" writings (those written under pseudonyms) were not intended to state a truth or clarify an issue, propose a definite doctrine, or offer meaning that could be directly appropriated. These works were meant to "divert, to subvert, to disseminate doubt and to involve the reader in a game of self-discovery. They are meant to interrogate, interpolate, misuse, and buttonhole the reader" (Poole, 1993, p. 12).

The reader or critic who approaches Kierkegaard's writings only for doctrine or objective information or a worldview are merely carrying out a tradition of "weak readings" that search for Kierkegaard's view of X. Kierkegaard does not even lay out his ideas in an orderly fashion. To put them in order is to distort them. Like a literary boxer, Kierkegaard jabs, feints, and catches the reader off balance (and the reader is always "you," the individual), or he presents a pseudonymous boxer, removing himself entirely from the arena.

To clarify, Kierkegaard admits that objective

reasoning about evidence is a legitimate way to settle some questions. He knows that there are dangers in illusion and that detachment from factual reality is insanity. However, it is not enough merely to know objective truth; one must be truthfully related to the objective truth. In Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Kierkegaard makes his point with one of his characteristic stories:

> A man escapes from an insane asylum. To convince the people he now meets outside the asylum that he is sane, he decides to speak rationally. He finds a ball on the ground and puts it in his tail pocket. As he walks in his new freedom, the ball bounces against his posterior. Each time the ball bounces, he says. "Bang, the earth is round." Though he tells the objective truth, he does not demonstrate his sanity. (1944, p. 174)

Now, says Kierkegaard, he would not do better to say that the earth is flat. Objective truth is better than objective falsehood. But more important than both is subjective truth, which is the truth of a person (a subject) rightly related to reality—a person with harmony of mind and heart who is well grounded in an objectively true worldview.

The Parables of Jesus

Concerned with his program of communication, a program focused on changing readers through indirection, Kierkegaard explained that, "There is much talk about God directly communicating. But really—that a person despised and cursed by all, condemned as a criminal, nailed to a cross—when he says, 'Believe in me that I am God.'—Good heavens! Is this direct communication?" (Kierkegaard, 1955, p. 61). Not only does Christianity present a paradox that demands indirect communication, but Christ Himself is a model for employing parabolic, the narrative indirection, in his teaching. Kierkegaard's inspiration for emphasis on the subjective individual rightly related to truth is Jesus, His nature, and his teaching.

In Matthew 13, after extensive use of parables to evoke a kingdom perspective in His followers, Christ asks His closest disciples, "Have you understood all these things?" What follows is one of the few humorous statements in Scripture. The answer: "Yes" (New American Standard Bible [NASB], 1995, Matt. 13:51). How ironic or perhaps dishonest their confident reply seems in light of the confusion and uncertainty displayed before and after in the lives of the disciples. In fact, the parables have as much to do with concealing or confusing the truth as they do with revealing it. Earlier, the disciples asked, "Why do you speak in parables?" (NASB, 13:10). Christ's answer is that he teaches in story because "while seeing they [the multitudes] do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand" (NASB, 13:13). In a synoptic account, Mark 4, Christ explains to the closest disciples, those who have followed Him because of their desire to know, has been given the mystery of the Kingdom of God, "but those who are outside get everything in parables" (NASB, 4:11). Kierkegaard also adopted this division. To those who have not leaped into the sphere of Christ he writes indirectly; to those that have heard and believed, he writes his more direct and edifying and Christian works. They both have divided people by the people's response to indirect communication.

Scripture as Indirect Communication

The foundational element in any attempt to engage in the integration of faith and learning is the Word of God. The ability of God's Word to accomplish His purposes does not rest in the hands of a messenger; rather, its power exists inherently—any attempt to impart the truth of Scripture relies on the direct power of Scripture as the following passages indicate:

> For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (ESV, Heb. 4:12)
>
> For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (ESV, Isaiah 55:10–11)
>
> … and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which

> are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. (ESV, 2 Tim. 3:15–16)

However, the inherent power of Scripture does not negate the responsibility of people to share it. On the contrary, people are the means of disseminating the gospel. This principle emerges in both the Great Commission in Matthew 28 and in Christ's final words to his disciples in Acts 1. Christ clearly directs his followers to go, share, and make an eternal impact. Applying this principle specifically to Christian universities and faith and learning, instructors are the intermediaries of God's Word in the classroom.

The basic truths of Scripture are usually best taught indirectly by allowing the student to read and think carefully while allowing God's Spirit to inspire and perhaps spur the student to ask questions. Likewise, the use of Scripture in coursework needs to be overt but not obtrusive and naturally brought forth but not pushy as though attempting to convert.

The Parable of the Sower: Indirection and Intentionality

The Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1–20) metaphorically, and most notably, represents the four responses of humankind to the Word of God. The path, the rocky ground, the thorns, and the good soil are all components of the familiar biblical parable. While the four soils are often the centerpiece of the parable, an examination of the sower yields a deeper understanding of the relationship of the messenger to his task.

It is understandable, and even expected, for readers to focus on the place where the seed fell because it serves as the focal point of the parable. Nevertheless, the parable is named for the one who sowed the seed. From these words, "Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed . . ." (NASB, Mark 1:3–4a), the following observations are borne.

Observation 1: The act of sowing was intentional (Garland, 1996). The sower went out with a specific objective in mind: to sow. This was not an accidental spilling of seed; rather, the sower was prepared and equipped to intentionally sow.

Observation 2: The range of soil on which the sower scattered the seed was broad. He did not reserve the seed for one type of soil but scattered it multifariously. He did not favor one soil over another; each type of soil received seed.

Observation 3: The sower had a singular focus: to sow. After sowing the seed, the sower's task was fulfilled. He did not water the seeds, tend to seedlings, or reap a harvest. The sower fulfills the duty of sowing seed and does not presume any role other than sowing.

Observation 4: Success was not measured in the outcome. The sower did not fret the outcome, force the growth, or advance the harvest. The act of sowing was his exclusive task, not meticulously preparing the seeds or the ground on which they fell. He simply focused on spreading seed.

Using this parable as a template, the implications for instructors who strive for biblical integration are conspicuous.

Application 1: The work of biblical integration must be intentional, which presupposes a plan. Although faith and learning often occur organically, biblical integration requires an intentional effort. This effort encompasses a knowledge of both the Bible and course content, and that the instructor grasps the synergistic relationship of the two.

Application 2: Instructors entrusted with the task of biblical integration must scatter truth generously. Just as the sower distributed the seed across a diverse terrain, so the instructor must freely share biblical truth with all learners and demonstrate relevant and meaningful integration.

Application 3: The instructor must view the role of biblical integration as a part of a larger process. While the student may not show immediate signs of growth, the instructor's objective has been fulfilled.

Application 4: Instructors, remaining steadfast in the task, cannot assume the outcome or use it as the measure of success. Instead, the best measure of success is the instructor's effort in constructing a biblical paradigm in the classroom.

The Parable of the Sower mirrors Jesus' own parabolic teaching. He designs parables not to be perceived by all yet uses them to reveal truth to those who grasp it through divine revelation. In an article revisiting the relationship of faith and learning, Kevin Miller (2014) explains the

relationship of teacher to student, or for the sake of illustration, sower to seed, when he writes,

> Jesus educated his students in the manner of the root meaning of the word 'education'—he educed from within those who would hear him a fuller knowledge of God and God's kingdom and of himself as the anointed one . . . It is not the forced imposition of the delivery of knowledge but the skillful drawing out and maturing of knowledge in the student with kairos or ripeness of time (p. 133).

This educing begins with the planting of seed, but maturation cannot exist without the planting of seed and its ability to take root.

Examples of Indirect Teaching in the GCU Online Classroom

Many opportunities arise in teaching to integrate faith into learning; in online classes with set classroom materials, one prominent place to be intentional and indirect is in the Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs). These inserted points of discussion within the classroom forum are an excellent platform for integrating faith and learning. Here are some examples:

Example #1: The instructor uses a passage in the Bible that serves as a good example of a term being used in the lesson, then challenges the class as to what filters they use and then to consider how a biblical filter can assist in making qualitative decisions.

> *English 105, Topic 4: A Personal Review Based on Philippians 4:8*
>
> **Class:**
>
> This week as we conduct a review of a website, we are creating a quality filter of sorts. We are looking at how a website measures up to selected criteria. When the website either passes or doesn't pass the test, we have evidence to make a qualitative judgement.
>
> The Bible provides quality filters as well. In Philippians 4:8, Paul writes, "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" (NIV).
>
> Christians here are being asked to implement this quality filter for what they allow in their minds. Do you use any such filter to make qualitative judgements? How might this biblical passage inform the decisions you face in life?

Example #2: Here the instructor uses a Bible passage to awaken the student's understanding of the multiple ways God communicates to humankind through creation. The purpose is to reinforce good visual communication techniques.

> *English 106, Topic 3: God and Visual Rhetoric*
>
> **Class:**
>
> As we have been learning this week, visual rhetoric is communication through visual images. We see examples of it each day in various forms such as billboards, traffic signs, grocery ads, etc. Visual rhetoric is nothing new, however. Did you know God uses visual rhetoric to communicate to human beings? Consider the following verses from the book of Romans: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse" (Romans 1:20 NIV).
>
> What examples of God's visual rhetoric do you recognize? What does it communicate to you?

Example #3: This is a general example for use in a traditional classroom or online. The purpose of this discussion question is to use Scripture to enhance classroom decorum, specifically to move students toward a positive attitude regarding feedback. Note again the indirect approach; the student is asked to find applications for the classroom discussions.

> *English 106, Topic 5 The Bible and Peer Relationships*
>
> **Class:**
>
> The book of Proverbs is filled with morsels

of wisdom. Written by Solomon, who some consider to be the wisest person to have ever lived, Proverbs provides insight regarding peer relationships. Consider the following:

- Proverbs 27:17, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (NIV).
- Proverbs 27:5–6, "Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses."

How may these verses inform your peer relationships in class? How could they impact your perceptions of feedback?

Example #4: Here the instructor shares a personal experience to illustrate a spiritual concept in the discussion forum and asks the students to share their own perceptions.

UNV503, Topic 1: Introduction to Grad School

Class:

Here's a story from my doctoral experience. I went to a university with Christian in the title, but in a grad class, the prof asked if anyone in the class (about 25 students) believed in absolute truth, thinking that there would probably be none. I was the only one who raised my hand (and I'm not trying to make myself look heroic); I'm sure many refused to raise hands who believed that truth could be absolute, but I was not surprised by their silence. Side note: If you claim no absolute truth exists, you have claimed that as an absolute and contradicted yourself.

Why were other students silent? What should universities do to guarantee all students feel free to express their beliefs?

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is somewhat limited in that the authors are writing from experiences in their respective fields of English and Theology. More needs to be done by instructors from other academic disciplines as well. Surely many instructors use the indirect method instinctively, realizing that students embrace truths they discover for themselves far better than being spoon-fed through lectures. But the great need is for Christian instructors to be intentional in using this same approach to integrate the Christian worldview into their classroom teaching and discussions.

Indeed, every instructor should ponder the question Glanzer et al. (2019) posed to a couple thousand Christian professors at Christian colleges and universities: "What difference does a professor's Christian identity make in teaching?" (p. 38). Much may be learned from other instructors in our various disciplines as to how one's Christian identity may shine through and enhance our teaching. Providing platforms for instructors to share ideas with one another always bears much fruit.

CONCLUSION

The necessity for Christian institutions of higher education to be intentional in their integration of faith and learning has never been more important. The challenge that every instructor faces is how to integrate them in a way that is both natural for the setting and for the course being taught. Rather than dictating what to believe, the approach of indirection endeavors to allow the learners to discover the truth for themselves. Such discovery provides an experience that will more readily be understood and accepted.

Christ both revealed and concealed the truth. He taught in a way to educe by indirection. Soren Kierkegaard saw Christ as the ultimate paradox, the God/man, and adding to His paradoxical nature was his cryptic teaching. He told parables so that his students would internalize and change through their searching and questioning. He was ready with answers when the time was ripe. Paul's strategy in 1 Peter 3:15 of being prepared to give an answer implies that those who respond to an indirect communication about Christ are searching. We who present these questions indirectly can directly answer them. We must, however, know where the answers are found, be available to answer, and know that we must sometimes refrain from giving direct answers.

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