

“HONEST ANSWERS TO HONEST QUESTIONS”: THE FRANCIS AND EDITH SCHAEFFER APPROACH TO THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

The teaching strategies of Francis and Edith Schaeffer helped young adults construct meaning in their lives. During several seasons of tumultuous social unrest, the Schaeffers consistently gave shelter to many confused, searching, and hurting adults. Their educational motto was “honest answers to honest questions.” For nearly thirty years, from 1955 to 1984, Francis and Edith taught at L’Abri, a unique living-learning community they founded in the Swiss Alps. Until now no formal study has researched the educational aspect of Francis Schaeffer at L’Abri. This recent mixed-methods study has defined the educational emphases and methods of the Schaeffer approach at L’Abri. All the participants in the study (n = 30) were students of Francis Schaeffer at L’Abri. Their interviews yielded rich and deeply nuanced descriptions of the teaching-learning process there. In summary, they identified three vital components and five valuable expressions of the L’Abri phenomenon. Significantly, every participant (100%) indicated that Francis Schaeffer’s use of questions was helpful to their overall learning experience. The article concludes with several iterative teaching strategies from the Schaeffer approach to apply in 21st century educational settings.

Keywords: meaning, questions, inquiry, educational methods, emerging adults, Francis Schaeffer, L’Abri

INTRODUCTION

Francis Schaeffer (1912–1984) and his wife Edith Schaeffer (1914–2013) opened L’Abri in Switzerland in 1955. From the French word meaning “shelter,” L’Abri was a haven for young adults who were seeking answers to deep questions about life. Over nearly three decades of work, their influence grew in Europe and the United States through several successful lecture tours, publication of dozens of books, and the release of two film series. Together, Francis and Edith Schaeffer encouraged a generation to seek meaning and purpose in life.

Much has been written about Francis and Edith Schaeffer. Edith wrote L’Abri in 1969 to recount the story of how an American family moved to a chalet in the Swiss Alps and opened a spiritual

shelter to help many young people troubled by uncertainties regarding life’s meaning. One of the earliest systematic studies of Francis Schaeffer’s work came from a doctoral student at Northwestern University in Illinois. Lane Dennis (1980) wrote about Schaeffer in a phenomenological dissertation. In her next work, Edith Schaeffer broadened the historical scope of her writing to include both the years before L’Abri and beyond in *The Tapestry: The Life and Times of Francis and Edith Schaeffer* (1981). A revised edition of L’Abri (1992) was published nearly thirty years after the first, which included a section containing information about the enduring worldwide influence of L’Abri.

Valuable work has been done regarding Francis Schaeffer’s apologetic method (Edgar, 1995;

Follis, 2006; Morris, 1976), theology (Doran, 2002; Hamilton, 1997; Lont, 1976; Patterson, 2006), missiology (Dennis, 1980), scholarship (McCarthy, 1980), historiography (Burch, 1994; Gill, 1981), political thought (Hankins, 2008; Noll, 1984; Outlaw, 2001), and spirituality (Edgar, 2013). But despite all the research on Schaeffer the apologist or Schaeffer the activist, literature is scarce on Schaeffer the educator. Perhaps this gap in the literature exists because many have been captivated by his apologetic method and political influence while others have altogether ignored Francis Schaeffer as a serious intellectual.

This article seeks to fill a gap in the literature regarding Schaeffer as teacher. At the heart of this study were three research questions:

1. What characterized the educational approach of Francis Schaeffer at L'Abri?
2. What did students at L'Abri find most helpful or not helpful about Francis Schaeffer's approach to teaching?
3. In what ways have the educational practices of Francis Schaeffer impacted those who studied under him at L'Abri?

I completed an extensive review of the literature and conducted nearly three dozen episodic, semistructured interviews with students who were taught by Francis Schaeffer at L'Abri. The interviews yielded over three hundred pages of transcription, and several themes emerged that may be helpful to educators today.

METHODS

Participants

In preparation for this project, I conducted five semistructured interviews with those who had been to L'Abri with Schaeffer or had been profoundly influenced by him in some way. These "pilot" interviews took place between May 2016 and December 2018. Through the earlier pilot study, it became clear that the ideal participants for this final study should be educators and influencers who are mentioned by name in printed works as those who studied with Francis Schaeffer at L'Abri between 1955 and 1984.

Books, articles, and websites that mentioned Francis Schaeffer's time at L'Abri contained lists of potential participants for the study. Colin Duriez

(2008) mentioned at least 16 individuals in various portions of his book (pp. 19, 21, 23, 31, 34, 35, 65, 64, 67, 68, 115, & 127). In the appendix, Duriez names at least 20 more (pp. 223–224). For his work, Barry Hankins (2008) recorded at least 17 individuals, some of whom were not mentioned by Duriez (pp. x, 51, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 70, & 71). Edgar (2013) was another excellent source containing several potential participants for the study.

I applied nonprobabilistic sampling techniques to ground theory regarding the educational methods of Francis and Edith Schaeffer at L'Abri. The purposive use of selecting typical cases and convenient samples yielded the best results in this study (Flick, 2009, p. 122). Once completed, the number of participants in this study was sufficient to achieve theoretical saturation. Research suggests a minimum of 10 participants to build grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). More recent experts, such as Hennink et al. (2017), have identified two types of data saturation. Code saturation can be achieved in nine interviews when researchers have "heard it all." Meaning saturation, however, stresses "understanding it all" and can be reached between 16 to 24 interviews (p. 1). The study design aimed for 30 interviews and 30 were conducted. I achieved theoretical saturation in the sense of both hearing and understanding at 23 participants.

The analysis of the demographic information for this study showed that the diversity of participants adequately matched the diversity of the Swiss L'Abri during the Schaeffer Years (1955–1984). This suggests that the sample was representative of the phenomena studied. Students came to L'Abri from many different countries for many different personal reasons, stayed anywhere from a few days or months to years and even decades, and participated in the educational ministry there at different levels.

Participants in this study consisted of 19 men and 11 women. Their ages ranged 63–83 years old at the time of the interview (born 1936–1956), with an average age of 73. Four participants (13%) were born in the 1930s, 16 (53%) were born in the 1940s, and 10 (33%) were born in the 1950s. Different nationalities were also represented. There were 19 participants (63%) from the United States, two (7%) from the Netherlands, one (3%) from Switzerland,

one (3%) from Germany, one (3%) from Poland, one (3%) from India, and five (17%) from the United Kingdom.

Table 1. Age and Nationality of Participants (N = 30)

| Characteristic | n | % | M | SD |
|--------------------------------------|----|-------|------|----|
| Age at the time of interview (63–83) | | 73.03 | 4.58 | |
| Decade of birth | | | | |
| 1930s | 4 | 13.3 | | |
| 1940s | 16 | 53.3 | | |
| 1950s | 10 | 33.3 | | |
| Nationality | | | | |
| United States of America | 19 | 63.3 | | |
| The United Kingdom | 5 | 17.7 | | |
| The Netherlands | 2 | 6.7 | | |
| Switzerland | 1 | 3.3 | | |
| Germany | 1 | 3.3 | | |
| Poland | 1 | 3.3 | | |
| India | 1 | 3.3 | | |

Table 2. Initial Years at L’Abri and Amount of Time Spent There (N = 30)

| Characteristic | n | % |
|--|---|------|
| Initial Years at L’Abri | | |
| 1955–1959 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 1960–1964 | 5 | 16.6 |
| 1964–1969 | 5 | 16.6 |
| 1970–1974 | 8 | 26.7 |
| 1975–1979 | 9 | 30 |
| 1980–1984 | 2 | 6.7 |
| Amount of Time at L’Abri | | |
| One trip up to 3 months | 4 | 13.3 |
| One trip lasting 4 to 11 months | 3 | 10 |
| More than one trip for a total of 4 to 11 months | 9 | 30 |
| Total stay of 1 to 4 years | 2 | 6.7 |
| Total stay of 5 to 9 years | 5 | 16.7 |
| Total stay of 10 years or more | 7 | 23.3 |

Participants in this study first arrived at L’Abri at various periods during the history of the ministry. One participant (3%) arrived 1955–1959, five (17%) arrived 1960–1964, five (17%) arrived 1965–1969, eight (27%) arrived 1970–1974, nine (30%) arrived 1975–1979, and two (7%) arrived 1980–1984. People stayed at L’Abri for diverse lengths of time.

There were four participants (13%) who stayed for one trip lasting up to 3 months, three (10%) made one trip that lasted 4–11 months, nine (30%) made more than one trip to L’Abri, two (7%) were there 1–4 years, five (17%) stayed 5–9 years at L’Abri, and seven (23%) stayed 10 years or more.

Table 3. Levels of Involvement and Leadership at L’Abri (N = 30)

| Characteristic | n | % |
|--------------------------------------|----|------|
| Highest Level of Involvement | | |
| Visitor | 0 | 0 |
| Guest | 1 | 3.3 |
| Student | 10 | 33.3 |
| Helper | 5 | 16.7 |
| Worker | 6 | 20 |
| Member | 2 | 6.7 |
| Trustee | 6 | 20 |
| Number in Leadership | | |
| Worker, Member, and Trustee Combined | 14 | 46.7 |
| Nationality and Leadership | | |
| United States of America (Worker) | 3 | 10 |
| United States of America (Member) | 2 | 6.7 |
| United States of America (Trustee) | 2 | 6.7 |
| The United Kingdom (Worker) | 2 | 6.7 |
| The United Kingdom (Trustee) | 2 | 6.7 |
| The Netherlands (Trustee) | 1 | 3.3 |
| Germany (Trustee) | 1 | 3.3 |
| Switzerland (Worker) | 1 | 3.3 |

Dennis (1980) identified seven levels of participation for residents at L’Abri. Through a preinterview questionnaire, I identified the highest level of involvement of every participant in the study. No participants were identified at the lowest level of “visitor.” The second level was “guest,” and one participant (3%) had this type of involvement. There were ten participants (33%) who were involved at their highest level as “students.” The next level of involvement was “helper” and was represented by five participants (17%). “Workers” were represented by six participants (20%). There were two participants who were “members” (7%). “Trustee” was the highest level of involvement with six participants (20%) in this study at that level. As it comes to the length of time for the “workers,” two of them were there for 1–4 years

and two were there 5–9 years. The two “members” were at L’Abri 5–9 years. All six “trustees” were at L’Abri for over a decade. Nearly half of the participants in this study, fourteen (47%), held leadership positions of “worker,” “member,” or “trustee.” At the level of worker there were six participants (20%), member had two (7%), and trustee had six (20%).

Instruments

The five preliminary interviews conducted May 2016 to December 2018 gave shape to the semistructured interview script for this study. From these interviews, I gained important insights into my readings on the topic and further refined my sampling procedures by giving more emphasis to prescreening potential participants based upon their experiences. The emphases of prayer and the hospitality of Edith Schaeffer are two such themes that emerged early from the pilot studies.

To screen participants and begin a general categorization of those involved, each participant completed a preinterview questionnaire. This questionnaire captured their initial motivation for coming to L’Abri and the level of their involvement while there. The results from Dennis’s study (1980) formed a template for the preinterview questionnaire. Dennis identified five reasons people came to L’Abri. They came for specifically Christian reasons (51%); seeking answers to the

question of the meaning of life from a non-Christian perspective (18%); out of curiosity or with no pressing reason (16%); seeking answers to nonurgent educational questions (16%); and relational reasons (5%). (p. 110) Dennis also identified seven types of involvement people experienced once they had arrived at L’Abri. Each person may have experienced one or more of these types of roles: visitor, guest, student, helper, worker, member, and trustee (pp. 86–95). During the semistructured interviews participants expanded upon what they began to share through the preinterview screening about their own experience at L’Abri.

PROCEDURE

The thirty interviews (n = 30) were conducted between January and June of 2019. First, individuals completed a preinterview questionnaire and signed a consent form. Then, interviews were in person, by phone, Skype, Facetime, Zoom, or another online means and usually lasted 45–75 minutes. One participant elected to conduct the interview entirely online via email.

All interviews were recorded on an Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS 852, and each of the interviews was transcribed. A typical recorded interview consisted of 13 single-spaced pages of transcription. The study yielded over 300 pages of transcripts from the semistructured episodic interviews. Next, coded portions of transcriptions

Table 4. Semistructured Interview Questions

| | Interview Questions |
|---------------------|--|
| Opening | 1. What is your name and current occupation? |
| Introduction | 2. Think back to when you first came to L’Abri. Describe what it was like. What was the impact of this experience then, and has there been any long-lasting influence on your life? |
| Key | 3. What was it like to learn from Schaeffer? |
| | 4. What contribution did Edith make to your experience of the learning environment of L’Abri? |
| | 5. Was there anything you saw in his teaching methods that might be considered unusual or unique? How did you respond to those methods at that time? |
| | 6. What do you most appreciate or not appreciate about that experience with Francis Schaeffer at L’Abri? |
| | 7. Francis Schaeffer often taught on the Lordship of Christ in all of life. What does the Lordship of Christ in all of life mean to you? |
| | 8. In what ways did Francis Schaeffer shape your thinking about the Lordship in Christ? |
| | 9. In what ways did the key expressions of the L’Abri community, such as study, work, shared meals, and worship, help you develop your own understanding of the Lordship of Christ in all of life? |
| | 10. In what ways has your time with Francis Schaeffer at L’Abri shaped your own approach to teaching others? |
| Ending | 11. The purpose of this study is to analyze Francis Schaeffer’s educational methods at L’Abri and their impact on those who studied under him. What did we miss? Is there anything we should have talked about but didn’t? |

were given to participants to check for accuracy. Lastly, verified portions of transcripts were transferred to NVivo software for further analysis.

Data Analysis

During the first cycle of coding, an open approach allowed theoretical directions to arise from the first reading of the transcribed data. In Vivo codes, also known as literal or verbatim codes, use the direct language of participants as codes rather than researcher-generated words and phrases. In Vivo codes were the general method of first cycle analysis in this study. However, a willingness to mix and match methods allowed for richer theoretical development (Saldaña, 2013, p. 94). I also utilized initial, provisional, and holistic coding methods during this phase, and emerging themes refined or added to the semistructured episodic interview script in accordance with grounded theory.

The coding went through another cycle. “The primary goal during Second Cycle coding is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of First Cycle codes” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 207). Axial Coding helped me determine which codes were the dominant ones and which ones were less important. Reorganizing the data set and eliminating synonyms helped the best representative codes rise to the top, which became the categories. “The ‘axis’ of Axial Coding is category” (p. 218). Analytic memo writing at this stage was critical. The focus of memo writing in the second cycle of coding was placed on “the emergent and emerging codes themselves, along with the categories’ properties and dimensions” (p. 221). Theoretical Coding is another second cycle process, and I saw certain codes begin to function like an umbrella that covers and accounts for all the other codes and categories formulated thus far in grounded theory analysis (p. 223). Flick (2009) suggests that the model in grounded theory research mainly drives toward three aspects: “theoretical sampling, grounded theory coding, and writing the theory” (p. 91). Thus, after the second cycle of coding, I drew theoretical conclusions from the categories and themes raised by the research. I organized these conclusions and then communicated in a written summary considerations and possible recommendations.

Member checking of the emerging themes

of the study brought positive results. A six-page summary of the themes of the qualitative research was distributed to a group of participants for feedback. Three participants (10%) were selected for member checking based upon their articulateness, availability, and expertise on the L’Abri phenomenon. Two individuals involved in member checking of the findings had served over a decade in L’Abri leadership as trustees and one had been a regular speaker at L’Abri conferences for over a decade.

Each participant involved in member checking gave generally positive feedback regarding the summary of findings. An example of an affirmation for the direction, tone, and content of the findings was expressed, “It looks good to me, covering all you set out to do. You have an impressive collection of data, participants, etc.” Another individual wrote about the summary of emerging themes, “I don’t have anything to add to your executive summary. I like the language you have used in your descriptions. It all seems excellent and fits with my experience and many others.” One more example of feedback from another person involved in the member checking includes, “My sense overall is that your research has brought you to a series of accurate and helpful insights into the educational ministry of Francis Schaeffer.” The participant continued, “At least what you have listed and described certainly matches my experience being tutored by him and spending considerable time with him and Edith as they grew older.”

There were several helpful suggestions offered by those involved in the member checking process. Some had to do with clarification of terms. One humorous example was Edith’s “lovely fussiness,” which was misunderstood as Edith’s “lovely ‘fuzziness.’” After a chuckle and some emails back and forth, it was clear that the meaning of the phrase was intended to refer to her world class hospitality, not a statement about her more circuitous way of communicating.

The emphasis on member checking process demonstrated that I, in good faith, sought to represent the experience of the participants with integrity and accuracy. Inviting feedback and input was another check against bias or blind spots. The critiques brought to the study were taken into consideration and made their way into the final report.

RESULTS

The educational ministry of Francis and Edith Schaeffer at L'Abri was a complex phenomenon impacting an international group of students for nearly three decades from 1955 to 1984. The participants in this study were a representative sample of the L'Abri phenomenon because they were an international group of former students who were with the Schaeffers at L'Abri at different times, for different lengths of time, and with different levels of involvement.

Interestingly, almost all the participants in this study (93%) have had vocational educational experience since their time at L'Abri. As such, they were in a unique place to speak about how the impact of their educational experience at L'Abri with the Schaeffers had influenced their own work as educators in the decades that have followed and shared what they most appreciated about that experience.

Three Vital Components

“Vital” means life-giving and essential. It has become clear from the interviews that the participants saw these three components as critical to the flourishing of L'Abri during the Schaeffer years. If even one of these components was missing, L'Abri would have ceased to thrive. Each of these three components was a dynamic couplet. In other words, in each couplet there was a lively interaction of two separate entities or ideals that operated as one.

1. **The indefatigable marriage of Francis and Edith Schaeffer.** It is patent that both Francis and Edith brought their own incredible giftedness and passion to the ministry of L'Abri. Participants in the study described with rich detail the importance of their marriage and the individual attributes of each of them. They got tired and made mistakes, but it was their work together that made L'Abri work.
2. **The unrelenting pursuit of truth through open questions and discussions.** Here the concept of a dynamic couplet is seen again. Like a marriage that functions well when two mature people experience oneness, the realities of truth and open questions interacted in a live-giving way with those

at L'Abri. It is fascinating to learn about the way Francis Schaeffer kept his absolute commitment to biblical fidelity, but he did so in such a way that invited people to ask big questions. And this pursuit of truth was unrelenting at L'Abri.

3. **The patient formation of a living-learning community of individuals.** The words “community” and “individuals” appear throughout the transcript documents, but it is the interplay between the two seemingly contradictory words that is so beautiful to understand about L'Abri. People were able to study what they wanted to as individuals, but at the same time they formed life-long friendships in the community of L'Abri. This took incredible amounts of time. L'Abri was a patient educational ministry where people shared life together and learned together for months, years, and decades.

Five Valuable Expressions

The three vital components of L'Abri—the indefatigable marriage of Francis and Edith Schaeffer, the unrelenting pursuit of truth through open questions and discussions, and the patient formation of a living-learning community of individuals—combined to emanate several good gifts to those living at L'Abri. These five valuable expressions were appreciated by those at L'Abri because they assisted students in their learning and in their lives.

1. **Proven authenticity.** Participants made several comments about how real and transparent Francis and Edith were. This was a consistent theme and a remarkable feat considering that the Schaeffer's basically invited people into their home for three decades!
2. **Institutional flexibility.** In our day of church “business plans” and such, it is refreshing to hear that the Schaeffer's were not driven by such pragmatics. And it was not only their way—it was the way of L'Abri. Many former students commented about the openness to change their courses of study, and the helpers and workers shared this liveness.

3. **Intellectual hospitality.** The openness that Francis brought to any honest question combined with the “lovely fussiness” of Edith created an incredible atmosphere of intellectual hospitality. People were encouraged to explore trains of thought and serious academic inquiry. They were given time and attention and made to feel comfortable so they could wrestle through the options set before them. They were welcomed into a “family” where they could find answers to some of the more troublesome questions of life.
4. **Relational diversity.** This was seen time and again in the interviews. The literature review revealed the incredible diversity of individuals at L’Abri. The findings of this qualitative study corroborated the fact that the participants really enjoyed the diversity. One participant noted that he had been at L’Abri for at least three months before it even dawned on him to ask anyone what their church denomination was.
5. **Shared leadership and work.** Many participants contributed to the teaching-learning ministry of L’Abri in significant ways because Francis and Edith developed a culture of sharing the ministry. Some presented talks and papers while others came up with very creative adaptations of what they were learning so that they could share it with other students.

Participants in the study shared valuable insights about their learning experience at L’Abri under Francis and Edith Schaeffer. The results combined the three vital components and five valuable expressions to give an accurate picture with rich details of the unique educational setting found there. There are several implications and inferences one can draw from the results of the study.

APPLICATIONS

It is easy to see the similarities between Schaeffer’s day and ours. The tumultuous 1960s and 1970s were full of societal issues: the generational gap, racial unrest, lack of confidence in education, and increasing doubts in the church. Those very elements are present here and now. Because young adults are consistently receiving

mixed messages from an increasingly splintered society, they are naturally confused and frustrated and struggle to make sense of it all. They need good teachers. Perhaps this is reason enough to revisit some of the proven methods of Francis and Edith Schaeffer at L’Abri.

All the participants in this study (100%) said it was Francis Schaeffer’s use of questions that positively impacted their time with him. Carefully, over time, Francis and Edith shaped a culture at L’Abri that was truly a shelter where people were safe enough to ask their questions. Questions were not shunned; they were encouraged. Both teacher-generated and student-generated questions drove instruction. No question was out of bounds. “Honest answers to honest questions” was the common theme.

Students Were L.O.V.E.D.

Francis and Edith Schaeffer L.O.V.E.D. their students. The L.O.V.E.D. acronym stands for five recommendations based upon the Schaeffer method: leverage doubt, open up questions and discussions, view people as glorious ruins, encourage restored relationships, and deepen worldview.

Leverage Doubt. Francis Schaeffer had a special connection to doubters. His own season of profound doubt and darkness prepared him for his work at L’Abri. Schaeffer’s dark night started in January of 1951, and when he came through that period about a year later, from that point forward, Schaeffer began to develop a listening attitude, one of the most important gifts he offered to those who later studied under him. Coming through the spiritual crisis had also mellowed him. The Schaeffer’s second daughter, Susan Schaeffer Macaulay, recalled, “I saw the change in [him]. The flaws in his character really started to be worked on from then. You know, he really changed, considerably” (Duriez, 2008, p. 107).

Timothy Keller, in his book *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, offers helpful advice regarding the role doubt can play in life. He writes, “Skeptics must learn to look for a type of faith hidden within their reasoning. All doubts, however skeptical and cynical they may seem, are really a set of alternate beliefs” (2018, p. xxiv). Keller challenged Christians and skeptics alike to take a second look at doubt because doubt can be leveraged to serve good purposes. He left a

challenge for his readers:

My thesis is that if you come to recognize the beliefs on which your doubts about Christianity are based and if you seek as much proof for those beliefs as you seek from Christians for theirs — you will discover that your doubts are not as solid as they first appeared. (p. xxv)

The wise teacher can take a cue from Francis Schaeffer. Stop punishing doubters, and instead, do something innovative. Leverage doubt to increase learning. This involves slowing down and getting close with students to discover what their doubts are and fostering trust by asking good questions. Francis and Edith Schaeffer demonstrated how this approach can take sacrifice and time.

Open Questions and Discussion. Questions are clues that offer insight into the inner world of students. Whether a student asks an insightful question or cannot even form their question into words, a wise teacher knows how to grow student curiosity in the subject matter. Fostering student engagement is paramount to education, and keeping students involved and hungry for more is the dream of every passionate educator. Francis Schaeffer and those who were with him knew how to create an environment where student questions were the regular offering. Questions of every type and stripe were piled upon even more questions. Remarkably, this phenomenon continued at L'Abri not for just a few moments but for nearly three decades. Here are four suggestions to open questions and discussion.

First, the wise teacher welcomes students into a questioning environment. This begins with the posture of the teacher. If the teacher takes a self-assured posture much like Schaeffer did, that the lesson is about the students learning and not the teacher looking good, if the teacher believes that students are incredibly important and their questions matter—then everything slows down. There will be an incredible focus on the importance of the question asked by the individual who is esteemed by the teacher.

Second, there are no stupid questions. Students need to know that simple fact so they feel safe to ask their questions. When students ask their questions, some will shoot to the stars while other questions will fall as flat as a shadow, but the wise teacher honors all honest questions. Schaeffer never

dismissed someone or belittled their questions. Schaeffer endeavored to honor each question, even if he had answered it a dozen times before.

Third, honest questions deserve sound, honest, full, and interesting answers. Schaeffer took the time to properly answer each question. Sometimes he would talk fifteen minutes or longer in response to just one question. For teachers who follow the example of Francis Schaeffer, they will find the joy of communicating with students in meaningful ways as they give their complete attention and their best answers to the questions of their students.

Fourth, carefully selected and presented material can evoke student-raised questions and discussion. Francis Schaeffer would use articles, news clippings, and other current events as a springboard into thoughtful discussion. Some of his most memorable question and answer times with his students involved these kinds of worldview discussions about current events.

View People as Glorious Ruins. When studying the life and writings of Francis Schaeffer, one is struck by how consistently he kept a biblical focus on persons over his decades of ministry at L'Abri. Repeatedly, the participants in this study stressed how much Francis Schaeffer respected individuals and empathized with their pain. People were to Schaeffer “glorious ruins.” Two important truths are communicated in that phrase. First, people were glorious to Schaeffer because they were forever marked by the *imago dei*—they were made in the image of God. Regardless of their past and present foibles, they would always be of incredible value to their Creator. As the title of his book said, to Schaeffer there were No Little People (1974). Second, people are ruins because, while they are on this earth, they are fallen and deeply flawed. Helping individuals would often involve Schaeffer being present with them at the lowest point of their lives and applying grace to that specific place of need.

Schaeffer held both of those truths about human beings before him constantly. People are glorious ruins. One of the reasons he was able to connect in such powerful ways with people is because he was profoundly influenced by his theological understanding of persons. This deep, deep concern for people was a constant refrain in the discussion with the participants and it has marked their work

as teachers ever since. A wise teacher would ask questions such as: Do I truly believe this student reflects the image of God Himself? If so, how can I show them reverence and honor? How can I seek to appreciate and understand them? Do I really understand the ruin this person is experiencing right now? If so, how can I accept the fact of their struggle and pain without treating them coldly or just dismissing their difficulty? In what ways can I see the grace of God bringing them substantial healing and restoration in this area of their ruin? How can I be an instrument of the grace of God in their life?

Encourage Restoration of Relationships.

The fall of mankind disrupted relationships, but Christian education should help restore them. The curriculum and instructional methods used by teachers and educational institutions should teach students how to relate with others in life-giving ways. Students should deepen their emotional intelligence and grow in their communication skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

One of the valuable expressions of L'Abri was "intellectual hospitality." Under the wise guidance of Francis and Edith Schaeffer, L'Abri was able to become both a warm environment and a thinking climate. This was indeed a rare combination and, as such, represented a special accomplishment. Faith-based organizations tend to have less of a thinking climate than a warm and friendly one (Roehlkepartain, 1993, p. 62). What L'Abri accomplished in raising up men and women of influence aligned with the practice of capitalizing on the best that hospitality has to offer to train students for Christian ministry (Shaw, 2011, p. 18). The leaders of L'Abri were successful in challenging their students to ask tough questions about themselves, the world, and God.

Francis Schaeffer and those with him at L'Abri encouraged relationships within their "living-learning" community. The students studied together, worked together, ate meals together, prayed together, and worshipped together. The teachers did the same. In addition, teachers served together, planned together, and went to conferences together. There were formal structures at L'Abri that intentionally encouraged relationships such as days of prayer on Mondays and high teas on Sunday afternoons. There were plenty of informal opportunities to

build relationships such as going on hikes together through the trails in the Alps. Long conversations and even times of resolving conflict were modeled to students. Specific instruction was given to teach students what relationships restored by the gospel looked like.

The wise teacher should consider the ability of their students to have healthy relationships with others. It appears that students are struggling to make real relationships, and many students need the extra support of their teachers to build and restore relationships. Perhaps students are not being taught how to relate to others at home or at church. Much attention is now being given to the negative effects of social media. Suicide and depression rates are rising among several strata in America. Now more than ever it is apropos to help students know how to be a good friend and for them to build those skills under the tutelage of their teachers.

Deepen Worldview Thinking. Everyone has a worldview. It is a lens through which everything is seen. A worldview functions like an operating system that controls both the input and output of life. A worldview is not only a view of the world, but it is also a view for the world (Phillips et al., 2008, p. 16). That is to say, a worldview not only offers a description of the way things are but also a prescription for the way things ought to be. Worldview is not only cognitive—it is visceral (Smith, 2009, p. 140). It affects and is affected by all parts of life. Worldview is consciousness of reality (Kuyper, 1931, p. 137). It is the totality of human existence.

Francis Schaeffer taught that Christianity was an overarching system, a philosophy that provided meaning and purpose about everything. To him, the Christian worldview was not relegated only to the domain of the church walls. It was not about religious things only and it was not private. Instead, the comprehensive worldview of Christianity touched upon matters of salvation and upon all other areas of life. Francis Schaeffer's message was to bring people to Christ and then grow them to see the Lordship of Christ in all of life.

Too often, educators teach facts devoid of meaning by not showing how the facts connect to a comprehensive whole. They fail to give their students the greater context for the things they are learning. Students without that greater context

might end up confused or could miss the entire lesson because it is just dangling out there alone with nothing tying it to some reality the students already know. The worst possible result of this kind of education is that, through the passing of time, a slowly creeping malaise of meaninglessness engulfs their view of the world and themselves in it.

Francis Schaeffer was brilliant at seeing the big picture and then showing the connections the little parts made to the whole. He was a quintessential generalist. He was also an excellent teacher of Christian worldview. How did he deepen worldview in his students? First, he would dig deep into the current worldview understanding of his students and made every effort to know where they were coming from. Through a series of questions and answers he would help students understand contradictions and shortcomings in their view of the world. Second, he built a comprehensive Christian worldview question by question, lesson by lesson, series by series, and then later, book by book. Whatever the subject, he tied it back to the Christian worldview—politics, the environment, art, history, philosophy, or science. He consistently aimed to promote the Lordship of Christ in all of life. It was his touchstone proposition and organizing principle. Third, Francis Schaeffer would challenge his students to apply the Christian worldview to their own context. He shared the ministry with them in remarkable ways. At L'Abri they gave lectures, led discussions, and helped plan events. After they left L'Abri, they made their own creative applications of the Christian worldview in a variety of innovative ways. As leaders of “L'Abriesque” ministries, in nonteaching environments, and in conventional educational contexts they applied their Christian worldview to their work.

CONCLUSION

This study brought to light new insights regarding the teaching of Francis Schaeffer at L'Abri from the perspective of educational theory and practice. Participants in this study ($n = 30$) were students under Francis Schaeffer at L'Abri between 1955 and 1984. In summary, they identified three vital components and five valuable expressions of the L'Abri phenomenon. Significantly, every participant (100%) indicated that Francis Schaeffer's use of questions was helpful to their overall learning experience (Rasmussen, 2021). The article

presented several iterative teaching strategies from the Schaeffer approach to apply in 21st century educational settings.

A fresh understanding of Francis Schaeffer the man and a clear description of his educational methods can motivate educators to be innovative and courageous in their callings today. In all his responsibilities, Francis Schaeffer fulfilled in essence one role: teacher. He was a patient, insightful, and relevant teacher who knew how to connect with his students. He loved them and led them to the Lord. And then he taught his students to love the Lord with all their being. Francis Schaeffer was a teacher who connected all of life, including the lives of his students, to the Lordship of Christ.

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