

Visual Valet

User's Guide



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Where did the Visual Valet come from?

The *Visual Valet* is a personal assistant for Christian thinkers and teachers. Like most personal assistants it takes time to learn to work together effectively. This *User's Guide* is designed to help you work with the *Visual Valet*. This *User's Guide* explains where the *Visual Valet* came from and shows examples of how it can help. The *Visual Valet* is not "the" answer, but rather a few "loaves and fishes" shared with you so that Christ can multiply them to meet the needs in your classroom.

Why should you invest time to read the Visual Valet? Most books about teaching are based on current educational research, personal experience or logical analysis. All of these add credibility, relevance, and clarity. The Visual Valet, however, is based on the presupposition that God's revelation of Himself, His creation and His purposes in the Bible is foundational to anyone's understanding of teaching and learning. Although it is true that there are differences of interpretation even among those who believe that the Bible is trustworthy and authoritative, these differences are no reason to abandon the Bible as the foundation for our consideration of education. The same differences of interpretation exist when different people consider educational research, personal experience, or logical analysis. The Bible, however, comes with the promise that the Holy "*Spirit of truth ... will guide you into all truth*" (John 16:13).

If you don't agree with my interpretation of what the Bible says it may well be that I have understood it incompletely or incorrectly. However, if you disagree with my conclusions because of your research or experience or analysis, please understand that I assume that what the Bible says has priority over any other source of information no matter how valuable or irrefutable they may seem to be. Often Bible references are included in a Christian text, but I know that I rarely take the time to read the verses that are cited. Footnotes or endnotes are also seldom considered so the practice of this book is to include the text of Bible verses within the text of the discussion. There is a danger that it will be harder to follow when God's Word and mine are mixed within the text. But, if God's Word is authoritative and not my interpretation of it, it makes sense to directly consider what the Bible says. I trust you won't succumb to the temptation to skip the quotes to get to the "good stuff" or the "new stuff." I can assure you that what God says is always more important than what I say even though it has been a privilege to study various parts of God's Word and bring them together so that they will help illuminate and interpret each other and the great task of teaching.

Note: Throughout this book, God's Word will be set off in italic lettering.

I know that my conclusions have been shaped by my experience as a student and teacher. Like David, I believe that "*all the days ordained for me were written in*" God's

"book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:16). Because He makes no mistakes and wastes none of our experiences, even the difficult times—and there were lots of them—have helped me move from total ignorance of Christian education to incomplete but growing understanding.

I am thankful for the experience God has given me as a student (11 years in public elementary & high school, 3 years in Bible college, 5 years studying chemical physics and education in university, and 6 years of part-time study in Christian education as a graduate student) and a teacher (2 years in public school, 21.5 years in a Christian high school, and 5 years teaching teachers).

Teaching is more than a job for me. I know that God called me to serve Him as a teacher even though I was interested in being a scientist and available to be a preacher. However, His calling didn't automatically equip me for the *"good works, which God prepared in advance for"* me *"to do"* (Ephesians 2:10).

Environmental concerns

My environment has profoundly affected my understanding of what it means to be a teacher. The effect is so great that it was easy to assume that any difficulties I had being a distinctively Christian teacher were the result of my circumstances.

My concept of a teacher was shaped by my experience as a student. Sometimes I thought that I could do a better job of explaining while other times I wondered if I could possibly keep a classroom of students actively engaged in learning. I had some great teachers and some that provided a lot of examples of what not to do. I can only remember one teacher that I knew was a Christian. She was the sponsor of the junior high, Inter-School Christian Fellowship group. Although she was very influential in my life, I, unfortunately, never had her as a teacher so I never experienced her teaching within a classroom setting.

My teacher training followed my degree in Religious Education with a major in theology and was mixed with my study of science. It was there that I first began to realize that I did not approach teaching from the same direction as my instructors. They seemed to be convinced that the students were naturally good. Discipline problems were the result of external circumstances such as poor parental input, low socio-economic status, uninteresting teachers, and irrelevant subjects. There were no principles for discipline because everything "depends" on the circumstances.

I knew that the Bible said everyone was a sinner by birth and by choice. I recognized that the discipline problems I'd seen were usually the result of deliberate choices rather than the inevitable consequence of a certain set of circumstances. Of course, as teacher I contributed decisively to what happened in the classroom, but I was not prepared to accept that I was the source of all classroom problems, that the students were never really at fault.

I taught in a public school in Canada for two years. In my social studies class I enthusiastically introduced the study of additional historical and scientific information that did not fit well within the naturalistic narrative of the ancient history textbook. The author began "at the beginning" but he and I had quite different views of how far back in time that was. I had just been to a great conference that introduced me to a lot of information that was very hard to interpret within the normal evolutionary framework.

I asked the students to compare the ability of creation and evolution to explain the evidence. The students seemed to enjoy the idea of questioning "the book" and didn't complain about the assignments any more than usual.

I discovered that I was making waves when the chairman of the school board came to talk to me about what was happening. He told me that I was making the principal of the school uncomfortable when he taught biology. It seems that some of the things I said contradicted things he said and some students had the audacity to point out the conflict.

As an active member of one of the local churches, he was reluctant to make a public issue of the problem, but I knew that changes were expected in my teaching.

There were many other Christian teachers in the school who seemed to be doing just fine, but I was convinced that the system and my administrator made it impossible for me to be the kind of Christian teacher that I wanted to be. I knew God had called me to be a missionary teacher so I looked forward to a better teaching situation.

Black Forest Academy sounded ideal. BFA had only Christian teachers and most of the students were the children of missionaries. I had never been in a Christian school but I sensed that things would be different. When I began teaching at BFA there were no restrictions on the Christian content in my classroom. I was encouraged to make my classes as Christian as possible. The situation was "ideal" but I wasn't equipped to be effective in the situation.

I had good theological training in addition to my background in science and education. I knew how to teach and used every opportunity that I recognized to be distinctively Christian in my classroom. Unfortunately, I didn't recognize very many opportunities and didn't know how to create them. I'd never seen a Christian science or mathematics teacher. My theological education was only applied to teaching within the church. Somehow, Sunday School contents and methods didn't seem appropriate in physics and chemistry. I didn't get to teach Bible very often. If I could only be a Christian teacher in Bible class, I would be a "not Christian" teacher for only a small part of my BFA experience.

I wanted to develop as a Christian teacher and so did the other teachers. The school encouraged our growth and provided books and conferences that challenged our thinking and stimulated our development. I had the privilege of engaging in discussion with some exceptional Christian teachers as we sought to discover what distinctively Christian teaching looked like in all the different classrooms of the school. It still took 20 years for me to develop a few principles that I could share with others.

The Visual Valet is distillation of what I've learned in my journey. The Visual Valet has helped me as a good personal assistant should. I trust that you will find it helpful also.

Transforming the teacher

The goal of teaching is to bring about change in the life of students. Because students become like their teachers, transformed teachers are the key to transformed students. I cannot force someone else to think in a specific way, but I can do something about the way I think. I can allow the Holy Spirit to use the word of God, the Bible, to shape my thinking.

Unless I am continually developing a more distinctively Christian way of thinking and teaching, I cannot blame the system in which I teach for hindering me. If I am personally overflowing with new insights which fill me with gratitude and worship, my students will notice. If I choose God's ways instead of my own in all areas of life, students can learn to choose His ways also. Even if they do not understand the things of God they cannot deny His is making a difference in my life.

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

I can be an example of what God wants to do in the lives and thinking of my students. I want to attract my students to Him and be a living demonstration of His power to use even the most unlikely for His glory.

User's Guide

Some practical tips may allow you to get more help from the *Visual Valet*.

The *Visual Valet* (VV) has to help you before it can help your students. If you don't find it useful, don't introduce it to others. Wait until you are comfortable using the VV so that you can share your personal experience rather than "a good idea I heard." Not everyone learns in the same way so the VV may be more valuable to some than others, but it is no substitute for what you are learning.

Don't wait until you have "all the answers" because then you will never start. You can begin with only questions. However, if you record your questions and the answers you find, you will be able to see over time how God has changed your thinking. He will give you a unique message about Him, a unique perspective on His character and purposes that will encourage your students to seek Him as well.

Biblical integration starts by asking the right questions.

Think through the big picture before looking at the details. If you can relate the whole subject about which you teach to God and His Word, you will discover detailed relationships as you go along.

Reflecting on the questions below is a good place to get started. Don't worry if you don't know all—or any—of the answers. Unanswered questions stimulate profitable meditation. Because you are studying God, His ways and purposes, you can expect to be learning forever. The joy of discovery requires something unknown and unexplored

Creation - Reflections

We often do not see what we are not looking for so it is important that we look for the right things.

God says in *Jeremiah 29:13*, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." If we look for God we will find Him. If we ignore Him as we have been taught by example, if not by instruction, we are unlikely to see Him even though He may graciously show Himself to us in spite of ourselves.

And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me." (Romans 10:20)

Many people don't see God because they don't want to see Him.

Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 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 men are without excuse.
(Romans 1:19-20)*

Instead of acknowledging God's clear revelation of Himself they refuse to give God the credit He deserves for what He does and they refuse to be thankful.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Romans 1:21)

Soon what is "plain to them" can't be seen because the eyes of their "foolish hearts" are "darkened." This is at least part of the reason, why Jesus said that we need to come to God like children.

I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. (Mark 10:15)

Children haven't practiced rejecting God so much—although that is the natural inclination of their sinful heart—so they still see God.

*For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and **for him**. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:16-17)*

*For from him and through him and **to him** are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Romans 11:36)*

1. Why did God make _____? What is _____ "for"?

The great purpose of all His creation is to glorify Him. Inanimate objects, plants, and animals glorify Him just as God intends people to glorify Him. The difference is that they have no choice, while we are honored to be able to choose to love and honor Him because we are made in His image.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. (Psalm 19:1)

Sing for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel. (Isaiah 44:23)

This general answer shouldn't satisfy us. It can't be just a cop-out so we don't have to think deeply, carefully and prayerfully about the details. We will only scratch the surface of what God has made but every scratch should reveal more of His glory if we are prepared to see it.

2. What aspects of God's nature, character, power, and purposes do I understand better because of _____?

God is always the same but because He is infinite and we are finite, we can continually grow in our knowledge of Him. When we consider different things that He has made – and He has made everything – we are looking at different aspects of His self-revelation. All of creation doesn't reveal everything about God, but all of creation reveals something about Him.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. (James 1:17)

3. How should _____ direct our attention "to Him"?

4. How does God hold _____ together now? How is He presently involved in _____ since He originally made it?

What does _____ reveal about God?

What is God's purpose for _____?

Fall - Distortions

Sin has affected every part of creation. We should not then be surprised when we see evidence of its destruction and distortion in whatever part of creation we consider. In fact, if we don't recognize the effects of sin in both what we consider and in ourselves as the observer and steward of God's creation, we should know that something is wrong.

*For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (Romans 8:20-22)
If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)*

1. How has _____ been affected by sin?
2. How has my understanding of _____ been affected by sin?
3. How has _____ been misused because of sin?

If we know God's purpose for a particular part of His creation we can identify when it is not being used for that purpose. Therefore, we need to first think about God's original purposes for creating it. Misuse can only be identified by knowing the correct use. Sometimes, however, thinking about misuse will help clarify the proper use as well as vice versa.

5. How has God frustrated _____? How is _____ different now from what it will be when He restores all of His creation?

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)

4. What about _____ has sin stolen, killed, or destroyed?

Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen. (Romans 1:22-23, 25)

5. What created thing is given credit for _____ instead of God?

How is God misunderstood because of _____?

How is _____ misused?

Biblical integration involves looking for the answers in the right places

Redemption - Revelations

We are not left to our own fallen imagination and reason to try to determine the purposes of God and the distortions of sin. God has revealed Himself in His written word, the Bible, as well as His creative word, the universe.

1. What has God graciously revealed in His Word about _____?
2. How did God use _____ in the past?
3. How will God use _____ in the future?

It is exciting to realize that some characteristic of part of God's creation 'is like' Him. However, it is important to find out what God has said about each part of His creation, as well as what we think it says about Him. Unfortunately, many people are disappointed

that God didn't say something very specifically about the particular part of creation in which they are interested, which they are studying. God has, nevertheless, given us the broad principles that we need. Yet, He has left us the great privilege, as we depend on His indwelling Holy Spirit, to work out the detailed relationships ourselves.

Without divine help we cannot understand either the specifics of what He has done or the patterns that reveal His motivation and purposes.

He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel. (Psalm 103:7)

In fact, God and His purposes are foolishness without His Spirit. It isn't that it is hard to understand Him; it is impossible to understand Him.

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Relating any part of creation to the Creator is not merely an academic exercise. His further revelation of Himself is always dependent upon our response to previous revelation. If we refuse to see what He shows us, we become blind and no longer see anything at all. He doesn't keep showing us something new.

*As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." (Hebrews 3:15)
But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. (John 16:13)
By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. (Hebrews 11:3)*

Faith comes before understanding but faith is not irrational. Our finite minds have to trust because we can't understand an infinite God who created rationality as a reflection of His nature.

6. How did Jesus use _____?

God knew, however, that written words were not enough so He sent Jesus, the living Word to demonstrate what God meant when He began communicating with us through His creative and written Word.

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

How does the Bible confirm God's revelation in _____?

What does the Bible say about God's purpose for _____?

Are you going to invest your life teaching about some aspect of God's creation, or using it, or studying it? If so, then it is worth devoting your life to finding out all that you can about what God says regarding this particular part of His creation. He has uniquely prepared you to investigate it by giving you the interest, ability and opportunity. Don't forget to quote chapter and verse so you can share your discoveries with others.

Biblical integration is incomplete without the right response

Fulfillment - Applications

1. How has my relationship to my heavenly Father been changed by considering _____?

2. What do I appreciate more about God because I have considered _____?
3. How might Jesus want to use _____ to prepare me to fulfill my unique role within His Body? Do I trust God's eternal plan enough to allow Him to use _____ in my life even though it may cause me to suffer now?

Without an eternal perspective, life and all its component parts does not make sense.

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. (1 Corinthians 15:19)

If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." (1 Corinthians 15:32)

4. How might Jesus want to use _____ to accomplish His purposes among those that are not yet part of the Body? Will I allow Him to use _____ in my life to help others rather than myself?
5. Will I thank God for _____ —no matter how little or much I know about it— because I am confident that _____ was made "for Him" and is to direct our attention "to Him"?
6. Will others desire to worship God because of the way that I interact with _____?
7. Does my attitude toward _____ reflect an appreciation for _____ because it was made by God?
8. Is my use of _____ shaped by God's purposes or mine?

We don't have to know all the answers and understand all the details to worship God. In fact, we never will know all the answers and understand all the details. Demanding that His purposes be comprehended in our finite and sin-distorted minds is the height of arrogant independence, rather than humble submission. It is living by sight rather than by faith.

We live by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7)

The desire to see God's will done in all areas of His creation on earth, just the way it is done in heaven, is a work of God. It isn't the result of our efforts or our thinking. It is also a work of God when the desire to do His will becomes a reality in our lives, when we choose His way instead of our own.

For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. (Philippians 2:13)

How has _____ changed my relationship to my heavenly Father?

How does Jesus want to use _____ to fulfill His purposes in my life and the life of others?

Will I allow the Holy Spirit use _____ to give me a thankful, worshipful spirit?

Summary

Right questions

Right sources

Right responses

Transforming the student

The goal of developing as a distinctively Christian teacher is not to impress others with your ability but to help them think in a distinctively Christian way also.

How can I help my students to think about and respond to _____ in a biblically integrated way?

- **Ask the right questions?**
- **Teach them the questions and encourage them to ask them of themselves?**

We cannot control the circumstances of our students' lives that may cause the work of God in their lives to wither and die. However, we can water their lives with encouragement so that the hot winds of doubt and difficulties don't accomplish the will of the enemy.

- **Prepare the soil of the mind and heart by removing stones and weeds.**

Dealing with common distortions may remove obstacles to growth and development.

We don't need to know all the right answers. It is the Holy Spirit's job to "*guide...into all truth.*" We can co-operate with Him by preparing the heart and mind of students to hear His voice

The relationship between God's creative word and the written word is complex and interwoven like the synapses of the brain. You don't have to understand it to be able to use it even though understanding may help you use it better.

- **Share what God has been teaching you and how He has been changing you.**

God works through people. Your "witness" is not just about what He did for you in the past as He made you a new creation in Christ, but what He is doing here and now to make you more like Jesus. The power of a transformed life cannot be denied even when it cannot be understood by the unregenerate mind. Often it is exactly what God uses to draw a person to Himself. "If God can change him, maybe He can change me—and I need changing."

We need to share what God has done yesterday and today if we want our students to experience His transforming power today and tomorrow. If we only share about last year, they'll expect Him to work next year. Like a reflection in a mirror, the image is the same distance behind the mirror as the object is in front of it.

- **Clarify that non-Christians cannot understand God's perspective.**

Reinforce that Christians have to listen to and obediently respond to the indwelling Holy Spirit if they are going to be able to understand God's purposes and fulfill them.

We will become like our teacher. So, we want to be taught by the Holy Spirit. We will become Christ-like—God in a man—as we allow the Holy Spirit to make us like Jesus.

- **Prayer before, during and after!!**

How to integrate

- **Identify Biblical principles to be integrated**

Don't try to deal with all Biblical principles at the same time. Your students will be confused and unlikely to learn any principle at all.

Don't try to deal with the same Biblical principle all the time. The principle will not apply to all situations/subjects. Students will then be quick to reject the principle even where it does fit.

- **Move from the Big Picture to the details**

Like putting together a puzzle, it isn't necessary to know where every piece goes when

you start. Begin with the edge pieces that define the boundaries. Look often at the picture on the box while patiently putting together the individual pieces. Work with the confidence that there is a place for every piece and that you have everything you need to complete the project. Some ideas about subject areas to help get started.

1. Arts - expression of man's nature & creativity
 - a. Communication - language, literature, vocal music
 - b. Emotions - instrumental music
 - c. Beauty - sculpture, painting, movement - sports & ballet
 2. Science - investigation of God's nature & creativity
 - a. Math - order
 - b. Chemistry - unity, micro interest
 - c. Physics - power, macro interest
 - d. Biology - life, variety
 3. Technology - fulfilment of God's purposes for His creation
 - a. Music instruments – lead worship, release emotions
 - b. Printing press – multiply communication
 - c. Paints & dyes – enable arts
 - d. Computers – speed communication
- **Plan assignments and discussion questions that cause students to begin thoughtfully considering the Biblical principles**
Even in hostile situations, carefully prepared questions can be used by the Holy Spirit to draw individuals to our Heavenly Father. Long answers may be quickly forgotten. Short questions, on the other hand, can keep working long after a student leaves your classroom.
 - **Consider how Biblical principles from other subject areas may be related**
Identifying relationships between subject areas reinforces the Lordship of Christ over everything. If you can help your students to see connections between your specialty and other subject areas, you confirm the unity of all things because He made, sustains and redeems them for His purposes.
 - **Allow students to apply the principles personally**
It is easy to enthusiastically share your thoughts and neglect to listen to those of others. Children and young people will have a different perspective. They need to know that God is interested in a personal relationship with them rather than a second-hand relationship dependent on what He has said to their teachers.

Implementation methods

Use informal opportunities, as well as more formal situations, to share what God is showing you about how what you're doing and teaching fits into His Word.

Reading assignments

Most of the required reading assignments are determined by the curriculum chosen by the school or education system. However, the organization of the readings may be used to highlight differences and similarities among the required material. If you are reading material that helps you understand the reading assignments, you can offer it as an optional extra. The reality is that few students may read anything that is not required, but offering insight into what influences your personal thinking produces opportunities for questions. If you are thinking outside the curricular box, they will also be challenged to think outside the box of their personal preferences and experiences.

Journaling

When students are asked to respond to what they have read, the reading is more valuable and memorable. If you have established an atmosphere of trust, student responses to the great themes encountered throughout the curriculum will give you

insight into their needs and gifts. The informal evaluation that occurs can enable you to address misunderstandings and reinforce learning before the pressure of more formal tools such as quizzes, tests, exams, and portfolios.

Worksheet 4 could be used as a guide for students' journalling in a Christian school or be modified by removing the section on Biblical integration for use in a non-Christian school.

Teacher portfolios

Recording your insights can help you develop a more distinctively Christian curriculum that you can share with others. Others will learn from you just as you learn from them. We easily forget what God has shown us of Himself because of our natural forgetfulness and because our enemy will do everything in his power to limit what God wants to do in us and through us. Like the Israelites who were repeatedly challenged to create memorials of God's working in their lives, teachers can create a record of what God enabled them to do in specific classes with specific topics. Your examples will be more memorable when explaining concepts to others than sharing ones you hear from someone else.

In-house in-service

It is easy to assume that the only way to produce significant change is to alter the entire system. Although that may eventually happen in a reformation, God more often produces change starting with individuals who humbly share what God has given them. Professional development by "experts" may give a new perspective that was unnoticed because the teachers were too close to the problems. However, when an insider shares what they are learning within the challenges of normal school life, they spark hope and squelch pessimism. The witness of changed life and thinking cannot be denied even if it isn't embraced.

Teachers not only have a responsibility to the students in their classroom, they also serve as God's representatives to their peers. Investing in children can produce huge long-term rewards, but investing in fellow teachers can multiply the eternal difference that you make. They will have opportunities to affect the lives of students to whom you have difficulty relating. They will teach students you never teach. Together you will demonstrate that you are not alone when you seek God and His ways. Especially when individualism demands that everyone's ideas be considered equally valid, a group of teachers who are learning from each other and working toward a common goal is a powerful testimony.

Conferences

Christian teachers have much to contribute to educational discussion. Unlike those depending on the shifting sands of personal opinion and educational fads, they have important insights about the nature of the learner—and teacher—and the world that they study. If the only voices heard in teachers' conferences are those which ignore God and reject Christ, it is not surprising if people assume that Christians have nothing to say.

Because children and young people become like their teachers, spiritual opposition to Christian perspectives is to be expected. In some cases identification with Christian principles will produce active hostility, but in others, curious interest may be aroused. Whatever the situation, Christian teachers can pursue and share Truth as far as possible in the environment where Christ, the Lord of the universe, has placed them.

Working Together

So what have you learned so far? If you've read this far, it probably means that you've found the contents at least moderately interesting or useful, but let me be direct—changing patterns of teaching is difficult. If you try to change by yourself, your good intentions are likely to remain as intentions and not become actions. Without Christ it is impossible; without His body is more than unlikely.

Let me illustrate what I mean by asking some personal questions about other input in your life. I'm not there to record your answers so you can be completely honest.

What did your preacher speak about last Sunday? What was his theme during the past month? What books have you read in the past year?

If you can even answer the questions, you are probably doing better than most people, but these questions are really superficial.

What have you learned about God, God's Word, God's world, God's people, and God's temple—you—during the past week? Month? Year?

I often don't remember what God has taught me because I don't keep good records. I find journaling hard, although I like to put notes in the margin of my old Bibles and in my computer Bible. However, I just got a new Bible and it's hard to get started adding "messy" notes on pages that still smell new so...my aging, distractable memory is often all that I have.

If you can go beyond remembering the topics and identify a few key truths that you've learned, you are definitely making progress. However, it is easy to become proud of knowledge, especially if you compare yourself to "average" Christians.

*We know that we all possess knowledge. **Knowledge puffs up**, but love builds up. (1 Corinthians 8:1)*

*We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise (2 Corinthians 10:12)
[Emphasis mine].*

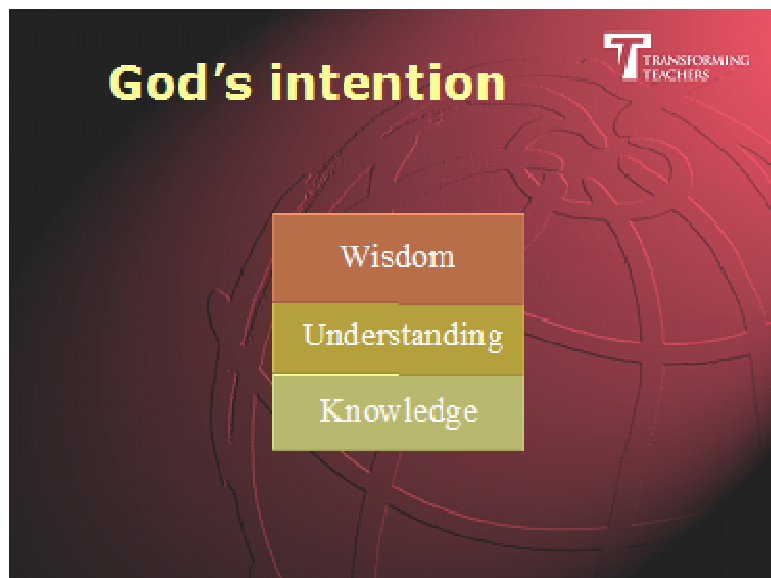
What are the practical implications of what you've learned for your attitudes? Actions? How could you use what you've learned to help those you are discipling? What difference would it make if they put all that you've learned into practice?

The problem with increasing our understanding of truth is that we become more accountable.

*Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.
(James 4:17)*

Knowledge without understanding leads to pride, but understanding should lead towards humility as we begin to see how God intends to transform us by what we have learned. Unfortunately, we rarely develop humility because we become satisfied with understanding the implications of truth without actually changing our practice. That's not God's intention because He is in the transforming business! If we don't change, understanding only produces guilt.

How are you different now from a year ago? Have you shared with anyone what God has taught you and how you understand the truth is to change you so that they can hold you accountable to put the truth into practice?



I've listened to too many great speakers and read too many challenging books that have only added to my to-do list, but have not really changed me. I don't want to add to your pride or unfulfilled responsibilities. I want you to experience the joy of wisely practising what you understand. Wisdom involves becoming like Jesus as He actually changes us to make us more and more like Himself.

What God wants is really quite clear. He wants to develop His wisdom in our lives.

For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:6)

We are to put into practice all that we learn about Him as His Spirit leads us into all truth.

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. (John 16:13)

Unfortunately, God's intention and our usual practice look quite different. Godly wisdom is much less than our understanding of spiritual truth and even less than what we know.

Without Christ, transformation is impossible. One of my favorite verses is *Philippians 2:13* where Paul reminds us that "it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." It is God's work within that brings us to the place that we know His purposes and want to do them. So, if you or anyone else has a desire to do what is right, you can be assured that God is at work. But it is also God's work to enable us to "act according to his good purpose." Our tendency is to try to find out what God wants and



then rush out to try to do what He wants in our own strength without realizing that is impossible. A great danger in teaching truth is that we give the impression that knowing it or even making a commitment to do it will really produce transformation. Wisdom is always the work of God, not the product of human effort.

Without Christ's body it is more than unlikely. God can do anything, but just as we use our bodies whenever we want to do something, Christ uses His body to do His will here on earth. Every Christian is part of His body, but no part is designed to operate independently of the other parts.

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. (Romans 12:4-5)

You may have tremendous abilities, but without all the others you will never be used the way God wants to use you.

Take time to review what Paul said as he discussed this important issue with the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

There really is nothing more disgusting than body parts that are separated from the body. We certainly don't want to become spiritually disgusting like the people Paul wrote about in Colossians 2:18-19.

Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

It may be common practice for teachers to close their classroom door and "do their own thing" with as little interference as possible from administrators or parents, but that is not the way for a Christian teacher to have an effective spiritual ministry to students.

All analogies or metaphors break down eventually and none are comprehensive, but the metaphor of the body is used so often in Scripture that we know that there is more than

a superficial similarity that God wants us to understand. After all, Christ even took on a human body to identify Himself with us.

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me. (Hebrews 10:5)"

When a physical body has problems, the problem may be in the head, but not so in the Lord's body. He is perfect; we're the ones with the problems. One problem that a body may have is that some parts do not do what the head commands. The body parts may be attached but disconnected to the head like the legs or arms of a parapalegic. It may be possible for various other parts of the body to compensate in part, but such a disconnected relationship to the head is always a tremendous handicap because it is not the way the body was designed to function.

Sometimes the connection to the head isn't lost completely, but various diseases may attack the nerve connections so that the body is no longer controlled by the head. We have sympathy for people in the unfortunate physical situation where they experience involuntary motion. The same kind of spiritual disturbance is all too often dismissed as a personality problem or lack of maturity. In physical bodies we quickly look for medication to control the activity. In Christ's body, however, the twitching is often perceived to be a sign of special vitality.

Even when we recognize the problem of being unattached, there is often a spiritual tendency toward segregation by body parts. You've probably heard the line that "the eyes all meet on Tuesday but I see the meetings been cancelled due to lack of vision" or "the fingers meet on Wednesday, but some feel they're out of touch" or "the ears meet on Thursday but I hear they're having problems." As a Christian teacher you need to be connected to others in the body. Your isolation may be very common, but it isn't the way God intended.

The ideal situation would be for the Body of Christ to recognize the significance of your ministry as a teacher and your need for special support, it is likely you will need to take the initiative to get others to join you in developing a new habit of doing Biblical integration. A small group of 3 or 4 people with whom you can interact about your personal attempts at Biblical integration can make all the difference between "heard that" and "done that." In a Christian school, the whole staff could work together on exercises in staff meetings. Even there, each individual needs a smaller group to whom they are accountable. The small groups can share their discoveries with the large group. The level of individual involvement and transformation is, nonetheless, much greater in the small group than in a large one where most of the time is spent listening—or thinking of other things—rather than speaking or focused thinking.

If you are in a public school where there are no colleagues who can join you at school, you can invite a Christian parent, a Sunday School teacher, or a teacher from another school to join you. The frequency of meeting may be less because scheduling a meeting time is more difficult, but getting together with 2 or 3 others even once a month can make a tremendous difference.

When you get together it isn't necessary to have a rigid agenda but it is necessary to stay focussed on the task. Remember you are in the front-lines of a spiritual conflict and the enemy will do all that he can to prevent you from being effective for the Master. However, Jesus said, *"Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them"* (Matthew 18:20). In fact it was when talking about *"teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you"* that He reassured His disciples, *"I am with you always, to the very end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20).

Prayer is a critical element of both your time together and your time apart in the classroom. Transformation is always a God-thing, not a development of natural talents and abilities. All aspects of a student's intelligence need to be recognized and developed because they are all gifts of the Creator. Yet, unless the Spirit of God is involved the recipients will be ungrateful and the gifts will be misused. Transforming teachers may not

be the most gifted, most experienced, or even the most persistent, but they are the most available to be used by the Master Teacher. Natural abilities may produce visible results, but they will always be temporary instead of eternal, attracting attention to man instead of God.

The group needs to pray for each other as each asks the Holy Spirit to transform them so that they can become a transforming teacher. God can use even a donkey to speak for Him as He did in confronting the wilfulness and greed of Baalam.

Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times? (Numbers 22:28)

But, His usual pattern is first to change the teacher and then use the teacher to change the student. After all, since "everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40), it is difficult to transform a student unless the teacher has been transformed.

What kind of people did Jesus choose to be His disciples? Would you have rejected some of His choices? Why didn't He choose more people with more obvious potential? Why did God chose you? How does 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 help answer these questions?

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

Pray for your students by name. All of them need prayer. Those that misbehave or are at the extremes of performance may attract the most attention, but the "normal" student is equally in need of God's intervention in his life. Pray that God will direct you to the specific individuals in whose lives He wants you to invest in a special way. Don't be surprised if He leads you to unlikely candidates just as Jesus chose 12 that included angry hotheads (James and John, the sons of thunder), a boastful busybody (Peter), a traitor (Judas Ischariot), a hated collaborator (Matthew), unspectacular nobodies (James—son of Alphaeus, Bartholomew, & Thaddaeus), a violent rebel (Simon the Zealot), a pessimistic doubter (Thomas), as well as common-sense choices (Andrew & Philip). Jesus the divine Son of God spent all night in prayer so don't be surprised if the number is small and the choice isn't obvious.

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles. (Luke 6:12-13)

Don't make the mistake of the early church and assume that God can't change the most outspoken, violent opponent of the truth into a special demonstration of His grace and transforming power. When Paul "came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple" (Acts 9:26). You may have the privilege that Barnabas had of being a transforming teacher of one who will transform the world.

Jesus did warn about throwing pearls before swine.

Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces. (Matthew 7:6)

It takes the discernment of the Holy Spirit to determine what is really happening within the heart. Even Paul was quick to condemn as hopeless a Christian who began to develop, but failed.

But Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. (Acts 15:38).

He left it to Barnabas to once again be the transforming teacher. Although Paul eventually recognized what God had done in the life of John Mark, he missed out on being part of the transforming process.

Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. (2 Timothy 4:11)

Prayer will also be needed because opposition is inevitable when you're advancing in a spiritual conflict. Jesus said that He wanted us to have peace but warned that *"in the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33). The source of the opposition may be surprising, but being prepared for it can remove some of the sting. My experience is that it was at least as often that the Christian parents in a Christian school caused problems, as it was that non-Christian parents resisted the teaching of truth. The school board chairman from the public school who came to talk to me about the problems I was creating by trying to present both the creation and evolution models of origins in a class about ancient human history was a member of a local church. Christian parents can be just as blind as any other to problems their children are having or as reluctant as any other to assume responsibility for dealing with the issues.

After prayer, a small group can spend time discussing the problems and successes each member has had with Biblical integration. Together they can evaluate the elements of the Biblical framework that could be emphasized as particular units are being studied. They can also help each other relate specific topics and lessons to the Biblical framework. The different perspectives will help ensure that individual teachers' limitations aren't reproduced in their classes.

It would be great if every church recognized the ministry to Christian teachers in the schools of the community. Christian teachers need as much prayer as the church staff and foreign missionaries for they have tremendous responsibilities as they serve in often difficult circumstances.

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. (James 3:1)

Such a revolution can begin as teachers recognize their calling by Christ and their ministry in His Body. Praying together and inviting others to join in the spiritual battle is both a recognition of our dependence on God's power and an opportunity to involve others in a strategic ministry that will make an eternal difference.

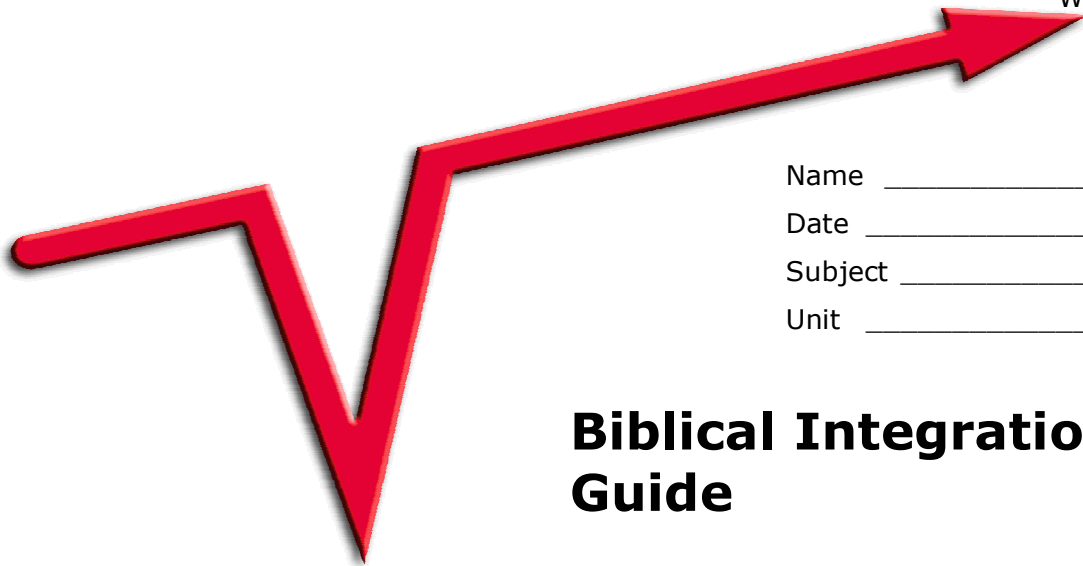
4

Worksheets

Biblical Integration Worksheet

Topic _____

[illegible]



Name _____

Date _____

Subject _____

Unit _____

Biblical Integration Guide

Reflections – What do I see of God and His purposes in _____?

Distortions – How has _____ been spoiled and misused for ungodly purposes?

Revelations – What has God revealed in the Bible about _____, Himself & His purposes?

Applications – How can _____ be used for God's purposes? (Know Him, be used by Him, worship Him)

Name _____

Date _____

Subject _____

Unit

& a Biblical Worldview

Creation / Reflection

1. How does _____ reflect God's character?
2. What was God's original purpose for _____?

Fall / Distortion

1. In what ways has _____ been distorted by the fall of man?
2. In what ways has _____ been misused?

Redemption/Revelation

1. Why did Christ need to die so _____ can fulfill God's purposes?
2. What perscriptions does the Bible **recommend against** common misuses of _____?

Fulfillment/Application

1. How does _____ make me appreciate God and desire to worship Him?
2. How can _____ be used for God's purposes within His family & His world?

Using your answers to the above questions, complete the statement below:

God made _____ for _____
(subject) (purpose)

but man's rebellion _____
(distortion)

God provided His Word, His Son and His Spirit so that _____
(revelation)

so His children would _____
(application: benefit mankind)

and give glory to God by _____
(application: reveal God's character)

Reading Response

Record your response to each of the readings. Record the title and author with a separate response for each reading. Please write in complete sentences or in bullet note form. Please put your name and the title of the reading on your response.

Appropriate responses could include the answers to the following questions as well as general comments. You don't need to answer all of the following questions for each reading, but your response should be at least 1/2 page per reading. The purpose of this response is to help you interact with what you are reading, as well as to help me understand what you are thinking. It will help me respond to you, suggest additional readings, etc.

1. What questions do you expect to have answered? (to be completed after reading only the title)
2. What were the answers to your questions?
3. What was the main point? (1-4 sentences)
4. What questions were created by the reading?
5. With what did you agree? Why?
6. With what did you disagree? Why?
7. What did you not understand?
8. What do you want to change in your thinking or **practice** as a result of your reading?
9. Big questions - how would the author answer these questions?
 - a. What is good, beautiful, true, valuable?
 - b. What is bad, ugly, false, worthless?
 - c. How do we know? How do we choose? What are the consequences?
 - d. What is the purpose?



10. Biblical integration:
 - a. What have I seen of God's character and purposes?
 - b. What distortions of God's character and purposes are present or considered?
 - c. What does the Bible say about the contents?
 - d. How is my relationship to my heavenly Father changing? How is

Jesus making me more usable and preparing me to fulfill His purposes among Christians and non-Christians? How is the Holy Spirit making me more dependent, thankful, and worshipful?

Rate the reading on the basis of

1. How easy it was to understand (+2 +1 0 -1 -2)
2. How valuable it was to you (+2 +1 0 -1 -2)

Biblical Integration Questions

Transforming the teacher

1. Why did God make _____? What is _____ "for"?
2. What aspects of God's nature, character, power, and purposes do I understand better because of _____?
3. How should _____ direct our attention "to Him"?
4. How does God hold _____ together now? How is He presently involved in _____ since He originally made it?

What does _____ reveal about God?

What is God's purpose for _____?

6. How has _____ been affected by sin?
7. How has my understanding of _____ been affected by sin?
8. How has _____ been misused because of sin?
9. How has God frustrated _____? How is _____ different now from what it will be when He restores all of His creation?
10. What about _____ has sin stolen, killed, or destroyed?
11. What created thing is given credit for _____ instead of God?

How is God misunderstood because of _____?

How is _____ misused?

4. What has God graciously revealed in His Word about _____?
5. How did God use _____ in the past?
6. How will God use _____ in the future?
7. How did Jesus use _____?

How does the Bible confirm God's revelation in _____?

What does the Bible say about God's purpose for _____?

9. How has my relationship to my heavenly Father been changed by considering _____?
10. What do I appreciate more about God because I have considered _____?
11. How might Jesus want to use _____ to prepare me to fulfill my unique role within His Body? Do I trust God's eternal plan enough to allow Him to use _____ in my life even though it may cause me to suffer now?
12. How might Jesus want to use _____ to accomplish His purposes among those that are not yet part of the Body? Will I allow Him to use _____ in my life to help others rather than myself?
13. Will I thank God for _____ - no matter how little or much I know about it - because I am confident that _____ was made "for Him" and is to direct our attention "to Him"?
14. Will others desire to worship God because of the way that I interact with _____?
15. Does my attitude toward _____ reflect an appreciation for _____ because it was made by God?

16. Is my use of _____ shaped by God's purposes or mine?

How has _____ changed my relationship to my heavenly Father?

How does Jesus want to use _____ to fulfill His purposes in my life and the life of others?

Will I allow the Holy Spirit use _____ to give me a thankful, worshipful spirit?

Transforming the student

How can I help my students to think about and respond to _____ in a biblically integrated way?

Developing a Christian Framework

Part One

- Divide into groups of four to consider creation, fall, redemption and fulfillment
- Each group should identify at least two key truths regarding each phase by considering:
 - **Revelation**
What has God revealed about Himself, spirit beings, things (inanimate), creatures (animate), people (others), and ourselves?
 - **Relationships**
What has He revealed about the relationship between Himself and the different things He created?
What has He revealed about the relationship between the different things He created?
 - **Repercussions**
What was the effect of each phase on the relationships?
- Each group member should write down all the truths that the group identifies

Part Two

- Each group member is to become an expert in one of the 4 phases
- Representatives for each small group gather to form 4 large groups corresponding to the four phases.
 - Write down all the truths from the different groups
 - Note how often each truth was identified
 - Divide the truths into essential (E)/optional (O)
 - If more than ½ the groups identified it → E
 - If less than ½ the groups identified it → O
 - Reword the truths into a consistent format starting with the essential truths

Part Three

- Reform the groups of four and have each expert report the conclusions about their phase
- Collect the conclusions from one group and print the results for distribution in the next workshop

For Further Consideration

- At what grade level would such an exercise be appropriate?
- Ask your students to fill in the framework at their age and grade-level. Compare the different truths identified by each grade in a staff meeting to look for spiritual and intellectual development.
- When considering each grade level, subject, topic or lesson, determine which truths are being reflected, which are often distorted, which are needed to correct distortions, and which should be applied.
- Start with the general and go to the particular; start with a subject area and then go to the grade-level topics or themes
- Ask your students to determine which truths are being reflected, which are often distorted, which are needed to correct distortions, and which should be applied.

Christian Framework Worksheet

[illegible]

5

Samples

Visual Valet Wordless Book "Script"

This servant doesn't do your work for you, but helps you without saying a word.

- It reminds you what God's doing
- It helps you discover what God thinks about everything we're doing

And it's all in this wordless book. We'll have to read the book through two times to find out all that our Visual Valet wants to tell us. But it is a short book and there are no big words so that should be easy.

The GREEN page tells us God made everything. And He made everything very good. He made all the beautiful plants and animals, the sun and stars, so we would know how wonderful He is. He made every person special including me and you. He wants everyone to love Him and live the way He knows is best for us.

But everything isn't good the way God made it.

The DARK BLUE page tells us our sin has wrecked everything. Everyone in the whole world has done what is wrong and helped wreck the world. Instead of doing things God's way, we choose our way. Instead of love there is hate. Instead of beauty there is ugliness. Instead of living and growing, animals and people die. Our sin keeps us from God's love and must be punished.

But God made a way to take care of our sin.

The RED page tells us Jesus fixed everything. Our sin took us far from God's ways but God loved us so much that He would do anything to bring us back to Him. He gave us the Bible to tell us about the way things were before sin wrecked everything. He sent people to tell others that He loved them. Finally our heavenly Father sent His only Son, Jesus, to show us how to live God's way even when everyone else does not. Then Jesus died on a cross to take the punishment we all deserve. But He didn't stay dead even though they buried Him. He proved He was really God by coming back to life and going back to heaven where He is praying for us right now.

But it isn't enough to know what Jesus did long ago.

The GOLD page tells us that God wants everything to be good again. Because our sin wrecked everything, we have to ask Jesus to forgive our sin and thank Him for taking the punishment we deserve. When we choose to live God's way instead of our own, Jesus comes to live in our heart and help us to do what is right and good. Our Father wants us to know Him and love Him and use everything He made to show everyone how wonderful He is. Jesus wants to use all the special gifts that He has given us to help others just the way He always helps us.

The Visual Valet can remind you what God's doing, but you have to talk to God yourself and tell Him that you have sinned, that you believe Jesus died to take the punishment for your sin, and that you want Jesus to be your Savior and live in your life so you can do what God wants. You could pray something like this:

Dear God. I know that I have sinned and done what I wanted instead of the good things You wanted. I believe that Jesus is Your Son and that He took the punishment I should have had when He died on the cross. I believe He came back to life and is with You now. I receive Jesus now as my Savior and invite Him to come and live in me so He can always help me do what pleases You. Thank you for loving me and making me part of Your family just like the Bible said you would. Thank you for letting me talk to You because Jesus took care of my sin. Amen.

Now, let's read our wordless book again so the Visual Valet can help you discover what God thinks about everything we're doing.

The GREEN page tells us that everything helps us know God because He made everything and keeps it all working. Everything good tells us something about our good God who

made it. Everything beautiful shows us how wonderful He is. No matter what we are learning, we are learning more about the Creator who is even more fantastic than the things He made. No matter what we are doing—running, talking, reading, writing, thinking, or eating—we are using the special gifts He has given to us.

But it is easy to forget about God and act as if He wasn't taking care of us.

The DARK BLUE page tells that everything has been damaged by sin. Sometimes we see the ugly, selfish, hurtful things that others do, but often we don't notice when we are doing the things that we do not want others to do to us. Sometimes when we look at TV, listen to music, or read books, we forget that sin wrecks everything. Instead of helping us live God's way, what we experience can make us think that our way is the best way, that God is not important, that He does not care about what happens to us. We don't want to be fooled into thinking that all the ugly bad things that sin has made are God's fault.

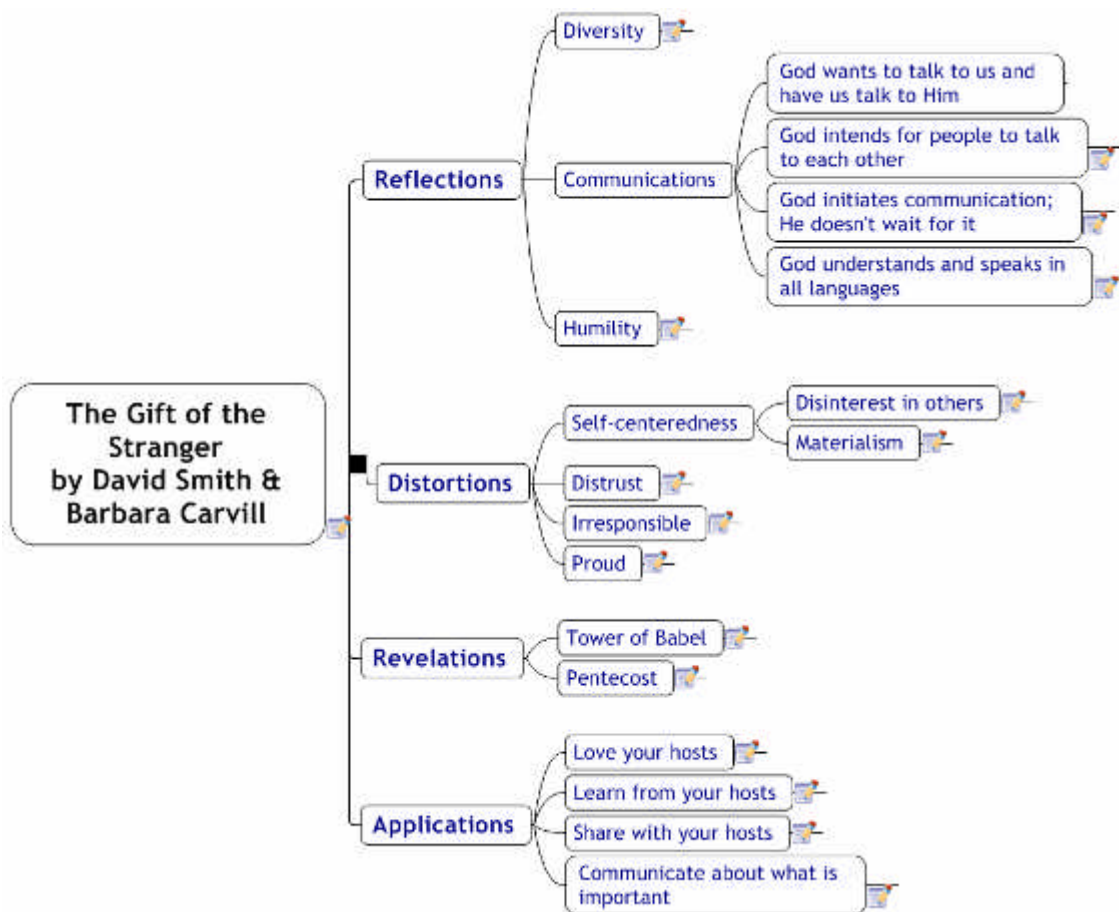
Sometimes, however, it is hard to know what is God's way and what is our way.

The RED page tells us that God has given us the Bible to tell us about His way. We can't figure it out ourselves because we are not God. In the Bible we find out about what Jesus has done about our sin. We read about how He wants to use everything He has made including me and you. He tells us what is right and wrong. He tells us how much He loves us and cares for us even when everything we know has been wrecked by sin.

But it isn't enough to just know God's way, we have to live God's way.

The GOLD page tells us we can live God's way when God lives in our hearts. All the things we learn, are to be used to help others rather than just to make us happy. What we find out about God helps us to love Him and be thankful for all that He does for us. The special gifts He has given me and you make it possible to please Him by helping others in ways that no one else can help. Every day can be a new chance to show others how great God is by our thankful hearts. As we see God in all He made and choose to do what God wants, we please Him and He makes us happy. We can keep learning and doing more just like Jesus did until we are one day with Him and our heavenly Father in heaven. Then there will be no more sin to wreck anything and everything will be completely good, just like it was in the beginning.

Outline of Non-fiction Book



Reflections on a Non-fiction Book

The Gold of Exodus - Howard Blum

Howard Blum. (1998). *The gold of Exodus: The discovery of the true Mount Sinai*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Questions inconclusively answered

- Is the Bible a historical document?
- Is Mount Sinai in Saudi Arabia? Jabal al Lawz?

Significant quotations

"'It's worth considering,' the professor chided, 'what Theodor Reik, the great psychoanalyst, said about biblical scholarship. He called it "conjectural history." After all, nothing in the Bible is known for certain. Did Moses live? Did the Red Sea divide? Did a million Jews escape from Egypt? Did God give the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai? We *believe*, that is one thing. But to *know*, that is another.'

...'Biblical historians must live with uncertainty. The best we can do in attempting to re-create the biblical past is, as Reik called it, conjectural history. We don't put forth definitive answers, but rather plausible, fruitful conjectures.'" p. 131

"Bob Cornuke...was a changed man. ...Look what he had accomplished, he told himself. He had followed in the footsteps of the children of Israel to Mount Sinai. He had crossed the Red Sea, journeyed through the wilderness to camp at Elim, and had come to the mountain of God. Even more, he had climbed to its peak. He had stood where Moses had spoken with God. He had seen the altar of the golden calf, the boundary markers, the pillars of cut stone. He had proved that the Bible was not myth, that Moses was not a fictional character, that the story of the Exodus was not merely plausible--it was true, it had happened. How could his life ever be the same?" p. 339

"As a young boy listening to the story of the Exodus being told at the Passover seder, I was captivated by the magic and adventure of the tale. A burning bush. Plagues. A sea that split in two. Manna from heaven. And a million people heading off into the desert with Pharaoh's chariots in pursuit. It did not matter--in fact, it never crossed my excited mind to wonder--if this was a true story. I was too enthralled.

In college and graduate school, it was not the miraculous but the worldliness in the drama of the Exodus that attracted me. Rereading the biblical chapters from this mind-set, I focused on a political story about the formation of a people: their escape from oppression and their journey--both a literal march and a moral transformation--to a promised land. Again, it did not matter if it had happened exactly as the Bible said it did. The Book of Exodus was one of the defining metaphors of Western thought: a model for action.

And not I have set out to tell a story that owes something to both of these personal experiences with the Bible. *The Gold of Exodus* has its beginnings in the supernatural, in the biblical tales of an ancient time when God visibly and directly intervened in the lives of mortals. Yet this book is also a contemporary narrative of adventure and politics, a drama where a belief in the sacred had worldly consequences. Further it is a reporter's account: a true story. Quite a balancing act, I admit. Therefore, I think it would be valuable--perhaps even necessary--to share with the reader how I shaped the story and what standards I used in putting together my book: how I arrived at the truth.

First, as much as I would like to, I don't think I can responsibly dodge the unarticulated question that runs through this book: Is the author insisting the Bible is true? Is this

book written with the conviction that, to cite one extraordinary example, God descended from the Heavens to give Moses two stone tablets? Or is the author telling his story guided by another hardheaded attitude--that the Bible is merely literature? A fiction?

My own beliefs fall (conveniently, I realize) somewhere in the middle between such complete fundamentalism and total secularism. This book was written from a perspective that sees the Book of Exodus as a drama based on true and historically verifiable events. After the Jews left Egypt, *something* monumental happened at a mountain known as Mount Sinai. It was an event that transformed a nomadic tribe of former slaves into a nation, that is, into a unified people who now shared common laws. To my mind, the event was poetically, even mythically described in the Bible. But it was also real and transforming--and there was a Mount Sinai.

And I believe that Larry Williams and Bob Cornuke succeeded in finding the historic site described in biblical literature as the mountain of God. It was precisely where the Bible said it would be." pp. 351-2

Biblical integration guide

1. Reflections
 - a. God can be visibly and directly involved in what happens here on earth.
 - b. The Israelites experienced His involvement repeatedly.
 - c. Mount Sinai is a place where God manifested Himself.
2. Distortions
 - a. Biblical history is just a myth created to produce certain responses in the reader rather than a record of events that occurred in a specific time and place to specific people.
 - b. The Bible is not God's Word, as infallible and dependable as God Himself, but a human creation as fallible and undependable as people.
3. Revelations
 - a. *Matthew 5:18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*
 - b. *1 Corinthians 10:1-11 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did--and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did--and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did--and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.*
4. Applications
 - a. We can depend on the historical veracity of the Bible in every detail.
 - b. Studying in detail what it says can give us concrete information about specific locations.
 - c. Intense study of every detail doesn't reveal more problems, but the solution to problems that appear on the surface.
 - d. People rarely doubt the Bible because of specific problems that they believe it contains, but because they are unwilling to accept what God says to them through it.

Reflections on a Fiction Book

The Third Twin – Ken Follett

Follett, Ken. (2003). *The third twin*. London, UK: Pan MacMillan.

Biblical integration guide

1. Reflections
 - a. Nature - every one is made with unique gifts
 - b. Nurture
 - i. Our parents are God's gift, not our choice; even if a person is adopted or abandoned God is still in control of the circumstances
 - ii. Parents impact their children's lives, often unconsciously
 - c. Choices - we are not victims, but responsible individuals who can't blame either nature or nurture for what we do with what we have been given

p. 600 "I could be Harvey. I'm not him because I choose not to be. My parents didn't make that decision just now: I did. Thanks for your help, Mom and Dad, but it was me, not you, who sent her back to her room. Berrington didn't create me, and you didn't create me. I did."
 - d. Sexual restraint is an expression of care and responsibility
 - e. Marriage is the proper place to exercise sexual relationship
 - f. The value of a person is not related to the color of their skin
2. Distortions
 - a. A person's value is proportional to his gifts
 - b. People know what is best so that they can make good choices for their own life and the lives of others
 - c. People can do what is right if only they would choose what is right - God isn't necessary
 - d. Sex before marriage is normal
 - e. What is possible is the highest value in science
 - f. Sexual immorality often accompanies deceit
 - g. Truth is a small sacrifice for scientific progress

p. 618 "Preston Barck, supposedly a responsible scientist, was so obsessed with his pioneering work in cloning that he divided an embryo seven times, producing eight identical embryos, and implanted them in eight unsuspecting women."
 - h. Love ignores sin

p. 596 "He really loves his rotten son, Steve thought; and for a moment he felt irrationally guilty for deceiving a fond father."
 - i. People create themselves by their choices and God isn't a factor. There is no transcendent standard of right and wrong.
3. Revelations
 - a. Both the desire to do what is right and the ability to do it are gifts of God

Philip. 2:13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose
 - b. God loves sinners but never ignores sin. He took the consequences upon himself.
 - c. *Luke 12:48 From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.*
 - d. God knows every detail of our lives before we're born

Psalms 139:13-16 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

- e. People are not created as criminals although their sinful tendencies may be in that direction

James 1:13-15 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

- f. God never puts anyone in a situation where sin is the only choice
1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

- g. The essence of sin is not evil acts but ignoring God
Romans 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him

4. Applications

- a. Influencing children toward sin is a grave responsibility
Matthew 18:6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.
Mark 9:42, Luke 17:2
- b. Thank God for the nature and nurture He has given you

Questions

1. Is cloning human beings right? If not, why not? If yes, why?
2. What is positive about Steve's understanding of himself? What is negative?
3. What is positive about Jeannie's understanding of herself? What is negative?
4. If we are who we are because of nature, nurture and choices, where does God fit in or does He?

Novel Consideration

Overload - Arthur Hailey

Hailey, Arthur. (1998). *Overload*. New York, NY: Bantam Doubleday Dell.

Biblical Integration Guide

- Reflections
 - Man was intended to develop and use available resources
 - Technology can be used to:
 - Bring fruitfulness to barren land
 - Health to handicapped
 - Employment
 - Comfortable lifestyle
 - Violence not only destroys things but also relationships
- Distortions
 - Extra-marital sex is inevitable
 - Adultery can help others - handicapped, infertile, lonely
 - Sex is a need that must be met
 - Faithfulness is the result of guilt so it is temporary
 - Religion is a personal choice but it usually complicates life
 - Jobs take priority over family
 - "Prophetic voice" is usually being manipulated by personal prejudices or greed
- Corrections
 - God could and did make barren women fertile (Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth) - taking matters into our own hands produces inevitable conflict (Sarah vs Hagar and Ishmael vs Isaac)
 - *Flee ... lysts (2 Timothy 2:22)* - don't stay in situations that produce temptation
 - Adultery is always wrong in thought as well as deed (*Exodus 20:14, 17; Matthew 5:28; Proverbs 6:25*)
 - Stealing is always wrong whether we are rich or poor
Proverbs 6:30-31 Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving. Yet if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold, though it costs him all the wealth of his house.
2 Samuel 12:1-6 The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. "Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him." David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."
- Applications

Big Question Guide

- What is good, beautiful, true, valuable?

- Sex
- Modern lifestyle
- Environment - in moderation
- Employment
- Justice
- Honesty about material things - no stealing power
- Profits produce employment
- Return on investment
- People before plants and animals
- Children should make their own choices about religion
- Physical appearance
- Responsibility in your work
- What is bad, ugly, false, worthless?
 - Reckless pollution
 - Opposition to progress
 - Communism
 - Racial prejudice
 - Prejudice against women
 - Violence
- How do we know? How do we choose? What are the consequences?
 - How we feel at the moment especially as it relates to sex
 - Principle - when it involves tangible or intangible things belonging to others
 - Honesty
 - Transparency
 - Loyalty to company, friends
- What is the purpose?
 - Enjoy life including work
 - Do your best
 - Provide for others

Questions

- Why are sexual decisions decided without principles while decisions about material things are governed by principle?

Topical Bible Study

Food

Christian framework

Creation:

God is a gardener – made the Garden of Eden

God made man to be a gardner because man was involved in the production of his food – he was to care for the garden but it wasn't to be activity of hardship, but enriching responsibility

Food wasn't intended to be simply utilitarian → God created food with great attention to color, taste, texture, aroma and even sound (crunch of raw apples, snap of fresh beans ...)

Food was to be a source of pleasure as well as meet essential needs

God created plants for food that would reproduce themselves so there would be an unending supply to meet the needs of animals and people

God prepared food to meet the needs of people even before He created people → He takes care of our needs

God created a wide variety of kinds of food and built-in the ability of each kind to also produce great variety eg. Wild cabbage of late 1800's became broccoli, cauliflower, kohlrabi, brussel sprouts, white cabbage, red cabbage, ...

No death is involved in the decomposition of plants during digestion (or in soil) as death was introduced as the result of sin

Fall:

Man was still to be involved with food production

Production of food would be hard work

To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:17-19)

The first sin was the result of wrong choices about what you eat → Eve chose what looked good and tasted good, instead of what God said was good.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. (Genesis 3:6)

Because something is available doesn't mean it is good for you → basis for caution in biotechnology, etc.

Animals were given to man for food → specific provision, not a requirement – undercuts radical vegetarianism

Sin keeps food from satisfying

They will eat but not have enough; they will engage in prostitution but not increase, because they have deserted the Lord to give themselves to prostitution, to old wine and new, which take away the understanding of my people. (Hosea 4:10-12)

You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. " (Haggai 1:6)

Gluttony is a sin because it focuses on us and demonstrates a lack of trust in God's provision for tomorrow

Redemption:

God uses the weather to punish sin by bringing a scarcity of food. However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed. The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out. The Lord will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil you have done in forsaking him. The Lord will plague you with diseases until he has destroyed you from the land you are entering to possess. The Lord will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish. The sky over your head will be bronze, the ground beneath you iron. The Lord will turn the rain of your country into dust and powder; it will come down from the skies until you are destroyed. (Deuteronomy 28:15-24)

Thankfulness is a critical element in determining what we eat → Grace shouldn't be a prefatory prayer

If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? (1 Corinthians 10:30)

Jesus was recognized by the disciples in Emmaus, not as He taught them, but in His saying of thanks for the food

The risen Lord Jesus demonstrated the reality of His bodily resurrection by eating fish

The resurrected Lord made breakfast for His disciples when He wanted to spend time in intimate fellowship with them → men's breakfasts are His idea

Lord's prayer → ask for our daily bread even though God knows we need it and has promised to provide it but He wants us to acknowledge our dependence on Him for it, not "Mother Earth" or our own efforts

God provided many living demonstrations of the continued consequences of poor choices regarding food (Eve and Adam weren't the only one to put food before God):
Esau

See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. (Hebrews 12:16)

God spent 40 years trying to teach the Israelites the lesson that Eve failed to learn, i.e. that His Word is more important than physical food.

He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 8:3)

God worked in the lives of others so that we would learn not to make the same mistakes

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. (1 Corinthians 10:11)

God gives us each what we need to keep us from pride or desperate sin

Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God. (Proverbs 30:8-9)

Jesus illustrated the new covenant of grace using food so that we would be continually reminded of what He has done for us

Proclamation of God's Word is illustrated repeatedly in pictures of sewing seed and reaping a harvest

God's word is compared to food

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Psalm 119:103)

Jesus was known for the fact that He enjoyed eating and drinking

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." ' (Luke 7:34)

Jesus' first miracle involved making something to drink

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at

Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him. (John 2:1-11)

Jesus' most "successful" miracle involved multiplying the loaves and fishes to meet the legitimate need of feeding hungry people, but it was misinterpreted by the crowds and the disciples

Dietary rules are for our health and were to separate the Jews from all others → all others were expected to eat everything

Dietary rules were abolished for the purpose of separating Jews and non-Jews because all are one in Christ (Peter)

Fulfillment:

Contentment is the natural result of a heart that has learned that his Heavenly Father will take care of all his needs whether there is lots or little to eat

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. (Philippians 4:11-12)
But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. (1 Timothy 6:8)

Fasting is a way of demonstrating that we have learned the critical lesson about the priority of the spiritual over the physical, even though both are good gifts of God

Jesus doesn't waste good food

When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." (John 6:12)

Sharing food with others is a critical function of church life

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

Church organization began to deal with the problem of food distribution

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:1-4)

Serving food requires wisdom and Spirit-filling just as does prayer and preaching → we can do nothing independent of Him

The intimacy of dependence on Jesus is expressed in a picture of a vine producing fruit

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

Personal food choices are to be based on their impact on others

If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. (Romans 14:15)

Fellowship around food is appropriate, but it should always take second priority to listening to Jesus (Mary & Martha)

Ministry of hospitality to strangers has given people the privilege of serving angels

We are looking forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb – God celebrates with good food just as the father of the lost sons did

Heaven is a place with special trees to provide food → we still eat regularly in heaven

On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. (Revelations 22:2)

Jesus was concerned about where we sit when we go out to eat

When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:7-11)

Biblical integration guide

Reflections:

A chef's creative and beautiful presentation of food is a reflection of God's care for the aesthetic dimension of food as well as its physical necessity

Man, God's image-bearer, could like God be creative in developing the God-given potential of the plants → basis for food technology, plant breeding, biotechnology

Distortions:

Eating disorders have spiritual dimensions, not just physical ones

"We are what we eat" – the physical needs of man are important and God will take care of them if we put Him first

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6:31-33)

He doesn't want us to repeat the sin of Eve, Esau, or even Martha and put anything, even something as important as food, before Him

Food wouldn't have been such a big temptation if it hadn't been so necessary and attractive

Revelations:

Being tempted in the area of food is to be expected – Jesus was

There are boundaries that God has established in biological reproduction that people can only try to cross at their peril → whether they can cross is one question where the answer is not clear, but whether they should cross has already been answered

My suspicion is that a lot of bio-technical research is inspired by a desire to demonstrate that there are no boundaries between biological kinds as evolution postulates contrary to the statement of Scripture. I suspect that God will maintain the different kinds to demonstrate the validity of His Word as well as the functioning of His creation. We may appear to cross the boundaries, but the results will always be disastrous. However, within the boundaries all kinds of legitimate variation is possible.

Applications:

If God's Word isn't true, then eating and drinking is all the pleasure that we can look forward to and we might as well get as much of it as possible before we die

If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." (1 Corinthians 15:32)

How we eat and drink in the presence of Christians reflects our way of thinking about them

For as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! (1 Corinthians 11:21-22)

Progression in type of foods as you develop is expected

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. (Hebrews 5:12-13)

Caring for others requires organization → it won't just happen automatically

Missions have to carefully think about their involvement in physical aid so that the recipients understand the priority of the spiritual → how is this possible when distribution occurs by godless governments?

Drought & plagues of grasshoppers are ways God controls the food supply so that people will recognize that He controls the food supply

We are responsible to help those who are poor and sick, but a person that refuses to work should not be given social assistance even if they have nothing to eat

For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

Food can't contaminate your body so all food can be eaten and enjoyed

All food is clean. (Romans 14:20)

Honoring God by doing no regular work was an important part of the Sabbath, but in the Feast of Unleaven Bread food preparation was allowed

On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat—that is all you may do. (Exodus 12:16)

Equality is expected so we'd better be careful that the salads or desserts don't run out before everyone is served at the potluck dinners.

Sharing the food that we have is an expression of God's love

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (James 2:14-17)

Study of brain chemistry which is related to metabolism and nutrition can't solve all the problems of man's behavior → people make wrong choices because they have a sinful nature not just because they have a chemical imbalance although the imbalance may make them more vulnerable to sinful choices

Man was to fill the earth according to God's command but God promised to supply the food that he needs → population control is not necessary because we'll run out of food resources

Distribution of available resources is a problem because like the rich farmer, those with good crops tend to stock pile it for their own future rather than share their bounty with others

Increased efficiency in farming methods and better quality of seeds has multiplied production world-wide and is, no doubt, part of God's provision of food for the growing population of the world

We can develop ways to increase production to share, but we should beware of attempts to eliminate God's involvement in farming through the weather → motivation is critical to determining the rightness of irrigation, greenhouses, etc.

Storage of food in times of plenty for times of scarcity is appropriate – Joseph

Administration of food resources is a national issue, not just a personal profit issue

Nutrition, agriculture, political science, family life, sociology, biology, social studies, botany ...

Sharing plenty as a demonstration of Christian love

Agriculture as obedience to God's command – not a substandard occupation as is often thought in our modern society; appreciate the farmer even if you get all your food from the supermarket

Thankfulness every time we eat

Care in preparing and presenting food

Enjoy food – don't just eat to live – with others

Christian Framework

God

- Father loved Christ (John 17:24)
- Father chose Christ (1 Pet. 1:20)
- God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent (Heb. 1-3, Ps. 139:1-6, 7-12)
- God is divine Person with intelligence, emotion and free will (Isa 1:18, Isa 19:65, Ps. 3:115)

Creation

- Triune God made everything perfect (including spiritual beings)
- God sustains everything (Col. 1:16-17, Heb. 1:3)
- God made everything for His glory
- God has revealed Himself to us through His Word and His world
- God made man in His image and we are valuable and unique
- God communicates with man (Rom 1:18-21)
- Man is different from the animals (1 Cor. 15:39)
- Man was created to live in relationship with God and others
- Man has been given responsibility to care for the animate and inanimate creation
- God provided for everyone's and everything's needs
- Man was created for God's pleasure and purposes
- Human life come from God
- Relationships were based on interdependence, service, & enjoyment; by nature they were sustaining and demonstrated unity in diversity
 - Angels are ministering servants
 - Inanimate world (planets) feed the animate through their fruit and also through the oxygen they produce
 - People are to care for the animate & animate universe
 - Animate and people's waste products feed plants (CO₂ and excrement)
 - Inanimate heavenly bodies mark times & seasons
 - God enjoys everything He made → beauty in everything
 - Man enjoys God & everything He made
 - Only God and man are creative
 - Reproduction after kinds but great variety
 - Man requires a helpmate
 - Helpmate has a service role
 - Man needs the inanimate world – atmosphere, water, food
 - Man isn't an animal
 - Animals came in male & female
- God established what is right – everything else is wrong
- God's moral order is non-optional and non-negotiable (Exod. 20:1-17, Rom. 1, 6, 7)
- Man did not decide what was right and wrong
- Man will live forever
- Man was created to live in relationship with others in families (Gen. 2:21-24)

Fall

- Autonomy destroys because it is contrary to the nature of creation and its planned purpose
 - Nature & purpose are interwoven because creation is an expression of God's nature and His eternal purpose was self-giving within the Trinity as well as in time
 - Satan was the first to desire to be autonomous rather than dependent
 - Because created autonomy is contrary to the nature of the universe, Satan by nature is a liar → no created thing can be autonomous
 - Man adopted his false perspective

- Man's dreams don't exist apart from him & neither do God's material "day-dreams" that He spoke into existence = entire universe
- Everyone has sinned
- Sin involves the desire to make decisions without depending on God – without His word or His power
- Sin always has consequences
 - Personal sin has personal to universal consequences
 - National sin has national consequences
- Man's sin has affected everything in the physical universe
Weeds, "hard" work, "pain" in childbirth, floods, storms, creation "groans"
- Sin causes death and dying (Rom. 5:12)
- Personal relationships between God and man are broken (Isa. 53:6)
- Sin produces eternal separation from God as well as physical death
- Relationships between man and others are marred by conflict caused by selfishness and pride
- Man's heart has been changed so our view of everything is blinded, distorted
- Man uses everything for himself
- Man has rejected God's revelation (John 3:19-20)
- Man sins by nature and by choice
- Creation is treated as more important than the Creator (Rom. 1:25)
- Man's sin didn't destroy God's creation but perverted it
- Wicked spiritual beings have an influence on the physical universe and people

Redemption

- Redemption always begins with God's initiative
- Repentance is the first step in redemption whether personal or national
- God didn't abandon man in his sin – this world is not forsaken
- God's word is the standard of right and wrong (Ps. 19:7; Ps. 119; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- God's revelation in Christ completes His revelation of Himself (Heb. 1:1-2)
- God established the state and church to uphold moral order on the earth (Rom. 13:1-7, Matt. 16-18)
- Nothing man does can remove the results of sin
- God has provided the only answer to sin and all its effects in the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ
- Personal transformation is the path to any kind of group transformation
- Everyone and everything is redeemable by Jesus' death and resurrection ((2 Pet. 3:9)
- Jesus understands man's situation because He is the God-man and He has lived in this sin-distorted physical universe
- Through Jesus, man can be restored to fellowship with God (Rom 6-8)
- Jesus has defeated all the wicked spiritual beings

Fulfilment

- God wants us to live as His children from now through eternity
- Jesus desires that God's children function together as a living organism that He directs and empowers
- God's children are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and are individually and collectively to worship God
- Christians are the "light of the world" (Matt. 5:14-16)
- Christians are the "salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13)
- Man is still responsible to care for the animate and inanimate creation (Gen. 1:26-28)
- Christians are to make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20)
- Everything we do has eternal significance
- The life of God is available by the Holy Spirit to His children so they can live in hope and victory in this life
- God desires His will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10)

- God will accomplish all His purposes in all creation but it will require that He makes everything anew, replacing the physical, temporal universe with something that is eternal
- Wicked spiritual beings and all people that reject God's redemption will be removed from God's eternal kingdom so that it will be completely without sin

Born in Vancouver, Canada, Harold Klassen has a broad educational background. He earned a Bachelor of Religious Education from Canadian Bible College in 1970, followed by a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Physics and teaching certification from Simon Fraser University in 1975. In 2003, Harold earned a Masters of Science in Education from Philadelphia Bible University.



After teaching two years in a public school in Canada, Harold joined the staff of Black Forest Academy, a school for missionaries' children in Germany. He taught chemistry, physics, math, Bible, and computer science during his years in the classroom from 1977 to 1998. He was also the High School Principal for six years, the school's librarian for seven years, and responsible for operations for a year.

Harold was the Business Manager for the German branch of Janz Team from 1998 to 2000. Since then, he has served as Assistant to the International Director of Janz Team while taking a leadership role in staff development. In addition, he has taught seminars to equip teachers in Romania, Poland, China, Malaysia, Canada, and Germany.

Harold's background played an integral role in shaping his vision for Christian education.

As a student in a public university, he found that the pedagogy he was learning wasn't congruent with his personal understanding of the nature of man. He resolved to uncover God's purposes and principles for Christian teachers.

While at Black Forest Academy, Harold delved into the philosophy of distinctively Christian education and began to implement those principles in the classroom. His passion for the subject led him to develop a theoretical framework, which he began to share with other educators who keenly felt the need for God-centered teaching.

Today, Harold continues to assist teachers around the world as they use their classrooms to shape the thinking of new generations of students. His mission is to equip them to teach their students that all of life and learning is related to Christ and the Bible. Harold pursues this goal through speaking and writing, and you'll find much of his materials available on this website. It is the culmination of several decades of personal study, experience, and a genuine passion for distinctively Christian thinking and teaching.

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