

# **Philosophy of Education**

Edward P. Meadors

My philosophy of education arises from a Christian world-view based on biblical truth. Because God is creator of both the material world and the human intellect and imagination, I am convinced that a broad liberal arts curriculum which incorporates the arts and sciences best educates Christian students. Such a curriculum challenges students to understand fellow men and women, the rich diversity of humankind's cultures and societies, and the physical world. The responsibility of a teacher, I believe, is to train students to think analytically about events and ideas both abstract and concrete in order that they may learn to reach intelligent conclusions as to what is true. As a Christian educator, I am compelled to integrate every field of study with the reality of God's present saving grace, which has been achieved through the historical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I believe in Christian education because of the conviction that ultimate truth finds its origin in God who has revealed Himself uniquely in the person and work of Jesus Christ. I agree with the statement "All truth is God's truth." Thus, Christian faith, correctly perceived, does not narrow or restrict the intellect but inspires and challenges it. Integration of faith and learning in a liberal arts context, when properly understood and practiced, ideally prepares Christian students by stabilizing them with a secure Christian world view that will enable them to live intelligently, securely, and sensitively in a pluralistic, relativistic society.

Primary to the health and success of a Christian college is the vitality of her Bible department. I believe the Bible reveals God's plan of redemption in the events of history and specifically in the historical death and resurrection of Jesus. Through an understanding of Scripture we come to know the will of God and His purpose for our lives. Therefore the Bible gives meaning and purpose to knowledge acquired in all fields of study and presents guidelines for Christian application of knowledge. In addition, Biblical studies are a necessary requirement of successful liberal arts education on a cultural level. Our Judaeo-Christian heritage has directly influenced religion, history, the visual arts, literature, music, philosophy, law and the physical sciences. Western culture cannot be understood fully without a knowledge of the Bible. Thus, it is imperative that Christian colleges persistently strive to make their Bible departments a primary source of strength and unity in both spiritual and academic respects.

I also believe Biblical studies have a practical objective. Because the Bible gives: "the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," and because "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:15-17), the Bible is crucially pertinent to the successful development of every Christian student, whether they plan to serve on the mission field or settle into family business. To teach an effective approach to the interpretation of Scripture is the awesome task of the Bible professor, who always must be aware of the catastrophic consequences of misinterpreting Scripture.

While I believe the integrity of the Bible holds up to redactional, traditional, form-critical and other modern critical methods which contemporary scholars use to analyze the Bible, I am convinced of the superior value of the Grammatico-Historical Method—that the Bible is to be understood in light of its original languages and historical contexts and

only then applied to our day. Students, I believe, must be instructed to confront directly the apparent enigmas and complexities within Scripture which inevitably lead to controversy and in some cases doubt. Careful study, I believe, can prevent the emotional disillusionment with Scripture which students often acquire from initial exposure to radical scholarship. Hence rigorous study can elevate faith in the value of Scripture. Faith is strengthened through perseverance. Such has been my experience.

However, while I am painfully aware of the historical, linguistic and cultural complexities of exegeting Scripture, I am also driven by the belief that the Bible has its origin in God's inspiration through the Holy Spirit for a specific purpose which is the salvation and health of humankind. *Students should be challenged but with Christian understanding and compassion.* While certain aspects of the Bible appear complex, the gospel remains simple. Thus, I am convinced that ordinary people and ordinary students, as opposed to Bible scholars, can understand Scripture and can rightly and justifiably apply Scripture to the affairs of daily life. The task of the teacher, I believe, is to enable students to understand Scripture in its original context and language and to help students apply Scripture with more confidence and understanding in contemporary life.

A further responsibility of the professor which I take very seriously is the professor's moral and ethical accountability outside of the classroom and especially in the home. Paul's exhortation to the deacons in 1 Tim. 3:1-13 is a challenge which I apply to myself now as a husband and father, and a maxim which I maintain in formulating my conception of the ideal teacher. Indeed, the teachers whom I respect the most are those who personify 1 Tim. 3:1-13. I hope and pray to do likewise.

Finally, I place essential importance on the professor's relationship with his or her colleagues. A professor will never be better than his or her department, because in the end a student's education results from the combined effort of a team of professors. I am aware of the hazards which result from inter-departmental conflict, and I am also acquainted with the fruitful learning which results from inter-departmental dialogue. I plan to pursue the latter.

In closing, I believe it appropriate that I testify to the core components of my faith. I believe in God the Father, sovereign Lord of heaven and earth and in His love and compassion for all men and women. I believe in the historical incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension and exaltation of Jesus Christ, who now rules as Lord at God's right hand in heaven. I believe that humankind universally has fallen into sin and as a result must face the consequences of sin, which is death and God's judgment—the penalty of which is damnation in a literal hell. I believe that salvation from sin and its consequences can only be achieved through the Grace of God, which He has offered in the sacrificial, substitutionary death and resurrection of Jesus. I believe in the Holy Spirit who motivated the prophets of old, who empowered Jesus our Saviour, who inaugurated the Early Church, who inspired the writing of Scripture in its entirety, and who continues to inspire, challenge, enlighten, discipline and sanctify Christian men and women today. I believe the Holy Bible is God breathed in its entirety and as a result is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions. I believe the primary purpose of Scripture is to communicate the wisdom of God's love which leads to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. I am excited about sharing my faith. I believe in the power of prayer. I stake my life upon these core components of my faith (Rom.1:16; 2 Tim. 1:12).

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