

# The Christian Teacher in a Secular Society



How does a Christian teacher function faithfully and effectively in a secular society? Although not a simple matter to address or resolve, this issue is one that has become increasingly relevant, given trends in contemporary culture. In this article, I will highlight several considerations that can contribute toward an understanding of our role as Christian educators within this complex and, at times, difficult context. I also hope that these ideas may serve as points of departure and lead to further conversations. First, some core concepts.

A Christian is a disciple of Jesus Christ, one who evidences the spirit and the qualities of Jesus (Acts 4:13). A true disciple is both a believer and a follower.<sup>1</sup> Being a disciple is a matter of mind and of life, of thinking Christianly<sup>2</sup> and of living like Christ.<sup>3</sup> The challenge is that we find ourselves in an increasingly secular world, a society in which individuals operate without a religious basis, endeavoring to live “without God in the world.”<sup>4</sup>

How should a Christian teacher operate in this secular milieu? How should he or she act and live? At an even more foundational level, given the pervasiveness of the secular worldview, how does one become a genuine Christian educator? And how does one maintain and provide evi-

## The Challenge of Becoming, Being, and Living

dence of that distinctive character, with relevance and with redemptive purpose, while interacting with secular postmodern persons?

### The Challenge of Becoming

It is altogether too easy to teach from a secular worldview—without reference to God or His plan for life and learning. Consequently, to become authentic Christian educators, we must first forge a biblical paradigm, a Christian view of education and of life that includes at least five key elements.<sup>5</sup>

• **A pervasive spiritual perspective.** Paul wrote, “Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31, NIV). God’s glory is His character (Exodus 33:18-22; 34:5, 6). To do something for God’s glory, then, is to reveal His attributes. The emphasis, however, is that in *whatever* we do, in whatever aspect of the educational process we engage, we are to reveal an accurate and attractive picture of God.

Paul further explains, “Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:17).<sup>6</sup> To do something “in the name of” Jesus means to say what He would say, to do what He would do. It implies that we seek to teach our subjects as He would teach them and to interact with our students as He would relate to them.

Consequently, in the biblical view, the spiritual perspective is all-encompassing. There are no secular disciplines or secular subjects. Setting up a spiritual/secular dualism would, in fact, create a false dichotomy. Rather, all of life and learning is to be seen in terms of its relationship to God.<sup>7</sup>

• **The divine origin of truth.** God is the Source of all true knowledge and understanding. Scripture states: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father” (James 1:17, NKJV). The Book of Proverbs further adds, “For the Lord gives wisdom. From his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6). In essence, God is the Source of knowledge and He also provides the ability to comprehend meaning and to correctly apply this understanding, which is the essence of wisdom. Finally, John is specific when he writes, “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

Consequently, truth begins with God, not with humanity. Further, if God is the Source of truth, all truth

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must therefore be God's truth, regardless of where it is found.<sup>8</sup> As educators, we must recognize and affirm that connection, especially to our students. We do this when we help students to see God as the Creator of all things and the Author of their properties and principles, as these are revealed throughout the disciplines.<sup>9</sup>

• **God-centered values.** Faced with a society that was losing its spiritual footing, the prophet Ezekiel repeated God's urging: "'Teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean'" (Ezekiel 44:23).<sup>10</sup> In the New Testament, Paul identifies these differentiating criteria to include that which is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and worthy of praise. He then counseled us to thoughtfully consider these values in making moral choices (Philippians 4:8).<sup>11</sup> Finally, Scripture highlights justice, mercy, and humility as foundational values and the divine expectation for our lives (Micah 6:8).

In essence, biblical values are God's desires for us as His creation. They are the portal to the abundant life that Christ wants us to experience (John 10:10). As a result, character formation—the development of a moral, value-based framework—is foremost in education. It is insufficient to simply convey knowledge, promote understanding, or impart skills and competencies. These are of value only when they operate within the context of a moral life, evidenced by ethical decisions and actions anchored in the character of God.<sup>12</sup>

• **Teaching as a divine calling.** In Ephesians 4, Paul states that when Christ ascended to heaven, He gave special gifts to His church, including the gift of serving as pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:8, 11). In the original language, it is clear that the gift of pastor and teacher is granted

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to the same group of people. A person who receives one receives the other. To create a pastor/teacher dichotomy is simply not biblical. In essence, the pastor-teacher gift is a double portion of the Spirit (2 Kings 2:9), with important implications for those who serve as "pastors" and as "teachers."<sup>13</sup>

Paul adds that we are to see our role as God's ambassadors, "as though God were making his appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20)<sup>14</sup> while Peter writes that "If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God" (1 Peter 4:11). Teaching then is not merely a job, a career, nor a profession. It is a vocation,<sup>15</sup> a divine calling. As we respond to that call, we become God's en-

dorsed representatives, with authority and responsibility.

• **A Spirit-filled life.** It is essential that an educator receive God's Spirit. In His promise of the Counselor, Christ indicated that it was the Holy Spirit who would teach us all things (John 14:26). Having received God's Spirit, we are also enabled to understand divine truth and to then teach, "expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2:12, 13).<sup>16</sup> Paul further states that we "are an epistle of Christ, . . . written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets . . . of the heart" (2 Corinthians 3:3).

In the Christian view, to be spiritual is to be Spirit-filled. Consequently, a Christian educator must not only be competent, but also committed, for it is through the efficacy of the Holy Spirit that our students experience salvation. As educators, our greatest need is that the Spirit work in and through us.

In summary, in order to *become* authentic Christian teachers, our first and most important task is to develop a biblical view of our life and of our role as educators. This paradigm includes an understanding that all of life and learning is to take place within a spiritual framework, that all truth is God's truth, that character formation centers on divine values, that teaching is a divine calling, and that we are to live a Spirit-filled life.

### The Challenge of Being

Being is not static, but dynamic. It has to do more with *how* we live our lives than with *what* we say we are. For a teacher, this matter of being includes at least three dimensions: how we approach our discipline, how we view our students, and how we model the Christian life. We will consider each of these.

• **A Christian educator approaches his or her discipline from a Christian worldview.** What does this mean? First of all, it suggests that we must



make Scripture foundational. The rationale is that the Word of God speaks with relevance to each dimension of life, that every discipline should connect with our lives in meaningful ways, and that as a result, God's Word should be relevant to each academic discipline. Our task is to seek for a thoughtful understanding of Scripture in relation to the discipline as a whole, and by extension, to those topics that we teach.

Next, we must clarify assumptions. As we approach a discipline, we make crucial underlying assumptions. These include the nature of the discipline and how it should be presented, the nature of truth and reality, and the origin and purpose of life, as well as matters pertaining to our relationship with God, with other human beings, and with the world around us. Our task is to continually evaluate how these assumptions align with the biblical worldview.<sup>17</sup>

Third, we will need to trace the Great Controversy. Every dimension of life is affected by the conflict between good and evil. In fact, the Great Controversy theme is the grand sense-making narrative for life.<sup>18</sup> Our task is to understand how our respective disciplines are shaped by this cosmic conflict.

Fourth, we are to consider the gospel commission (Matthew 28:18-20). This means that we see our profession as a ministry—that we live lives of service. And that we view our witness not as an event, but as a lifestyle (see Figure 1). “You *are* my witnesses” (Isaiah 44:8, italics supplied). Our task is to understand what the gospel commission imparts to our discipline in terms of witness and service.

Finally, we must link biblical values to personal, everyday experiences. Real-life issues, with ethical implications, exist in every discipline.<sup>19</sup> When considering a controversial issue, we need to ask: “What is God’s design for this area of human activity?” “What biblical response is called for?” Our task is to identify guiding principles and moral values.<sup>20</sup> Students should then be encouraged to engage in ethi-

cal reasoning and develop a personal position derived from the biblical perspective.

• **A Christian educator views his or her students as God does.** What does this imply? The overarching theme is that God views every student as a candidate for heaven.<sup>21</sup> He sees them, not as they are, but as they can become by His grace.

This divine perspective conveys a number of implications in regard to how we relate to students. It suggests that we take a personal interest in each student, and that we affirm the worth and potential of each individual. It means that we are to love our students, even though we may disagree with them. It means that we trust them, even though at times they may seem untrustworthy.<sup>22</sup> It implies that we challenge them to do their best and help them to develop a sense

of mission. Above all, it reminds us that our ultimate purpose is to lead our students to experience a personal relationship with Christ.<sup>23</sup>

• **A Christian educator models the Christian life.** What does this include? It indicates that our lives are to reflect the character of Christ, that our students see an accurate and attractive picture of who God truly is. As a result, they can say: “If God is like my teacher, I want to know Him!”<sup>24</sup> It involves that we convey confidence in God’s revelation and that we affirm biblical standards of moral behavior. It means that we make the Christian life an adventure, with zest!<sup>25</sup>

### The Challenge of Living

How should we function as Christian educators? How should we then live? The aspect of action focuses on reaching out with intentionality to secular postmodern persons with salvation purpose.<sup>26</sup> It involves a number of key behaviors (see Figure 2 on page 8):

• **Create community.** Contemporary secular society is post-individualist. Its postmodern focus emphasizes community.<sup>27</sup> Building community, including virtual communities, has become a prime goal of postmoderns. Scripture also affirms the role of community, both within the body of believers and in fulfilling the gospel commission.<sup>28</sup>

As Christian educators, we need to be proactive in creating caring, connected communities in our classrooms and throughout the school. We should be intentional in establishing positive relationships with and among students. We must remember that belonging precedes believing.

• **Recognize context.** Postmoderns have highlighted the significance of context and, by extension, culture.<sup>29</sup> As Christians, we must also seek to understand others’ backgrounds and culture, which modify the way they see and understand life. In Scripture, the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) illustrates the importance of understanding culture and of taking context into account.

Figure 1. Two Views of Christian Witness





**Figure 2. Reaching the Secular Person**

As a result, when discussing social issues, historical events, and biblical passages with postmoderns, it is essential that we examine context. This also helps us to avoid imposing our own conditions on interpretations of meaning and motive. At the same time, we cannot mindlessly accept or reject contemporary culture. We are to affirm those elements of culture that are in harmony with God’s will, and we are to redirect any aspect that may not be congruent with God’s character or His plan.<sup>30</sup>

• **Validate emotion.** In the Age of Reason, modernists tended to suppress feelings and elevate logic. In rejecting rationalism, postmodernism has chosen to highlight emotion.<sup>31</sup> Thus the pervasiveness of comments

such as these: “How can it be wrong when it feels so right?” “Go with your gut feeling!” “Just do it!” The result is the tendency of contemporary society to elevate feelings over rationality and objective truth.

In the Christian perspective, the emotions are of importance (Nehemiah 8:10; John 11:35). Too often, we have denigrated emotion into a sign of intellectual weakness, and have reduced the gospel to a sterile set of postulates and proof texts. As Christians, we must affirm feeling as well as reason. We should make the gospel not only logically compelling, but also emotionally attractive. While we should help others to think carefully and analytically about what they believe, we must also encourage sensitivity, spontaneity, and joy.

• **Respect diversity.** Postmodern secularism celebrates diversity and promotes inclusiveness.<sup>32</sup> It maintains

that minority groups have rights and merit respect. It holds that the community must function as a support network for the individual members of society. This perspective resonates with the Christian worldview. Christ’s mission was to break down barriers of exclusivity, to set the oppressed free (Isaiah 58:6; Luke 4:16-21). He reached out to the marginalized, to those rejected by mainstream society (Matthew 11:19; Mark 2:16).<sup>33</sup>

As Christian educators, we must recognize that each individual, regardless of ability, ethnicity, or social status, is of inherent worth, both by creation and by redemption (Isaiah 43:1; Jeremiah 1:5; John 3:16). We are to become a voice for the exploited and oppressed. We are to treat each person with respect, irrespective of ethnic or religious affiliation.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the Christian paradigm must be open to consideration of divergent views, while at the same time safeguarding fundamental beliefs (Isaiah 8:20). Our goal is unity in diversity.

• **Engage in dialogue.** Secular postmoderns view learning as a democratic process, not merely as the transmission of knowledge from expert to novice.<sup>35</sup> It is a conversation in which both parties share experiences and insights. Our role as educators is consequently less of a top-down dispenser of information and more that of a *guide by the side*. Increasingly, we should think of education as learning together, as forming a learning community.

There is an important corollary to this approach. We should make it clear that Christians do not have a monopoly on truth. Rather, non-believers also discover truth.<sup>36</sup> The key difference is that the Christian recognizes the Source of that truth. This implies that we can all learn from one another, regardless of belief or background, provided that we can connect that knowledge back to its Source and apply it to our lives through the truth-filter of His Word.

• **Build faith bridges.** In the post-

modern world, there is a new openness to spiritual themes. Spirituality is no longer banished to the fringes of society, but has become a social dialogue. This surge in spiritual consciousness, however, should not be confused with a renewed interest in religion. Postmoderns are spiritual, but not necessarily religious.<sup>37</sup> Many, in fact, are suspicious or openly antag-

onistic toward religion. This poses a monumental challenge!

All of this suggests that Christians are to be ambassadors of generosity, benevolence, and goodwill. It implies that our witness may best be formulated as relational—developing conversations about God, sharing one’s personal experience with God, and seeking a

deeper understanding of the Spirit. Finally, secular postmoderns must see that Christianity is a vibrant community of faith, experiencing the joy and peace of a Spirit-filled life.

### Conclusion

As Christian educators living in a secular postmodern world, we are to

## Additional Readings That Address the Christian Worldview

Beckwith, F. J., W. L. Craig, and J. P. Moreland, eds. *To Every-one an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Academic, 2004.

Cosgrove, M. P. *Foundations of Christian Thought: Faith, Learning, and the Christian Worldview*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Academic, 2006.

Cotham, P. C. *One World, Many Neighbors: A Christian Perspective on Worldviews*. Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press, 2008.

Dockery, D. S., and G. A. Thornbury. *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundation of Christian Higher Education*. Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Academic, 2002.

Fowler, J. M. “Building a Christian Worldview: A Christian Approach to the Study of Philosophy.” Paper presented at the Institute for Christian College Teaching, Lincoln, Nebraska, August 14-30, 1988: [http://ict.aiias.edu/vol\\_02/02cc\\_055-073.pdf](http://ict.aiias.edu/vol_02/02cc_055-073.pdf).

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McGrath, A. *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World*. New York: Doubleday, 2004.

McGrath, A., and J. C. McGrath. *The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, Veritas Books, 2010.

Moreland, J. P., and W. L. Craig. *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

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Palmer, M. *Elements of a Christian Worldview*. Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1998.

Rasi, Humberto M. “Worldviews, Contemporary Culture, and Adventist Thought.” Paper presented at the Symposium on the Bible and Adventist Scholarship, Juan Dolio, Dominican Republic, March 19-26, 2000: [http://ict.aiias.edu/vol\\_26B/26Bcc\\_001-015.htm](http://ict.aiias.edu/vol_26B/26Bcc_001-015.htm).

Ryken, P. G. *What Is the Christian Worldview?* Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2006.

Samples, K. R. *A World of Difference: Putting Christian Truth-Claims to the Worldview Test*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2007.

Sire, J. W. *The Universe Next Door: A Basic World View Catalog*, 5th ed. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Academic, 2009.

Stephani, Julie. “Values, Worldview, and Faith. How Can Adventist Educators Pass Them On?” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 66:1 (October/November 2003):38-42: <http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae200366013805.pdf>.

Walsh, B. J. *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1984.

### Foundational Works That Address the Principal Tenets of Postmodernism

Aronowitz, S., and H. A. Giroux. *Postmodern Education: Politics, Culture, and Social Criticism*. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

Cahoone, L., ed. *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Erickson, M. J. *Truth or Consequences: The Promise and Perils of Postmodernism*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001.

Foucault, M. (R. Howard, trans.) *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. London: Routledge, 2001.

Lyotard, J. F. (G. Bennington and B. Massumi, trans.) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.



think deeply and Christianly regarding our beliefs and convictions—the challenge of *becoming*. We should then view our discipline and our students from God’s perspective, and exemplify the Christian life in a faithful and invitational way. This is the challenge of *being*. Finally, we must connect meaningfully with our students and converse clearly and persuasively regarding our Christian worldview—the challenge of *living*. Together, these three ingredients—becoming, being, and living—present us with the opportunity to serve faithfully and effectively as Christian educators in a secular society. ✍

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. And a true follower of Christ is ultimately a disciple maker (Matthew 28:18-20).
2. John 8:31; 1 Corinthians 2:12-16; Philippians 2:5; Romans 12:2. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in this article are from The Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.
3. John 15:8; Galatians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6.
4. Ephesians 2:12.
5. This paradigm is a subset of the Christian worldview, with a special focus on the educational process and the role of educators. For further study, see the sample of resources that address the Christian worldview on page 9.
6. See also 2 Corinthians 10:5, “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” If every thought is captive to the Lord Jesus, it follows that each concept we teach, and by extension each topic and subject, should recognize that Jesus is Lord—that this is His discipline, His classroom.
7. Proverbs 3:6 affirms: “In all your ways acknowledge Him” (NKJV). Texts in the endnotes marked NKJV are from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The implications of this concept are further explored in “The Challenge of Being” section on page 7.
8. This concept of all truth as divine truth was significantly developed in Frank E. Gaebel’s *The Pattern of God’s Truth: The Integration of Faith and Learning* (Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1985); and in Arthur F. Holmes’ *All Truth Is God’s Truth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing, 1977).
9. James writes that “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17, NKJV; see also John 1:17). This implies that we must view every domain of knowledge and each dimension of our lives as an extension of God’s truth.
10. While this section focuses on making a difference between the clean and unclean, there is also a biblical basis for distinguishing between the sacred and the common (see, for example, Exodus 3:5 and 12:11; Leviticus 10:1, 2; 1 Chronicles 13:9, 10 and Numbers 4:15; 1 Samuel 13:9-14 and 2 Chronicles 26:16-21). We must not, however, create a false dichotomy in our lives between the spiritual and the secular. Rather, as previously noted, all of life is to be Spirit-filled and viewed from the divine perspective. Certain things in life, however, are sacred, made

holy either by God’s direct presence or by His express command, or because they have been dedicated to God. Consequently, the Sabbath, the tithe, and the place of worship, among others, are sacred. Yet all days of the week are to be filled with God’s Spirit, all one’s resources are to be employed to God’s glory, and wherever one may be, he or she is to abide in God’s presence. Thus Martin Luther could say that “the shoemaker should shoe the sole of the pope as religiously as the pope should pray for the soul of the shoemaker” (cited in Arthur F. Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing, 1987], page 16); and Ellen White could write, “There is practical religion in a loaf of good bread” (*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1943], p. 313).

11. Quoted from NLT. Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from *The Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

12. As earlier noted, God’s glory is defined through the attributes of His character (see Exodus 33:18, 22; 34:6, 7). When we do all things to His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31), we seek to reflect His character and transmit a clear picture of who God is. Further implications of this element in the biblical worldview are discussed in “The Challenge of Being” section on page 7.

13. It suggests, for example, that pastors are to educate their flock, and not merely sermonize (Matthew 28:18-20). On the other hand, teachers are to also see their role as that of a shepherd (pastor), nurturing and caring for their flock (Jeremiah 13:20). See also “Two Ministries/One Mission” by George R. Knight, *The Journal of Adventist Education* 72:4 (April/May 2010):4-9: <http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae201072040406.pdf>; and “The Same Gift: ‘And . . . to Some, Pastors and Teachers’” by Newton Hoilette, *The Journal of Adventist Education* 55:2 (December 1992/January 1993):4-7: <http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae199355020404.pdf>.

14. Writing to Timothy, Paul clarified that those who are called to teach are also to be faithful to their calling (2 Timothy 2:2).

15. The word *vocation* is derived from the Latin *vocare*, which means “to call.”

16. Quoted from the 1984 edition of the NIV Bible.

17. While disciplines present data or rules, such as the data of science or the rules of logic, these must be interpreted by indi-

viduals based on the assumptions of their worldviews. What is key is the hermeneutic that is brought to the discipline. The specimen, for example, might be the forelimb of a whale or a bat, which is similar to the human arm. The assumptions of a secular naturalist lead to an interpretation that suggests a common evolutionary ancestor, while the assumptions of the theistic creationist interpret the data as the work of a common Creator, God.

18. It helps us understand, for example, why bad things happen to good people. The Book of Job, which speaks to this matter, takes us behind the scenes in this cosmic conflict.

19. A social studies class, for example, could consider issues such as sexism, racism, and nationalism; AIDS, birth control, and the recreational use of drugs; pressure groups and conflicts of interest, as well as immigration policies, squatter settlements, foreign aid and national debt, the exploitation of natural resources, and waste disposal. Issues in technology include piracy, hacking, computer fraud, encryption, robotization, artificial intelligence, intellectual property rights, and privacy at the work site. There are issues in business subjects concerning equitable taxation, fair profit, monopolization, unionization and worker strikes, declaration of bankruptcy, sexual harassment, and deception in advertising. Physical-education courses could discuss competition, deception, financial sponsors for events and sports equipment, contracts, and hormone enhancement. In psychology, issues include hypnosis, IQ testing, sexual expression, co-dependency, dealing with a counselee's threat of harm to self or others, and securing informed consent from persons who may have psychological impairments. Scientific issues include global warming, cloning, animal experimentation, abortion, euthanasia, nuclear energy, and waste recycling, among others.

20. These ethical-moral values include priorities such as acceptance, altruism, benevolence, compassion, fairness, gratitude, honesty, impartiality, integrity, justice, liberty, loyalty, mercy, purity, respect, sincerity, stability, tolerance, and trustworthiness. Values in the academic realm also embrace accuracy, competence, cooperation, curiosity, discernment, logical thought and expression, relevance, sensitivity, and thoroughness, among others.

21. Ellen White writes, "It becomes every student to learn of God, who giveth wisdom, how to learn to the best advantage; for all are candidates for immortality" (*Fundamentals of Christian Education* [Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1923], p. 379).

22. How many times, for example, have

we let God down, and yet, despite our untrustworthiness, God continues to give us opportunities and responsibilities?

23. This concept is further developed in George R. Knight, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 4th edition (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2006), page 207; and in E. B. Snorrason, *Aims of Education in the Writings of Ellen White*, Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2005, available at <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1706&context=dissertations>.

24. Perhaps this is one way in which the prophecy of Zechariah 8:23 will be fulfilled, which states: "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, "Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you."'"

25. Young people often conclude that the Christian life is all about what one *cannot* do; that anything happy or fun is swiftly prohibited. Jesus, however, declared, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10, NKJV). Our students need to see the Christian life as the abundant life. The most powerful part of that message is how we ourselves approach the Christian life.

26. "In the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one" (Ellen G. White, *Education* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903], p. 30).

27. See the reading list on page 9 for foundational works that address the principal tenets of postmodernism that are evidenced in contemporary culture.

28. Scripture, in fact, begins with the community of the Godhead, in whose image we are made (Genesis 1:26; see also Genesis 1:2; Psalm 133:1; Isaiah 42:5; Matthew 25:31-46; John 1:1-14; Acts 2:1, 46; Romans 15:1; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Galatians 6:2).

29. Georg G. Iggers, "A Search for a Post-postmodern Theory of History," *History and Theory* 48:1 (February 2009):122-128; Fredric Jameson, "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," in *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, Lawrence Cahoon, ed. (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), pp. 556-572; Richard Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity," in *ibid.*, pp. 447-456.

30. As Christians, we should see our role not primarily as a thermometer, adapting to the prevailing context, but as a thermostat of context and culture—creating a positive difference for God in the world.

31. For educational implications, see Michalinos Zembylas, *Teaching With Emotion: A Postmodern Enactment* (Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing, 2005).

32. George Fallis, *Multiversities, Ideas, and Democracy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Richard Howard, trans. (London: Routledge, 2001).

33. The woman at the well of Sychar, for example, was marginalized from mainstream society due to a combination of ethnicity, gender, and lifestyle (John 4:5-42).

34. It should be noted that these redemptive acts are not mere manifestations of humanistic altruism nor even of a social gospel. Rather, they are the consequence of redemptive grace in the lives of Christians: "Freely you have received; freely give" (Matthew 10:8).

35. Richard Edwards and Robin Usher, *Postmodernism and Education: Different Voices, Different Worlds* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Henry A. Giroux, "Toward a Postmodern Pedagogy," in *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, op. cit., pp. 687-697; Patricia Hinchey, *Finding Freedom in the Classroom* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010); Patrick Slattery, *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era: Teaching and Learning in an Age of Accountability* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

36. God "'causes his sun to shine on evil people and good people. He sends rain on those who do right and those who don't'" (Matthew 5:45, NIV) because He desires all "to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4, NIV). Holy Bible, New International Reader's Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1995, 1996, 1998 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

37. Lieven Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context* (Dudley, Mass.: Peeters Press, W. B. Eerdmans, 2003); David S. Dockery, ed., *Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001); Robert Greer, *Mapping Postmodernism: A Survey of Christian Options* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003); Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights From Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007); David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity . . . and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2007); Myron B. Penner, *The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).