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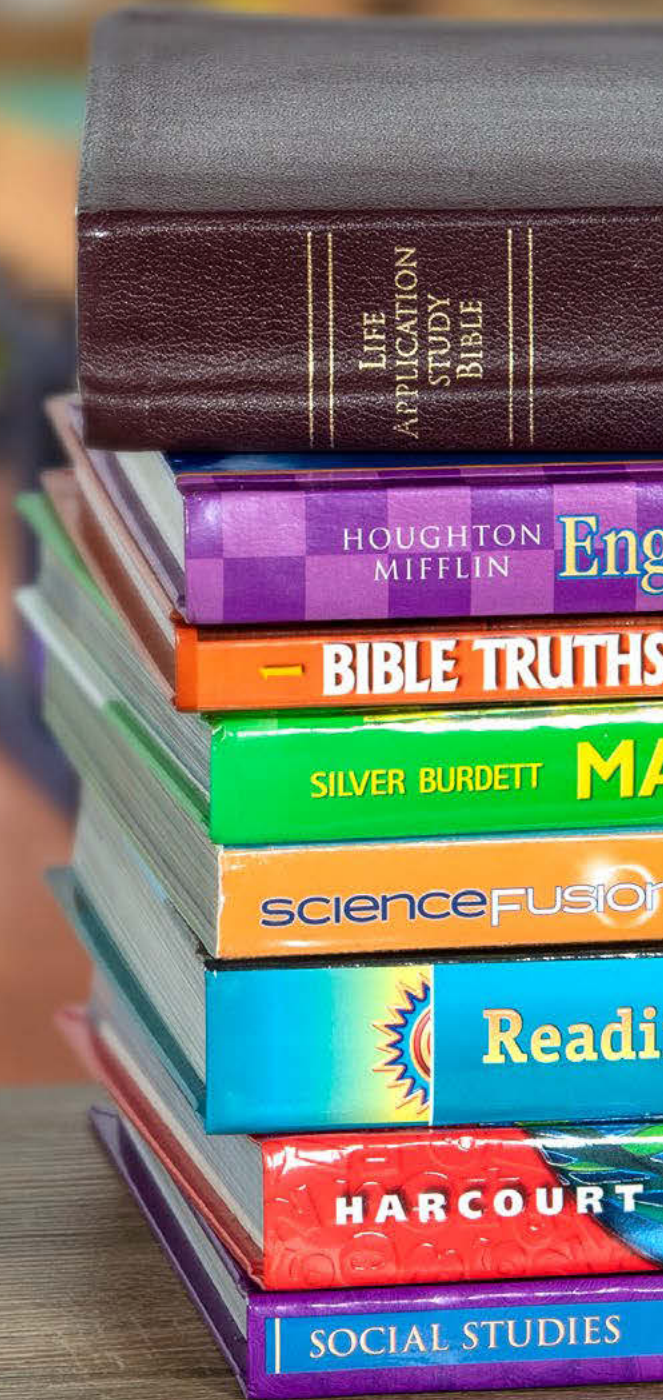
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REJECT, REDEEM, RECEIVE

HOW TO DEVELOP TEACHERS WITH
DISCERNMENT AND GODLY WISDOM

BY KEVIN JONES



David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the renowned minister of Westminster Chapel in London, once said, “The only way to understand yourself or your life is to start with God. And right at the very beginning the Bible takes us there. If you are not clear about this, you will go wrong everywhere else.”

Philosophy has the tendency and capacity to encroach upon the mind and actions of people and often does not start with the Bible, but with the thoughts of men.

Philosophy is not new. Correct and incorrect thoughts about God are not either. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve did not trust God, and they fell because in their hearts and minds, they believed they knew best. After the Fall, human hearts continued in their hardened posture toward the Word of God.

Because they do not start with God, many theorists and philosophers are wrong. They claim to know what is best without submitting their thoughts to the wisdom of God’s written, infallible, and authoritative Word. So, what are current and future educators to do with theories and philosophies when they are more abundant than flavors of ice cream?

Read them, evaluate them in the light of Scripture and place them under Scripture’s authority, then reject what Scripture rejects, redeem what is misunderstood by man but clear in Scripture, and receive what is in line with Scripture.

Thorough scrutiny, however, is a daunting task. Contemporary theories regarding the way people learn and develop — such as behaviorism, constructivism, educational humanism, essentialism, and progressivism — each offer some benefits, but also many issues for educators. Yet, our future teachers must completely understand each one as they contend in the public square. The founders of each theory had their own beliefs, their own theses, their own hope for what the theory would accomplish, their own idea of the effect of their theory, and its longstanding impact.

SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

All areas of philosophies, be they metaphysics, axiology, or epistemology, should fall under the authority of Scripture. The Bible narrates how the world came into being; the Bible

explains how we learn and understand; the Bible guides how we should think; and the Bible shows how we should live in the world. The School of Education’s responsibility is to ensure our students understand that memorizing Scripture and clearly defining these terms and ideas do not suffice. The goal is to live in a way that honors God, so we will no longer conform to the world’s pattern but instead have transformed minds capable of discerning the Lord’s good, pleasing, and perfect will as we serve mankind.

We are sending students into the world who will humbly leverage their identity and position as Christian educators to serve others.

We will no longer conform to the world’s pattern but instead have transformed minds capable of discerning the Lord’s good, pleasing and perfect will.

The School of Education continues the hard work of developing future educators who know what to reject, redeem, and receive from various theories and philosophies. Questions like “How do I incorporate Christ in this lesson?” “How do I live

out my calling in the place the Lord has sent me?” “Why do I teach?” “What should I teach?” “What do I leave out?” and “How can I excel in educating myself and others?” are essential for educators to answer as they design, implement, and evaluate the lessons they teach. Keeping the Lord on the throne and theorists in their proper place makes this process successful.

We are reminded in 1 Corinthians 1:18–31 about the heart of man: “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.” Yet what many see as foolish, we as believers understand and receive as the “power of God.” We want our students to walk in the power of God and stand against all forms of worldly wisdom, which are foolishness compared to the wisdom of God. And to do so with boldness, not timidly and fearfully. We hope they can each say with great joy, “My message is foolish, and I am okay with looking like a fool.” We reject with great joy whatever stands in opposition to the Word.

CRITICAL THINKERS

We are training critical thinkers with enhanced analytical abilities — minds prepared and eager to engage the culture with the Gospel. As every educator must remember, speculation is not the truth. The Bible is true, and the Bible



does not speculate. We simply trace the hand of God from Genesis to Revelation, and the evidence is present. Even so, we scrutinize with grace because we are reminded of Paul's words at the end of 1 Corinthians 1: "Brothers, consider your calling: Not many were wise from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth. Instead, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world — what is viewed as nothing — to bring to nothing what is viewed as something, so that no one may boast in his presence" (vv. 26–29).

Some theories offer helpful components, but can't compare with the Gospel nor should they be compared, for there is nothing to compare. It is like being hit by a drop of dirty water compared to the rushing power of the Pacific Ocean. The Scripture says, "I will destroy the power of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart" (1 Cor. 1:19). Where is the one who is wise? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the debater of this age? We can find them in textbooks, classrooms, and in P–12 and postsecondary classrooms around the world.

Our calling is to live out what we know is true.

Theories and philosophies stem from man's sinful heart — his goals, hurts, disappointments, values, preferences, dispositions, context, and feelings. Compare this to Scripture, which is breathed out by God. So, the process of rejecting, redeeming, and receiving the writings and thoughts of men will always be a task for the believer. This task will show us the folly of men and the wisdom of God. Our calling is to live out what we know is true.

Jeremy Kimble, Associate Professor of Theology, reminds us in his lecture "God, Hermeneutics, Theology, and the Academic Disciplines" that our responsibility is to "show how the fall affects our disciplines and how we should do them to bring praise to the greatness of God." The training we impart is simply a means to share the Gospel, make disciples, and serve image-bearers of all ethnic backgrounds, physical and mental abilities, and socioeconomic status. The Gospel we have is for everybody.

Kevin Jones is Dean of the Cedarville University School of Education and Assistant Professor of Education. He earned his Ed.D. in leadership education from Spalding University.