

A Biblical Foundation for the Integration of Faith and Learning

John Wesley Taylor V

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the Holy Scriptures are the written Word of God—inspired, trustworthy, and authoritative (Ministerial Association, 1988). Although Christian education does not appear as one of the 27 fundamental doctrines, it is nevertheless viewed historically by the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church as a core ingredient in the fulfillment of its mission. This may be evidenced by the prolific writings on the subject of education by Ellen G. White (e.g., White, 1923, 1943, 1952, 1968), a founder of the denomination, as well as by the extent of the SDA educational system, now one of the largest sectarian educational organizations, with over five thousand schools, colleges, and universities, and nearly one million students.

A core concept in the Adventist philosophy of education is the “integration of faith and learning” (IFL). Many Adventist educators, in fact, see this construct as a distinctive ingredient of SDA education that must be nurtured in an assertive, on-going manner. Evidence of this position, for example, may be found in the frequent sessions of the International Faith and Learning Seminars, sponsored by the Institute of Christian Teaching since 1988. Essays developed at these conferences are published in the scholarly series *Christ in the Classroom* (Rasi, 1991-2000).

Given the centrality of Scripture in Adventist theology and the importance of the IFL principle in SDA educational philosophy and practice, it stands to reason that such a concept should find substantial support in the Scriptures. This paper seeks to examine this Biblical foundation and provide thereby a defensible rationale for the integration of faith and learning in Christian education. It should be understood, however, that this presentation does not pretend to be an exhaustive account of all Biblical passages relevant to Adventist education. Rather, it endeavors to highlight exemplary passages from Scripture that undergird the integration of faith and learning, and that can serve as a point of departure for further research and reflection.

Formation of the Christian Mind

Although the integration of faith and learning can be approached from various perspectives, perhaps the most basic Scriptural concept is embedded in Philippians 2:5, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Set in the context of the incarnation, this passage proposes, first of all, the existence of the Christian mind. Furthermore, it maintains that believers must undergo a personal, transformational process—the receiving of the mind of Christ. Finally, it affirms that as Christians, we must think Christianly.

According to 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, there are two types of individuals: (1) the natural man or woman, who has no discernment of spiritual things, and (2) the spiritual person, who discerns all things from a spiritual point of reference, having received the mind of Christ. The passage indicates that the difference lies in the mind. Romans 8:6, 7 corroborates this view, "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God." There are thus two kinds of minds, the carnal mind and the spiritual mind. The carnal orientation runs counter to God and His truth. It is a secular mind—a temporal, world-oriented, fragmented perspective (see Figure 1). By contrast, the spiritual mind is a Christ-like mind, in harmony with God's plan for life and the universe at large. It thus incorporates an eternal, supernatural, holistic perspective.

Figure 1. The Two Minds (Rom. 8:6-7)

<p>Living for the present Just do it! Enjoy it while it lasts! Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die (1 Cor. 15:32).</p>	<p>An eternal orientation Every decision, every action in this life has eternal consequences.</p>
<p>Assuming that this world is all there is Decisions and behaviors are limited to the criteria of "this world" (2 Cor. 4:4).</p>	<p>A supernatural focus Seeing life from God's point of view. Making value judgments based on God's character.</p>
<p>Segmenting existence One's life is reduced to a fragmented collection of ideas and activities. Often a spiritual/secular dichotomy.</p>	<p>A wholistic worldview Not dichotomized nor compartmentalized. Rather, Christianity embraces all of life.</p>

Often, individuals seem to assume that the mind is analogous to a suit of clothes—something one puts on and off at will, depending on the season (perhaps the basis for the oft-heard expression "I just changed my mind"). The Christian mind, however, requires a certain stability, a faith commitment. James states, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God... and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting ["nothing wavering" KJV], for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (1:5-8).

Note that there are three conditions to receiving wisdom: commitment, faith, and petition. By contrast, a "double-minded" person, oscillating between a secular and a spiritual perspective, is caught in a mental dichotomy and cannot not receive anything from God—much less the mind of Christ and its consequent wisdom. Whenever there is a living spiritual commitment to God, however, evidenced in singleness of mind and purpose, there is born the prayer of faith, which results in wisdom, the gift of God.

This faith commitment, this singleness of mind lies at the heart of the Christian experience. Christ Himself declared, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.... He who is not with me is against me,

and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Matt. 12:25, 30 NIV). In essence, the Christian mind is either completely Christian, or it is not Christian at all.

Comprehensiveness of Life and Learning

Singleness of mind brings about a comprehensive, holistic, Christ-centered view of life and learning. This is in direct contradiction to a dualistic perspective.

Early on, the Gnostics divided man into matter (evil) and mind (good). Based on this Greek dualism, we also have tended to fall into dichotomous forms of thinking—such as soul/body, piety/action, world/church, mercy/justice, liberty/responsibility, love/authority, theory/practice, student/subject, and faith/learning. The result is a fragmented thinking, and a compartmentalized, polarized life.

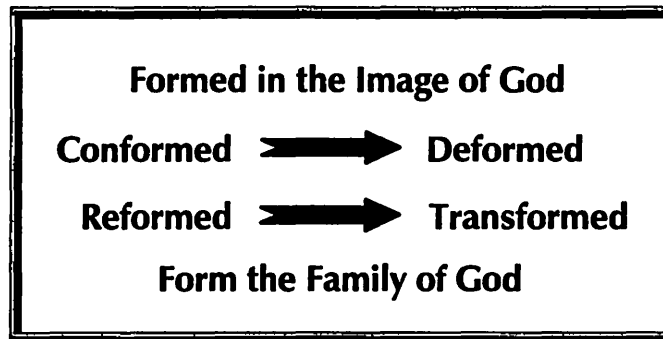
Perhaps the most dangerous dualism for the Christian, however, is to think that some aspects of life are spiritual and others, secular. Sometimes, in fact, we begin to think secularly even about sacred things—such as baptisms, offerings, and Christian education. The Word, however, emphasizes that we must "Put on the new man, who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised..., slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all" (Col. 3:10, 11).

This pervasiveness of Christ in every aspect of life is echoed throughout the Scriptures. "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). What are the implications for education? First of all, it would seem that all aspects of life—even such common activities as eating and drinking, teaching and learning—must glorify God. Teaching, furthermore, is a matter of both words and deeds. To teach "in the name of Jesus" means to act as His official representative—to say what He would say, to act as He would act.

Paul highlights this imperative: "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" (2 Cor. 10:5 NIV). Curricular programs are made up of courses, courses are comprised of topics, topics of concepts, concepts of ideas, and ideas of thoughts. Thus, if every thought is captive to Christ, it implies that every class period, every subject area, and every educational experience must be consequently anchored in Jesus Christ.

How do these conditions come about? Romans 12:2 admonishes, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." In the very beginning, mankind was formed "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:26, 27). Tragically however, man chose to be conformed to this world, to take the distorted shape of sin, to be pressed into the mold of this secular age. As a result, man was deformed—he began to lose the original form, the likeness to his Creator. The good news is that, by the grace of God, human beings can be reformed by a renewing of the mind—a spiritual rebirth. This reformation brings about a change—a metamorphosis, a radical transformation in which the image of God is restored in men and women, who form the family of God (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Processes of Change (Rom. 12:2)

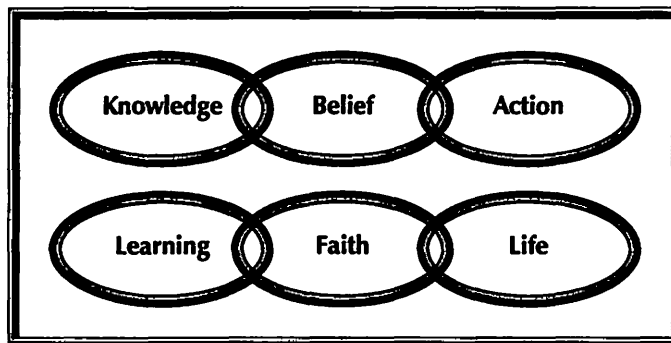


As the Apostle Paul aptly summarized, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world [a secular worldview], but the Spirit who is from God [a Christian worldview], that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God” (1 Cor. 2:12).

Integrating Faith, Learning, and Life

According to Scripture, faith, learning, and life are closely intertwined. Paul states, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). And the apostle James declares, “Faith, without works, is dead” (James 2:17; also 1:22-25). It seems evident that faith and learning have been intimately joined through the power of the Word (see Figure 3). It is not sufficient, however, to merely know, nor even to believe. Rather, there must be a life response. “In your lives, you must think and act like Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5 NICB). Christians must thus translate faith into practice and grapple with the implications of learning for their lives. Let us consider briefly each of these components from a Biblical perspective.

Figure 3. Linking Faith, Learning, and Life (Rom. 10:17; Jms. 2:17)



Faith. Christ asked his disciples, “When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). Faith is not blind devotion or lame belief. Rather, faith is a reasonable commitment, based upon substantial evidence (Heb. 11:1). Christianity, then, is a matter of significant acts and facts, not simply vague theories or interesting speculations.

Furthermore, faith does not exist in isolation, in a vacuum. It must have an object. One must have faith *in* something or someone. What type of faith then is needed? (see Figure 4) The overarching tier in the faith paradigm is faith in God, based on an understanding of God that

is both theological (knowing *about* God) and relational (knowing God *personally*). This faith is complemented by confidence in God's revelation of His truth, His character, and His plan. The third type of faith—sometimes the most difficult to attain—is faith in persons, in the potential of others and of self, by the grace of God.

Learning. To learn is to change. It is a transformation of heart, mind, and being. It represents a change in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or values. Christ invited His listeners, "Come unto Me... and learn from Me..." (Matt. 11:28, 29). What type of learning is needed? First of all, there must be a change in the mind—learning to think Christianly. This is followed by a change of life—learning to live by faith.

Life. Life is more than mere existence. Christ declared, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Life then goes beyond simply coping and surviving; it goes beyond self. In its fullest sense, life is God-centered, for God is Source of life. He is the Sustainer of life. He is the ultimate Focus of life. "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent" (John 17:3). What type of life is needed? (1) Eternal life, a gift of God through Christ, (2) a productive life, transforming knowledge into practice, and (3) a meaningful life, filled with love toward God and man.

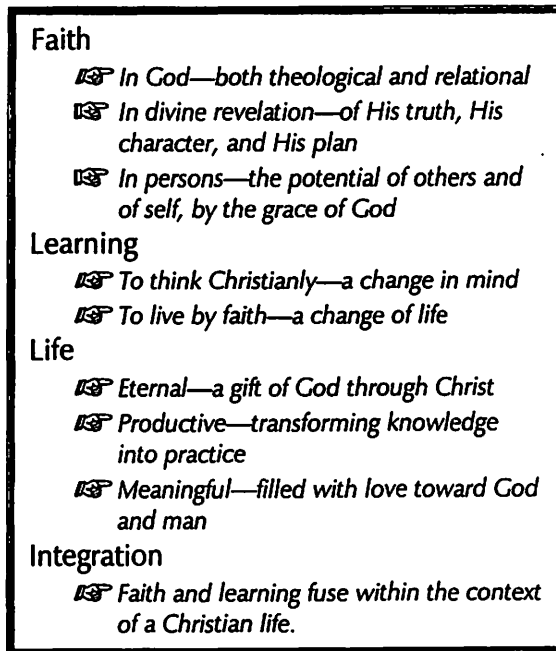
Integration. Referring to the marriage union, Christ stated, "They are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matt. 19:6 NIV). This covenant is analogous to the concept of integration. The integration of faith, learning, and life is more than a mingling or chance encounter. Rather, it is a dynamic union, a bringing together of fragments into a living whole.

What then is the integration of faith, learning, and life? It is when Christian beliefs and values provide the focus and core of the academic endeavor; which, in turn, seeks to relate Christianity to the entirety of human existence and culture.

An Integrated Educational Program

One of the most significant passages in Scripture to delineate the features of a Christian curriculum is found in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, verses 4-9. This passage begins by declaring, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!" This verse, considered by many Jews to be one of the most sacred in the Torah, identifies God as the *focus* of the

Figure 4. Integrating Faith, Learning, and Life



educational program (see Figure 5). This emphasis is reiterated throughout Scripture. “For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6). “My purpose is that they may... have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:2-3 NIV). God, in essence, is the core curriculum.

Figure 5. *The Integrated Curriculum (Deut. 6:4-9)*

The next verse (Deut. 6:5) describes the *dynamic* and *scope* of the curriculum. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.” In Christian education, love is to be the prime motivational component. Truth, in fact, must always be spoken in a context of love (Eph. 4:15). Further, the scope of the educational program must be comprehensive and holistic.

The *source* and *instrument* of the curriculum are next identified. “These words which I command you today shall be in your heart” (6).

The words of God include His written Word, the Holy Scriptures (Rev. 1:1, 2); the illustrated Word, as seen in God’s created works (Ps. 19:1); and the living Word, Jesus Christ (John 1:14). These divine Words constitute the great unifying factor in Christian education, the foundation of its curriculum. They bring about a transformation in learning and life. As Paul wrote to Timothy, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Note, however, that Deuteronomy stipulates a condition: the Words must first be internalized in the instrument, in the teacher’s life. One simply cannot share what one does not have.

Deuteronomy 6:7 specifies the curricular *process* and *setting*. “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” To teach diligently suggests that effort, perseverance, and excellence are required. Such instruction incorporates both receptivity and activity (“sitting” and “walking”). It takes place both “in the house” (the classroom) and “by the way” (real life experiences), thus linking together theory and practice. Furthermore, it identifies certain prime moments for learning—“when you rise up” and “when you lie down” (the start and end of the day). Given that the most important dimension of life is one’s relationship with God, this would seem to suggest setting aside prime segments of the day (including the school day) for worship and devotional experiences.

Finally, in verses 8 and 9, the passage addresses the curricular *dimensions* of the educational program. “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Note that four dimensions are specified. God’s words are to be on the hand, guiding one’s actions

- **Focus:** God (4)
- **Dynamic:** Love (5a)
- **Scope:** Comprehensive and holistic (5b)
- **Source:** The Word—Written, Illustrated, and Living (6a)
- **Instrument:** Committed teacher (6b)
- **Process:** Diligent and excellent, receptive and active (7a)
- **Setting:** Prime moments for learning, linking theory and practice (7b)
- **Dimensions:** Physical, intellectual, spiritual, and social development (8,9)

and physical development. They are to be before the eyes, directing one's thoughts and intellectual growth.

What about the doorposts and the gates? It's important to recall these words were spoken to the Israelites who had recently left Egypt for the Promised Land. On that last night, they sprinkled the blood of the lamb on their doorposts in evidence of their faith commitment. In Bible times, as in many places today, the gates of one's courtyard were considered to be the avenue of contact with the larger world. Messages, in fact, would often be posted on the gates to announce important events—a form of communication, of witness. The "doorposts" and "gates" thus suggest that God's words should guide the student's spiritual as well as social development.

These four dimensions of the Christian curriculum seem to be of particular significance. Luke 2:52, for example, states that Jesus Christ developed in four areas—"in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (see Figure 6). But perhaps even more important is the understanding that God's Word is to serve as the foundation for each dimension. In essence, every aspect in the Christian educational program must be Christ-centered, Bible-based, student-related, and socially-applied.

Figure 6. Dimensions of the Christian curriculum (Deut. 6:8, 9; Luke 2:52)

God's People	Writing upon the door posts	Frontlets between the eyes	Sign upon the hand	Writing upon the gates
Jesus Christ	Favor with God	Wisdom	Stature	Favor with man
Metaphor	Heart	Head	Hand	Humanity

Role of the Instrumentalities

The Scriptures identify the *parakletos* (the Comforter), parents, priests, and pastor/teachers as the principal instrumentalities in the teaching/learning process. Of these, the Holy Spirit is paramount. "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26 NIV).

Although the Holy Spirit can speak directly to the mind of the student, it also mediates through the other divinely appointed instrumentalities. Paul, for example, stated, "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Cor. 2:12-13). He also noted that the changes brought about in students' lives were the result of the Spirit of God operating through human instrumentalities. "You are manifestly an epistle of Christ," he wrote, "ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart" (2 Cor. 3:2-3).

In the Biblical model, the first educational agency is the home. Consequently, parents are to assume a significant, ongoing role in the education of their children. Psalm 78:1-7, for example, highlights the intergenerational teaching relationships. “We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God” (NIV). This sentiment is echoed in other Scriptural passages, such as Ps. 34:11, Isa. 38:19, and Eph. 6:4. This latter passage, for example, enjoins fathers to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (KJV).

In Old Testament times, the role of parents was supplemented by that of the priests. “For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction—because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty” (Mal. 2:7 NIV). In the New Testament period, the church functioned as the extended family of God and every leader of the faith community was considered a teacher (Giles, 1989). These leaders included apostles, prophets, bishops, elders, and deacons. Elders, for example, were enjoined to teach by example and to see themselves as “shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-3 NIV).

There were, however, individuals who were especially commissioned for the work of teaching. “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul further observes that God “gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13 NIV). It is important to note that based on the Greek text, the passage refers to four groups of people (Hocking, 1978, p. 21), with the function of pastor and teacher considered to be one and the same gift. Thus pastors are to see their role as teachers of their congregations, while teachers are to understand their calling as shepherds (i.e., pastors) of their students. Notice that the ministry of these pastor/teachers results in a development of faith, knowledge, and service; in essence, an integration of faith, learning, and life.

In the Biblical paradigm, however, teachers are but representatives of the Master Teacher. “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us” (2 Cor. 5:20). An ambassador, of course, receives authority, as well as the responsibility to present an accurate, appealing picture of whom he represents. “If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:11 NIV; also 2 Tim. 2:15). In the ultimate sense, then, God is the teacher in Biblical education. As the prophet Isaiah pointed out, “And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great

shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:13 KJV). The original text denotes something more than just learning *about* God. Rather, students are to be taught *by* God, through His human instrumentalities.

Perspectives on Content and Method

From an integrational perspective, divine truth and values form the bedrock of the educational experience. An understanding of God's truth is mediated through His Word (John 17:17), under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). It is also illustrated tangibly through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Given that all truth in any subject area is ultimately God's truth (Holmes, 1977), students must be led to relate the truthfulness of every topic they study to the ultimate Source of Truth.

The integration of faith and learning also emphasizes the importance of moral values in the formation of the character. "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). Teachers, for example, are to help students understand "the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean" (Ezekiel 44:23 NIV). This is best accomplished through a process of values formation and maturation that involves analysis, reflection, and action. The apostle Paul portrays that vast value-laden agenda for Christian education: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble [honest KJV], whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you" (Phil. 4:8-9 NIV).

This perspective regarding God-derived truth and values-oriented learning permeates every subject area. In the sciences, for example, students must be encouraged to integrate the words and works of God. The basis for this integration is found in the fact that the Living Word formed nature (John 1:1-4), that God set aside a day of rest in which to especially view nature in a spiritual context (Ex. 20:8-11), that Christ derived spiritual truth from natural settings (e.g., Matt. 6:28-30; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 12:6, 7), and that in the New Earth, the redeemed will continue their study of God's creation (Isa. 11:6-9).

An integrated Bible-based approach to language and literature might incorporate the understanding that it is God who gives the gift of creative expression (Gen. 2:19, 23). While sin can distort language (Gen. 11:4-9), God takes the initiative to bridge the communication gap (Acts 2:7-12), restoring and reuniting language (Rev. 7:9, 10). It may also consider the concept of the study of quality literature as a Christian mandate (1 Tim. 4:13), as well as the existence of literature that is worthless or positively injurious (1 Tim. 6:20). It may further help the student realize that there are God-given standards for Christian literature (Phil. 4:8), and that life is either uplifted or debased by what we read (2 Cor. 3:18).

In the arts, an integrational approach might seek to help the student to develop Christian criteria for evaluating musical renditions, as well as other art forms. This might include an analysis of the following considerations, among others:

- Is it in harmony with divine values? (Phil. 4:8)
- Does it direct attention toward God, rather than toward self? (Isa. 14:12-14)
- Does it glorify immoral conduct? (Ex. 32:15-19)
- Can it be listened to, played, or sung to the glory of God? (1 Cor. 10:32)
- Does it mingle the sacred and the common? (Lev. 10:1, 2)
- Is its effect to bring one closer to God? (Mat. 7:20)

Similar Bible-based approaches might be developed in any subject area—technology, history, psychology, research, social studies, manual arts, to mention a few.

Illustrations of IFL in Practice

Having sought to establish from Scripture a conceptual framework for the integration of faith and learning, we should also note that the Bible also provides multiple examples of these concepts at work. We consider, in chronological order, a representative sample.

Abraham, father of the faithful (Rom 4:16), instructed his extended family to adhere to a God-centered code of ethical conduct. “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment” (Gen. 18:19 KJV). In later years, the priests and Levites were charged with educating both adults and children in the divine precepts (Lev. 10:10, 11). This was to be especially performed at the yearly feasts and during the sabbatical year (Deut. 31:9-13 NIV).

During the time of the kings, some, such as David (Ps. 119:12; 143:10), endeavored to understand God’s revealed will and transmit that, in turn, to their people. Most, however, failed to instruct the nation in the ways of God, with resulting apostasy and national ruin. “For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach and without the law.... In those days it was not safe to travel about, for all the inhabitants of the lands were in great turmoil. One nation was being crushed by another and one city by another” (2 Chron. 15:3-6 NIV).

There were moments of revival and reformation, however, and these were brought about largely through education. A case in point may be found in Jehoshaphat’s reform. “In the third year of his reign he sent his officials ... to teach in the towns of Judah. With them were certain Levites ... and the priests.... They taught throughout Judah, taking with them the Book of the Law of the LORD; they went around to all the towns of Judah and taught the people. The fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands surrounding Judah, so that they did not make war with Jehoshaphat. Some Philistines brought Jehoshaphat gifts and silver as tribute, and the Arabs brought him flocks: seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred goats” (2 Chron. 17:7-11 NIV).

The reformation influence was seen in the case of Daniel and his friends. Although studying at a secular institution, they continued to integrate faith and learning on a personal level. They stood firmly for divine principle (Dan. 1:8-16), turning to God as the source of wisdom and understanding (Dan. 2:18-23). The result was remarkable. “To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. At the end of the time set by the king to

bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar.... In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom" (Dan. 1:17-20 NIV).

After the exile, another reformation took place, prompted through the teaching/learning process. Ezra, a scribe who "had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel" (Ezra 7:10 NIV), read the Word of God before all the people. He was joined in this work by the Levites. "So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God, and they gave the sense, and helped [the people] to understand the reading" (Neh. 8:1-8). The responsibilities of these educators were threefold—proclamation, explanation, and exhortation (Pazmiño, 1997). The response of the learners involved listening, understanding, obedience, and worship. The outcome, a revival of godliness among God's people.

Jesus Christ, in His ministry, taught multitudes and individuals, children and adults. But His focus was invariably God-centered, values-oriented, and anchored in the Scriptures.

Consider these passages:

- Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...." (Matt. 5:1-3 NIV).
- Now so it was, as the multitude pressed about him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret... And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. (Luke 5:1-3)
- Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council, came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God...." (John 3:1-2 NIV).
- Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:14)
- And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself... And they said to one another "did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:27, 32)

In the early Christian church, Philip, one of the seven deacons, was directly involved in a Spirit-led teaching/learning situation. "Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man [an Ethiopian official] reading Isaiah the prophet. 'Do you understand what you are reading?' Philip asked. 'How can I,' he said, 'unless someone explains it to me?' So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.... Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus" (Acts 8:30-31, 35).

Timothy, one of Paul's fellow workers, received Bible-based instruction as a child from his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). The Church later recognized in him the gift of teaching and commissioned him for this ministry. Paul refers to this singular event, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to

teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you" (1 Tim. 4:13, 14 NIV).

Similarly, Titus, a Gentile convert supervising the work of the church on the island of Crete, was appointed to teach various groups of individuals according to their distinct needs and responsibilities (Titus 2:1-10, 15). These groups, which included older men and women, younger men and women, and slaves, were to be given a Bible-based, values-oriented education.

Finally, all Christian believers are called to teach the words of God, in whatever context they find themselves. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19-20 KJV). It is perhaps significant that the word "teach" ("make disciples" NKJV) is the only imperative in this verse in the Greek, thus constituting the thrust of this gospel commission.

Conclusion

The concept of the integration of faith and learning in Christian education seems to be biblically defensible. The Scriptures present evidence regarding the importance of receiving the mind of Christ; the comprehensiveness of Christian life and learning; as well as the interrelationships of faith, learning, and life. Furthermore, the Bible delineates the parameters of an integrated educational program, describes the role of divine and human instrumentalities in the educational process, and provides spiritual perspectives for both content and method. Finally, the Word of God presents an array of real-life examples of the integration of faith and learning in practice.

Through the integration of faith and learning, Christian education remains distinctive—in the world, but not of the world (John 17:15, 16). It enables students to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Such education represents a challenge, a high calling for teachers, administrators, and all other involved constituencies. It is, nevertheless, attainable. "Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, 'Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, 'Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?' No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it" (Deut. 30:11-14 NIV).

Today, however, we must choose whom we will serve—whether the gods of traditional education that our mentors served on the other side of the river, or the gods of this secular age in which we now live.... Or the one True God (adapted from Joshua 24:15). May our faith commitment affirm, "But as for me and my house, as for me and my classroom, as for me and my school, we will serve the Lord!"

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the texts of Scripture quoted are from The New King James Version, copyright 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers. Texts credited to KJV are from the King James Version. Texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*, copyright 1973, 1978, International Bible Society.

About the author: John Wesley Taylor V, PhD, EdD, is professor of education and research at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS), the General Conference institution of graduate education for the Asia-Pacific region. His e-mail address is taylor@aiias.edu.

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