

A Framework for Teaching Business from a Christian Worldview

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ABSTRACT: Business faculty at Christian colleges and universities are oftentimes challenged to teach from a Christian worldview. It can be difficult to teach from a Christian worldview without a structure or framework for doing so. This article will define a Christian worldview then offer a framework consisting of five questions that can be answered through a creation, fall, redemption, and restoration narrative for business faculty to employ in their respective disciplines. This framework will be explained theoretically, and then some practical applications will be provided.

KEYWORDS: Christian worldview, teaching from a Christian worldview, business faculty

INTRODUCTION

Business faculty at Christian universities are often asked to teach from a Christian worldview. Roller (2021) says that Christian business faculty should “provide students with opportunities to read and study scripture” (p. 57). The mission of the Christian Business Faculty Association is to, “empower Christian business faculty to transform the world for the glory of God.” There is an expectation for business faculty to successfully integrate a Christian worldview into their courses, but in practice, it is not always an easy thing to do.

The reality is that three issues arise when institutions assume that faculty know how to teach from a Christian worldview. First, many faculty find it difficult to integrate faith and learning (Dickens et al., 2015). Next, embedding a Christian worldview into the business curriculum is not always a natural process (Ashton, 2017). Finally, effectively integrating a Christian worldview into courses takes time and effort (Christian & Christian, 2018). While there are solutions to the first two issues above, the reality is that it does take additional time and effort to successfully integrate a Christian worldview into business courses. Murison (2018) makes a disturbing observation that Christian schools that do not allow a biblical worldview to make a significant impact on their operations are merely an adaptation of their secular counterparts.

The purpose of this article is to help business faculty find practical ways to apply a Christian worldview to their unique disciplines. A framework of five foundational questions coupled with the biblical account of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration will be presented to assist business faculty in their pursuit of faith integration into the subject matter. A definition and overview of a Christian worldview will offer business faculty a starting point for developing an effective framework for their courses.

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW?

Prior (2021) explains how worldview is a translation of the German word *weltanschauung*, meaning a framework for one’s basic belief about things. A Christian worldview would make Christianity, or a Christian view of the world, the framework for a follower’s belief system. Finding the starting point on something like Christian worldview is difficult. As James Orr (1908) claims, the concept of worldview is as old as thought. Naugle (2002) observes that the Christian worldview goes back to the Bible. Kuyper (2011) in the late 1800s explained how the Bible was the foundation of all knowledge, and only Scripture could distinguish between true and false knowledge. While the term “worldview” is more contemporary, the concept of a Christian worldview finds its roots in the Bible.

One of the more comprehensive definitions for worldview comes from Sire (2009), who defines worldview as a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being. (p. 20)

Phillips et al. (2008) state that “through His creation (the universe) and His Word (the Bible), God has shown man how to make sense of the world and his life” (p. 27). The Bible is at the heart of a Christian worldview, allowing one to make sense of the world through the scriptural narrative. Sire (2004) points to seven questions to help define the presuppositions that help form one’s worldview. One’s worldview offers answers to the foundational questions of life.

THE FIVE FOUNDATIONAL QUESTIONS

While the five foundational questions in this article are not specific to business disciplines, they can be used to apply a Christian worldview to any business discipline. Several models employ some variation of these five questions to help faculty teach from a Christian worldview (Grove Christian School, 2019; Settecase, 2019; Sire, 2014).

1. Who is God?
2. Who am I?
3. Why am I here?
4. Why are people the way they are?
5. What is the remedy?

The Bible must be consulted to offer answers to the five foundational questions. Jesus made clear the authority of Scripture (Matthew 5:18). Paul also points to the utility of Scripture in equipping men and women for God’s work (II Timothy 3:16-17). While it is not possible to fully answer all five of the foundational questions biblically in this article, a brief overview with selected scriptures will be offered.

Who is God? According to Genesis 1:1, God is the Creator. Revelation 4:8 explains that God is eternal and thrice holy. Psalm 75:7 and Isaiah 33:22 speak of God as the judge. God’s holiness and justice bring His wrath upon sinful man. Thankfully, God is also merciful and full of grace in accordance with Hebrews 4:16 and Ephesians 2:4-5.

Who am I? I am God’s divine workmanship, according to Ephesians 2:10. Genesis 1:26-27 reminds me that I am created in the image of God. I have a sin problem that separates me from a holy God per Psalm 14:1-3 and Romans

3:23. II Corinthians 5:17 states that I can be a new creation through Christ Jesus.

Why am I here? II Corinthians 3:16-18 states that I am here to reflect God’s glory and to bring glory to Him. Jesus tells me in Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:19-20 that I am to proclaim His gospel to everyone and teach everyone to follow biblical commands.

Why are people the way they are? This goes back to the sin problem in Psalm 14:1-3 and Romans 3:23. It all began with the fall in Genesis 3.¹ People in sin are far from God and His ways per Proverbs 15:29 and I Corinthians 1:18-20.

What is the remedy? The cure for the sin disease is true repentance for sin and faith in Jesus Christ. Romans 10:9-10 displays the inward and outward change this repentance and belief makes in the life of a believer. Mark 1:15b says, “Repent and believe in the gospel.” Paul claimed in Acts 17:30b that God “commands all people everywhere to repent.” In Acts 16:30-31 a Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas what he must do to be saved, and their response in verse 31 was, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.”

Faculty now have the concept of worldview, a brief explanation of the Christian worldview, and the five foundational questions to answer in business courses, but one additional thing is needed. A story to express the Christian worldview. While the Bible offers the most complete story, it is not reasonable to think that business faculty can teach the whole counsel of the Bible in a semester. Is there an easier way for business faculty to tell the story without diluting the importance of Scripture?

CREATION, FALL, RESTORATION, AND RESTORATION

Running the risk of oversimplification, a scriptural narrative might be explained in basic terms. While not original to Wolters (2005) or Arnott (2021), they break a Christian worldview into three categories: Creation, Fall, and Redemption. Some (e.g., The Gospel Coalition, n.d; Schmucker, 2017) have added a fourth category: Restoration. Creation, fall, redemption, and restoration can be briefly explained biblically.

Creation. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” He is the Creator. According to Genesis 1:2a, God created everything out of nothing. God is the only one who can create something out of nothing. Again, He is the Creator. God’s creation was good throughout Genesis chapter 1. This means that God’s creation was a reflection of the Creator—good. Everything

worked just as He planned for it to work, and His creation was to bring Him glory through its goodness (Welchel, 2015). According to Genesis 1:26, God created humans in His image. Colossians 1:16 states that Jesus is the mediator of all creation. He was there and had a hand in creation.

Fall. Genesis chapter 3 outlines the fall. The serpent deceived Adam and Eve, and sin entered the world. God's good creation was fractured. Romans 8:22 says, "For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now." All that God created as good is now groaning in pain because sin entered the world. The problems in the world today can be traced back to the fall in Genesis chapter 3.

Redemption. God launched His rescue plan through Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:7 says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." The separation that sin caused between a Holy God and fallen man can be erased through Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 5:18-19 states, "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

Restoration. Hahne (2010) states, "[A]t the end of history God will reverse the damage from the Fall not only to humanity, but even to nature itself" (p. 19). Everything will be restored to the way that God intended creation to be in Genesis 1. Revelation chapters 21 and 22 point to a new heaven and new earth and a time when there is no more curse (fall). God will restore His creation to the time when everything was good.

Taking Sire's (2009) definition of worldview, faculty in business courses can use the creation, fall, redemption, and restoration narrative of the Bible as the expressed story or set of presuppositions in which to frame business concepts. Specific examples will be offered in a later section of this article. The shared story can be useful for answering five foundation questions in the business classroom.

APPLICATION IN THE CLASSROOM AND ONLINE

Business faculty now have a framework and structure for applying a Christian worldview in their courses. There are three parts to the framework:

1. Understanding definitionally what a worldview is and how it works.
2. Using the five foundational questions to frame worldview in the classroom or online.

3. Implementing a creation, fall, redemption, and restoration story into the subject matter to answer the five foundational questions.

Borrowing from Sire's (2009) definition of worldview, it is an orientation of the heart that can be expressed as a story about reality that is the foundation for which one lives and moves and has their being. It is how one makes sense of the world, and faculty can use the five foundational questions to start challenging students to apply a Christian worldview to business. The creation, fall, redemption, and restoration story of the Bible helps students answer the five foundational questions.

Figure 1 displays how the creation, fall, redemption, and restoration narrative of the Bible can potentially answer the five foundational questions in the classroom. Note the overlap. The answers to the four tertiary questions all stem from the primary question: Who is God? A Christian worldview offers answers to the five foundational questions, and it all begins with knowing the God of the Bible.

Practically, the application of a Christian worldview from this framework might look and feel differently in different business disciplines. A couple of examples will be offered in this article, but each faculty member will need to work through their courses to make this unique to what they are teaching.

In the Economics Class

Assume an economics faculty member is starting the semester off, and some early definitions of economics are being presented. Scarcity is at the heart of the definition of economics. According to Tucker (2019), scarcity is the condition in which human wants exceed available resources; therefore, economics is the study of how society chooses to allocate scarce resources. The foundational questions of "Who is God?" "Who am I?" and "Why are people the way they are?" can be explored to better understand the concept of scarcity. To do this, an economics faculty can use the creation story from Genesis 1 to point out that there was no scarcity in God's good creation. Adam and Eve had all of their wants fulfilled in God's good creation by the resources that He provided. The story of the fall in Genesis 3 shows students how scarcity entered the world. Adam and Eve's sin fractured the goodness of God's creation and now the human heart has unlimited wants but limited resources. The story of redemption and restoration shows students how Jesus can fix the brokenness of the fall and will one day restore everything to the way that God originally intended it to be. Until the time of restoration, we have to study the allocation of scarce resources. Notice how the creation, fall, redemption, and restoration story of scarcity in economics helps to answer the foundational questions of "Who is God?" "Who am I?" and

Figure 1: Five Foundational Questions Answered by Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration



“Why are people the way they are?” Not only do students receive a Christian worldview of scarcity, but they also have a much richer understanding of economics in general.

In the Legal Environment Class

Another example could come from a legal environment of business (business law) course. The topic might be fraud and statutory law. A faculty member could use the story of the fall to help explain the ethical failures of the executives at Enron. The legal and ethical failures of the Enron executives led to the creation of new statutory laws such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. This might create the opportunity to share the story of redemption by using Romans 7:7a: “What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin” (English Standard Bible, 2001). The law points people to their need for a Savior. Using the story of the fall and redemption modeled through the Enron situation, students can start answering the questions of “Who is God?” “Why are people the way they are?” and “What is the remedy?”

Do Not Neglect the Syllabus

Application of the Christian worldview framework in business classes should incorporate thoughtful consideration of course objectives and inclusion in the course syllabus. Zhou (2017) states that learning objectives highlight to students what is most important in a course, and they help

faculty implement good course design. The incorporation of components of the Christian worldview framework in business course syllabi shows students what is most important to the class. It is a best practice, then, to be explicit with the syllabus so that students can be better learners (Duquesne University Center for Teaching and Learning, n.d.). An example comes from an International Business and Ethics course, which has an objective on a syllabus stating, “Analyze systematically one’s personal values and ethics.” Assignments like discussion boards and case studies can help measure this course objective. Students can read the course objective on the syllabus, see the corresponding instruments of measurement, and understand the importance of the objective in the overall class. Faculty can then intentionally implement a framework incorporating the five foundational questions and a creation, fall, redemption, and restoration narrative to help students meet that objective.

CONCLUSION

This article sought to offer business faculty a framework for incorporating a Christian worldview into their courses. Borrowing from Sire’s (2009) definition of worldview, faculty can help frame the story and orientation of the heart that provides students a foundation in which they live and move and have their being. The framework offered answers

five foundational questions by utilizing the biblical narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

Business faculty who take the time and effort to effectively incorporate a Christian worldview in their courses offer students the pinnacle of knowledge. It is not just knowledge that comes from a textbook or experiences, but the knowledge that comes directly from the Lord. Proverbs 2:6 says, “For the Lord grants wisdom! From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.” Business faculty have the unique opportunity to work collaboratively with God in educating students.

ENDNOTE

- ¹ Genesis 3 depicts the great deception that the serpent sowed in the heart of Eve. Eve then shared the deception with Adam who willingly participated in disobeying God’s command. Their sin broke the goodness of God’s creation.

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