

# Why Bible College?

by Dr. Jerry Tetreau

Why Bible College? Let's look at all three words: *why*, *Bible*, and *college*. Should we look at all the two-word combinations as well? That would be a large enough challenge for this article: Why Bible? Why College? and Bible College?

## Why?

The word *why* often speaks of inquiry for the reason. Webster's 1828 dictionary gives the etymology of the word, mentioning the close relationship in Saxon of the words *hwi* and *hwig* (for *why* and *which*). It points out that the French *pour quoi* combines both (for *why* and for *what*). Webster then lists four distinct uses of the English word. As he often did, he begins by examining how the word is used in scripture.

1. *For what cause or reason, interrogatively. Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?* (Jer. xxvii).
2. *For which reason or cause, relatively. No ground of enmity, Why he should mean me ill.* (Milton).
3. *For what reason or cause; for which; relatively. Turn the discourse; I have a reason why I would not have you speak so tenderly* (Dryden).
4. *It is used sometimes emphatically, or rather as an expletive. If her chill heart I cannot move, Why I'll enjoy the very love.* (Cowley).

A person's asking a question may be an implication of an open mind or that the speaker is teachable. The one asking the question may also be trying to teach. Consider the early questions in scripture. The first recorded was asked by the serpent: "Yea, hath God said. . .?" Later God asked, "Where art thou?" "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?" God asked Eve, "What is this that thou hast done?" In Genesis 4 we

have the sad story of Cain and Abel. God asks angry Cain three questions and follows with two more.

Perhaps you have heard folks ask, "Why Bible college?" They may have an open mind or a closed mind. To ask may be a good thing; it may be a bad thing. Let us later consider the cause, the reason for a Bible college!

## Bible

Webster's 1828 gives the etymology of the word *bible*: it come from *biblos*, the Greek word for book. Webster next defines Bible:

*THE BOOK, by way of eminence; the sacred volume, in which are contained the revelations of God, the principles of Christian faith, and the rules of practice. It consists of two parts, called the Old and New Testaments. The Bible should be the standard of language as well as of faith. (Anon.)*

Charles C. Ryrie speaks of general revelation and special revelation. Psalm 19 speaks of God's general revelation

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(vv. 1-6) and special revelation (vv. 7-11). J. Gresham Machen refers to these as God's two books: the book of His **works** and the book of His **words**. General revelation (God's work in nature) is how He reveals Himself to all people. Special revelation, by contrast, does

not necessarily come to all people. Examples of special revelation would include the use of the lot, the urim and thummim, dreams, visions, theophanies, angels, prophets, and even Jesus Christ, our Lord (Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 63-64).

John 21:25 makes it clear that we do not know all that Jesus did or said. However, the Bible is where we learn about the life of Christ. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen" (John 21:25). The Bible informs us about special revelation and revelation in general. The Bible is accurate (John 17:17), progressive (Hebrews 1:1), and purposeful (2 Timothy 3:15-17). "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:15-17). (I prefer the archaic King James translation of the word *thoroughly* to the more recent choice, *thoroughly*. Webster's 1828 defines *through*: "from end to end, or from side to side." The commonly preferred spelling *thoroughly* means completely. It is the Bible that will equip a believer through and through, from end to end. To be poorly dressed and **thoroughly** chilled is to be chilled to the bone. To fall into the lake and be **thoroughly** soaked is to have all one's skin, hair, and clothes wet.) The Bible is a means to equip one from the inside out. The internal is causative to the external.

By presupposition and by faith, we know the Bible is infallible; we also can know the Bible is true by experi-

ence. “There exist factual, historical evidences which constitute the Bible’s credentials and validate the truth of its message” (Ryrie, p. 65). I know the Bible is true because God says so AND it works in life!

## College

The word *college* can refer to an association of individuals having certain powers and duties and engaged in some common pursuit (e.g.: the electoral college) (*Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language, 2nd college edition, 1982*). We use *college* in this article to refer to an institution of higher education that grants degrees. This is the word often used to describe a student’s study of four years leading to the bachelor’s degree; it may refer to a school offering specialized instruction in some profession or occupation.

At the incarnation, Jesus took upon Himself flesh, but He did not set aside His deity; this union of deity and humanity is a great mystery. In His humanity, we read, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52). Jesus developed intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially. We must not develop less. Men and women need to grow intellectually as a part of complete education. College can help. The Bible college can most effectively help.

College-level education has changed much since the founding of Harvard. The settlers’ most effective tool for the propagation of the old culture was postsecondary education. Those European settlers tried to duplicate the practices of the old world. The churches provided the leadership; Christian tradition the foundation (Brubacher, John C. and Willis Rudy, *Higher Education in Transition*, 3rd ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1976, pp. 5-6)

Private colleges in the United States from the beginning were church-related, liberal arts institutions. The original mission of church-related colleges was to spread the Christian gospel while educating ministers for the new churches which were being established on the

frontier (Wright, Richard A. and John A. Burden, eds., *Teaching in the Small College—Issues and Applications*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1986, p. 131).

The early mission of Colonial colleges can be seen in Harvard’s early product: over 50 percent of its graduates became ministers in its first sixty-five years (Wright and Burden, p. 131). Secularization took its toll: the percentage

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dropped to just 50 percent by 1750, to 22 percent by 1801, and to 6.5 percent by 1900 (Beale, David O., *Pursuit of Purity—American Fundamentalism*, Greenville, S.C.: Unusual Publications, 1986, p. 88).

## Why Bible?

Two presuppositions are the foundation for a Christian philosophy of life and ministry: God exists and God has spoken. In His spoken word we read of the creation of man, the fall of man, and God’s plan to redeem fallen man to Himself. Genesis 1 and 2 record the creation, chapter 3 the fall, and the rest of the Bible, God’s plan of redemption.

Three foundational dictates can be found in God’s word: the Creation Mandate (man is to be a take-charge being), the Great Commandment (man is to love God and others as himself), and the Great Commission (man is to make disciples, looking to God so that those new disciples can continue the cycle). These three dictates apply to the preacher in the pulpit and the person in the pew; they apply to those in direct ministry and to those in indirect ministry.

In 1823 Noah Webster wrote to a young

man about to commence his formal education. Webster told him to answer three questions from his Bible: “Who made me?”, “Why was I made?”, and “What is my duty?” He also advised the young man to study thoroughly the Ten Commandments and the attributes of God and to consider what influence these ought to have on his life.

A society that turns its back on God’s “Ten Words” will not hesitate to disobey authority, to steal, to lie, to commit adultery, to lust, or to put themselves and material possessions above the Creator. They will mock at the practice of worshipping the one true God rightly and regularly.

Yes, fallen man was given the law (*torah*, the instruction on how to live); fallen man was given the Ten Commandments (God’s high standard for living). God gave man directives and principles in His word that will serve as a lamp to the feet and a light to the path (Psalm 119:105). However mankind has not heeded the warning of the Bible’s middle verse, Psalm 118:8: “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.”

Fallen men and many carnal Christians appear to ignore Jeremiah 17:5: “Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.”

Why Bible? Jesus said that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Man with a living soul must feed on the living word. For the Christian, there are two irreducible minimums relating to scripture: first, the Bible must be received as it is—the infallible Word of God; second, Bible principles must be laid at the bottom of every subject, every area of life. Laying the Bible as the foundation of every area of life and study amounts to more than sprinkling a verse of scripture here and there. This is a challenge for life-long learning, life-long working, and life-long living.

Without receiving the light of God’s Word, one will fall in the ditch as surely

as “the blind leading the blind” (Matthew 15:14). If one wants to study the best form of human government, can he afford to ignore the Bible passages that speak to that area? Isaiah 33:22 identifies the three functions of government God uses to direct His people: “For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.” Because the LORD is righteous, these three functions can be exercised by Him. Because man is a fallen creature, there must be a balance of power to help offset the evil in man’s fallen nature.

### Why College?

Even a cursory look at the falling quality of education reveals the need for post-secondary education. Have you had a look at the questions given at the end of eight years of education a century ago? Have you taken a look at the percentage of math courses being taught in our community colleges today that are remedial—not for college credit? If you are a tax payer, you may not want to look. Ask ten high school graduates what is the meaning of the mathematical *pi*. Ask a cashier to make change. Ask if they accept Alaskan currency.

How is it that we have not taught students how to think, how to learn, and thus how to lead? Grade inflation has contributed to the dumbing down of society. Do you know the average level of reading speeds and reading comprehension of incoming freshmen students in college? I have been teaching speed reading to college freshmen and am thrilled with the increase in reading speed without comprehension levels falling. But why are these students doing so poorly at the start of the course each year?

What percent of 20-year-old students have learned to write clearly and effectively? Do they know the purpose of the introduction, what constitutes an effective body, what is the proper function of a conclusion? Does the body have unity, emphasis, and coherence?

A purpose for education ought to be helping young people learn how to make valid decisions independently.

What percentage of our youth is ready to handle household finances and parent children at age 21? What percentage of our youth leaves high school having developed the discipline of not

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quitting? Most importantly, are our young people leaving high school ready to lead a family and produce responsible children?

### Bible College?

In 1947, Dorothy L. Sayers spoke at the University of Oxford on “The Lost Tools of Learning.” The presentation is challenging to read. She spoke of the folly of too-early teaching specialization. More specifically, she faults education that has not first taught the student how to learn. She points out that the Mediaeval syllabus was divided into two parts—the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*. The *trivium* consisted of Grammar (study of Latin), Dialectic, and Rhetoric (art of effective communication). This study would help the student learn how to learn. Upon the mastery of the *trivium*, the student received the Bachelor of Arts and was ready to begin the *quadrivium*; the ceremony was

called commencement. The *quadrivium* consisted of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. This study ended in the Master of Arts. She makes the point that theology was the queen of the sciences that held all learning together.

Education that is not built upon the firm foundation of biblical theology is not equipped to answer the big questions of life. Even the Christian college graduate who cannot answer life’s most difficult questions is not ready to live and to minister like Christ.

All education is built on a philosophical base: either humanistic or theistic. It is possible to have a secular base in a Christian climate. It is also possible to have education that lays Christ and the Word of God in the foundation of all instruction. A Bible college is in the best position to answer the question, “What does the Bible say about this subject?” A Bible college is in the best position to answer the question, “What does God expect of me if I am to live and minister like Christ?”

### Why Bible College?

The knowledge of God’s Word gives the Christian student a filter through which to sift the ideas presented in every man-made book. Bible college education can equip the student with the tools for continuing lifelong learning that puts the first emphasis on finding out the mind of God on any given subject.

Why Bible College? God knows best and He has given the only sure manual for the Christian’s faith and practice.

### About Dr. Jerry Tetreau

Jerry C. Tetreau, often called “Dr. T”, has been involved in Christian education since 1967 having served as a teacher, Christian school administrator, and, since 1979 at Tri-City Baptist Church, as the Academic Dean, Vice President, and President of IBC. He currently serves as IBC’s Chancellor. Married to his wife Kit for almost 50 years, Dr. T has two children and five grandchildren.

