

# STUDY GUIDE

This study guide will help you master the major worldview themes in *Total Truth*. Through additional stories, examples, and illustrations, you will gain practical experience in applying what you have learned. You will also join a “conversation” with earlier readers whose questions and comments helped to shape the material. Each chapter begins with several discussion questions to clarify and expand its central themes, then ends with a short list of review questions (“Test Yourself”), followed by suggestions for open-ended learning activities (“Continuing the Conversation”), which are especially valuable for small group study.

I am thankful to all who have contributed to the ongoing conversation about *Total Truth* since it was published, especially John Haynes, owner of Cornerstone Christian Store in Atlanta, Georgia, where I gave a presentation broadcast by C-SPAN’s Book TV; the Heritage Foundation; campus groups at Stanford University, Texas A&M, and the University of Georgia; Probe Ministries; the Portico; and several public policy groups, Christian colleges, and homeschooling organizations. Online reviews have sparked a lively discussion in the blog world, thanks especially to Al Mohler, Tim Challies, and the reviewers for Stacy Harp’s Mind & Media. Finally, I have been honored to receive a wealth of correspondence from readers, and though unable to respond to each personally, I am grateful to all of you who continue to keep the conversation going.

*NOTE: Questions are thematic rather than strictly sequential. Page numbers are given so you can cross reference broad themes throughout the book.*

## ***Introduction***

The Introduction lays out the unifying themes that run like so many silver threads through the tapestry of the book. Let’s work through several new examples to make sure you have those threads firmly in hand before moving on. Since underlying worldview themes often bubble to the surface during times of cultural upheaval, we will begin with illustrations from the 2004 presidential election that help us to identify long-standing worldview conflicts.

The election was nothing less than “a conflict between two worldviews,” pitting “faith against reason,” said Jonathan Freedland in the *Guardian* (Oct. 20, 2004). In the *New York Times* (Nov. 7, 2004) Maureen Dowd fumed that moral conservatives would replace “science with religion, facts with faith.” The cover of *Stanford Medicine* (Fall 2004) featured a dramatic illustration of a clergyman holding up a Bible, facing off against a white-coated scientist holding up a test tube, with the ground cracking open between them. The message? That America is becoming divided between those who believe the Bible, and those who believe in science.

1. *Our worldview detectors ought to buzz loudly whenever we hear phrases like “faith against reason.” How do the examples above express the fact/value split? (20-22)*

The defining feature of the 2004 election was a “morality gap,” said Thomas Byrne Edsall in the *Atlantic Monthly* (Jan./Feb. 2003). In the past, the left/right division in American politics was over economic issues. It was an accepted axiom that people vote their pocketbooks. But today the cutting-edge issues have to do with sex and reproduction: abortion, homosexual marriage, embryonic stem cell research, and so on. “Whereas elections once pitted the party of the working class against the party of Wall Street,” the article concludes, “they now pit voters who believe in a *fixed and universal morality* against those who see moral issues, especially sexual ones, as *elastic and subject to personal choice*.”

Notice that the issue is not the *content* of morality (i.e., which actions are right or wrong) so much as the *truth status* of moral claims. Is morality a universal normative standard? Or merely a matter of subjective preference? This question lies at the heart of the cultural conflict that will continue long past the election.

2. *The morality gap pits those who hold an objective view of morality against those who reduce morality to subjective “values.” Explain the difference. (20)*

At the Democratic National Convention, Ron Reagan, son of the former president, made a widely publicized remark about opponents of embryonic stem cell research. “Their belief is just that—an article of faith—and they are entitled to it,” he said. “But it does not follow that the theology of a few should be allowed to forestall the health and well-being of the many.”

What’s the worldview here? Notice that people are invited to believe whatever they want—they’re even “entitled to it”—so long as they are willing to hold it

as a subjective “article of faith,” *not* something objectively true that should be allowed to guide scientific research.

3. *Which side of the morality gap is Reagan on? How can you tell? (20-21)*

To be cultural missionaries, we must understand the language of the people we want to reach. A college economics textbook explains the modernist definition of *fact* and *value*:

“Facts are objective, that is, they can be measured, and their truth tested. . . . Value judgments, on the other hand, are subjective, being matters of personal preference. . . . Such preferences are based on personal likes and feelings, rather than on facts and reasons” (*Economics for Decision Making* [D.C. Heath, 1988]).

4. *How does the definition of values in this quotation differ from the way Christians typically use the term? How does this explain why we often have difficulty communicating in the public arena? (22, 176-178)*

What we see in these examples is that the challenge to Christianity is much more radical than it was in the past. Secularists used to argue that religion is *false*—which meant at least we could engage them in discussions about reasons, evidence, logic, and arguments. But today secularists are much more likely to argue that religion does not have the status of a testable truth claim at all.

To get a handle on this, imagine you present your position on some subject and the other person responds, “Oh, that’s just science, that’s just facts, don’t impose it on me.” Of course, no one says that. But they *do* say, “That’s just your religion, don’t impose it on me.” Why the difference? Because science is regarded as public truth, binding on everyone, while religion has been reduced to private feelings relevant only to those who believe it.

5. *Explain how the fact/value grid functions as a gatekeeper to keep Christian perspectives out of the public square. (21-22)*

“Science is a predictive discipline based on empirically falsifiable facts,” says physicist Lawrence Krauss. “Religion is a hopeful discipline based on inner faith.” In other words, religion is no longer even considered in the category of true or false. There’s a story about a famous physicist, Wolfgang Pauli, who once told a colleague, Your theory is so bad, *it’s not even wrong*. It’s not even in the ballpark of possible answers. That’s how religious claims are regarded today: They are not even candidates for truth.

6. *Why is the fact/value split the main reason for the “cultural captivity” of the gospel? ( 22)*

TEST YOURSELF:

7. *What is the difference between fundamentalism and evangelicalism? Which more closely describes your own background? (18)*

8. *In your view, are Christians today too quick to reach for political solutions? (18-19)*

9. *Explain what a worldview is. What are the biblical roots of the idea that everyone has a worldview? (23-24)*

10. *The concept of worldview “remains largely a buzzword used in the context of political discussions and fundraising for Christian parachurch organizations,” writes Ray Bohlin of Probe Ministries (<http://www.probe.org/docs/totaltruth.html>). Describe other common misinterpretations of the concept. (24-25, 26, 50-51)*

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:

*Collect examples of the fact/value dichotomy from books, movies, conversations with friends. How can we get past the gatekeeper, making it clear that Christianity is not a private “value” but a claim to cosmic truth?*

## PART 1

### *Chapter 1*

While setting up for a television interview, the host explained to me that the program aimed at being biblical in both message *and* methods. “For example,” she said, “we don’t exaggerate the number of our listeners.”

“Of course not,” I responded. Not fudging the numbers seemed a pretty obvious moral principle.

“Most people in the industry do,” the host replied, explaining that certain statistical tricks are commonly used to inflate audience numbers. “When we told another Christian television producer that we don’t use those tricks, he said, ‘What? You don’t inflate your numbers? Then how do you stay in business?’”

Sadly, it is possible to be Christian in our beliefs, yet secular in the way we live. Chapter 1 opens with the story of “Sarah” who was a sincere believer, but who had absorbed moral relativism as part of the professional ethos of her field.

1. *How do stories like these illustrate the danger of the sacred/secular split? (31-33)*

The vast majority of Christian colleges and universities perpetuate the sacred/secular divide, according to a study by Robert Benne (*Quality with Soul* [Eerdmans, 2001]). He calls it the “add-on” approach because it treats Christianity as something *added on* to the curriculum—through chapel, Bible studies, and prayer groups—while the course content is essentially the same as in any secular university. These colleges define themselves as Christian primarily because of their ethos and atmosphere, not because they teach a distinctive vision of the world.

The upshot is that many of our churches and schools are turning out young people who are Christian in their *religious* life, but secular in their *mental* life. As a result, it is all too easy to absorb secular worldviews from the surrounding culture.

2. *What are the dangers of an “add-on” approach? (36-39, 44)*

The Enlightenment treated reason as a neutral source of truths, independent of any philosophical or religious commitment. But the Augustinian view is much more holistic, teaching that when we turn away from God, our minds rationalize our sinful choices and become “darkened” (Romans 1:21). As a result, claims made in the name of reason often reflect hidden religious and philosophical motivations.

3. *What does it mean to say there is no neutral knowledge? (38-46, 93-94, 98-99)*

Labels like “science” or “reason” are often used to mask a hidden agenda. During the 2004 campaign, Eleanor Clift criticized President Bush in *Newsweek* (Aug. 13, 2004) for allowing religion to inform public policy in matters like abortion, while she praised John Kerry for keeping faith out of politics. “Voters have a choice,” she concluded, “between a president who governs by *belief* and a challenger who puts his faith in *rational decision-making*.”

What’s the implication here? Obviously, that Christianity is *not* rational. But notice that Clift is also presenting the liberal position as though it were not any

particular ideology, but only a rational weighing of the facts. The article was titled “Faith Versus Reason,” as though liberal views were purely a product of reason.

In reality, the liberal position on abortion and bioethics is an expression of utilitarianism and pragmatism, based on a cost-benefit analysis. The lesson is that worldviews do not come neatly labeled. No one says the conflict is a *utilitarian, pragmatic* standard of ethics versus a *normative, transcendent* standard. No, they say it’s science versus religion, facts versus faith. Whenever we hear that kind of language, we should aim our worldview detectors beneath the surface to uncover the implicit worldview assumptions.

4. *What does materialism propose as ultimate reality? Naturalism? Empiricism? Pantheism? (41-46, 135, 147, 389)*

Critics often debunk Christianity as irrational and biased, based on faith—while presenting secular beliefs as unbiased and objective, based on reason. But this is sheer bluff. All systems of thought are structurally the same: Each starts by proposing *something* as ultimate reality, then seeks to explain the world on that basis—spinning out the implications, garnering empirical support, and so on. By uncovering these hidden assumptions, we can level the playing field among competing worldviews.

5. *After I converted to Christianity, a college classmate said, “You can’t be objective, like I am.” How would you respond to this kind of dismissal? How is the concept of neutral reason often used to discredit Christianity? (38-46, 93-94)*

#### TEST YOURSELF:

6. *The text says “Sarah” held Christianity as a collection of truths but not as Truth about all of reality. Explain the difference. (32-33, 34-35, 398 note 3)*

7. *The idea that the secular realm is unbiased and neutral arose during Europe’s religious wars. Explain how it developed. (381-382, 448 note 2)*

8. *How do Christians explain the wide range of practical agreement among people holding divergent worldviews? (43)*

9. *Many readers of Total Truth say the discussion on mathematics was especially powerful in opening their eyes to the impact of worldviews. (43-44) Of course, some fields are more “worldview sensitive” than others. Explain why. (399 note 25)*

10. *According to the doctrine of Creation, God is the source of all cosmic order—not just the moral order but also the physical order, social order, political order, aesthetic order, etc. How does this provide a basis for a Christian worldview? (34-35, 45-46, 84)*

11. *How does a biblical doctrine of “vocation” inform our understanding of worldview? (47-51)*

#### CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:

*The stories that conclude chapter 1 illustrate how a Christian may recognize data that others miss because they are blinded by secular presuppositions. Collect other instances where a biblical perspective directs our attention to facts that others overlook due to worldview blinders. (58-62)*

### *Chapter 2*

When financial scandals erupted a few years ago across the corporate world, Christians were shocked to learn that some of the top executives were regular churchgoers, even deacons and Sunday School leaders. They attended church on Sunday, but during the rest of the week they were cooking the books for their own self-enrichment. “Top managers of firms such as Enron, Global Crossing, and, it now appears, Xerox systematically lied about the condition of their enterprises to rationalize granting themselves huge sums diverted from equity,” writes columnist Gregg Easterbrook in an article appropriately titled “Greed Isn’t Good” (The New Republic Online, July 1, 2002). “If this isn’t common theft—lying in order to abscond with someone else’s money—what is?”

Why are Christians sometimes susceptible to corruption? The answer has much to do with the sacred/secular split. As Dan Edelen writes ([www.dedelen.com](http://www.dedelen.com)), “Their tragedy—and ours—is their disjointed worldview that kept their faith from influencing their real-life work situations.” Believers who live in a two-story mental universe do not sense any obligation to apply a biblical perspective to their work—which means that some *other* worldview seeps in to fill the vacuum. Many Christians in business have absorbed the legally enshrined “finance model,” which portrays corporations as amoral entities existing solely to maximize profit and shareholder value—a worldview that makes it far too easy to rationalize immoral practices.

1. *Using Os Guinness’s image of a “toolbox,” explain why failing to develop biblical tools of analysis makes us susceptible to picking up non-biblical tools. (44)*

Those who act as “enablers” for the misdeeds of others are likewise responsible. When scandals broke at Tyco, the corporate attorney turned out to be a devout Catholic (see Steve Fishman, *New York* magazine, Aug. 9, 2004). Though not found legally guilty of criminal wrongdoing, jury members still said, “He was morally guilty.” Why? Because he had failed to follow up on clear indications of corruption, while allowing his own impeccable reputation to shore up the company’s image.

Recently a well-known minister and speaker was forced to step down because of alcohol abuse and other moral failings, which prompted a fellow pastor to write an article apologizing to the public. Why? Because he had continued to invite the minister to speak at his own church even after seeing signs of the problems. By letting his own name be associated with the speaker, he had helped prop up the man’s credibility and shield him from accountability.

*2. How do these scandals remind us that the topic of worldview is not merely academic, but has a profoundly practical impact? How can we hold Christians in leadership positions accountable?*

If asked to apply a biblical perspective to their work, many believers wouldn’t know how to do much more than quote Bible verses—which is rarely effective in a secular setting. To engage with modern culture, we need to construct a general account of the world that “translates” biblical truth into the language of the various disciplines: a Christian *philosophy of business and economics*, a Christian *philosophy of science*, a Christian *philosophy of politics*, and so on. A worldview functions as a bridge that takes us from Scripture to the issues of our time.

*3. Since the Bible does not explicitly address many aspects of modern society, how do we make the case that Christianity applies to every area of life? (47-49, 50, 81)*

The sacred/secular split is a hangover from Greek dualism, and we recognize it today in a tendency to rate professional religious work as more valuable than other forms of work. A high-ranking government official who attended Harvard told me, “In my campus group, the message was clear: If you really wanted to live for the Lord, your options were The Three M’s. You could be a minister, a missionary, . . . or a Mrs. (the *wife* of a minister or missionary).”

Another reader says that until reading *Total Truth*, “I had never even considered that the secular/sacred dichotomy was *not* part of the Christian worldview. I’d always been brought to see ‘true’ Christian work as the ministry, while

the rest of us were to do the best we could in our ‘regular’ work so as to be able to give more to ‘ministry’ work.”

4. *Do these stories describe attitudes you have encountered? (66-67, 74-77, 80-83) How would you explain that all valid callings are forms of obedience to the Cultural Mandate? (36-37, 47-49, 86-87)*

An especially clear example of the medieval nature/grace dualism comes from the writings of Dante—yes, the same Dante whose *Divine Comedy* you read in English class. “Man’s goal is twofold,” he writes in *Monarchy*, “happiness in this life” and “happiness in the eternal life.” The earthly goal we can reach by “the exercise of our own powers” of reason. But the heavenly goal requires “spiritual teachings which transcend human reason,” that is, “revealed truth.”

The most familiar critique of this nature/grace dualism was by Francis Schaeffer, but it has been criticized on a more scholarly level by Catholic thinkers (80, 94, 404 note 58, 405 note 7). The most penetrating analysis was by the French Jesuit Henri de Lubac in *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*. The problem with the idea of “parallel, duplicate orders,” he explained, is that the dimension of grace came to be viewed as a mere addition to nature, “a sort of second story carefully placed on top of a lower nature” ([Herder & Herder, 2000, 1965], 234). Lubac found seeds of this false dichotomy in Thomas Aquinas (though not yet in a pernicious form). Eventually it led to the idea of a natural order functioning independently of God in the lower story, which was responsible for a drift toward naturalism that has continued to our own day.

5. *If nature operates independently of God, then it can be understood solely by reason and science—and theology will be regarded as irrelevant, even an intrusion. How would a teacher react if you suggested a serious consideration of a Christian view of history, economics, psychology, or any other subject in the classroom today?*

#### TEST YOURSELF:

6. *Why have many churches succumbed to a therapeutic form of religion? (68-69)*

7. *Did you find the survey by Christian Smith helpful in giving a firsthand glimpse into the ways we often privatize religion? (69-73)*

8. *Total Truth is not written as a history of philosophy but as a history of ideas. That means it does not give a full, comprehensive account of various philosophers, but asks only how each one contributed to the development of a spe-*

*cific idea—namely, the two-story divide. Explain how Platonism and Aristotelianism influenced Christian forms of dualism. (74-82, 92-94, 99-101, Appendix 2)*

9. Explain “structure” versus “direction.” (85)

#### CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:

*Many readers say the discussion of Creation, Fall, and Redemption was the most helpful part of the entire book. Apply the three-part grid to better understand your own theological background. (83-95)*

### Chapter 3

A person is merely an automaton—“a big bag of skin full of biomolecules” interacting by the laws of physics and chemistry, says Rodney Brooks of MIT (*Flesh and Machines* [Pantheon, 2002], 174). It is not easy to think this way, he admits. But “when I look at my children, I can, when I force myself, . . . see that they are machines.”

And yet, and yet. “That is not how I treat them. . . . They have my unconditional love, the furthest one might be able to get from rational analysis.” If this sounds incoherent, Brooks admits as much: “I maintain two sets of inconsistent beliefs.”

This is a secular form of dualism, and chapter 3 traces its emergence through Descartes, Kant, and several contemporary thinkers. Let’s tune up our worldview detectors for a closer look.

Steven Pinker’s worldview could be called scientific naturalism—nature is all there is. Our minds are nothing but computers, complex data-processing machines. This is Pinker’s professional ideology, the one he adopts in the laboratory. Yet when he goes home to his family and friends, he realizes that his scientific naturalism doesn’t work. You can’t treat your wife like a complex data processing machine. You can’t treat your children like little computers, as Brooks admits in the quotation above. So in real life, these scientists admit that they have to switch to a completely contradictory paradigm—one that has no basis within their own intellectual system. As Marvin Minsky puts it, we are “forced” to believe in freedom of will, “*even though we know it’s false.*” False, that is, according to scientific naturalism.

1. Explain what a secular leap of faith is, and why the text calls this “the tragedy of the postmodern age.” (105-112, 217-221)

Christians who adopt the label *postmodern* say the church must leave the modernist age behind and move forward into postmodernism, or risk becoming irrelevant. But this is based on the mistaken idea that modernism and postmodernism are sequential stages in history. In reality, they coexist within the same two-track divide that has been endemic in Western thought since the ancient Greeks. Modernism remains firmly entrenched in the lower level—in the hard sciences and the world of politics, finance, and industry. (No one designs an airplane by postmodern principles.) Postmodernism is simply the current form of the upper level.

2. *How would you use this insight to respond to Christians who embrace postmodernism? (21, 113-115)*

This is not to deny that something new is taking place in our day. But a more accurate way to picture the change is that the two stories are moving farther apart from one another. In the downstairs, modernism is growing increasingly materialistic and reductionistic. Today there even is a school of thought called eliminative materialism that denies the reality of consciousness, reducing humans to “zombies” (111-112, 394). At the same time in the upstairs, postmodernism is growing ever more subjective and relativistic, celebrating the non-rational as a form of liberation (113-115).

You might picture the lower story angling downward while the upper story angles upward, with the gap *between* them growing ever wider.

3. *An analytical person—a scientist or engineer—is likely to be sympathetic to modernism (lower level). A creative person—an artist or writer—typically leans toward romanticism and postmodernism (upper level). How can we present the claims of Christianity in a credible way to both types?*

Many readers of *Total Truth* have asked, Does liberating Christianity from its cultural captivity in the upper story mean simply moving it to the lower story? Absolutely not! As chapter 3 shows, the lower story has been taken over by radical reductionism and positivism, with no room for any religious perspective. Our goal is to reject the dichotomy altogether, replacing it with a multifaceted concept of knowledge that recognizes many types of truth.

We still find relics in our culture of an older, holistic view of truth. A few years ago, a teachers association stated, “People have many ways of knowing about their world, including scientific knowledge, societal knowledge, religious knowledge and cultural knowledge” (415 note 74). That’s close to the biblical view, and we could add more categories as well, like mathematical, moral, and

aesthetic knowledge. A multidimensional conception of truth acknowledges many “ways of knowing” about the richly diverse world God has created.

4. *Explain why Christians reject the contemporary definition of both “fact” and “value.”* (119)

#### TEST YOURSELF:

5. *Secularists typically equate “reason” with materialism or naturalism—which renders Christianity “unreasonable” by definition. How would you show that they are cheating by assimilating a set of worldview premises into their very definition of reason?* (101)

6. *How does the upper/lower story analysis make sense of both theological liberalism and postmodern spirituality?* (115-118)

7. *What is the difference between the biblical concept of faith and the modernist leap of faith?* (111, 116, 119-122, Appendix 4)

#### CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:

*How would you make the case that Christianity gives a unified, logically consistent basis for exactly those things that are so problematic for scientific naturalism, like human dignity and moral freedom?* (110-111, 217-221, 314-321, Appendix 4)

### Chapter 4

As I was writing this study guide, Terri Schiavo died after her feeding tube was removed by a court order. Now, Christian ethicists agree that there is no moral obligation to prolong the dying process, but Terri was not dying. So the heart of the issue is a theory of “personhood” that says just being part of the human race is not enough to accord any intrinsic moral worth. You have to meet a set of *additional* criteria—a certain level of autonomy, the ability to make choices, and so on. Anyone who lacks full cognitive abilities is considered a “non-person,” a category that includes the fetus, the newborn, and the mentally impaired. Many ethicists have begun to argue that “non-persons” can be used for research and experimentation, or harvesting organs, or other utilitarian purposes. So let’s aim our worldview detectors at the ideas driving the culture of death.

It was René Descartes who applied the two-story divide to the human person. In his philosophy, the physical body is a glorified machine, while the mind is an autonomous power that in a sense *uses* the body in an instrumental way—almost the way you use a car to take you where you want to go (103).

In the 1970s, ethicist Paul Ramsey noticed that this Cartesian dualism had become the underlying worldview in abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering, and the other life issues (*The Patient as Person* [Yale University Press, 1970]). For a long time, pro-life groups have thought the battle was over getting people to agree that the fetus is human life. Today, however, abortion advocates are perfectly willing to say the fetus is *physiologically* human—but that fact is regarded as irrelevant to its moral status, and does not warrant legal protection. The deciding factor is “personhood,” typically defined in terms of autonomy or the power of choice.

*The two-story approach to life issues:*

### PERSONHOOD

Warrants Legal Protection

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### PHYSIOLOGICALLY HUMAN

Irrelevant to Moral Status

For example, during the 2004 presidential campaign, John Kerry surprised everyone by agreeing that “life begins at conception.” How, then, could he support abortion? Because, as he explained, the fetus is “not the form of life that takes [on] *personhood*” as we have defined it (ABC News, July 22, 1004).

This is the logic being applied to euthanasia. In a television debate, bioethicist Bill Allen was asked point blank, “Do you think Terri is a person?” He replied, “No, I do not. I think having awareness is an essential criterion of personhood” (Court TV Online, Mar. 25, 2004). Those who favored letting Terri die included some, like Dr. Ronald Cranford, who have openly defended denying food and water even to disabled people who are conscious and partly mobile, like the case of a Washington man who could operate an electric wheelchair (see Robert Johansen, National Review Online, Mar. 16, 2005).

*1. Critics say the pro-life position is based on mere faith that life begins at conception—yet the beginning of life is a biological fact. By contrast, arguments for abortion rest on the concept of “personhood,” a non-empirical, non-scientific philosophical concept. Does this suggest a way for pro-lifers to turn the tables on their critics?*

A similar dualism underlies the liberal approach to sexuality. The body is treated as simply an instrument that can be used by the autonomous self for giving and receiving pleasure. In a widely used sex education video, sex is defined as merely “something done by two adults to give each other pleasure”

(“What Kids Want to Know about Sex and Growing Up,” Children’s Television Workshop, 1998).

In fact, the cutting edge today is the postmodern idea that gender is a social construction, and therefore it can be *deconstructed*. People “don’t want to fit into any boxes—not gay, straight, lesbian, or bisexual ones. . . . they want to be free to change their minds,” says a magazine for homosexuals (Bret Johnson, *In the Family*, July 1998). “It’s as if we’re seeing a challenge to the old modernist way of thinking ‘This is who I am, period,’ and a movement toward a postmodern version, ‘This is who I am right now’.” All forms of sexual identity are treated as matters of choice.

“This is seen as liberating, a way to take control of one’s own identity, rather than accepting the one that has been culturally ‘assigned,’” writes Gene Edward Veith (*World*, Mar. 27, 2004). “At some colleges, students no longer have to check ‘M’ or ‘F’ on their health forms. Instead they are asked to ‘describe your gender identity history’.”

The body has become an instrumental tool that can be used by the autonomous self any way it chooses, in a pragmatic calculus of pain and pleasure:

#### AUTONOMOUS SELF

Uses the body any way it chooses

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#### PHYSICAL BODY

Morally neutral mechanism for pain or pleasure

*2. Christianity used to be criticized for having a low view of bodily life. But today it has a much higher view than secularism’s utilitarian, pragmatic view. The Bible teaches that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and will be resurrected at the end of time. How can we turn the tables to show that it is Christianity that gives a basis for a high view of embodied existence?*

The idolizing of choice lies at the heart of the crisis in marriage as well. In Rousseau’s social contract theory, the original human condition is a “state of nature” in which there are no relationships—no marriage, no family, no civil society. In this primal state, we are atomistic, disconnected, autonomous individuals (137-141).

But if this our natural state—if we are originally and inherently autonomous individuals—then where do social relationships like marriage come from? Answer: They are created by choice. And if we *create* marriage by choice, then clearly we can also *recreate* it by choice. We can redefine it any way we want.

Vice President Dick Cheney has defended homosexuality by saying: “People ought to be free to enter into any kind of relationship they want to” (CBSNews.com, Aug. 25, 2004).

3. *Explain how Rousseau’s ideas have filtered down to ordinary people, until today many regard any normative standards for marriage as discriminatory and oppressive.*

#### TEST YOURSELF:

4. *Explain why the Trinity is the Rosetta stone for Christian social theory. (130-134, 138)*

5. *The text says Greek philosophy defined the human dilemma as metaphysical instead of moral (76). What does that mean? Explain how the worldviews analyzed in this chapter likewise define the problem with human nature (the Fall) in metaphysical rather than moral terms. (127-149)*

6. *Practice applying the grid of Creation-Fall-Redemption to various worldviews you encounter, especially in your field of work.*

#### CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:

*Using the categories of Creation, Fall, and Redemption, construct the basic elements of a Christian worldview on politics and the state, business and economics, and other subjects.*

## PART 2

### *Chapter 5*

America’s public schools are growing more dogmatic in their teaching of evolution, but many teenagers aren’t buying it. In a 2005 Gallup poll of teenagers, 38 percent affirm that “God created human beings pretty much in their present form.” Another 43 percent hold that humans developed from less advanced life forms, “but God guided” the process. All told, 81 percent believe that God was somehow involved.

“You have to be educated into *not* seeing the design around you in the natural world,” comments Mark Hartwig (*Baptist Press News*, Mar. 9, 2005). “You have to be either bullied or . . . socialized out of it.”

Part 2 will equip you to protect yourself and your children from being bullied or socialized out of recognizing the design in nature. As you read about the standard evidence for Darwinism, make it your goal to grasp the underlying logic. You may encounter a wide diversity of examples in books, museums, and television programs, but all rely on the same logic—namely, that minute, nearly imperceptible changes add up over time to create new structures (limbs and organs), until finally a new species appears.

Because the process takes too long to be observed, the theory rests on an extrapolation—a projection into the past supposedly based on changes observed today. In reality, however, it *contradicts* the pattern of change we actually observe. Small-scale changes simply do not add up the way the theory requires.

1. *State in your own words why the logic of Darwinian theory is faulty.* (158-161, 165-168)

The reason the public is concerned about Darwinism is that it puts Christianity in the upper story, on the level of fantasy and fairy tales. In the *New York Times* (July 12, 2003), the Darwinist philosopher Daniel Dennett said bluntly, “We don’t believe in ghosts or elves or the Easter Bunny—or God.”

In a *Times* interview (Nov. 28, 2004), Richard Dawkins was once asked whether he would be so hard-hearted as to persuade a religious person “that his life was based on a falsehood,” if that person “had always harmlessly derived comfort and consolation from his faith.” Dawkins magnanimously replied that if the person “was really deriving consolation, perhaps in bereavement, from something I thought was nonsense, I wouldn’t wish to shatter that person’s dream.”

2. *Should Christians really seek this kind of concession—a grudging tolerance of religion so long as it is a harmless “dream”?* (106, 153-154, 174, 176-178, 202-203)

If the impact of Darwinism was to push religion off into the realm of wish fulfillment, then Creation gives the basis for recovering a unified truth (154-155, 247). Readers of *Total Truth* often ask what it means to talk about the unity of truth. It does not mean ignoring ordinary disciplinary boundaries: Science remains distinct from theology, mathematics from music, etc., and each discipline has its own appropriate methodology. The metaphor of two stories is picture language for the *truth status* of an idea. To put Christianity in the upper story is a way of saying it is grounded *not* in truth but in things like emotional need, myths and symbols, the will to believe, or cultural tradition.

Think of the rules of a game like baseball. “Three strikes, you’re out”—is that true or false? Neither, of course. It’s just a rule for playing the game. Similarly, theology is no longer regarded as a matter of true or false, but merely cultural convention or personal preference.

*3. Before we can argue that Christianity is true, we must often first make the case that it is even in the category of things that can be true or false. How would you make that case?*

Tragically, many Christians have capitulated to the fact/value split (177-178, 201-204). How can you test whether *you* have slipped into two-level thinking? Ask yourself two questions. First, if Christianity were decisively shown to be false, would you stop believing it? No doubt, you would take several years to think about it before taking such a significant step. But in the end, can you honestly say that if Christianity were persuasively shown to be false, you would stop believing it?

The idea that Christianity could potentially be falsified may seem contrary to the biblical admonition to have faith. But it is the attitude of Elijah on Mt. Carmel, subjecting God’s existence to a highly public empirical test. It is the attitude of Paul telling his audiences to consult the 500 people who were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ resurrection (116, 121).

*4. Think of similar examples given throughout Scripture.*

The second diagnostic question is whether religion has any consequences for other areas of knowledge. In the academic world, theology is expected to accommodate to the findings of science, but never the other way around. If you suggest that science should take into account the truths of theology—well, you have violated the canons of scholarship! Theology is allowed to give a spiritual spin on the story told by naturalistic science, but it is not allowed to change the story itself. It has to take *that* as a given.

*5. Is there two-way traffic between your faith and the way you think about work, social issues, politics, and family life? Or does the traffic go only one way? (115-116, 203-204)*

#### TEST YOURSELF:

*6. What is the difference between classic Darwinism and punctuated equilibrium? (165-168)*

*7. Define philosophical naturalism. What role does it play in the evolution debate? (156-158, 168-175, 202-205)*

8. *To what degree is a commitment to evolution driven by anti-religious motivations? (171-173)*

9. *How does the Intelligent Design paradigm represent a new approach to faith-and-science issues? (173-175)*

10. *“Every school child knows that values are relative,” Allan Bloom writes (177). He goes on: “They are not based on facts but are mere individual subjective preferences.” What do Christians communicate to the world when they use the term “values”?*

#### CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:

*Do you use mostly emotive language when talking about Christianity? The faith we hold dear? The beliefs we cherish? Comfort and consolation? That is like waving a white flag telling secularists not to take us seriously. How can we speak so that non-Christians will listen?*

### Chapter 6

Shortly after *Total Truth* was published, the academic world was rocked by the news that a prominent atheist had changed his mind. For the past half century, the name of philosopher Antony Flew was virtually synonymous with atheism. But now he has decided there is a God after all.

What brought such an entrenched atheist to change his mind? The scientific case for Intelligent Design (ID). Investigation of DNA “has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), that intelligence must have been involved,” Flew says in a video (“Has Science Discovered God?” The Institute for Metascientific Research, 2004). Though atheist colleagues were outraged by his change of mind, Flew replied calmly, “My whole life has been guided by the principle of Plato’s Socrates: Follow the evidence, wherever it leads.”

1. *Critics often dismiss ID theory as religion dressed up in scientific garb. But Flew’s turnabout shows that the evidence for ID can be weighed on its own merits. Are you convinced that Christianity is capable of standing up to the test of “following the evidence wherever it leads”?*

The media consistently distorts the goal of the ID movement, claiming that it wants to ban the teaching of evolution. Not so. Proponents of ID want *more* taught in schools, not less. They want to open the classroom to criticism of scientific naturalism and discussion of dissenting positions. Their slogan is *teach the controversy*.

This approach can serve as a model in other fields as well. To be well educated, students should be taught to think critically about *all* the worldviews they are likely to encounter in our pluralistic society—religious worldviews as well as secular worldviews. Teaching subjects from an exclusively secular viewpoint “actively discourages critical thinking by failing to provide students any critical distance on the secular ways of thinking and living,” says philosopher Warren Nord (*Darwinism, Design, and Public Education* [Michigan State University Press, 2003], 47).

2. *How can we make a case for teaching critical thinking in public schools by including the study of all major worldviews?*

It is all too easy for Christians to fall into the old stereotype of simply banning ideas they disagree with. A prominent Christian radio commentator recently urged his audience to take a controversial book and “throw it away!” But putting on blinders is not the way to become critical thinkers. Nor does it show respect for our opponents, who are made in the image of God. Christians should lead the way in modeling what it means to take ideas seriously, “giving honest answers to honest questions,” as Schaeffer put it.

Back in the age of state churches, it was Christian dissenters who framed the case for pluralism and religious liberty. Today, in the age of state schools, Christians ought to be framing the case for pluralism and freedom in education as well.

3. *Pluralism is often misunderstood to mean relativism. What would genuine pluralism look like in the classroom?*

#### TEST YOURSELF:

4. *What is the defining claim of Intelligent Design theory? (180-182)*

5. *What is irreducible complexity and how does it pose a challenge to Darwinism? (184-188)*

6. *Explain the logic of the explanatory filter—chance, law, design—and how it applies to the origin of life and of the universe. (188-201)*

7. *What distinguishes ID from theistic evolution? (203-204)*

8. *What distinguishes ID from classic creationism? (415 note 70)*

9. *Critics say ID breaks the rules because science, by definition, may consider only natural causes. How would you respond? (169, 203)*

## CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:

*Select a few contested issues in public education and think through how to apply a “teach the controversy” approach.*

*Chapter 7*

Religion itself “is a product of evolution,” claims a recent book. Because religion “enables groups to function as adaptive units,” a tendency to believe was selected for in our evolutionary history (David Sloan-Wilson, *Darwin’s Cathedral* [University of Chicago Press, 2003], 6). The fast-growing field of evolutionary psychology aims to expand naturalistic evolution into an all-encompassing worldview explaining every aspect of human experience.

Yet virtually every proponent of the theory ends up making a secular leap of faith. Chapter 7 walks you through several examples (you might also want to review chapter 3), so that you can make this an indispensable tool in your apologetics toolbox. In evangelism our goal is to bring people to recognize their need for God, including their intellectual need. How? By showing them that no worldview except Christianity adequately accounts for the world as we actually experience it (217-221, 396).

The fundamental principle is this: *Every worldview not based on biblical truth ends up with some form of reductionism.* After all, if you do not begin with God, then you must begin with something *less* than God. And whatever you propose as ultimate reality provides the categories for explaining everything else. Materialism reduces everything to particles in motion. Scientific naturalism reduces everything to complex mechanisms, operating by inexorable laws of nature. Pantheism reduces all individual existence to an underlying spiritual unity. Every worldview reduces the richly diverse, multileveled world that God created to a limited paradigm that absolutizes one *part* of creation (41-42).

Recognizing this dynamic will give you a powerful tool for apologetics. You can be utterly confident that any worldview that is not biblical will be “too small” to account for all of reality. For example, the biblical teaching that humans are made in the image of God leads to a richer concept of human nature than any other worldview—because every alternative reduces humans to the image of some aspect of creation.

*1. Explain what Schaeffer meant by saying that, in every nonbiblical worldview, some part of human nature will always “stick out” of the paradigm. (110-111)*

Since every nonbiblical worldview is too narrow to account for the full range of reality as God created it, adherents will not be able live within the confines

of their own belief systems. We are not merely data processing machines, no matter what scientific materialism says. We are not merely products of natural selection maximizing our chances of survival, no matter what naturalistic evolution says. At some point people are compelled to tell their genes to “go jump in the lake” (to use Pinker’s phrase [218]), while they take a leap of faith to affirm things that are *not* accounted for within their own worldview.

That point of inconsistency is your opening. Gently and prayerfully direct people to the testimony of their own lives—to the fact that they cannot live consistently on the basis of their own professed worldview. They may then be open, by God’s grace, to hearing about the only worldview that *does* account for the full range of human experience—because it does not begin with any part of creation but with the transcendent Creator.

*2. When speaking with nonbelievers we cannot simply quote the Bible. But what we can do is show that their own worldview fails to account for the world as they themselves experience it. How would you make the case that Christianity alone gives a complete and consistent account of reality? (217-221, 314-321, Appendix 4)*

#### TEST YOURSELF:

*3. Explain “kin selection” and “tit for tat.” Do these theories provide an adequate account of altruism? (208-212, 317-318)*

*4. Do you agree that evolution and evolutionary psychology are a package deal—that if you accept the premise, then you must accept the conclusion? (210-216)*

*5. Is it fair to say that evolution often functions as a religion? (172-173, 223-224)*

#### CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:

*Practice identifying examples of the secular leap of faith in movies, articles, politicians’ speeches, etc.*

### **Chapter 8**

At the start of each class, a high school history teacher begins with a short warm-up exercise—but the exercise has nothing to do with history. Instead the teacher posts moral dilemmas on the blackboard (like the well-known “lifeboat” problem), which prod students to question the moral standards learned at home and church in order to work out their own personal values.

When the same teacher gets around to teaching history, he presents that subject from a relativistic framework as well. At a Back-to-School night, when asked what perspective he employs in teaching history, he replied, “There’s really no way to know what’s true and false, what’s right or wrong. History is open to individual interpretation.” (See Pam Glass, *ChristianBookPreviews.com*.)

The label for this view is social constructivism—that knowledge is not *discovered* but *created* (241-242). When the pragmatist philosophers applied evolution to the realm of ideas, they concluded that there are no transcendent, unchanging truths. All ideas are social constructions, subject to evolutionary development.

1. *A theory of knowledge is called an epistemology. Explain why an evolutionary epistemology leads to relativism across the curriculum. (229-232)*

In moral theory, John Dewey realized that an evolutionary approach must begin with whatever the individual happens to value. Thus moral education should teach students to clarify what they value, then weigh alternatives to decide which course of action has consequences that match their values.

2. *Explain how this naturalistic approach is the basis for moral education in the public schools today. (238-241)*

In his hugely successful *Conversations with God for Teens* (Hampton Roads, 2001), Neale Donald Walsch answers teenagers’ questions as if he were God.

Question: But how can I ever erase the bad things I’ve done from your judgment book? (Ayla, age 13)

GOD: There *is* no “judgment book.” . . . It may be a surprise for most humans to learn that there is no such thing as right and wrong. There is only what works and what doesn’t work. . . . Absolute Right and Absolute Wrong do not exist.

Question: So “right” and “wrong” are a changing thing?

GOD: Yes, changing and shifting from time to time and place to place.

3. *How does Walsch express an evolutionary epistemology in this passage?*

When Christian students are not taught a critical worldview grid, they easily absorb the same relativistic, pragmatic view of morality. Christopher Hall at Eastern University says most of his students “are rampantly promiscuous”

(*Philadelphia Inquirer*, Mar. 13, 2005). The journals they write for class, he said, jump wildly from their experiences in praise and worship to their sexual activity: “There is a significant gap between what the young profess to believe and how they live.”

4. *Morality is always derivative—it stems from a person’s worldview. How would you give a worldview context and rationale for biblical ethics?*

#### TEST YOURSELF:

5. *Process theology is widespread in mainline seminaries today. Identify both its appeal and its flaws. (235-236)*

6. *Give examples of the ongoing impact of legal pragmatism. (237-238)*

7. *How do Christian teachers often inject their own interpretation into the term “constructivism,” failing to recognize its evolutionary origin? (427 note 58)*

8. *Explain this irony: Postmodernism denies all objective truths except the truth of Darwinism. (242-243)*

9. *What fatal flaw in evolutionary epistemology did Darwin himself recognize? (243-244)*

#### CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:

*In chapters 7 and 8 we learned how philosophical naturalism has permeated all subject areas. Collect examples to show how naturalistic assumptions underlie the ideas you encounter at work, at school, or in politics.*

## PART 3

### *Chapters 9 and 10*

Members of an Eastern European missionary organization invited me to dinner to discuss translating *Total Truth* into Slovakian. Though honored, I was also a little curious. “Some material in the book focuses closely on the American experience,” I said (thinking especially of Part 3). “Would it really be relevant to other parts of the world?”

The head of the organization threw back his head and laughed. “*Where do you think all our missionaries come from?*” he asked. “Since so many missions

groups originate in the States, American definitions of the spiritual life have an impact all around the globe.”

Chapters 9 and 10 describe the rise of a distinctively American form of spirituality and church life. Many readers say this section provided categories for understanding features of their own church experience that have troubled them—the emotionalism, the anti-intellectualism, the celebrity-style leadership. Because these chapters together tell a continuous story, the study questions are combined into a single unit.

*1. How do scholars define the term “evangelical”? (256-257) What characteristics of evangelicalism do you recognize in your own background?*

Ronald Knox, who wrote a history of the early evangelicals (290-291), also said that a healthy church is one that maintains a balance between *inspiration* and *institution*. Most reform movements are driven by people who are hungry for a deeper spiritual reality, who castigate the institutional church for its empty ritualism and dead orthodoxy. But eventually every beneficial reform, in order to have lasting effects, must itself give rise to institutions. It must be developed into a systematic teaching (theology), proclaimed in corporate statements of faith (creeds and confessions), expressed in worship ceremonies (rituals and hymns), taught and transmitted to the next generation (churches, schools, seminaries). The institutional aspect of the church is like a pipeline, protecting and channeling the precious water of life within.

As long as evangelicalism remained a reform movement within existing churches, it could focus on *inspiration* while taking the benefits of the *institution* for granted. As evangelical groups began to break away and become independent, however, inspiration alone was not enough. That’s when they began to exhibit the traits described in these chapters, becoming anti-intellectual, anti-historical, individualistic, and celebrity-driven (253).

*2. Today there is a small but significant movement out of evangelical churches into churches with a greater “institutional” component—Episcopal, Orthodox, Catholic. How would you explain the appeal of these liturgical, sacramental, communal, historically rooted churches?*

Many readers of *Total Truth* have asked about the “Emergent Church.” Certainly it fits the pattern of movements that focus on inspiration while protesting the failings of the institutional church, and a good model for our response would be Francis Schaeffer’s balanced approach to the counterculture of his day. Though aware of the dangers of the youth culture (e.g., drugs), he nevertheless commended it for protesting against a materialistic, market-

driven bourgeois society. “The hippies of the 1960s . . . were right in fighting the plastic culture, and the church should have been fighting it too” (*Pollution and the Death of Man* [Hodder & Stoughton, 1970], 19). Schaeffer affirmed the hunger for hope and meaning that underlay even some of the counterculture’s excesses (407 note 4).

The Emergent movement likewise has its excesses—in many cases a weak view of Scripture, an embrace of postmodern relativism, and an eclecticism that can look a lot like religious consumerism. Yet we should also affirm its underlying hunger for transcendence and authentic community. The movement is right to protest so much of mainstream evangelicalism that is slickly packaged and commercialized. Cliché-ridden praise choruses that are virtually content-free. Church growth programs that are impersonal, relying on manipulative formulas and techniques of mass marketing. Publicity and management techniques borrowed from the corporate world (286-290, 292, 364-376).

“Why do so many pastors use principles designed to lead an organization to maximize profit rather than to shepherd and lead people into knowing God?” asks Jay Bauman on an Emergent Church website ([www.theooze.com](http://www.theooze.com), Feb. 2, 2005). “Modern management theory has little to do with the well being or spiritual growth of the individuals involved; usually the opposite, seeing them as a means to an end—growing a larger organization (in this case, church).” Big Business and Big Government have been joined by Big Ministry—churches and parachurch groups that value large budgets and extensive programs. We forget that spiritual authority is not given to the savvy businessman or the powerful political operative, but to those who weep before the Lord over the brokenness of the world and the spiritual bankruptcy of the church.

#### TEST YOURSELF:

3. *Finke and Stark found that religious groups grow most rapidly when they are at odds with the surrounding culture. Why is that the case? (261-262)*
4. *The First Great Awakening largely succeeded in balancing heart and head. Explain how it nevertheless sowed the seeds of anti-intellectualism. (266-272)*
5. *Why did social contract theory become a widely accepted assumption among Americans? (279-284) Today ontological individualism is so far advanced (see definition on 131, 141-142) that even our most intimate relationships have become fragile and easily fragmented. How has this given rise to a hunger for genuine community within the church?*
6. *Why did C. S. Lewis urge Christians to read “old books”? (282, 302, 305)*

7. *What changes in the political and economic realms made the evangelical message seem plausible? (282-286)*

8. *Describe the new model of leadership that emerged. Do you recognize elements of this pattern today? (286-290)*

#### CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:

*What can your own church do to maintain a healthy balance between inspiration and institution?*

### Chapter 11

A Christian journalist once told me point-blank, “When you enter the newsroom, you have to leave your faith behind. You can’t bring a Christian perspective into your reporting.” An economist teaching at a church college used almost identical words: “There is no Christian approach to economics. It’s just a science based on facts.” A science student at a Christian university said, “I believe there’s a Creator, but there’s no *scientific* evidence for it. You have to accept it strictly by faith.” In chapter 11, we dip into history to understand the source of this all-too-typical compartmentalized thinking.

Through most of Western history, the world was interpreted as a rich web of moral and spiritual meanings. Historians were expected to draw moral lessons from historical events. Scientists praised the Creator for His ingenious “contrivances” in nature. Artists sought to inspire virtue and character. Economists did not talk about competition among self-interested individuals, but about stewardship of the earth and the just use of resources. In colonial America, school primers taught religious lessons alongside the ABCs: “In *Adam’s* fall, we sinned all.”

In the nineteenth century, however, evangelical scholars accepted a definition of knowledge that would contribute to the unraveling of this moral universe. They adopted a two-story framework that treated the lower story as religiously neutral. This approach had its roots in Common Sense realism, which presumed that scholarship functions without any philosophical framework—that “simple induction from empirical observation would merit universal rational assent” (James D. Bratt, in *Models for Christian Higher Education* [Eerdmans, 1997], 135-136).

1. *Explain Scottish Common Sense realism and how it arose to counter skepticism. (296-298)*

Because they embraced the ideal of neutral knowledge, evangelicals did not think it was necessary to craft an explicitly Christian worldview to guide schol-

arly research in the lower story. Instead they were confident that whatever reason discovers by free inquiry would ultimately support biblical teachings. Historians call this the *convergence* model of faith and scholarship, because it holds that reason, when it is working properly, will *converge* with the scriptural teachings.

What's the key phrase here? *When it is working properly*. But what happens when reason and faith do *not* converge? When the deliverances of science, history, or psychology contradict Scripture? Hidden under the banner of “science” and “free inquiry” is often some *ism* skewing the results.

2. *When scholarship does not converge with scriptural teachings, either our interpretation of Scripture is faulty, or the scholarly research was driven by implicit worldview assumptions. Think of examples of each to show how this can happen.*

Today most universities do not teach anything resembling neutral scholarship. Take economics: Throughout Western history, Christian thinkers have produced a rich body of literature on economics (traditionally as part of moral theology). Yet a survey of college textbooks found that economics texts do not acquaint students with a wide range of religious and philosophical views. Instead they teach one view exclusively—namely, neo-classical economic theory, which defines people as self-interested utility-maximizers, and the economic realm as the scene of competition by atomistic individuals for scarce resources.

The same survey found that home economics textbooks, in their treatment of morally sensitive subjects like marriage and sexuality, have dropped the traditional moral language of duty, obligation, and principle. Instead they uncritically employ the language of self-esteem, telling students again and again that they must choose their own values:

Only you can choose the best alternative in making your own decisions. . . .  
Ask yourself what benefits or advantages will result from [your] choice. . . .  
Then choose the alternative that does the best job for you with the fewest disadvantages (*The Business of Living*, South-Western, 1986).

Moral decisions are treated as a matter of cost-benefit analysis, weighing the effects of various actions and calculating which works best. (The survey is described in Warren Nord, *Religion and American Education* [University of North Carolina Press, 1995], chapter 4.)

3. *How did the ideal of neutral knowledge open the way for university courses to teach completely secularized views? How were evangelicals*

*blinded to what was happening? Give examples from moral philosophy and natural science. (305-311)*

Beginning in the nineteenth century, evangelicals themselves began to accept a largely utilitarian, pragmatic approach in areas like business, management, finance, and marketing. We witness the effects today when churches and parachurch ministries promote a biblical *message*, while relying on questionable *methods* informed by secular definitions of success.

For example, a pastor recently told me about a Christian ministry that funded a scientific study to prove the effectiveness of its programs. Experts in the field published critiques demonstrating that the study was badly flawed. Yet the ministry continued to use the invalid numbers in its PR and fundraising efforts.

*4. In Christian circles, cutting ethical corners is often justified by saying, “It’s for the ministry.” Explain how two-story thinking can cause Christians to be blinded by a spiritualized utilitarianism (the end justifies the means). (85, 97-99, 311, 364-376)*

#### TEST YOURSELF:

*5. Describe “Baconian” hermeneutics. What are its strengths and weaknesses? (299-305)*

*6. In what ways does American evangelicalism differ from classic Reformation theology? ( 302-303, 434 note 37)*

*7. How does the embrace of **methodological** naturalism open the door to **metaphysical** naturalism? (307, 311)*

*8. Explain how Schaeffer combined elements of evidentialism and presuppositionalism into an effective apologetics method. (313-321, Appendix 4)*

*9. What is philosophical “cheating”? Give examples of ways people engage in it to avoid the logical conclusions of the premises they hold. ( 319-321)*

#### CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:

*Collect examples from your textbooks (or your children’s) to demonstrate that public schools are not neutral but teach from an exclusively secular point of view.*

## Chapter 12

While attending a conference, I noticed a young man reading *Total Truth* so eagerly that he was ignoring the speaker at the podium. When the lecture

ended, he rushed into the hallway and spoke excitedly into a cell phone. Later the young man introduced himself as Kirk Martin and explained that he had been so inspired by chapter 12 that, right then and there, he had called his wife and they had decided to change their lifestyle.

Martin posted his comments on the Amazon website for *Total Truth*: “In the Colonial Period, men were integral as actively engaged fathers and leaders of virtue. The family worked together daily in a family industry,” he writes. “During the Industrial Age, this dynamic changed. Women became responsible for ‘civilizing’ men (which led to the destructive mindset that excused and perhaps expected crude behavior from men). . . . The family dynamic became disjointed and lost its force.”

Martin has decided to foment a quiet reformation, starting with his own family: “Our family’s personal goal now is to recapture that family dynamic in which we can run a business together from home, and in which both my wife and I are responsible for educating and raising my son.”

We often hear feminists complain that women are squeezed into narrow, constricting definitions of femininity. But we hear much less about the way men have been constrained by stunted definitions of masculinity. My students and other young adults frequently find this chapter the most personally relevant. “I’m urging all my friends to read your book,” a brilliant young woman who graduated from MIT said enthusiastically. “I’m telling them it explains why Christian men are so lame!” Not exactly the way I would have phrased it, but it does capture the loss of traditional moral and spiritual standards for men.

#### TEST YOURSELF:

1. *After the Industrial Revolution, how did accepted definitions of masculinity grow narrower, excusing men from many of their traditional responsibilities?*
2. *How did the Industrial Revolution change women’s work?*
3. *What is the origin of the double standard? Does it still exist today? (333-338, 343, 344)*
4. *How can churches support families seeking to integrate work and home life? (344-346)*

#### CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:

*What surprised you most about this chapter? Does it affect your plans on how to organize the family/work relationship in your own life?*

## PART 4

*Chapter 13*

Your life is a story. Do you believe that? Do you believe that the events of your life fit into an overarching story that invests them with eternal significance? The reason we are captivated as children by adventures and fairy tales is that they portray spiritual truths in picture language. A well-told story stirs a longing to be caught up in an exciting drama ourselves. We have a God-given hunger to live for a great and noble cause, and the reason is that our lives really *are* part of a larger story—one that God Himself is telling.

Yet we are often blind and deaf to this spiritual drama. Because we are immersed in a secular culture, which hammers out the relentless message that the material realm is all that exists, we find it extraordinarily difficult *not* to focus solely on the horizon of the visible realm—to function in our day-to-day lives as though events occur by a kind of mechanical necessity, a chain of natural causes and effects, instead of being shaped by God to fulfill a larger purpose.

I gained a fresh appreciation of the Christian story when someone handed me a copy of Hollywood's most popular guidebook for writing screenplays, *The Writer's Journey* by Christopher Vogler (Michael Wiese Productions, 1998). Every good story is a variation on the same basic narrative pattern, just as every symphony builds on a fundamental musical structure. And what is that universal pattern? I was stunned by the biblical overtones in Vogler's answer: It is a sequence of events that takes the hero through death to resurrection.

In the classic hero story, the protagonist is called out of ordinary life into a grand adventure. In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy is literally lifted out of Kansas and dropped into the enchanted Land of Oz. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo Baggins is jolted out of his tranquil life to fight the dragon Smaug. The hero is then taken through a series of trials and tests, until the story climaxes in a symbolic death—some immense crisis that requires the hero to die to the old self, sacrificing old patterns and ways of life, in order to be transformed into a new self. Broken but healed, the hero returns to home and family to offer them the benefits of his new-found wisdom.

Does this story line sound familiar? Besides being the underlying structure for virtually all adventure stories, it also has a profound spiritual resonance—for it is the shape of Christ's life. The epic saga begins when Christ laid aside His divine prerogatives, His heavenly glory, and emptied himself (Philippians 2) to

enter human history. “He left his father’s home above,” says a hymn, and “emptied Himself of all but love.”

During His life on earth, Jesus endured tempting and trials from Satan, mockery and misunderstanding from those around him. He “learned obedience through what He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8), living the life we should have lived. And then, in the momentous climax of human history, He died the death we should have died, suffering the darkest loss and tragedy the cosmos has ever known. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Yet death could not hold down the Author of life. In a burst of radiant energy, Jesus broke open the grave, shattering the power of death. Through His sacrifice He is now the faithful High Priest interceding for His people. It is a breathtaking story if we can strip away the mental dullness from constant retelling in Sunday School classes, in order to hear it with fresh ears.

And yet, it is more than a story of what Jesus did *for* us. It is also what Jesus promises to do *in* us. Our own lives are likewise meant to unfold as a saga of death and resurrection. Sanctification is a process of dying to our old personality patterns, our ingrained coping mechanisms, our worldly definitions of success, our driven attempts to prove ourselves. The process often climaxes in a life-shattering crisis of loss, remorse, or injustice that jolts us out of our predictable patterns and casts us spiritually into the valley of the shadow of death. Only when we share in Christ’s suffering is there a promise of sharing in His resurrection power.

#### TEST YOURSELF:

1. *What are some of the most common idols that prevent you from applying a Christian worldview?*
2. *Are you tempted by fear of being ridiculed by your peers, of losing professional opportunities, of missing out on career advancement if you were to openly apply a biblical perspective to your field?*
3. *Are there personal ambitions for image and influence, for success and acclaim, to which you need to “die” in order to be truly free to follow Christ?*

#### CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:

*A Christian worldview is not merely about ideas and arguments. It really begins with dying to the idols in our hearts that keep us from being led by God in everything we do—including our intellectual work. Ask God to conduct a searching examination of your own hidden motivations, to reveal the idols in your heart and then set you free to serve Him alone.*