

BIBLICAL INTEGRATION OF CURRICULUM

Interpreting the Biblical Perspectives of History and Cultures

Biblical Concepts/Principles

History is linear, not cyclical. It has a beginning, ordained by God when he created time and space. It has an ending that will be realized on the final Day of Judgment and the beginning of the eternal order (Genesis 1:1; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:11-16).

Christian doctrine and belief are based on true historical events including:

The creation of history and time by a transcendent, sovereign God (Genesis 1:1);

God's revelation of truth in the form of the Bible, a trustworthy book grounded in history (Acts 1:1-11; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:1);

God's incarnation in human history in the form of Jesus Christ (John 1 :1-14; 1 Corinthians 15:17).

History has an overarching purpose and goal, i.e., the ultimate redemption of mankind and the restoration of the perfection of the original created order. History records the progress and ultimate destiny of that plan (Acts 17:26-28; 2 Corinthians 4:11-18; Ephesians 1 :2-14).

God is sovereignly active in history, not bound by "laws of history." He intervenes in it as he chooses and is leading it to a triumphant conclusion (Job 12:23; Proverbs 8:15-16; Zechariah 14; Acts 17:26-28)

The attributes and character of God are often revealed through His sovereign dealing with history (Psalm 107; 136; John 3:16; 1 Timothy 1:13,14).

Humanity's Relationship to the Events of History

God holds people responsible for fitting into His plan and for being His instruments in accomplishing His purposes (Romans 6:13; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 2:10).

Because the incarnation and atonement are the essential reason and focal event of all human history, the most important thing that any person must do is know, accept and follow Jesus Christ (John 17:3).

Created in God's image, people play a significant role in history. In choosing to do God's will they are acting in harmony with God's direction of history (Genesis 1:28; Matthew 5:16; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 2:10).

As sinners, people can affect history by choosing to disobey God, thus bringing tragedy upon themselves and creation (Genesis 3; Deuteronomy 28).

Human disobedience and sinfulness will not thwart God's overall direction of history (Obadiah 3, 4, 8; Malachi 1 :4; Acts 5:39).

God uses the sinful acts of people as sovereign instruments for fulfilling his purposes of redemptive grace and triumphant righteousness (Genesis 45:8; 50:20).

People's sinful nature proved them with a proper perspective with regard to the future. It keeps them from achieving perfection through their own works. This truth contradicts the theory of social evolutionary progress (Psalm 14:3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

God's Relationship to the History of Cultures, Nations, and Governments

In order to fulfill His sovereign purposes, God plans the history of nations, including their birth, development, and death (Deuteronomy 7:7-8; Job 12:23; Ezra 6:22; Isaiah 44:28-45; Jeremiah 27:6-8; Daniel 8:3-12; 20-25; Obadiah 3, 4, 8; Acts 17:26-28).

God controls the rise and fall of government leaders (Proverbs 8:15-16; Daniel 2:20-21; 4:17; Romans 13:1).

The history of a nation is dependent upon its response to God's will and law (Deuteronomy 28; Proverbs 14:34; 20:29; Jonah 3:5-10; Malachi 4:1-3).

Satanic opposition to God affects historical events (Genesis 3:14-24; Job 1:7, 12; Daniel 10:1-14).

All nations exist for the purpose of acknowledging the sovereignty of God and worshipping Him. At the end of time, all nations will worship God (Psalm 22:27-28; Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 15:4).

Humanity's Relationship to the History of Cultures, Nations, and Governments

In response to the cultural mandate to fill and subdue the earth and in response to their socially created nature, people have played a significant but subservient role in history (Genesis 1:28; Jeremiah 1:1-10; Ephesians 1 :1-14; 2:10).

Cultural development reflects the rational, creative, social, and moral dimensions of humanity, including:

People's needs and struggles resulting from the fall (Daniel 4:30; 5:23), including:

The struggle to survive and provide for basic needs (Genesis 3:17-19);

The need and search for security (Luke 12:13-21);

The desire to be free of external restraints (Isaiah 30:15; Jeremiah 32:33; 2 Peter 2:10);

The need for defining personal meaning (Luke 3:8; John 9:28);

The desire to "get ahead" of others (Revelation 3: 17).

Cultural practices and forms change over time through a variety of human activities, including:

- New ideas and philosophies (Colossians 2:8; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 3:3);
- Increased knowledge (Jonah; 2 Kings 22; 23:1-25);
- Technological discoveries (Genesis 10);
- Wars and revolutions (Joshua);
- Migrations and contacts with new cultures (Genesis 10; Genesis 46);
- Cross-cultural exchanges (Judges 1, 2);
- Social conflicts within and between different cultures (Exodus 1-15; 2 Chronicles 36; Acts 8);
- Economic trade (Genesis 42);
- Adaptation to geographic features of a region (Genesis 10:4);
- Changes in other cultures (Acts 1 :8; 8).

Although culture can and should be positively affected by Christians and those who adhere to biblical law, the perfecting of cultures through social evolution will never be achieved because of the sinful nature of humanity (Matthew 5:13-16; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

God commands people to record, disseminate, and respond appropriately to historical truth. Such recorded history is one of God's sovereign instruments for fulfilling His purposes for cultures and their history (Exodus 17:14; Deuteronomy 31:19, 21, 22; Psalm 78; John 20:31; 1 Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 1 :19).

People's records of historical events are subject to observations and interpretations that may be accurate, partially accurate, or inaccurate. Such records can affect subsequent changes in a culture (Proverbs 22:28; Jeremiah 7:23-28; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11-13).

Reflections of God as Revealed in a Study of History and Culture

God's character and ways are visible in the actions of people throughout history, including:

- The power of choice that reveals God as one who invites but does not force submission to His will;
- Family ties and affection that testify to the love of the heavenly Father;
- Heroism that reflects the self-sacrificing Redeemer.

The orderliness of God is revealed in the rules and systems that govern history.

The righteousness of God is shown in economic histories that honored principles for the responsible use of God-given resources as well as a work ethic that if obeyed led to physical sustenance and blessing.

The study of geography reveals God's infinite wisdom and care in planning a suitable habitat for people.

God's love for and work on behalf of people are revealed in all dimensions of His redemptive plan in history.

Basic Values and Norms Related to History and Cultural Studies

A biblical perspective of history and cultural studies focuses on the following values:

- Kindness
- Loyalty
- Trust
- Unselfish relations with others
- Respect
- Humility
- Human dignity
- Mutual responsibility
- Economic fairness
- Environmental integrity
- Justice
- Acceptance

Teaching Distinctives of a Christian Perspective of History and Culture

The Christian teaching of history avoids the extremes of humanistic self-assurance or existential skepticism with regard to the course of human history.

The Christian teaching of history acknowledges certainties based on God's revelation; it also acknowledges that the whole scheme of history is not knowable.

The Christian teaching of history does not emphasize a predictable repetitiveness to history, but it does acknowledge the constancy of God's response to human behaviors.

The Christian teaching of history decries the idea of purposelessness in the events of history and teaches a unity and continuity of the human story that leaves no room for accidents.

The Christian teaching of history interprets the past by considering the whole sphere of humanity's actions in the past. It does not limit itself to the study of isolated realms for interpretive purposes.

The Christian teaching of history does not distort history by slighting some periods in favor of others even if some have been more receptive to Christian beliefs and values.

The Christian teaching of history emphasizes the significant roles that worldviews and ideologies play in determining the events of history, especially their development of religious perspectives.

Attitudes and Skills to Be Manifested in Students from a Study of History and Culture

Through a study of history, students will interpret from a Christian perspective the process of cultural formation, both past and present, and respond to it with Christian values.

Through a study of history, students will appreciate the cultural heritage in which God has placed them.

Through a study of history and cultural studies, students will appreciate the sovereign mercy and grace of God as revealed and demonstrated in His redemptive plan for history.

Through a study of history, students will be able to discern causes and effects in the events of history and thereby become more skilled in avoiding the errors and failures of the past.

Through a study, of history students will see evidence of God's constancy and faithfulness and thus develop confidence in the midst of a rapidly changing world.

Through a study of history, students will develop a conviction of God's divine control of all things, thus strengthening their confidence in the wisdom and goodness of His unfolding plan for their personal lives.

Through a study of history, students will develop a proper toleration for those who have followed God with the light they had.

Through a study of history, students will develop patience and a willingness to let God execute justice as they observe the triumph of truth and righteousness and the eventual destruction of error and unrighteousness.

Through a study of history, students will develop a more objective, less provincial view of human events, i.e., a broader framework of providential purpose in history.

Through a study of history, students will be encouraged to face the future with confidence, making right choices for personal living, knowing the ultimate destiny of history and the One in control of that destiny.

Through a study of history, students will be challenged to emulate God's character as revealed in the events of history, including His righteousness, justice, and compassion toward humanity.

Through a study of history, students will be challenged to become responsible citizens of their nation and active in the affairs of society in order that God's kingdom of shalom, justice, and righteousness might be established on earth.

Points of Conflict with Secular Approaches to the Teaching of History

The Christian teaching of history opposes secular humanism that denies the existence of a sovereign Creator.

The Christian teaching of history opposes the concept that history is without meaning or value beyond itself.

The Christian teaching of history, while acknowledging the equal worth and dignity of all men, rejects the view of society that attacks as evil the exceptional endowments and achievements of cultures and individuals.

The Christian teaching of history rejects concepts of social consensus as the primary basis for determining cultural direction, values, and norms.

The Christian teaching of history rejects relativism as a basis for interpreting history, believing in contrast that history can be interpreted to a good degree of accuracy based on biblical standards of human conduct and descriptions of human nature.

The Christian teaching of history decries the misuse of historical documents for pragmatic or propaganda purposes, including the misrepresentation of "Christian" events and Scripture to support certain presuppositions.

Teaching Strategies That Can Help Communicate a Biblical Perspective of History and Cultural Studies

Challenge students to establish or share philosophical frameworks in which to study history.

Emphasize or study the affects of a nation's religious thought on its course of history.

Use time lines that include religious references, including biblical history.

Study biographies and works of historical persons who held the Christian worldview.

Identify factors that appear to have contributed to the rise and fall of various cultures. Find Scriptural references that explain how and why God affects the history of cultures, i.e., their rise and fall.

Emphasize national historical holidays that have religious origins and significance.

Direct class participation in forming a class creed for conduct, stressing the basis for cultural values.

Study the history of Israel, including the significance of contemporary issues.

Study church history.

Compare various interpretations of history and relate them to the worldview of the historian.

When studying the history of a nation or culture, locate sources that record their religious history, including the work of missionaries.

Assign for reading biographies of Christians who have affected the sciences, politics, religions, etc. Identify specific instances where the intercessory prayers of the church have affected the history of a nation.

Bibliography

Perspectives have been compiled from the following resources, each of which contributes much to the concept of the Biblical integration of school subjects.

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