

Owning a Christian Worldview:

The Critical Link to Living-Out Our Faith in Professional Nursing

Purpose: The purpose of this Bible study is to analyze the scriptural foundation for the development, ownership, and intentional integration of a personal Christian worldview into professional nursing roles, responsibilities, and practice.

Objectives: Upon completion of this Bible study, the nurse will:

1. Analyze the reasoned need for a personal Christian worldview in today's world.
I Peter 3:15 "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."
2. Discuss works because of salvation.
James 2:17 "Faith by itself, if not accompanied by action is dead."
Ephesians 2:8-10 "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith- not by works so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."
3. Develop a personal Christian worldview for integration into the provision of quality nursing care of the biological, psychological, social/cultural, and spiritual patient, family and community.
Colossians 3:23 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

Study Part 1: Laying the Foundation:

STOP and ask yourself:

1. How do I define "Christian worldview"?
2. Why do I, or why do I not, believe that having a Christian worldview makes a difference in my nursing role and responsibilities?

Every nurse should be dynamic, engaged, knowledgeable, skillful, and compassionate. Every nurse should demonstrate informed critical thinking and clinical reasoning in every patient encounter. The Christian nurse should also have the characteristics of a forgiven child of God. Our work as Christian nurses is not to earn our salvation, it is to work out our salvation (Philippians 2:12). Other world religions emphasize what each person must do to gain God's approval. Christianity is about what has been done by Jesus for us (Warren, 2019, p. 82) and how we then honor him with our quality nursing care.

In order to call out as a Christian, to claim that identity, one must have a saving-grace relationship with God the Father through the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, His Word (John 1:1-5; Psalm 32: 1-2; Isaiah 53; Romans 5:9-11; Revelation 13:8b). This relationship needs belief in Jesus as Lord as well as Savior. To believe in Jesus, and in order to daily live out a biblically-based Christian worldview, the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit is also essential (Acts 1:4-8). It is the Holy Spirit who gives us courage to speak the name of Jesus and the right words at the right time to do so for God's glory. Matthew 10:19-20 says "do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say for it will not be you speaking but the Spirit of your faith speaking through you". This passage is also found in Mark 13:11 and Luke 12:11-12.

[Author's testimony: My doctoral research was on the life of the missionary nurse who became known as "the mother of Swazi nurses". As part of my multi-continent investigation, I sought evidence that she had remained true to her calling from God. I then had to defend the Holy Spirit as the voice of God to my candidacy committee. I had the Matthew passage written on my notes. When my oral defense was completed, a committee member commented that it sounded like I believed what I had said. I shocked her with the reply that "oh, that wasn't me speaking. That was the Holy Spirit!" See Elliott, 2000.]

STOP and ask yourself:

3. Describe your relationship with Jesus. Do you have a personal, saving-grace relationship with God through Jesus Christ the Son?
4. What does "Jesus as your Savior and Jesus as your Lord" mean to you?

5. How does the Holy Spirit impact your personal life and your professional life as a nurse?

Jesus told us we are not to worry but to “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:31) and there are many passages in God’s Holy Word which describe characteristics of his kingdom. Most assuredly God is within us (Luke 17:21). Prince Satan rules the kingdom of the air, our world for a season (Ephesians 2:1-3). However, it is our King Jesus who rules the kingdom of God now in us and for all eternity after his return (Ephesians 2: 4-22; Revelation 11:15). If the kingdom of God is within us and there King Jesus rules, is it not logical that the Christian would mature to develop a view of the world that is like Jesus in thought and action? Would not we want to daily live a life that manifests the characteristics of God and his kingdom?

STOP, study the above scripture verses. Then pray The Lord’s Prayer with new or renewed conviction.

6. My Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Forgive my trespasses as I forgive those have trespassed against me.
Lead me not into temptation, and deliver me from evil.
For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever!
Amen (adapted from Matthew 6:9-11)

STOP and ask yourself:

7. If you prayed The Lord’s Prayer with new earnest or refreshment, then it is good to study more about what is expected when God’s kingdom is within. After using your Bible concordance (or simply type in go to Biblehub.net and type in “the kingdom of God) to look up more versus about God’s kingdom, what are some of the characteristics of this kingdom? How does this differ from the world?

Indeed, the world is itself the antitheses (organized force against) the kingdom of God (Erickson, 2001, p. 660). “Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (James 4:4b). If we have truly given our heart, soul, mind, and strength to Jesus, a Christian worldview becomes our norm in every aspect of our being. Every aspect includes how we view and carry out our calling through professional nursing.

To own a Christian worldview is to enter the theological realm of apologetics. Theology is human discussion about God (Hahn, 1994, p.7). From the Greek “apologia”, apologetics is to give an answer about Christ and to live a life reflecting Christ (Zacharias, 2019, p. 8-9). 1 Peter 3:15 instructs us to be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope that we have. How will anyone know we have hope in Christ if we do not live out our faith? According to Stott and Chester (2019), “People reject the gospel, not necessarily because they think it is false, but because it no longer resonates with them. [However], his word is not a prehistoric fossil, but a living message for the contemporary world. The church speaks most authentically not when it has become indistinguishable from the world around us, but when its distinctive light shines most brightly” (p 2,5).

STOP and ask yourself:

At this moment, what are my thoughts about a Christian worldview? Do I have the worldview that is willing to “Let my light so shine before others that they will see my good works and glorify my father in heaven” (adapted Matthew 5:16)?

[Author’s testimony: Matthew 5:16 was the first Bible verse my mother taught me as a child.]

Study Part 2: The Theology of a Christian Worldview:

As Christian nurses, we affiliate with varied independent and denominational churches which are commonly based on their chosen doctrinal perspective. We are united in theology (one true living God the Father, God the Son Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit) and yet varied in some interpretations of how that faith is lived out in worship, sacraments, marriage, gender roles, and such. Knowing your chosen theology will help you develop your Christian worldview and you are encouraged to study the foundation of, and lens through which, you learn in church. As an exemplar, this study is utilizing what has become known as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

STOP and ask yourself:

8. Who influenced your spiritual formation? What did they do that made a difference in your life?

9. What is the theological stand of your church/denomination/place of worship and how does that theological stand impact your relationship with God?

John Wesley was an 18th century student, pastor, teacher, and theologian in England. His spiritual formation was greatly influenced by his mother Susana and his brother Charles is well known in the church for the over 300 hymns he composed. Wesley believed that the Christian faith was to go beyond the walls of the church, that it was to be lived out in everyday work and life. Were he alive today, he would be a partner in health with nurses for he authored a book to teach church members how to provide basic health care in their homes and communities (Wesley, 1792).

Wesley had formal studies at Oxford University and his own personal struggle to clarify and defend his worldview. At one point when asked about the hope he had for being saved, his only reply was “I have done my best to serve God”. With spiritual maturing, he came to understand that spiritual growth and success was not measured by being good or bad. “Salvation depends entirely on God’s desire to have a relationship with us” (Harris and Nelson, 1994). Wesley came to believe that such a personal relationship with God is through Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience. Two centuries later this association became known as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. With such a title, it must not be assumed that each of the four is of equal value. However, “Wesley insisted that Scripture is the first authority and contains the only measure whereby all other truth is tested” (Elwell, 2001, p.1269).

The following narrative is adapted from a presentation at Oxford University and subsequent article published giving explanation of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral as the model for discussion on biblical gender equality. Here we can apply the content to the formation of a Christian worldview.

Scripture and Reason:

Scripture, the inspired and undisputed foundation of our faith, holds themes such as truth, love, grace, mercy, justice, compassion, faithfulness, and equality. Scripture teaches us “about the nature and character of God, about the nature and character of human beings, and how to respond to God” (Bratcher and Nelson, 1994). The Bible says that we see

through a glass darkly, and no human is perfect in all things. Reason is our God-given ability to have critical reasoning, to conduct logical analysis, to make moral decisions, to communicate and to have a point of general and special revelation. [This is where] we have the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2)

Scripture and Tradition:

No one lives in their entire life as one. Traditions are our social and religious attitudes, practices, and customs. Tradition is our beliefs and actions related to dating, marriage, pregnancy, birth, lifecycles and death, cultural moral responsibilities, and worship. Consider the vast number of global cultures and how each race, ethnicity, faith, nation, and indigenous group value their traditions. Many socially accepted customs are biblically wrong and Christ warned us of this very thing. In Mark 7:9, 13 Jesus said 'You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions...Thus you nullify the Word of God by your tradition you handed down'.

Scripture and Experience:

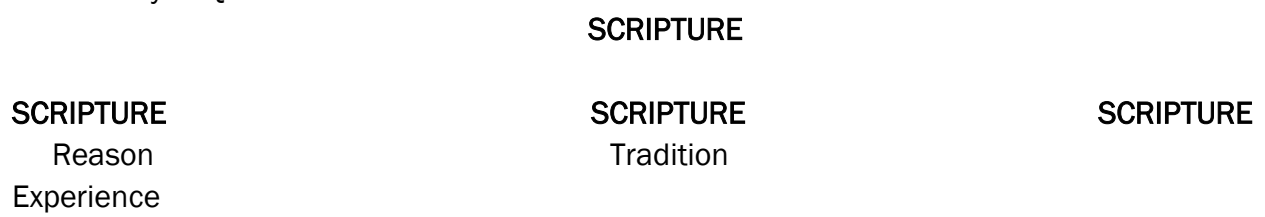
Scripture, reason, and tradition are manifested in our lived experience. (Elliott, 2010, pp.2-6)

“Christian experience adds nothing to the substance of Christian truth; its distinctive role is to energize the heart so as to enable the believer to speak and do the truth in love (Outler, 2000).

Thus it is in experience where our justification and sanctification are lived out. Here we grow in holiness and have joyful awareness of God’s peace and love. Here we take our Christian worldview into daily nursing roles and responsibilities, skills and patient encounters. Here we live in the confidence that we are children of God through Jesus Christ. That His kingdom is within us (Luke 17:20-21).

With the significance and authority of Scripture in mind, any diagram of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral is found lacking. For the sake of wanting to enhance the descriptions of each tenet as we progress in a worldview formation, a basic design is presented.

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral:



The Wesleyan Quadrilateral and Mark 12: 30-31 Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of mind, and with all of your strength. Love your neighbor as yourself.

SCRIPTURE

Love the Lord your God with all of your soul

SCRIPTURE

Reason
Experience
and with all of your mind
your strength

SCRIPTURE

Tradition
and with all of your heart

SCRIPTURE

and with all of

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral, Mark 12: 30-31, and Nursing Wholistic Care

SCRIPTURE

Love the Lord your God with all of your soul
Spiritual self

SCRIPTURE

Reason/Mind
Experience/Strength
Psychological self
Biological self

SCRIPTURE

Tradition/Heart
Social/Cultural self

SCRIPTURE

STOP and pray: Ask God to and praise Him now for forming your Christian worldview which will impact all of you and most definitely influence your daily nursing roles and responsibilities.

Study Part 3: Writing It Down, Owning It Forward:

In writing about a Christian worldview in today's culture [not limited to one nation, race, or global region], Franklin Graham (2018) stated that "a worldview lies at the heart of prevailing thought, sentiment, and ultimate judgment;" that within a Christian with a Biblical worldview "scripture informs his thinking and behavior, guiding his intellect and moral determinations". Another Christian author wrote that "a worldview is the framework from

which we view reality and make sense of life and the world. A biblical worldview is based on the infallible Word of God” (Tackett, ND).

STOP and Write: Here you invest more time in Scripture and in prayer to ask God as well as listen to him.

10. Begin to write down your Christian worldview. With every statement or phrase, and with every Bible passage, link what you write and how this Christian worldview might impact your service to others as a nurse. Writing your own Christian worldview is the beginning of owning that worldview.

In closing this study, you may read the Christian worldview of NCFI leader Carol Rowley, IHS Global Saline Coordinator. Her sharing is appreciated and you are encouraged to take her Saline courses. While her writing may be a guide for you, your writing out your own is the only way to take ownership of your Christian worldview. Rowley wrote (2020),

The foundation for my Christian worldview as a nurse today is God’s inspired, inerrant Word, the Bible. The Bible provides foundational truth about three concepts of major interest to nursing: humanity (people), environment (creation), and health (well-being). God created the environment (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:12-16). Within the environment, God created humanity (Genesis 1:26-27), and dimensions of human life include spirit, soul and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). While God’s original design was very good (Genesis 1:31), rebellion against God brought separation in humanity’s relationship with God (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; Hebrew 9:27), as well as consequences to other aspects of the creation (Romans 8:20-21). The Bible also expresses God’s great love for all people (2 Peter 2:39), His desire to have a reconciled relationship with them (2 Corinthians 5:18-21) and His concern and desire for their well-being (Matthew 6:26-30; 1 Peter 5:7). Christian nurses have the opportunity to reflect God’s love and care for humanity as they provide effective whole-person care for people. As God created the environment with aspects that can be investigated through science, nurses can combine a correct understanding and application of attributes of the environment with expertise about human life to promote well-being, prevent disease, and restore health in people’s lives.

Pray, search, write, own, serve, honor. “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” Colossians 3:17.

In His Service,

Dr. Susan Elliott, PhD, RNC, MSN, APRN-BC, PHN
Director, International Institute of Christian Nursing
July, 2020.

References

- Bratcher, Dennis and Nelson, Dean (1994). "How to use and not abuse, the Bible",
Leadingham, E. (ed.) *I Believe Now Tell Me Why*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, pp. 30-41
- Elliott, Susan (2010). "Biblical Gender Equality in Christian Academia", *Forum on Public Policy*, 2010 (2) <http://forumonpublicpolicy.com/alphalist.html>
- ____ (2000). *Missionary Nurse Dorothy Davis Cook, 1940-1972: "Mother of Swazi Nurses"*.
Doctoral dissertation, University of San Diego, San Diego, CA.
- Elwell, Walter (ed) (2001). *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2nd Ed. Grand Rapids, MI:
Baker Book House Company.
- Erickson, Millard (2001). *Christian Theology* 2nd Ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Graham, Franklin (2018) *A Biblical Worldview in Today's Culture*. Billygraham.ca. Retrived
February 17, 2020.
- Hahn, Roger (1994) "A word about this book", In Leadingham, E. (ed.) *I Believe Now Tell Me Why*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, p.7-10.
- Harris, Sam and Nelson, Dean (1994) "Grace that is greater than all our sin", In
Leadingham, E. (ed.) *I Believe Now Tell Me Why*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press,
p. 22-29.
- Outler, Albert (2000) *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral in John Wesley*, USA: Wesley 2000.
- Stott, John & Chester, Tim (2019) *The World: God's Word for Today*, USA: Intervarsity Press.

Tackett, Del (ND) Why is a Christian Worldview Important? Focusonthefamily.com. Retrieved May 19, 2020

The Holy Bible, New International Version (1983), Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers.

Warren, Rick (2019). Open Doors. Rancho Santa Margarita, CA: Purpose Driven Publishers.

Wesley, John (1747?) Primitive Physic: or An Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases, London, England: G. Paramore.