

Introduction

The purpose of the 'Starters' pamphlets

'Starters' are, as their name suggests, intended to help teachers start thinking biblically about their subjects. On the whole, they are brief papers with some basic foundational thinking.

However much is written down, it can never capture the essence of the knowledge of a personal God who can be revealed in all the aspects of curriculum.

Keys for unlocking more 'life'

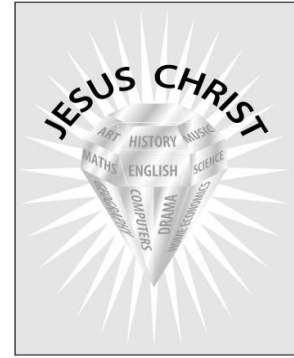
The principles outlined in the 'Starters' are meant to be just keys to help you unlock more for yourself. The Holy Spirit alone brings life, and it is life we need in our understanding and our teaching. God is interested, we believe, in every teacher discovering more revelation about knowledge out of their personal relationship with Him. Please do not let the principles we have shared become 'law' for you.

Final notes

Much of the content of the 'Starters' is the work of teachers in our Christian schools. Their work in turn has been shaped by others before them. We want to express our gratitude to all who have contributed in any way.

Please note that as some teachers use the 'Way, Truth, Life' (Trinity) model and others the 'Creation – Fall – Redemption' model for developing Christian curriculum you will meet those terms occasionally. In the 'Truth, Way, Life' model 'Truth to Teach' stands for basic source principles; 'Way to Work' stands for the way you intend to organize the content and 'Learning for Life' stands for the objectives the teacher has in mind for the students. In the 'Creation – Fall – Redemption' model, these are three terms for different stages of any proposed teaching material. They depict God's original created intention, the results of the Fall, and how we are to work to redeem that which was marred by sin.

Please write or e-mail to CST and let us know when God gives you fresh revelations and tell us of other useful publications you have found helpful so that we can add these to the pamphlets. Enjoy the journey!



Christian Curriculum Perspectives

“In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Colossians 2:3

One of the attributes of God is His omniscience; because He is all-knowing there is no aspect of knowledge outside of Him.

John Owen, the puritan theologian, wrote: ‘God Himself is all-knowing and all-wise, therefore, knowledge in its true fullness can rest only in God Himself.’

Jesus Christ, as the exact representation of the Father, is the sum total of knowledge and wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:24, 30). Therefore, every subject reveals an aspect of God’s nature and divine wisdom. All curriculum must serve our overall aim of discipling our students into God’s wisdom. Whilst subjects may need to be segregated for the purpose of studying each particular discipline in depth, we do not accept secular divisions and need to maintain an awareness of the integration of all subjects and their inter-relatedness. The Bible, as God’s revelation of Himself, contains source principles and truths relevant to each aspect of knowledge.

‘Let every good and true Christian understand that wherever truth may be found it belongs to its master.’

St Augustine

‘Study of God is the goal of learning.’

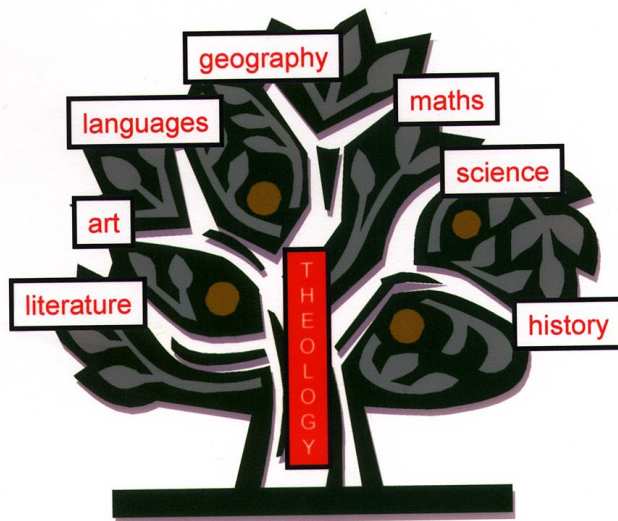
Roger Bacon (1214 – 1291)

The authority of the Word of God in relation to curricular subjects

Legend attributes to Alfred the Great the original founding of Oxford University. Later the first colleges were established in the 13th Century. Every student had to spend his first year studying theology – because it was understood that God’s Word was the foundational ‘Science’. Only through the Bible, God’s revelation of Himself, could any other subject be rightly approached and perceived. Only within a theistic worldview could they be properly understood. In their second year, students were allowed to branch out into their specialist subject, studying it in the light of theology.

Our task is to approach our subjects in the same way from a biblical worldview. The Bible is not a textbook but it is a source book, containing foundational and guiding principles which help us to interpret knowledge in its various aspects. We do not look to ‘add on’ to our curriculum verses or scripture principles. Rather we are on a journey of revelation, learning how God’s Word guides us and interprets the different subjects and themes in knowledge. We must never forget that all wisdom and knowledge is in Christ who is Himself, the Living Word (Colossians 2:3. John 1:14).

It is also important for us to remember and look for, the integration of each subject with others in God’s universe.



Truths and Lies in our Culture

Christian education is all about sowing the truth into children's lives. God's Word is pure and powerful seed which contains a life-giving dynamic of the Holy Spirit. It is living and active (Hebrews 4:12) and will accomplish the purpose for which it is sent (Isaiah 55:11)

Jesus told the parable about Satan sowing weeds amongst the good seed. In every culture there are lies which become sown by the enemy of God. In our own nation, for instance, there is a strongly held belief that materialism and finance can give us complete security. Many also believe that the only viable faith is one which can be rationally proved. In Africa, belief in witchcraft's power is correspondingly strong. In many nations education is believed to be a 'saviour' and the answer to life.

Our teaching and curriculum need to sow the truth of the kingdom so that our children receive the Christian worldview and so that prevailing lies in our culture are prevented from warping young lives with deception. In the same way as bank cashiers are trained to identify counterfeit notes by handling only true ones, so by knowing certain key concepts of truth our students will be prepared to identify false beliefs.

The following are concepts of biblically-based truth which can be used as appropriate and relevant in each area of curriculum. We encourage you to make these your own and pray about how God would have you use them with your students. For those who have worked with the 'Truth, Way, Life' (Trinity) model and are familiar with its terminology we could call these 'major heart concepts'.

Some of the concepts will apply more exclusively to certain subject areas; others are relevant more widely. For example, the Communication concept (no.13) especially applies to English Language, Literature, History and Foreign Languages whereas Provision and Resource (no.12) obviously applies more fully in Geography.

All of the concepts are wisdom because they are statements of truth; however, it is also useful to specify 'Wisdom' as a concept in its own right. (no.14.)

21 CONCEPTS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD FOR USE IN CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTION

The following principles (key heart concepts) are not meant to be exhaustive but to inspire the teacher to reveal these aspects of God and His Kingdom in curriculum. It is hoped that many more will be discovered. The scripture references are not intended to be limited to the concept but to help our thinking around the subject. Interpretation of the truths will inevitably vary according to your theology or background. The most important issue is to respond in faith to these broad principles from the Word of God and to unpack them further.

After each truth is a corresponding lie reflecting the world's thinking. We need to expose the lie when using the truth.

Teachers need to discover and explore these aspects of the Kingdom of God. The sentence definitions are obviously not meant to be used repetitively or legalistically but are merely guidelines to the truth which may be applied in a variety of ways and vocabulary adapted according to age.

Seven major ones (applicable to every subject)

1. MAN CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE AND REDEEMED BY HIM

(Genesis 1:27-28; 1 Peter 1:18-19)

God has given dignity and value to men and women by making them in His own image and by redeeming them through the cross at the cost of His Son's life.

Lie: Man evolved by chance and makes his own destiny.

2. CREATOR AND CREATION

(Genesis 1:1; John 1:1; Romans 1:20; Colossians 1:16)

God is the creator of the universe, and His creation reflects His nature.

Lie: Nature and the universe evolved by chance.

3. SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

(Psalms 33:10-11; Psalms 135:6; Job 42:2; Acts 17:26)

Through Jesus His Son as King, God is totally in control of His creation and the events of history and has planned everything according to His good and wise purposes.

Lie: Man is the prime animal continually gaining control of the world. The supremacy of man determines history.

4. UNITY AND DIVERSITY

(1 Corinthians 12 esp. vs 12, 27; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:4-13)

There is a unity and diversity throughout God's creation; as people we are called to unity but can appreciate and learn from each other's differences.

Lie: There is no overall unity or pattern to the universe; it is random.

5. ORDER

(Genesis 1: Isaiah 9:7a; 1 Corinthians 14:33)

God establishes a creation which is purposeful and reveals order; He proceeds in orderly ways to achieve His purpose though at times He intervenes miraculously to bring about His purposes.

Lie: There is no overall unity or pattern in nature; it is random.

6. WISDOM

(Proverbs 2:1-4; 4:7-8; Colossians 2:2-3; 1 Corinthians 1:24, 30)

Scripture encourages us to value and pursue wisdom which is only found in God; God's wisdom is reflected in all that He is and does.

Lie: Wisdom comes out of man's mind and his experience. It is often (merely) expediency.

7. INTERDEPENDENCE

(Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 1 Corinthians 12; Galatians 6:2)

Throughout God's creation there is a principle of interdependence which means that each part relates to, and has need of, the others.

Lie: We are autonomous, independent beings who may choose to co-operate with each other when it is in our own (self) interest.

Other key concepts

8. COVENANT LOVE

(Exodus 34:6-7; John 3:16; 1 John 3:1)

God is a God of love who commits Himself to love us and to do good to us through His covenant promises.

Lie: We may choose to care for others. Love is the expression of passion based on self-interest. Any covenants are optional, re-negotiable and often temporary.

9. GREAT COMMISSION

(Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Acts 17:26-27)

Out of His great love Jesus has commanded us to go with His heart of love and with His truth to make disciples.

Lie: We may influence others by our experience and superior knowledge, but we are under no obligation to do so.

10. FATHERHOOD AND FAMILY

(Genesis 1:28; Psalm 68:6; Luke 11:2; Ephesians 3:14-15)

God is a father who desires and plans to fill the earth with a family reflecting His own nature and glory.

Lie: The world is comprised of autonomous ethnic groups and cultures.

11. STEWARDSHIP AND SERVANTHOOD

(Genesis 1:26; Luke 19:11-27; John 13:2-17; 1Corinthians 4:1-2; Philippians 2)

God has made us in his own image to serve Him and one another by stewarding and developing the earth and its resources for His glory and for the good of our fellow man, just as Christ Himself did.

Lie: We use the world's resources primarily to maintain ourselves. We may choose to benefit others with our surplus. Conservation is important for self-preservation.

12. RIGHTEOUSNESS

(Psalm 89:14; Psalm 119:137; Isaiah 9:7; Romans 14:17)

Righteousness is personified only in God Himself and reflects His holiness and faithfulness. In God's Kingdom everything is meant to be rightly related to Him and to every other part.

Lie: There is no absolute right: ("right" is purely personal and communal preference.)

13. JUSTICE

(Psalm 9:16; Ps 11:7; Psalm 89:14; Micah 6:6-8; Amos 5:24; Revelation 20:11-12)

God is a wise judge who makes just decisions; He is impartial and equitable, and calls us to be the same.

Lie: Justice is our right but it is relative to our individual or communally agreed values.

14. PROVISION AND RESOURCES

(Genesis 22:14; Psalm 104; 1 Timothy 6:17)

One of God's names is Jehovah-Jireh: God provides resources for all that He has made and for all that He purposes to do.

Lie: Earth's finite resources enhanced by man's creativity are all that are available: their use generates a conflict between conservation and self-interest.

15. COMMUNICATION

(John 1:1, 14; Ephesians 4:15; 2Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:1-2; 1 John 1:3, 7)

God is a communicating God who reveals Himself through scripture and prophecy; He desires that good relationships be formed through honest and accurate communication.

Lie: Communication is a means to an end for our self-satisfaction. A multiplicity of media (sources) enhance(s) the quality of life.

16. WONDER – WORSHIP

(Psalm 8; Job 37-42; Daniel 4:3; Romans 11:35-36)

Many aspects of God’s creation cause us to wonder at His greatness and to worship Him in response.

Lie: We marvel at man’s greatness and worship him. Wonder and worship may be lasting but are frequently fleeting and fickle.

17. PLACEMENT

(Deuteronomy 32:8; Acts 17:26)

God has ordained areas and boundaries for the right settlement of all peoples.

Lie: It is an intrinsic right for people groups to have their own protected areas of settlement but these rights frequently conflict and the most powerful take precedence.

18. GROWTH – MATURITY – FRUITFULNESS

(Psalm 1:3; 92:12-15; Matthew 13:1-9, 23; John 15:5; Ephesians 4:15-16)

Everything which has life is created that it might grow to maturity and increasing fruitfulness.

Lie: Self-advancement is a dominant motivation for life but is not intrinsically related to maturity or fruitfulness.

19. GOVERNING – RULING

(Genesis 1:28; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 13:1-5; Ephesians 6:1-2; Hebrews 13:17)

Man is made in God’s image to govern and rule His creation for Him using godly principles; God’s rule through others is to be honoured.

Lie: Governments, whether autocratic or democratic, essentially serve selfish interests.

20. FORGIVENESS – RECONCILIATION

(Exodus 34:6; Matthew 18:21-35; Ephesians 2:13-16)

Having been reconciled with Christ we are called upon to exercise forgiveness and to live in harmony with one another.

Lie: Reconciliation is a laudable objective but apology and forgiveness are generally signs of weakness.

21. ETERNITY – INFINITY

(Psalm 90:1-4; Ecclesiastes 3:11; John 17:3; 2Timothy 1:10)

God is infinite and eternal, and many aspects of His creation reflect this; through Christ we can share in the gift of eternal life.

Lie: There is no definitive life after death. However, each individual may conceive their own philosophy.

Applying the 21 truths to specific curriculum

Note that the 21 concepts are major heart concepts, and each has many different aspects which can be highlighted using different words and different ways in order to give you the particular heart concept(s) you need in the **Truth - Way - Life** model approach. I would see these 21 as an umbrella under which all other lesson heart concepts can fit. We need to ask God for creative ways to use the concepts, avoiding slavish repetition of the sentences as written which can cause a boring familiarity for the students which will breed contempt.

Questions to be answered during the planning process:

1a. Which of the following 21 concepts apply to this particular aspect of curriculum?

Note: there are 7 of the 21 which apply in different ways to every aspect of the curriculum.

1b. Do I want to use all of the relevant concepts?

Note: the answer to 1b depends on the other lesson/themes being taught in the class in other areas of curriculum. The teacher needs to make value judgements about how much to emphasize well-used concepts (like the major 7) or whether merely to draw attention to them in passing.

2. Pray: what aspects does God want to emphasize – TRUTH - Source)

In this way clarify and prioritize the heart concept(s) you will major on.

3. Which are the lies to oppose?

See list of false beliefs in our culture.

4. How (in what ways) do the relevant heart concepts apply to this curriculum?

WAY TO TEACH (Way)

5. How shall I lead the students to discover and then examine the relevant lies and truths?

WAY TO TEACH (Way)

6. How and what do I want the students to understand and apply? LIFE WISDOM (Life)

A Sample of some false beliefs rooted in the British Culture

- Humanism** - man is self-existent, his own god and is progressing towards full self-knowledge
- Individualism** - man is autonomous and is not accountable to any reference other than himself – a particularly post-modern view
- Intellectualism** - exaltation and superiority of the intellect over any other way of knowing
- Rationalism** - as the basis for evaluating all beliefs and theories
- Materialism** - preferring physical possessions and physical comfort to spiritual values
- Hedonism** - the pursuit of pleasure as the highest good
- Relativism** - there are no absolute truths, everything is relative
- Pluralism** - no commitment to one absolute principle but to mixture
- Religion** - as expressed in outward form rather than real internal commitment to Jesus
- Technology** - can give us all the answers society needs
- Economic stability** - brings peace
- Fear** - of poverty, death, sickness, old age, violence etc.

These lies are rooted in our society. Each of the 21 concepts can be applied to challenge and eradicate the lies. As an exercise you might like to see for yourself which truths are particularly relevant to each lie.

Relevance of Concepts to Subjects

Note: that whilst all 21 concepts could apply to certain aspects of every subject, the following are an attempt to identify their relevance in a major way.

English Language:	Communication, righteousness, order (grammar, punctuation, spelling)
Foreign Languages:	Communication, righteousness, order (grammar, punctuation, spelling)
English Literature:	Covenant love, man created in God's image, wisdom, forgiveness, reconciliation, interdependence, unity and diversity, justice, righteousness
Maths:	Order, righteousness, eternity and infinity, unity and diversity, growth, wisdom, interdependence
Science:	Creator and creation, sovereignty, order, wonder, worship, unity and diversity, man in God's image, righteousness, interdependence
History:	Sovereignty of God, covenant love, Great Commission, governing, ruling, justice, placement, forgiveness, reconciliation
Geography:	Creator and creation, Great Commission, fatherhood and family, provision and resources, placement, unity and diversity, stewardship and servanthood, communication
Art:	Man created in God's image, creator and creation, order, unity and diversity, communication
Music:	Man created in God's image, covenant love, order, unity and diversity, creator and creation

Note: It has been discovered that about 7 of the 21 concepts apply to all curriculum.

They are:

- 3. Man created in God's image**
- 4. Creator and creation**
- 5. Sovereignty of God**
- 7. Unity and diversity**
- 9. Order**
- 14. Wisdom**
- 16. Interdependence.**

I am indebted to my colleagues Mr Keith Miners from Gateway School, Winnipeg, Canada and Mr John Ellwood of The King's School, Witney UK for their assistance in developing the work on truth and lies in our culture.