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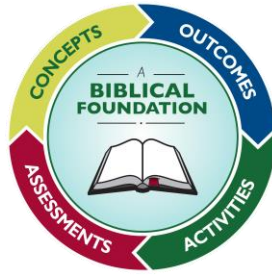
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## The Development of a Higher Education Biblical Foundation Course Design Model

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### Abstract

Every course at a Seventh-day Adventist (Adventist) institution of higher education should be qualitatively different from the same or similar course at a secular institution. They should also be different from a similar course taught at another Christian university. There are fundamental differences in Adventist beliefs that should influence the way Adventists view life and through which the disciplines are approached to form a unique and distinctive Adventist biblical worldview. Professors come to academia as experts in their discipline; however, because they are not generally educated in teaching theory, they often bring little understanding of course development, let alone course development from an Adventist biblical worldview foundation. Unable to locate an existing course design model built on an Adventist biblical foundation, the authors created one founded on learning theory research and supports such a foundation. The model created by the authors assists professors as they support students in not only becoming knowledgeable in the content, but more importantly becoming committed, faithful Seventh-day Adventist professionals with a clearly defined biblical worldview. Teaching from a biblically based, well-articulated Biblical Course Concept that is linked to biblical examples of stories and teachings along with the use of active learning strategies to introduce the academic knowledge and processes of the course will change the way professors teach. While this Biblical Foundation Course Design Model may sound simple in theory, it requires a strong commitment from professors, support from deans, department chairs, and administrators, along with professional development education. The model is not a cookie-cutter approach; instead, it challenges professors to think differently about the biblical worldview as it relates to their course content knowledge and course development. Therefore, professional development activities such as Summer Institutes of Course Design, ongoing faculty study groups, and peer presentations showcasing how professors have incorporated elements of the design into their classrooms or courses, are critical. Financial support from academic administration is necessary to make this change and support possible.

### **The Development of a Higher Education Biblical Foundation Course Design Model**

Many changes for both professors and students have taken place since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The improved access to information and a rapidly growing technological environment, are two of the major impacts on education in this century. Other societal developments such as globalization, terrorism anxiety, population shift through urbanization, and post-modern moral relativism have affected the educational needs and characteristics of millennials as well.

Millennial students, identified as being born between 1984 and 2004, are the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in U.S. history. The United States has always been at war, and defining events to them include the impeachment of a president and the increase of terrorism after September 11. They have no memory of a world without the Internet, personal computers, iPads, or smart phones. One in four grew up in a single-parent household and are impacted by the divorce rate exceeding 50%. However, they consider themselves very close to their parents.

As reported by Gleason (2008), who drew together a collection of research, some unique characteristics define millennials as a “wanted” generation; and they feel individually and collectively special as a result. This generation was rarely left unsupervised and thus, are comfortable with parental involvement. In fact, they want their parents involved in their lives; often expecting their parents and college officials to resolve their conflicts and to protect and nurture them. (Mastrodicasa, 2008) Millennials are viewed as motivated, goal-oriented, assertive, confident, and high-achieving. They are civic-minded valuing service-learning and volunteerism. They have had more home-work than previous generations, but also have had their schedules

planned out and filled almost every hour of the day with scheduled activities. (Coombs & DeBard, 2004, p. 87).

Millennials are demanding professors take note of their differences and teach differently as a result. Research has shown that millennials are asking for courses that are interactive, relevant to their culture, and where technology is both abundant and ubiquitous. (Price, 2009). In light of these changes, professors in higher education have been forced to adapt their teaching approaches without a clear direction for how to meet these millennial needs. The authors believe that Seventh-day Adventist (Adventist) millennial students need help navigating this new world through the appropriate use of higher order thinking skills. These skills will cultivate their understanding of the biblical worldview. The wide range of strategies and curriculum design models available can cause uncertainty for professors, who are often required to deliver more content in accordance with learning outcomes prescribed and mandated by their disciplines' national organizations, higher education accrediting organizations, and committees from local institutions. Increasing information leads to an increased number of facts and larger, heavier, more expensive textbooks. Students, meanwhile, cannot be expected to remember every single fact that is now in a textbook and their professors feel pressured to present; and professors must recognize that there are significant pieces of content knowledge that are an essential part of the discipline's vernacular. According to Schrock and Benko (2015), in order to enhance higher order thinking skills, professors must move beyond just the coverage of all the textbook content towards the *application* of the significant knowledge.

### **Background**

The Center for Teaching Excellence and Integration of Faith and Learning (Center) was established in June of 2013 to meet several Southern Adventist University (Southern) Vision

20/20 Strategic Plan Goals. Visionary leadership established this Center to promote teaching excellence and enhance student learning, in addition to focusing on the integration of faith and learning (IFL) and an Adventist biblical worldview within the courses designed and taught at Southern. The founding staff wrestled with the term *integration of faith and learning* and requested a name change to better reflect the use of a biblical foundation for the development of each course. The director and associate director of the now-retitled Center for Teaching Excellence and Biblical Foundations of Faith and Learning chose Psalm 25:4-5 as its guiding scripture: “*Show* me your ways, O Lord, *teach* me your paths; *guide* me in your truth and *teach* me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long” (Psalm 25:4-5 New International Version, emphasis added). This text highlights through parallelism the two most effective forms of teaching: modeling (“show me”) and mentoring (“guide me”), both built on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

The foundation of this Center is biblically-based, and the staff is committed to supporting professors to ensure that every course taught at this Adventist institution of higher education differs significantly from similar courses taught at secular or other Christian institutions. When hired to teach at an Adventist institution, a professor needs to be aware that this teaching position represents a calling by the Seventh-day Adventist church to the teaching ministry, which is a leadership position. As part of the teaching ministry, he or she is expected to continually reflect upon these questions:

- Why has God chosen me to teach at an Adventist Christian institution of higher education?
- What biblical concept can be the foundation for each course(s) I teach?

- What biblical content knowledge along with Adventist fundamental beliefs do I need to teach that I could not teach in a secular institution?

The mission of the Center is to serve God first, then collaborate and partner with professors to provide

- ongoing professional development, which includes utilizing a biblically based course design model;
- bimonthly Faculty Showcases featuring pedagogy and successful examples of classroom application of the biblical foundation Christian worldview;
- monthly Professor Study Circles (called Teach<sup>3</sup>);
- a Summer Institute dedicated completely to the Biblical Foundation Course Design Model, which focuses on developing higher order thinking skills and providing connections for taking the Adventist biblical worldview into students' daily lives and the public workplace;
- access to peer mentors through a New Faculty Mentoring Program; and
- confidential coaching on the teaching process, increasing teaching excellence across the curriculum in all schools and departments.

As part of the Center for Teaching Excellence and Biblical Foundations of Faith and Learning, the authors are charged with recognizing teaching excellence and helping all professors grow into teachers of excellence. We believe teachers of excellence at Southern must teach from an Adventist biblical foundation, be competent in their discipline, understand learning theories and course design, and, finally, be able to meet the needs of the students they are teaching.

## Introduction

Millennial students have different characteristics than previous generations (Gleason, 2008); and those coming to Adventist institutions of higher learning are compelling the institutions to change. Based on conversations with currently enrolled students, the authors learned these millennials are looking to be engaged and they want our Seventh-day Adventist biblical worldview to be prevalent throughout *all* their courses. When they graduate, Adventist millennials want to be ready to meet the world head on, with their biblical worldview developed. They, like other millennials, want to come away with an understanding of how the scriptures apply to their vocation and calling. (Ostrander, 2016) We must challenge students to choose the Lord and a biblical worldview as the perspective from which to make decisions and operate their lives.

Establishing a biblical worldview in *all* courses is of utmost importance in Adventist Institutions of Higher Education, especially when anyone and everyone has access to the wealth of information found on the Internet today. Many top tier universities have full courses online for free. Adventist courses need to be different. Faculty need to provide more than what students can find online; they need to teach from a uniquely Adventist perspective and structure their courses on an Adventist biblical foundation.

The Israelites were instructed to remember, keep, and pass on to future generations the commandments.

“...Keep all his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged . . . And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house,

and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thy risest up”  
(Deuteronomy 6:2, 7 King James Version).

Professors in an Adventist institution of higher education are privileged to carry forward and teach the biblical worldview to the students who sit in our classrooms and the generations that pass through our doors: “We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders he has done...then they will put their trust in God.” (Psalm 78:3-7 New International Version)

Joshua gave the Israelites a clear choice similar to the choice professors are given:  
“Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood,” (i.e. a traditional approach, teaching the way we were taught), “or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell;” (i.e. a contemporary approach, teaching the way things are taught in other institutions) “but as for me and my house,” (classroom) “we will serve the Lord,” (i.e. following the divine plan for education built on the foundation of scripture, committed to service, with a view of eternity) (Joshua 24:15 King James Version).

In presenting an Adventist biblical worldview, we too can equip students with a perspective from which to see clearly and choose clearly to serve the Lord. The importance of such a perspective was highlighted in the book *Total Truth*, in which author Nancy Pearcey (2005) explained the shaping power of theory and paradigm.

“All facts are theory-laden,” is a popular slogan in the philosophy of science today. A bit of an exaggeration perhaps, but it makes the point that even what we choose to consider a “fact” is influenced by the theories we bring to the table. We always process data in light of some theoretical framework that we have adopted for understanding the world. (p. 41)



Pearcey was a featured speaker at Southern's August 2013 Colloquium, a yearly event designed to set the tone for the upcoming academic school year. Prior to the presentation, copies of *Total Truth* were provided for all professors, and many took the chance to read it. Pearcey's talk incorporated the same arguments found in her book, which brought a renewed emphasis on biblical foundations of faith and learning and helped foster related discussions between professors, administration, and the Center staff.

In a sobering passage, Pearcey (2005) warned of the dangers of neglecting to develop a biblical approach for delivering course content:

The danger is that if Christians don't *consciously* develop a biblical approach to the [academic] subject, then we will *unconsciously* absorb some other philosophical approach. A set of ideas for interpreting the world is like a philosophical toolbox, stuffed with terms and concepts. If Christians do not develop their own tools of analysis, then when some issue comes up that they want to understand, they'll reach over and borrow *someone else's* tools—whatever concepts are generally accepted in their professional field or in the culture at large. . . . "*The tools shape the user.*" (p. 44)

She then reminded professors of the nature of truth and introduced biblical pillars essential to a Christian worldview.

Once we understand how first principles work, then it becomes clear that all truth must begin with God. The only self-existent reality is God, and everything else depends on Him for its origin and continued existence. Nothing exists apart from His will; nothing falls outside the scope of the central turning points in biblical history: Creation, Fall, and Redemption. (p. 45)

Since the Bible tells us that God is both the Author of absolute truth and absolute truth itself (John 14:6; John 1:3 21st Century King James Version), it then follows that every discipline should be centered in the truth of God as revealed in His Word. As professors reflect on course design, they must continually hold themselves accountable to the standards of a sound biblical foundation, in addition to the academic content required within their disciplines. These reflections will be deepened by professors continually asking themselves, “What truth about God does this course content show, and how can the truth be demonstrated through the course content, activities, and presentations?”

Pearcey further warned that the typical strategy in most Christian schools is to inject a few narrowly defined “religious elements into the classroom, like prayer and Bible memorization—and then teach the same things as the secular schools” (p. 37).

Rather than simply tacking on a worship thought that may or may not connect to the content of the day, professors at Southern are choosing to learn how to build a course on a biblical foundation. When courses are developed using the Biblical Foundation Course Design Model biblical concepts become the foundation and are integrated by the professor throughout the course through natural connections.

### **Sola Scriptura – The Bible Alone**

In an Adventist setting, teaching must be related to the Seventh-day Adventist biblical foundation, embodied by the church’s 28 Fundamental Beliefs. Professors seeking to show God’s truth in their course content should also be asking, “What makes this course uniquely and distinctively Seventh-day Adventist?”

The official website of the Seventh-day Adventist world church states the following:

Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as the only source of our beliefs. We consider our movement to be the result of the Protestant conviction *Sola Scriptura*—the Bible as the only standard of faith and practice for Christians. Over the years, our church has agreed upon key statements that summarize the principal teachings Seventh-day Adventists understand from the Bible. These statements are made collectively by a group of scholars studying and prayerfully searching the Bible with the help of the Holy Spirit. . . . In each teaching, God is the architect, who in wisdom, grace and infinite love, is restoring a relationship with humanity that will last for eternity. (“Beliefs,” n.d.)

Currently, the Adventist church has identified 28 Fundamental Beliefs. Theological scholars have arranged these beliefs into six major doctrinal categories: God, man, salvation, the church, the Christian life, and last day events.

At Southern, a group of professors serving as an adhoc advisory to the Center’s staff made a recommendation to group the 28 Adventist beliefs under four major themes, or “pillars”: Creation, The Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. The four biblical pillars were chosen to help students develop a biblically based Christian worldview that is built upon acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God, given so that He may communicate with the humans He created. Students can begin to develop a Christian worldview by reading the explanation given by Paul in 2 Timothy: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17 King James Version). The decision to use the four biblical pillars was shared with the School of Religion’s professors for additional input. The religion professors encouraged emphasis on the Bible as God’s Word to us as an additional biblical pillar. Further meetings with even more collaborating faculty members, however, led to

the decision to highlight the importance of Sola Scriptura—the Bible alone—as the framing lens through which the four biblical pillars would be presented. Faculty attending the first Summer Institutes, in 2014, began to develop courses using one or more of these doctrinal pillars as part of Southern’s biblical foundation of faith and learning. Table 1 shows the 28 Adventist Fundamental Beliefs sorted and placed under the four doctrinal pillars.

Table 1 <i>Doctrinal Pillars and the 28 Fundamental Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs</i> Fundamental Beliefs that are <i>italicized</i> are listed more than once, because they are inherent to more than one pillar.			
1) Creation	2) The Fall	3) Redemption	4) Restoration
Holy Scriptures <i>The Law of God</i> Trinity Father Son Holy Spirit Creation The Sabbath Marriage and Family	Nature of Man The Great Controversy <i>Death and Resurrection</i> <i>The Law of God</i> (clearly the law of God existed before creation but became a focal point with the Fall.)	Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ The Experience of Salvation Baptism Growing in Christ The Lord’s Supper Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary The Second Coming of Christ <i>Death and Resurrection</i>	Stewardship Christian Behavior The Church The Remnant and its Mission The Gift of Prophecy Unity in the Body of Christ Spiritual Gifts and Ministries The Millennium and the End of Sin The New Earth

Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, Director of Education for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, spoke at the *International Conference on the Bible and Science*, held at St. George, Utah from August 15 to 23 in 2014. “There is increasing interest in course design within Seventh-day Adventist institutions worldwide based on the Adventist biblical foundation of faith and learning,” she noted (Beardsley-Hardy, personal communication, August 18, 2014). Despite this, professors are still typically employed based on their advanced degrees, knowledge of the content, and previous teaching experience; skill in teaching and/or curriculum design generally gains importance only after professors have been hired and student evaluations of courses begin. At Southern, and in most Adventist institutions of higher learning, professors must also be members in “regular standing” in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Because twenty-first century education is changing so rapidly, professors are requesting more professional

development opportunities. They are also realizing the need to make Southern's classes different from secular institutions' and more distinctively Adventist to increase the uniqueness of Adventist institutions of higher education.

Various course design models were researched and studied for use at Southern. Based on exhaustive research, the authors were unable to locate an existing course design model for use within Seventh-day Adventist institutions of higher education that intentionally emphasized a biblical foundation and Christian worldview. The authors consequently partnered with selected faculty and spent twelve months developing a course design model with a biblical foundation for use by Southern professors. It is the purpose of this article to fill the gap in the literature through the introduction of Southern's Biblical Foundation Course Design Model.

### **Major Learning Theories**

The authors felt called to develop a course design model with a researched educational pedagogy and a biblical foundation which could be used by Southern faculty and shared with other Adventist institutions of higher education. We began this process by identifying academically recognized learning theories which have been utilized by the authors of other established models.

Because the ways in which students learn is important to professors and developers of curriculum design, the researchers reviewed categories into which learning models are often grouped. The authors selected four theories due to their popularity among educators: Behaviorist (Watson, 1913), Cognitivist (Anderson, 2010), Constructivist (Smith, Ragan, McMichael, & Miles, 1993), and Connectivist (Simmons, 2005) theories. Summaries are provided for the four theories.

### **Behavioral Theory**

John B. Watson is often considered the father of behaviorism. Behavioral theorists define learning as a “semi-permanent change in behavior.” In other words, learning has only taken place if a change in behavior is evident. Pure behaviorists are concerned not with internal process, but with external exhibitions. Behaviorists are concerned with the use of behavioral methods to encourage *learning* rather than for classroom or behavior management (Watson, 1913).

### **Cognitive Theory**

Cognitive theorists begin with the assumption that one cannot force someone to learn. Cognitive theory defines learning as a semi-permanent change in mental processes or associations. Cognitivists do not require an outward exhibition of learning but focus more on the internal processes and connections that take place during learning (Anderson, 2010). Aaron T. Beck is generally regarded as the father of cognitive therapy and believed higher-level thinking skills such as metacognition, study strategies, transfer, and problem solving are essential to cognitive theory. Higher-order thinking skills are an important part of the Biblical Foundation Course Design Model.

The Gestalt learning theory, sometimes defined with Aristotle’s quote, “the whole is greater than just the sum of the parts,” underpins all the cognitivist theories. This holistic approach is often used in Adventist education because it emphasizes seeing the big picture (i.e. the Great Controversy, the biblical worldview of a discipline, etc.)

### **Constructivist Theory**

Constructivist theorists believe that people create their own meaning through experience. Constructivism has its roots in the cognitive theories of Piaget and Vygotsky and embraces several aspects of both of those theories. From Piaget comes active learning, schemes,

assimilation and accommodation. From Vygotsky comes social constructivism, group work, and apprenticeship. Constructivism embraces a “top-down” rather than a “bottom-up” instructional methodology. This means that rather than teach all of the details that lead to a main idea, students discover the main idea and then derive the details. Personal theories, or students’ own ideas about how things work, play a large role in constructivism as professors attempt to provide activities that clarify and correct misconceptions. Additional constructivist strategies include presenting others’ viewpoints, promoting dialogue, and emphasizing conceptual understanding instead of rote learning (Laroche, Bednarz, & Garrison, 1998) which is why Constructivist theory is basic to the development of the Biblical Foundation Course Design Model.

### **Connectivist Theory**

Connectivism is one of the newest learning theories. This theory has risen in importance because of the vast amounts of information available digitally to anyone at any time in almost any location. George Siemens (2005), considered to be the father of connectivism, stated, “New information is continually being acquired. The ability to draw distinctions between important and unimportant information is vital. The ability to recognize when new information alters the landscape based on decisions made yesterday is also critical” (“Connectivism” section, para. 2). The connectivist theory of learning, which builds on both the cognitivist and constructivist theories, places greater emphasis on the connections needed for learning to take place and for the community to be available for the sharing of knowledge.

The Biblical Foundation Course Design Model was intentionally formulated using cognitivist, constructivist, and connectivist theories. With the Adventist biblical Christian worldview as the foundation for course development, these three theories build on each other and connect the processes of thinking (cognition), constructing, and learning.

### **Theoretical Foundations of Course Design**

Course design is a cyclical process for which already developed and researched models exist (e.g., the ADDIE model, Backward Course Design, Integrated Course Design, and Universal Design). The advantage of using elements of these models provides a researched and systematic approach to designing instruction. Researched course design models, along with terms and definitions important to course design, are listed below.

#### **ADDIE Model**

The ADDIE model is a systematic instructional design model that consists of five cyclical phases, one for each letter in the name: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. Although the originator is not known, the model was modified in 1978, resulting in a version called the Dick and Carey Model (Dick & Carey, 2000).

#### **Backward Design Model**

The backward design model as formulated by McTighe and Wiggins begins with the end in mind (McTighe & Wiggins, 2004). It is a course design model which first identifies the desired end results of a course. Next, the professor selects assessment activities that will measure the desired end results. Finally, the professor designs the course by identifying teaching strategies and learning activities that will best achieve the desired results.

#### **Instructional Design**

Instructional design is the practice of creating instructional experiences which make the acquisition of knowledge and skill more efficient, effective, and appealing (Merrill, Drake, Lacy, & Pratt, 1996). It is an iterative process that requires ongoing assessment and student feedback (Hoffman & Margerum-Leys, 1996).



### **Integrated Course Design**

The Integrated Course Design model, a variant of the Backward Course Design Model, identifies the important “situational factors” that are used to make three sets of decisions: (a) What are the student learning goals? (b) What will the feedback and assessment look like? and (c) Which teaching and learning activities will the professor use to achieve the learning goals? Each of these key components must be “integrated,” and they must support and reinforce each other (Fink, 2013).

### **Traditional Course Design**

Traditional course design is a systematic approach to course development that ensures specific learning outcomes are accomplished. It is a repetitive process that requires ongoing evaluation and feedback. It uses the principles of learning and instruction to find specific strategies for teaching activities and materials (Freeman, 1994).

### **Universal Design**

Universal design is a specific set of principles originally defined by architects, environmental researchers, engineers, and product designers that aims to design products and environments that can be used by all people to the greatest extent possible—without the need for adaptation or specialized design. In education, it has been defined as the preparation of curriculum, materials, and environments so that they may be used appropriately and with ease by a wide variety of people (Bowe, 2000).

Although each of the curriculum design model definitions is unique in some way, most share several elements. The common elements identified include (a) learning objectives or learning outcomes, (b) the scope and sequencing of content, (c) the use of strategies for presenting the content, and (d) the evaluation of the learning objectives or learning outcomes.

Many of these models also include student feedback at some point. The major difference between the models is the organizational order of the elements.

### **The Biblical Foundation Course Design Model**

#### **Goal of the Biblical Foundation Course Design Model**

Throughout the development of the Biblical Foundation Course Design Model, the authors had the goal of providing a curriculum design model professors at Southern could follow that featured a clearly identified biblical concept as the foundation for each course. This model needed to account for the recent vast changes in the educational landscape and meet the specific needs of the millennial student. All of the common elements of curriculum design were intentionally included, but we started the process with an element from the Backward Design Model (McTighe & Wiggins, 2011) to begin with the end in mind, which in our model is building each course with an Adventist biblical foundation. Professors identify an overarching biblical concept that exemplifies their course. The biblical concept is rooted in the biblical foundation of the four Adventist pillars and locate Biblical Examples of stories and teachings that relate to the content knowledge specific to their course. This planning allows the Bible to be the biblical foundation seamlessly interwoven throughout the course, supported by the other essential elements of course design. The Biblical Foundation Course Design Model assists professors as they support students in not only becoming knowledgeable in the content, but more importantly becoming committed, faithful Seventh-day Adventist professionals with a clearly defined biblical worldview.

#### **Process of Biblical Foundation Course Design Model Development**

Designing courses with a biblical foundation and a well-articulated Biblical Course Concept, along with linking Biblical Examples from an Adventist Christian worldview to the essential academic knowledge and processes within the course material, along with the use of

active learning strategies to introduce the academic knowledge and processes of the course will change the way professors teach. However, this type of intentional emphasis on course design will require a commitment from the university and the professor, who will need professional development and ongoing support. An instructor might ask, “In order to be successful with this course design model, how do I balance the breadth of content knowledge coverage with the depth of understanding required for mastery *and* include the biblical foundation within the course?”

This question usually stems from the belief that the biblical foundation is an “add-on” to the curriculum. The professor must be taught and then empowered to shift from the use of a traditional content coverage model to the Biblical Foundation Course Design Model. Academic Administration and the dean of the school or the department chair must be in alliance with the professor during this journey. After the change, the professor can move from simply covering the masses of content knowledge from textbooks to addressing the selected Learning Outcomes through a variety of interactive Teaching and Learning Activities, thus meeting the needs of millennial students.

We believe that when courses are planned with this new Biblical Foundation Course Design Model and all its elements, professors will be intentionally designing courses to guide learners to “the true ‘higher education’ . . . which is imparted by Him out of whose mouth ‘come knowledge and understanding’ Prov. 2:6” (White, 1903). The authors continue with a description of their seven steps for designing a course using the new Biblical Foundation Course Design Model.

### **Steps of the Biblical Foundation Course Design Model**

The professor should begin the process by “beginning with the end in mind” (Covey, 1989) through specific reflection on the following questions: “What is the essential over-arching concept of my course?” “How is this concept a truth about God?” and “What Biblical Examples (BEs) of this concept can be shared meaningfully throughout this course?” The answers to these questions are used to begin the development of the Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map. The map is a visual representation of the course’s biblical foundation and its connection to course content. The map streamlines the professor’s thinking and outlines the Biblical Course Concept and its connection to BEs, the academic knowledge and processes of the course, along with assessments which will be used to measure the student’s grasp of the content. Because the Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map is a visual representation of all essential elements of the course design, it becomes an important part of the course syllabus. The specific points necessary to design the Map follow in Step 1 of the Biblical Foundation Course Design Model.

#### **Step 1: Create a Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map.**

To start creating the Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map, the professor identifies two to three biblical concepts that could represent the essence of the course. See Table 2, for a partial list of biblical concepts that were collected by professors. Next, the authors suggest the professor spend time in Bible study, prayer, and reflection with the identified biblical concepts, asking God to help determine which *one* biblical concept will best represent the truth of God within the content knowledge of their course.

When the professor focuses students’ attention on the Biblical Course Concept students will begin to think beyond just the course content. At first, it may be hard to believe that all the content will still be covered, but it will, in the end, as professors learn to prioritize essential content knowledge.

The professor continues the process by writing the *defining sentence* using the selected Biblical Course Concept word and describing its connection to the course’s academic content in one sentence. For example, Dr. Linda Crumley, professor of COMM 397: Communication Research, identified “Discovery” as the Biblical Course Concept because she identified the biblical basis for her course to be: “God reveals all things to us.” The professor then wrote her defining sentence: “Through research, we seek to discover what God wants to reveal,” from Deuteronomy 29:29. The Biblical Course Concept and the defining sentence are placed in a green diamond shape in the center of the Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map. Figure 1 shows the beginning of the Course Concept Map for *COMM 397*. (figure 1).

Abundance	Commitment	Empowerment	Gratitude	Living	Redemption
Acceptance	Communication	Environments	Growth	Love	Reflection
Accountability	Compassion	Equality	Harmony	Loyalty	Relationships
Adaptation	Connection	Eternity	Heroism	Morals	Renewal
Adjustment	Cooperation	Ethics	Hierarchy	Nationalism	Restoration
Alignment	Coping	Excellence	Honor	Nature	Rhythm
Ambition	Courage	Experience	Hope	Order	Self-Awareness
Appreciation	Creativity	Fairness	Humor	Organization	Self-Worth
Balance	Culture	Faith	Identity	Overcoming	Strength
Beauty	Death/Dying	Family	Individuality	Patterns	Systems
Belonging	Democracy	Feelings	Intentionality	Peace	Tradition
Brotherhood	Dependency	Forgiveness	Interaction	Perspective	Transformation
Caring	Design	Free will	Interdependence	Power	Trust
Change	Desire	Freedom	Justice	Reality	Truth
Character	Discovery	Friendship	Knowledge	Rebellion	Unity
Choice	Diversity	Fulfillment	Leadership	Rebirth	Values
Circle of Life	Emotions	Grace	Liberty	Reconstruction	Will



*Figure 1.* Beginning of the Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map for COMM 397

Next, the professor identifies Biblical Examples (BEs) which include biblical teachings and specific Bible stories, with the reference texts, that relate to the Biblical Course Concept and defining sentence.

Dr. Crumley identified six BEs for her course:

1. Deuteronomy 29:29 – Discover God’s revelations
2. Isaiah 28:23-29 – Choose the right method for the job
3. 1 Corinthians 14:40 – Let all things be done decently and in order
4. Isaiah 48:6 – Be open to something new
5. Nehemiah 8:8 – Translate to understand
6. Numbers 1 – Taking a census-a procedural format

Dr. Crumley put each BE in a separate purple circle and used arrows to connect the Biblical Course Concept to each of the BEs on the Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map; she also added a map key that defines the different shapes (figure 2). (Note that, should this course be taught by other professors, they may see the course differently and find a different biblical concept and additional or different BEs.)

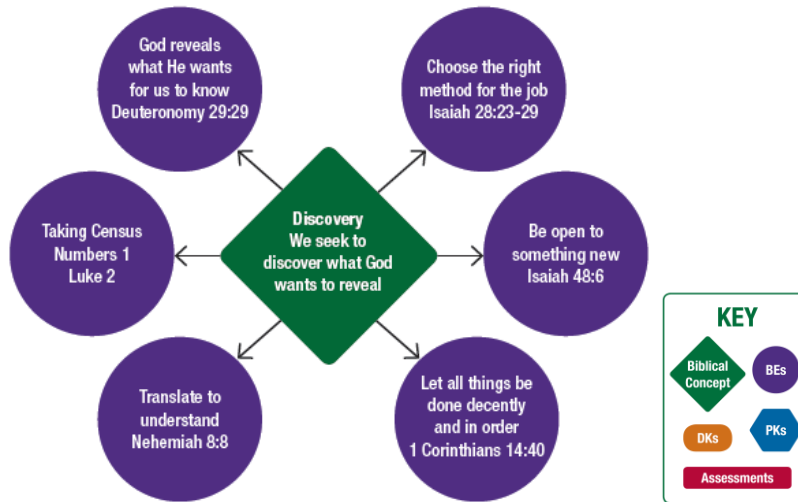


Figure 2. BEs and map key added to the Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map for COMM 397

The Biblical Foundation Course Design Model, like Stage 1 of McTighe and Wiggins' popular Understanding by Design Model (2011), emphasizes the identification of the desired end results for the course's content knowledge. The professor next determines which declarative (DK) and procedural knowledge (PK) students need to know to demonstrate understanding of the course content. These DKs and PKs will answer the question, "Five years from now, what should students still know and be able to do after taking this course?" Some professors will also add "beings", or attitudes and values, in addition to the DKs and PKs. Dr. Crumley identified three DK statements and three PK statements for her course. On her Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map, she placed each DK in an orange rectangular shape and each PK in a blue hexagon shape and added them to her Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map. Most professors do not have an identical number of DKs and PKs. However, the professor is asked to limit the total number of combined DKs and PKs to no more than eight. (figure 3).

The DKs and PKs will later (in Step 2 of the Model) be transcribed into Learning Outcomes (LOs), using verbs from the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. As the DKs and PKs are identified, the professor begins thinking about how adding verbs to the LOs will help students

reach higher-order levels of thinking, The professor will endeavor to move students to analyze, evaluate, and create activities found in the higher levels of the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001), a widely accepted taxonomy of the categories of learning originally developed for use at colleges and universities (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956).

The professor now reviews the BEs already identified and determines which BE connects best with each DK or PK. The BEs are usually rearranged on the Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map to positions closer to the DK or PK where they best connect, and an arrow is drawn connecting them. Figure 3 shows the Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map with the DKs and PKs added for *COMM 397*. (figure 3).

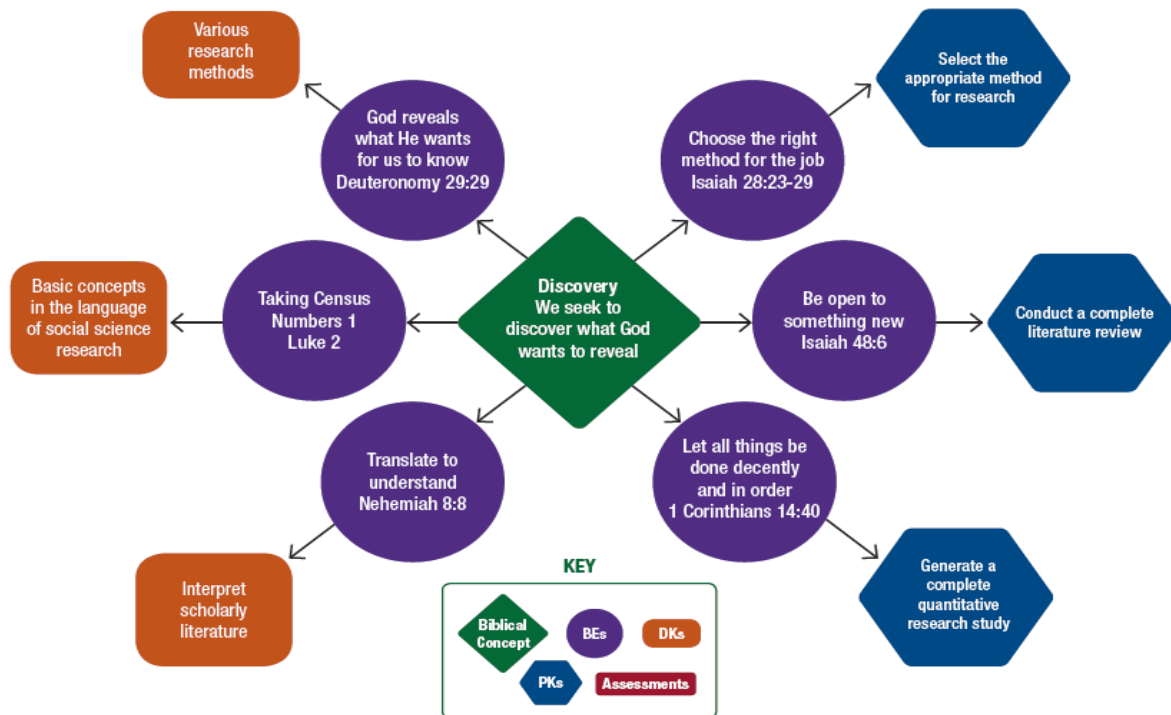


Figure 3. DKs and PKs added and linked to BEs on the Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map for COMM 397



Finally, to complete the Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map, the professor determines what kinds of assessments best measure student understanding of each DK and PK. For millennials, real world activities or projects should be used whenever possible. The professor places the assessments in red rectangular shapes and connects each to the appropriate DK or PK.

In COMM 397, Dr. Crumley chose to use Tool Presentations, Literature Reviews, Study Guides, Annotated References, Choral Readings, and a Group Project, along with tests as the assessments for her course. (figure 4). She did not rely solely on quizzes and tests, which are low-level assessments, and should not be the only type of assessment used. (It is important to note that in Step 5 of the Biblical Foundation Course Design Model, the professor will write an expanded Assessment Plan (AP) which will incorporate more information for the assessment activities identified here.)

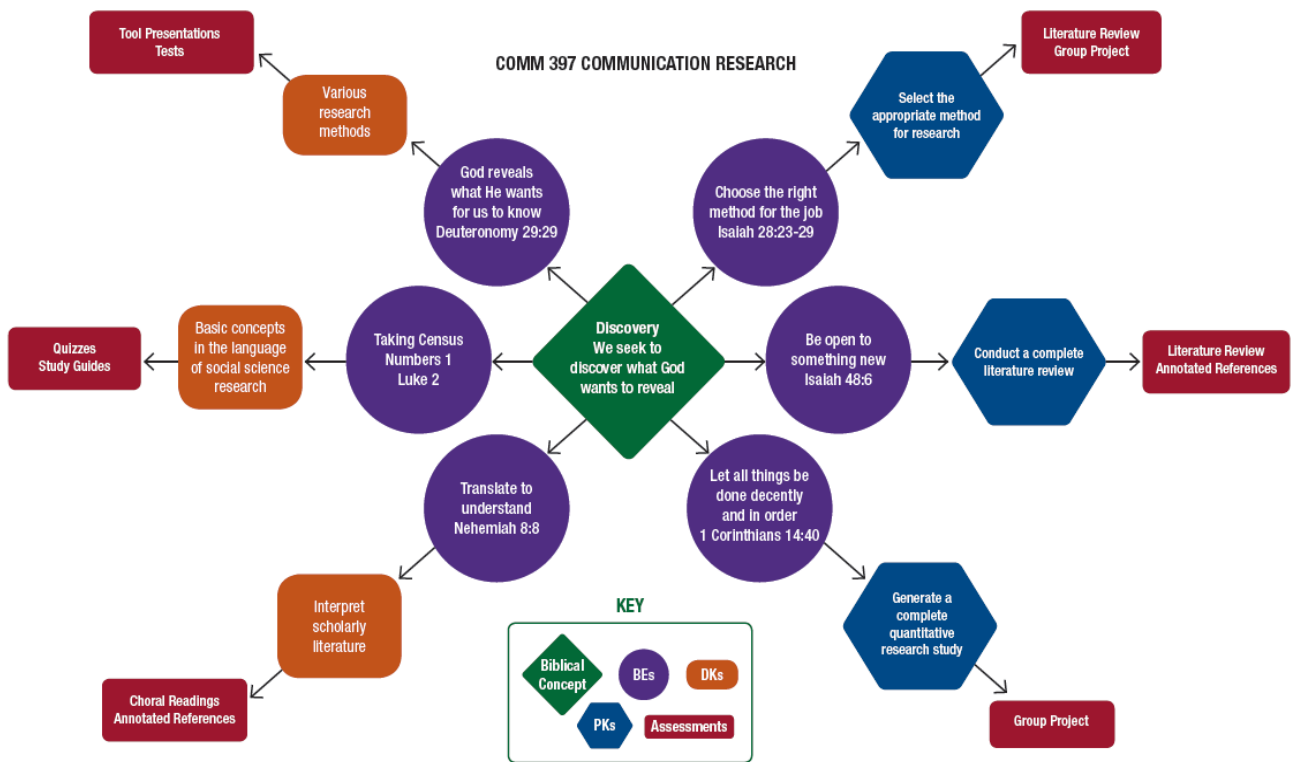


Figure 4. Completed Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map for COMM 397 Communication Research.

The completed Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map for COMM 397 shows the Biblical Course Concept and the defining sentence connected to the BEs, the BEs connected to the DKs and PKs, and the DKs and PKs connected to their corresponding assessments (see the Appendix for another example of a Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map). The next step, Step 2, in the development of Southern's Biblical Foundation Course Design Model involves writing Learning Outcomes (LOs) for the course. As stated earlier, the LOs will be recorded in the course syllabus so students can identify what is expected of them throughout the course.

**Step 2: Write the Learning Outcomes.** LOs describe in sentence form what students will be able to demonstrate in terms of knowledge and procedures upon finishing the course. The LOs build on the DKs and PKs identified in the Concept Map of Step One and are designed to intentionally show the progression of the learning process to move students toward higher-order thinking as represented by the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. This is important for Adventist students and the Model, which takes inspiration from the words of Ellen White: "Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children" (p. 18).

One LO is written for each DK and PK. When writing the LOs, the professor must remember to focus on student learning and state the LOs in clear, measurable, and observable terms. Vague words such as *understand*, *know*, and *become familiar with* are difficult to measure and should be avoided. Instead, instructors should choose action verbs from the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, such as *perform*, *identify*, *describe*, *explain*, and *demonstrate* (Anderson et al., 2001). Foundational courses, or General Education courses, will use more verbs from the lower levels of the taxonomy—*remember*, *understand*, *apply*—while, upper division and graduate courses will draw more from the higher levels—*analyze*, *evaluate*, *create*.

Table 3 shows the LOs for COMM 397: Communication Research. Remember, there is a *one-to-one* correlation between each outcome and a DK or PK; and, each LO should begin with an active verb from the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy. LOs should be listed after the sentence stem, “Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to”. The taxonomy category is listed in parenthesis after the LO.

<p><i>Table 3</i> Learning Outcomes for COMM 397 Communication Research</p>
<p>Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define the basic concepts in the language of social science research. (Remembering)</li> <li>2. Interpret scholarly literature. (Understanding)</li> <li>3. Examine various research methods/tools. (Analyzing)</li> <li>4. Conduct a complete literature review. (Evaluating)</li> <li>5. Apply the appropriate method for your research study. (Applying)</li> <li>6. Generate a complete quantitative research study. (Creating)</li> </ol>

**Step 3: Select Teaching and Learning Activities.** Active Teaching and Learning Activities (T/LAs) feature a wide range of strategies which share the common element of involving students in *doing* things and *thinking* about the things they are doing (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Active T/LAs should be identified and used to engage students—a specific need of millennial students (Nevid, 2011). It is important for professors to identify the significant DKs and PKs of the content and develop activities that present opportunities for students to apply the thinking skills used by professionals in the discipline. These active teaching and learning activities take the place of a professor lecturing for the *entire* class period; and many research studies indicate they are associated with greater academic achievement among all adult learners—including millennials. When the professor identifies the significant DKs and PKs and selects active teaching strategies to introduce and/or reinforce them, he or she is highlighting what is most important. This releases both the professor and the student from covering every page in a textbook and moves the textbook to its rightful place in the course—a resource. It also

allows professors time to bring in the biblical connections and Adventist beliefs identified in the first step of this Course Design Model. Students need to see the connections between the Biblical Course Concept, class assignments, BEs, and real-world vocational requirements. Vocational examples should also be linked back to the Adventist biblical foundation so students can see how Christian behavior is evidenced within the discipline.

Research evidence overwhelmingly supports the claim that students learn best when they engage with course material and actively participate in their learning. Active learning shifts the focus of instruction from professor delivery to student involvement. Students must take ownership of their learning and come to class prepared to interact with the day's lesson. Students will recognize that to succeed in an interactive course, they too must become active learners taking responsibility for their own learning.

The major characteristics associated with active learning defined by researchers include: increased student motivation, especially for adult learners, immediate professor feedback, student involvement in higher order thinking (analyzing, evaluating, and creating).

The professor should plan to introduce each LO by incorporating several active teaching and learning techniques in his or her daily plans. Active learning techniques range from simple (i.e. periodic pause, minute paper, or think-pair-share) to complex (i.e. simulation, problem-based learning, or service learning) which involve more prep and classroom time. Detailed strategies and more information on the benefits of active teaching and learning techniques can be found by visiting the following links (accessed 05/25/2016):

- <http://cei.umn.edu/support-services/making-active-learning-work>
- [http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/TeachingAndLearningResources/CourseDesign/Assessment/content/101\\_Tips.pdf](http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/TeachingAndLearningResources/CourseDesign/Assessment/content/101_Tips.pdf)

As the professor is choosing which T/LAs to use, the unique needs of the enrolled millennial students and the best practices for keeping them engaged should be considered. If possible, the professor should plan for assignment options and let students choose which activities to complete, remembering that millennials generally prefer collaborative learning.

**Step 4: Plan for Feedback.** Designing a Feedback Plan (FP) is the fourth step in the Biblical Foundation Course Design Model and once finished, it will also become part of the course syllabus. The FP has *two* parts: first, it should outline how the professor will *ask* for feedback *from the students* and second, how the professor will *give* feedback *to the students*. Without a Feedback Plan most assignments seem to stand on their own and are often seen as busy work by students. The absence of prompt, useful feedback reduces interest in learning. When professors provide students with prompt feedback followed by a discussion of incorrect responses, they are using one of the most powerful predictors of positive student outcomes. Research on the study of the brain indicates that humans are biologically wired to seek and use feedback (Zull, 2011). The FP should specify what regular feedback strategies are being used in the course, and when, or how often, they will they be asking students to use the strategies.

In Part 1 of the FP, professors should share the strategies they will use to regularly collect feedback from students. Feedback *from students* is often overlooked by professors; but one quick technique, The Minute Paper (Minute Paper, 2005), can be used by professors to quickly obtain helpful and important student feedback. To use this technique, ask students to write in class for one minute and answer a question similar to one of these: “What was the most important thing you learned during this class?” “What important question remains unanswered?” Or, “Give an example that relates to the topic of the day.” Other ways professors often receive regular feedback from students include using student response systems (clickers) and/or through course

evaluations, including a mid-term evaluation. Mid-term evaluations, developed by the professor, should be used to assess how the course is being perceived by the students while there is still time to make revisions prior to the final course evaluation.

In Part 2, the plan should also list the time-frame for feedback given from the professor to the students, such as the timeframe for returning graded papers with feedback AND for electronically responding back to student questions. To intentionally “close the assessment loop” for most assignments, professors should provide student feedback within 24-48 hours. Ideally, this closure allows students to utilize the professor’s input to improve learning in subsequent class activities and assignments (Nichols & Nichols, 2005). If feedback for a large assignment will take longer than 48 hours, professors should state the expected return date in the syllabus and again remind the students when the assignment is collected. (Students generally expect regular assignments graded and returned within 2 days and projects/reports within 1 week.) The FP should end with how students get additional feedback, if they desire.

**Step 5: Plan for Assessment.** The Assessment Plan (AP) itself should be approached by professors as reflective of our biblical worldview. Evaluation has a spiritual significance, as we are reminded in Deuteronomy 13:3 (New International Version), “The LORD your God is testing you”. The primary purpose of evaluation is for students to know how to discard error and retain truth, “But test them all; hold on to what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21) Professors, too, must keep in mind that they themselves will be judged by the manner in which they evaluate, “For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Matthew 7:1).

In order to make assessment a valuable learning tool, millennial learners need to know, upfront, what to expect and when to expect it. They also desire options. Variety in assessment

options is appreciated by millennial learners. Therefore a formal AP should be written and put in the syllabus which outlines what types of assessment will be part of the course, when will the assessment take place, and how the assessments will be evaluated—including the grading criteria for the course.

The AP builds on the assessment activities listed in the Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map described in Step One. As discussed in Step One, frequent assessment activities throughout the course are important; and professors should identify both these formative (ongoing, low-stakes) and summative (final) assessments in the AP. In reality, all assignments are generally formative or summative assessments, because they are used to assess student learning. But not all assessments are assignments. Professors often informally assess student learning during class discussions or through other in-class activities. The AP details the criteria for how students are to be graded for each assessment activity and assignment, including the weighting of categories/assignments. The plan also includes the grading scale for the course which is often dictated by the university or department. In addition, the authors encourage professors to evaluate the student's biblical worldview as it relates to the course content knowledge.

In order to make assessment a valuable learning tool, learners need to know, upfront, what to expect and when to expect it. They also desire options; variety in assessment options is appreciated by millennial learners. Therefore, a formal AP should be written and placed in the syllabus which outlines what types of assessment, including formative and summative, will be part of the course; when will the assessments take place; and how the assessments will be evaluated. The AP should also include rubrics or checklists for all major assignments and the grading scale that will be used in the course.

**Step 6: Check for alignment.** An important element of the Biblical Foundation Course Design Model is alignment. All components of the model should be checked to make sure they are in alignment with each other. The professor should remember:

- The course's biblical foundation of faith and learning should be represented by the Biblical Course Concept and defining sentence, which should be naturally connected through the BEs to a DK and/or PK.
- There should be at least one assignment, T/LA, and assessment for every LO.
- Critical LOs need to be revisited often throughout the semester and may need several assignments, T/LAs, and assessments.
- Every T/LA should align to a DK or PK; and, every DK and PK should align to a LO; and every LO should be assessed.

**Step 7: Prepare a detailed syllabus.** Finally, in culmination of the newly designed course, the professor produces a detailed syllabus that reflects both the requirements of the college or university and keeps in mind the preferences of millennial students. Professors should:

- Write a paragraph describing the biblical foundation connection to the course content knowledge.
- Include the newly designed elements illustrating the course's biblical foundation, such as the Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map, LOs, and the FP and AP, which includes assignment options and the course calendar.
- List the ways students should contact them, if needed, outside of class time including regular and electronic "Office Hours." Since electronic communication is the preferred style of communication by most millennials—the professor should consider



monitoring a chat application, during identified office hours and outline this option in the syllabus.

- Give hours and contact information for additional help possibilities such as the IT/IS or Learning Management System Help Desk(s), library resources, Research and Writing Center help, and/or tutors and lab assistants, etc.
- Provide copies of required policies from the institution such as the students with disabilities & academic honesty (plagiarism) policies.
- Make sure directions for completing all the assignments listed in the course calendar are described in detail, and rubrics or checklists are provided for major projects and assignments.

### **Conclusion**

Professors hired to teach at Seventh-day Adventist institutions are generally selected for their academic expertise in their specific fields of study. At Southern, and in most Adventist institutions of higher learning, these professors are also members in “regular standing” in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Rarely, however, do professors bring with them a basic knowledge of learning theories or understanding of course design, much less understanding of course design with a biblical foundation.

Because all full-time professors are said to be Adventist church members in “regular standing,” it can be safely assumed that every professor is a growing disciple of Jesus and has accepted His call to become a disciple maker within the context of the higher education classroom. The teaching ministry is another form of full-time ministry. Therefore, professors should be teaching from a biblical foundation. In Ephesians Paul tells us,

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13).

In the original Greek passage, Paul identifies that the gifts of “pastor” and “teacher” are given to the same individuals. Therefore the professor should know that his or her work includes the guiding and safekeeping of “his people”—the students. Paul is making it very clear to the Ephesians, and to us today, that all Adventist higher education professors are called to build up the body of Christ so their students will be prepared to reach unity in their personal faith, have a knowledge of the Son of God as their Savior, and provide works of service for others.

To expect professors to remain current in their own fields, understand new developments in learning technologies, and become familiar with learning theories and a clear curriculum design process is unreasonable, given the teaching structure in higher education—that is, unreasonable without a unique curriculum design model, specific education in the model, and ongoing support. This article was written to provide professors with that unique curriculum design model based on the Adventist biblical worldview. If professors make the commitment to take this journey, and design courses using this model, we believe it will also serve to deepen his or her connection with the Lord and with the Bible as the foundation for their teaching. But in addition to knowledge of the Biblical Foundation Course Design Model, each institution, like Southern, will need to provide ongoing education and scaffolding layers of support from all levels of administration.

Generational differences will continue throughout time. Therefore, higher education must also change to meet the specific needs of each group. In developing the Biblical Foundation Course Design Model, it is the belief of the authors that all professors will be able to teach from a uniquely Adventist biblical foundation, as well as meet the distinctive needs of the millennial generation. Under this model, every course taught at a Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher education will differ significantly from similar courses taught at secular or other Christian institutions. Furthermore, when this model is followed, professors will be better prepared to lead students into a deeper understanding of a faith-based biblical worldview and educate students to think biblically rather than humanistically. The final outcome should produce students who are capable of incorporating the Adventist biblical worldview into real-world occupational settings, and who are better able to make a difference for Him, through their calling and vocation.

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Appendix

