



# Let's Create a Culture of ANOINTED LEARNING

by DANIEL TOMBERLIN

**M**Y FIRST DAY at East Coast Bible College (in 1978) was very enlightening. We assembled for our first session of Old Testament Survey. Our instructor, Ken Bell, informed us that his class would not be a “glorified Sunday school” and proceeded to spend the next forty-five minutes introducing us to the canonization of Scripture. As Dr. Bell concluded, one of our fellow students exclaimed, “I wish I had never heard this!” In our first day we learned more about the nature of inspired Scripture than we had learned in our young lifetimes attending church. For one of us, it was too much to bear.

There is a myth among Pentecostals that education often leads to apostasy. Do some university students encounter challenges to their faith? Do professors provoke critical thinking? The answer to both questions is, “Yes!” But, the purpose of higher education is to prepare the student to engage the

mission of Jesus Christ in a highly skeptical world. If higher education provokes young men and women to forsake the faith, then maybe the real culprit is the local church that failed to prepare the student for the rigors of life in a fallen world. The college classroom is the intellectual boot camp for the soldier of Jesus Christ. It can be tough, but ministry in the world is tougher.

Church of God ministers should be prepared to engage young men and women for the sake of the faith. Young adults ask serious questions about human sexuality, evolution, and religious pluralism.

- Why did God create me this way? What does the church teach about sex? Why does the church teach against same-sex marriage?

- My pastor taught me that God created the earth in six days and that humans are created in the image of God. My science teacher is teaching me that the earth was formed over billions of years and that



humans evolved from lower-life forms. How can I make sense of this?

- Some of my friends are Muslim and Hindu. Don't we really worship the same God? Doesn't God love all of us?

Many church leaders have difficulty with these discussions beyond quoting a few biblical proof texts. But young people want more. Young people are inquisitive, and if we are going to reach and keep them, we must offer informed answers to their questions. We can no longer simply proclaim, "Because the Bible says so." This generation does not assume the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Just as the ancient Christians prevailed against the Roman Empire by offering an informed explanation of the faith, in our time, pastors must be well informed so that our explanation of the faith is challenging and compelling.

If we are to seriously engage the world with the gospel, the Church of God must

create a culture of learning. This must begin with the local church, primarily with student ministry. Church of God students routinely study algebra, literature, and the sciences in high school. But when they attend Church of God student ministry, the Scriptures are often presented as a collection of Bible stories. High school students are ready to be introduced to the meat of the Word—biblical and theological foundations. Church of God student ministry should seek the development of young adults who can make informed moral decisions and engage their world with the gospel. Pastors should encourage academic excellence among high school students, encourage them to consider a university education, visit university campuses with students and help them negotiate the challenges. Local churches should financially support the educational endeavors of young people who seek to enter the ministry.

If the local church is to succeed, we must have pastors who can lead a culture of learning. Apollos was a successful leader—eloquent, mighty in the Scriptures, fervent in Spirit, and teaching accurately about Jesus (Acts 18:24-25).<sup>\*</sup> However, he lacked theological understanding about the Holy Spirit. When Paul preached in Ephesus, he asked, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They replied, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit” (Acts 19:2). Because Apollos had never heard of Pentecost, he could not teach his church about the fullness of the Spirit. A pastor can’t teach what a pastor doesn’t know! Priscilla and Aquila recognized his gifts and discerned his lack of understanding. So, “they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26). Many Pentecostal pastors are sincere, eloquent, and fervent in Spirit. But, like Apollos, they lack theological knowledge. The ministerial development programs of the Church of God (CAMS, MIP) offer a basic foundation for ministry, but cannot adequately prepare ministers for all challenges. Just as Apollos submitted himself to the teaching of Priscilla and Aquila, Church of God pastors should engage in lifelong learning.

Denominational leaders must lead by example. Church of God leaders have sometimes been ambivalent about ministerial education. Leaders should present a united front in promoting the educational mission

of the church. Regional administrative bishops should schedule seminars on various theological subjects for the ongoing training of ministers. Leaders should give priority to formal education as criteria when making leadership appointments; and leaders should discourage the use of fraudulent titles and unaccredited degrees. Denominational leaders should offer greater financial support to educational institutions so that endowments can be established with the goal of providing reduced tuition for qualified students who pledge to serve the church.

Developing a culture of learning is not forsaking the empowerment of the Spirit. Rather, it is hearing the call of the Spirit to sanctify the mind, to train anointed minds, to prepare ministers of the gospel who do “not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). An anointed and trained minister will not be timid or fearful as he/she faces the challenges of this word. Instead, he/she will go forth in power, love, and a disciplined mind (2 Timothy 1:7). An anointed mind is a terrible thing to waste. [n](#)

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