



THE POWER OF A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

Insight's Role In Redefining and Solidifying My Faith In Jesus

RACHEL SHIVERS

“I wouldn’t say I follow a particular religion, but I do consider myself a spiritual man,” answered the car salesman in response to my question concerning his faith background.

As I inquired and listened, he explained his self-concept as a spiritually-minded person, desiring to do what is good, right and just because “in the long term, that’s the best way to live.” He dropped the terms “neo-pagan” and “spiritual relativist.” After mentioning negative experiences with what he called “fundamental Christians,” he asked if I had a particular faith.

“I don’t necessarily adhere to any one version or denomination of Christianity,” I said “But I am fascinated by Jesus and compelled to follow Him.”

“Oh yeah?” the man replied, his curiosity piqued.

“From what I understand,” I said, “Jesus, like you, was more concerned about what was happening inside a person—in their spirit—than what religious forms they followed on the outside.” At that point, the man stopped trying to sell me a car and started pursuing a conversation about Jesus.



Rachel Shivers is a former Insight student and staff member. She currently serves as a foster parent with her husband, Lucas, while

pursuing an M.Ed. in secondary education at Rockhurst University, Kansas City, MO.

This exchange ignited an invigorating discussion about Jesus and the Kingdom of God. In the past, I may have been less bold because I didn’t know what to say, or I may have been offensive by sending the message that “you’re wrong, and I’m right.” In both instances, I would have missed the opportunity to share about the Man at the center of the all-encompassing drama of history: Jesus.

Having developed a biblical worldview—as well as gaining a working understanding of several other worldviews and religions—I feel equipped to grow in and authentically share my faith while being salt and light in a world absolutely full of competing and conflicting ideologies and messages.

How *Insight* helped transform my worldview

In the 2003-2004 school year, I participated in a one-year Intensive Study of Integrated Global History and Theology (*Insight*). Using history as a backbone; scores of texts; local experts; guiding questions; inter-faith dialogues; and our collective experiences, a colorful assortment of young Christians from various backgrounds came together to discover a biblical worldview and God’s purpose in blessing the nations through restoration in Jesus.

Throughout *Insight*, my fellow classmates and I inductively investigated how the story of God’s redemptive purposes for the earth has been unfolding from the beginning to the present. Along the way we explored a vast range of issues and topics from human origin theories to postmodernism. These we

Insight

examined from several competing and complementing views from the secular world, various Christian traditions and other faith backgrounds.

Insight helped equip me to love God with all my mind. Thoughts matter to God. Satan's main tactic is to distort the truth and tell lies to keep us from God's wholeness and God's purposes. From lacking knowledge to building understanding; from a Christian mindset to a Kingdom mindset; from a proselytizer to a storyteller, *Insight* transformed the way I view and interact with God, the people He created and the world that surrounds me.

From lacking knowledge to building understanding

One of the key challenges believing students face in a pluralistic and relativistic society is the tendency toward a protective and defensive mindset. Christian students often do not have the intellectual opportunities to explore the challenges to our faith without getting lost in all-too-convincing "evidence" against Christianity. Profound questions and struggles cannot be helped by shallow slogans or inch-deep faith but the road to searching out the answers can be fraught with casualties.

Insight provided me the opportunity to encounter and wrestle through some of the deepest questions confronting students today. In the words of recent *Insight* '07 alumnus, Joy Magee,

I walked into the *Insight* program . . . assuming I would be taught how to 'defend my Christian beliefs.' I was very wrong! Rather than telling me what to think, *Insight* challenged me to face scary questions and to intelligently weigh everything I believe. *Insight* has given me a thoughtfully dynamic worldview so that I am not afraid to ask difficult questions in pursuit of Truth.

Based on an inductive and Socratic method of learning, *Insight* guides students to investigate several sides of each issue, often reading from a secular perspective and from primary source documents when possible. Through a worldview training integrated in the program, students are encouraged to consider the worldview of each author and how that affects their reasoning and direction of their argument.

"I can't pick up a newspaper without questioning the history that has led to that event and the worldview of the person writing it," said Bethany Wearden from class of '05. This skill transfers to university experiences in order to read texts critically and realize more than one compelling view on these issues. This prevents students from accepting what they hear without careful consideration. The message from any professor or text is not only the result of study, but also the result of a specific worldview. Their convictions are often much more complex than when presented as the authority on the issue.

Insight exposes students to diverse stances across the spectrum and allows students to go beyond shallow answers to build thoughtful understandings. "We were given the opportunity to evaluate and discuss literally mountains of information and come to conclusions on our own," said Andrew Spangler, class of '07. This exposure and time of grappling through tough issues within a safe context prepares students

for the information, ideas and concepts they will be exposed to at secular universities. It prepares them to think for themselves rather than accept a persuasive presentation.

If the first time students ever heard that the Protestant Reformation was a blood-bath or that missionaries harm local cultures, students likely have little historical or biblical perspective

by which to process, understand or challenge these claims. A thorough investigation like *Insight* enables students to encounter hard facts of the Christian legacy without losing heart. By grappling with the incongruencies between the ideals of Christian faith and the track record of broken humans falling short of God's glory even in their pursuit of Him, students lay a dynamic foundation to their faith. Yes, there were unnecessary and violent casualties during the Protestant Reformation, but they were as deeply rooted in cultural differences as they were in religious controversy.

For example, many evil things were done in the name of Christianity during the colonial era. However, in contrast, believers with authentic relationships with Jesus defended the human rights of natives. My studies at *Insight* helped me learn to



discern the difference between Western culture and the Kingdom of God. Often the Western church has been caught in the middle, with individuals and institutions varying in their degree of conformity to the world or conformity to Christ. Had I not investigated these issues and previously wrestled through the profound ramifications of Christianity's track record, encountering these claims during my undergraduate and graduate studies in history and education could have had a demoralizing or shattering effect on my faith.

Since I've examined several sides of complex issues and come to understand first the validity of the biblical worldview and second the basis of other people's convictions and beliefs, I'm able to stay strong in my faith without attacking others in the process of relating to them in order to communicate truth. I am not afraid to face the facts because I've already faced so many. Because I've investigated these issues, I can't be "thrown" by what the church has politely forgotten to tell you when you discover it in the world. Because I've studied the progression of history from the beginning to the present, I perceive and identify the forces at work in our culture today rather than being swayed by them. Issues like science versus religion melt away when a student discovers that a biblical worldview—the certainty that a God of order reveals Himself through discoverable laws in His creation—laid the foundation for modern science to develop.

From Christianity to the Kingdom

I came to *Insight* in search of the "Truth." Immediately, my own preconceptions about the world, the Bible and following Jesus were put to the test! Having strong Catholic, Lutheran and Southern Baptist influences in my life, I was particularly wary of (what was in my mind) the "soft" doctrine of non-denominationalism and the feelings-based faith of Pentecostals.

I had a passionate commitment to follow Jesus and a firm belief in the Bible as the standard for all of life and faith. I was, however, unaware of how my limited worldview influenced by understanding of the Word. The genius of *Insight* was bringing together young people who are all committed to Jesus but who come from diverse backgrounds, from rural to urban, from domestic to international, from conservative to liberal, from dispensational to charismatic.

After sharing life together for a year, I found my fellow classmates to be authentic and genuine disciples of Jesus, pursuing the Kingdom of God, regardless of their theology or practice. This helped me overcome my narrow understanding of the "right" way to follow Jesus. By a closer look at Scripture and the



testimony of other believers, I found my worldview in severe need of change.

INSIGHT helps with overcoming the smallness of the Christian mindset to embrace a full history in which all events and traditions make sense and can be evaluated in context of the master narrative of God's glory being expressed among all peoples, places and cultures. "I used to see history in broken segments. Now I see history as one glorious, single drama of God's work in the world. Everything becomes more meaningful," said Magee.

Viewing the broad strokes of God's redemptive history enabled me to realize that the church as I had experienced it is often focused on specific niches or aspects of biblical truth. These emphases can distract from the larger purpose and picture of God's purposes. *Insight* gave me the opportunity to examine my faith in light of not only competing worldviews from the world, but competing paradigms within the church. It broadened my horizons to understand that my life is about fully giving myself to the Kingdom of God – a whole new upside-down way of life in which I participate with God in transforming this world from the inside out.

At its heart, the Kingdom is not a religion; it is a whole new reality which transcends time, place and culture. The character of the Kingdom – doing the will of God through a dynamic relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit and living out love, service, faith, hope and the fruits of the Spirit – can be expressed in every culture, though it may look different. Through this revelation, I found a new oneness with other followers of Jesus. We can find commonality in the Kingdom and draw people from all backgrounds to worship God in spirit and truth through Jesus.

From a religious proselytizer to an engaging story teller

In addition to deepening, challenging, enriching and solidifying my own journey with Jesus, the most powerful result of developing a biblical worldview

ABOUT INSIGHT

Insight is a one-year, college-level academic program of the U.S. Center for World Mission that prepares future World Christian leaders through intensive study of God's purposes in the world throughout history.

Students: Spend a year building a strong biblical worldview and earn 36 units of college credit from Trinity International University. *Insight* is offered at several locations across the U.S. such as Pasadena

CA, Minneapolis, MN, Madison, OH, Detroit, MI and Boone, NC. Visit www.yearofInsight.org to learn more and contact a specific location.

High School seniors may take *Insight* to fulfill High School requirements and gain college credit in the same year.

Churches and NGOs:

We are looking for organizations that want to host a dynamic training program for their college-

age students. *Insight* is packaged in a way that it can be hosted at your location with few staff and resources. We will train and prepare you to have a successful program. Contact *Director@yearofInsight.org* for more info.

Insight

The right foundation for your college career.

info@yearofInsight.org

www.yearofInsight.org

626-398-2472

has been my increased ability to help people see Jesus beyond the hindrances placed in the way by both religious and secular culture. When talking with people from any worldview, I focus on the nature and essentials of the Kingdom, rather than specific applications for any one context.

I've learned to build bridges from the partial truth embedded in all ideologies to form relationships of trust and understanding, which can bear the weight of the truth of the Kingdom. I've learned to go beyond convincing people into Christianity. Instead, I listen. I understand. I hear where they are coming from. Having honest conversations to wrestle with potential followers of Jesus through their own questions can be a powerful witness.

John's gospel came to my mind in answer to the salesman's curiosity to my non-religious but definitely committed comments about Jesus. Using the story of Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman at the well, we discussed thirsts that can only be satisfied in God, and what it means to worship in spirit and truth, rather than on a particular mountain, in a specific temple or with the "right" church.

As Jesus' words years ago resonated with the salesman today, I gained a credibility to talk about the Kingdom of God as an alternative to the systems of the world. Because of my experience with investigating other faith systems, I acknowledged the truth embedded in several issues he brought up and then used them as a bridge to talk about the person of

Truth: Jesus. I used this story to help this man encounter the teachings and person of Jesus beyond his current worldview and despite the baggage he carried from past encounters with Christians.

For this man, encountering Jesus – and possibly even following Jesus – is something much more accessible than convincing him that Christianity is the way to go over his current mishmash of neo-paganism and spiritual relativism. This is a biblical worldview: not defending Christianity, but acting as an ambassador of Jesus to help people encounter the power of God's truth by starting with what light they already have grasped and connecting them with Jesus and His words of truth.

I am able to do this because I've grappled through the issues and I can understand where this man is coming from without it causing me to fall away from Jesus. I am not shaken because I've allowed my faith to be tested and re-formed through a process of examining events and ideologies in light of Scripture and God's purposes. I acknowledge the abuses and failures of Christianity as a religion, as well as the marks of truth in other religions and worldviews without having my faith in following Jesus and pursuing the Kingdom with a likeminded community threatened. That is the power of a biblical worldview. f