

# Biblical Integration Guide

Many Christians have little experience bringing non-Biblical material together with the Bible, so it is helpful to have something to suggest where they should look for connections. The Visual Valet suggests connections with four words: (1) reflections, (2) distortions, (3) revelations, and (4) applications. Some general suggestions are included. [http://www.transformingteachers.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=44&Itemid=142](http://www.transformingteachers.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=44&Itemid=142)

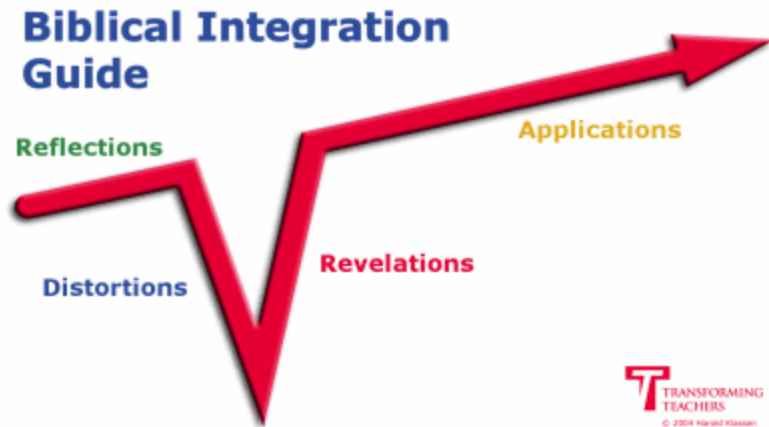
## 1. Reflections of God—intelligent design

The study of non-Biblical material should reveal **reflections of God**.

Because everything and everyone was created to reveal something of God and His glory, we need to continually look for ways in which what we are studying or doing helps us understand God better.

Science does not interpret Scripture. However, through science it is possible to understand more of some

aspects of God's nature and activity. For instance, **God's power** is clearly seen in the world of the sciences, while **His relational nature** is seen in the social sciences, **His order** in mathematics, **His gift of communication** in languages and literature, and **His creativity** in the arts.



"Research on a phenomenon known as inattentional blindness suggests that unless we pay close attention, we can miss even the most conspicuous events" (Siri Carpenter, *Monitor on Psychology*, Volume 32, No. 4 April 2001). **People may not see the reflections of God in a subject because their training, experience, and convictions direct their attention to someone or something else.** However, by studying the context in which the subject is first introduced in the Bible and other passages, they will begin to discover some of what God wanted to say through the material they are studying. The Bible does not contain everything that God wants to say, but it does give direction to the study of God's creation. Their study will have new meaning and direction as they begin to see more and more of God in it; and we have His promise that if we seek Him, we will find Him (Deuteronomy 4:28-29).

## 2. Distortions—evidence of the Fall

Most people can see the more obvious distortions of God's good creation, like murder, rape, terrorism, pollution, sickness, war, and child abuse. Though they may not acknowledge sin as the source of such distortions, they do accept their existence. However, there are many more subtle distortions that are not so quickly identified. Good things are misused for selfish, personal ends instead of God's glory. Parts of the truth are treated as the whole truth (Eckel, 2001, p. 14) and 'inconvenient' parts of the truth are ignored. Some part of the creation is expected to accomplish what only God can do.

People are often completely unaware of these distortions until the Bible reveals that their natural response or perception is indeed wrong. Without a word from God, they assume that their sin-blighted power of perception and understanding gives them an accurate picture of themselves and the world around them. If a person is not careful he can be trapped into living as if these distortions were part of God's plan rather than an expression of man's sinful tendencies.

The Visual Valet is a reminder that distortions are expected in everything because of the Fall. Distortions of man-centered, rather than God-centered presuppositions will produce problems in the methodology and conclusions of non-Christian researchers. But every Christian needs to humbly realize that his own conclusions will also be distorted by a sinful heart. That problem has to take precedence over the correction of other people's problems (Matthew 7:3-5).

### **3. Revelation—compensates for the Fall**

What we know of God's activity isn't based on our hunches or feelings, but on what He has revealed in the Bible. From the beginning God has communicated with people because He wants us to know Him and His ways. However, because He is so much greater than we are, even though we've been made in His image, we are dependent on His self-revelation. Without it we could never figure out even part of what He is doing. We will never know everything about Him or even understand all that the Bible says, but we do have an objective standard, something that we share and to which we are accountable. We are not dependent on unverifiable convictions, because the Bible always takes precedence over what we think we've discovered in the world, in ourselves, in our relationships with others, and even our relationship with God. It is important, therefore, that we begin by looking at what God reveals in the Bible.

Often it is only when the Bible says something contrary to the way a person has normally considered things, that he realizes his thinking and behavior need correction. Therefore, the idea of distortions and revelations fit closely together. God does not leave His children without hope by only identifying problems. He is also interested in transforming them from sinful patterns of life to godly ones (2 Timothy 3:16). We are not left to our own inadequate devices to determine what is a reflection of God and what is a distortion. He has clearly revealed Himself in the Bible. He has taken the initiative to give us insight into all aspects of His creation through the Bible. We are able to test everything, to determine what is good and what is not on the basis of what the Bible says, and then to hold on to the good (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

People are looking for the answer to sin's distortions in places where it cannot be found. All sorts of solutions are suggested to change environmental factors, to change personal behavior, build a better society, rid the world of pollution, etc., but the correction of sin's distortions is never found in man's efforts. The ultimate solution is a change of the wicked heart of man, which can only be achieved by God Himself. Solutions, which restrain evil are valuable. Those in authority have a responsibility to implement them, even though they cannot change a person's heart. God told Eli that He would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them (1 Samuel 3:13). However, solutions also need to recognize the very real presence of personal evil, as well as Satan's destructive influence. When we recognize the limitations of external corrections, we can avoid the problem that Paul discussed:

Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. (Colossians 2:20-23)

The Visual Valet is a reminder that the distortions of sin can be corrected by what God has done in Christ. Man is not seeking God, but God is continually seeking to bring people to Himself. No one can say that sin is irresistible because Jesus has lived in a sinful world, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He has paid the penalty of sin through His death, He has broken the power of sin through His resurrection, and He will deliver His body from the presence of sin when He returns from heaven to which He has ascended. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were not able to make perfect those who drew near to worship (Hebrews 10:1). In the same way, no political, social, or religious system can take the place of the "one sacrifice" by which He, Christ, "has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy" (Hebrews 10:14).

Part of God's redemptive work is to reveal ultimate answers to the very real problems that we see all around us. This knowledge of the right way is always intended to change who a person is and ultimately how he behaves. Unless a person is ready to obediently repent of his own way and do things God's way, he will never really be able to understand God. Knowledge and understanding are tied to obedience (Isaiah 1:2-3).

### **Applications**

The Visual Valet is not just theoretical, but also suggests applications for all we learn, so everything will fulfill God's ultimate intention that people live in loving relationship with Him. The motivations and directions of every life need to be impacted by what the Bible has to say. "Why do I have to learn this?" should not be answered with pragmatic, personal-enrichment arguments. Rather, answer with a sense that everything is both motivated by the love of Christ and an expression of that love. Any lesser motivation is not worthy of a child of God (1 John 3:10), an ambassador of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), a brother of the Son of Man (Hebrews 2:11). The only source of this divine love is the indwelling Holy Spirit, so everyone needs to be constantly sensitive to His direction. In fact, "expressions" could also summarize how God's intention is fulfilled as His love is expressed in all relationships.

The three Biblical descriptions of the Christian's relationship to God are helpful reminders of some of the applications.

### **Christians are the children of God.**

No area of research into God's creation should be rejected, because every area reveals something of Him. But we all need to be reminded to seek ways to enrich our relationship to our heavenly Father by becoming more familiar with His handiwork. Just as paintings, sculptures, handwork, writings, meals, and construction all reveal something of the artist or artisan, so God's works reveal Him. But His desire is not that His children know about Him, but that they know Him intimately. All truth should produce greater intimacy with the heavenly Father.

### **Christians are the body of Christ.**

The individual Christian obeys Christ, is united with other Christians in diversity, and lovingly serves unbelievers. God's purpose in Christ is that He have a glorious body made up of all the redeemed. This body is made up of individuals who have been gifted by the Holy Spirit with different ministry motivations, ministry roles, and ministry results. Christian education is preparing them for a life of service directed by the head of the body, Jesus Christ Himself. Christians are not being prepared to do things for God, but Christ is joining together so that He can accomplish His purposes in the world. The body of Christ, like any body, is how Christ expresses Himself and accomplishes His objectives. The members of the body must function together for the body to be healthy and able to do what the head demands. The purpose of the care and feeding of the body is not just to maintain its existence, but to allow the head to direct it and use it. A body on life-support systems which maintain its life but are unable to restore its usefulness is recognized by everyone as unnatural.

Christ's body needs to grow and develop, be fed and cared for, so He can accomplish His purposes among those who are not part of the body.

### **Christians are the temple of the Holy Spirit, both individually and collectively.**

Fulfillment of God's purposes always involves a response of thankfulness, praise and worship. Since the Creator is always greater than any of His creation, our study of anything expands our ability to appreciate His greatness, our smallness, and the wonder of His gracious love for us.

Each of the pictures that God uses to describe the Christian's relationship to Him and others will both limit sinful tendencies and fire sanctified imaginations so that Christians learn to live life not as divine puppets or rational robots, but as maturing members of God's family, the delight of His heart.

Since everything was created to bring glory to God, the study of anything in creation should provide glimpses of God.

### **Wherever they look, believers should expect to find reflections of Him.**

These will add to their appreciation of God whose Word they study. However, because of the Fall, both the creation they study and their own understanding of it have been distorted by sin. The Bible identifies these distortions, and the indwelling Holy Spirit uses the Word to convince people of their sin, God's righteousness and His coming judgment (John 16:8).

**The Bible also reveals how believers can avoid a self-centered and unbalanced misuse of creation as the Holy Spirit guides and teaches them** (John 14:26, 16:13-15). He also provides them with the power to practice the truth.

### **Although even the unregenerate man can see reflections of God's glory and overwhelming evidence of the unnatural presence of death and evil in the universe, the Bible is the only record of God's provision of redemption.**

The solutions to the world's problems do not lie in education or in government, but in spiritual rebirth. However, it is not just a relationship to a powerful Creator that God wants to restore. God the Father desires to have a dynamic, intimate relationship with each of His children. Jesus Christ desires to act in this world through His body and the

Holy Spirit indwells each believer to make them individually and collectively a temple of worship.

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