A quick glance at the local news makes it clear that the world is in desperate need of strong Christian leaders, leaders whose hearts are set on God and whose hands are ready to serve. Yet Christians often feel unprepared to engage a world of flourishing pluralism, marching under the mantra that “all truth is relative.”

According to a recent Barna survey, those who read the Bible and believe it to be the inspired Word of God are equal in number (19 percent of the population) to those who consider the Bible to be “just another book” (also 19 percent). Against this challenge, future Christian leaders must have the courage, and the education,
to not only manage individuals who hold disparate views on morality and ethics, but also to lead and influence them for the common good. One need not look far back into history to see the impact of the moral voice of Christianity on American society, whether it be abolition, labor reform, civil rights or sanctity of life issues. In order to continue this positive influence on society, future Christians must effectively infuse moral values into the cultural milieu of their time, and in turn, Christian educators must be prepared to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead in such a time as this.

ENGAGING THE MIND OF THE LEADER

How can an institution prepare leaders to engage the modern-day culture in a time when postmodernism is the prevailing philosophy of the day? For Dallas Baptist University (DBU), a central aspect to our mission is to proclaim that all truth is not relative, but rather that all truth is God’s truth, wherever it may be found.

As with all aspects of life, learning does not occur in a vacuum. We know that individuals bring certain presuppositions to the academic table that impact their understanding and guide their inquiry. The goal of Christian education, then, is to thoughtfully engage these sources through a robust Christian worldview.

Dr. David Naugle, DBU distinguished professor of philosophy, states that in order to accomplish the task of teaching from a Christian worldview, individuals must promote “scholarly activity in which the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith — God, creation, humanity, sin, and redemption — serve as the theological and philosophical starting points by which the various disciplines are studied, appreciated, critiqued and developed.”

It is necessary, therefore, for the Christian institution to recognize the need to develop leaders with the capacity to meaningfully engage the culture, while remaining true to God’s Word.

FINDING AND FULFILLING ONE’S CALLING

In the Christian world, the term “calling” is too often seen as a special vocation for the clergy. As Christian leaders, however, our most important task is to see every part of our life — at work, at home, at church and in the community — as falling under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The great Dutch statesman, Abraham Kuyper, put it well when he said, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘mine!’” His words echo the Great Commandment from Matthew 22:37: “Love the Lord your God with
In all that we do, our goal is to make our students transformers of culture for Christ — leaders who can help to “move people on to God’s agenda,” as Henry Blackaby puts it. No matter what their vocation, we hope that they will see that God has placed them in positions of influence for his glory, and that he has placed a special calling on their lives to be servant leaders.

LEADING DIFFERENTLY

One vital aspect of a Christian worldview is the understanding that Christian leaders should lead differently. Throughout the Bible, we see that the most important quality that a leader can possess is a humble heart that is devoted to serving God. “For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.” (2 Chron. 16:9a)

Thus, throughout our curriculum, our purpose is to help students understand that charisma, knowledge, instinct or ability do not matter as much as one’s humble obedience to God. This statement is easy enough to say, but we try to help students think through the practical ways in which this statement can be lived out.

For example, in our “Christian Worldview of Leadership” course, students think through how their Christian faith radically alters their view of decision-making, communication, conflict, priorities, adversity and much more. We look to the biblical image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd and help them see the difference between the world’s view of powerful leadership and the Bible’s view of servant leadership.

In addition, we develop students through an emphasis on service-learning. In every degree program, students are required to take the knowledge they have gained in the classroom and apply it to real-world needs. When students are able to directly apply the knowledge and skills gained in the classroom into real-life application, the learning and growth toward leadership is potentially amazing.

An often overlooked area of leadership training is mentorship. Taking the example of Paul’s work with Timothy, DBU has begun a mentored internship program. Taking the knowledge they have gained in the classroom and apply it to real-world needs. When students are able to directly apply the knowledge and skills gained in the classroom into real-life application, the learning and growth toward leadership is potentially amazing.

An often overlooked area of leadership training is mentorship. Taking the example of Paul’s work with Timothy, DBU has begun a mentored internship program. Taking the knowledge they have gained in the classroom and apply it to real-world needs. When students are able to directly apply the knowledge and skills gained in the classroom into real-life application, the learning and growth toward leadership is potentially amazing.

In order to properly train Christian leaders, students must understand God’s calling in their lives.