

# Statement of Faith and Classroom Integration

By Ed Speyers

**By no works of my own, I find my salvation through my faith in Jesus Christ my Savior, who redeemed my sinful nature through His death on the cross.**

It was the evangelist, the late Watchman Nee, who first made me aware of the role of the human eye in potentially leading people astray and into sin. Nee referred to Genesis 3:6 where Eve "...saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it." Note that before Eve "took some and ate it" she had not yet fallen into sin. How much more vulnerable to sin is fallen humankind! In short, our eye, relating to the visual world surrounding us, can get us into spiritual trouble very quickly if we are not sufficiently grounded in the Word of God. We need spiritual discernment and we need it badly if we are to proceed as Christians in a fallen world by doing what is pleasing to God and resisting all forms of evil.

I am basing my remarks on the assumption that freshman students have had at least some exposure to and have acquired a minimum sensitivity for the Christian worldview that knows right from wrong and good from evil. Teaching graphic arts is more than exposing examples that are not acceptable to a Christian mindset; it is drawing students toward what is consistent with sound Biblical teaching of ethical standards and practices – even in the sophisticated world of advertising design.

Our eyes, everywhere they rest, are bombarded with visual images. Regarding existing print and film advertising, how are students – young people in particular – to relate to the images they see? What are some reactions and routine responses to various forms of advertising? What are the advertisers really selling? Status? Sex? Fame? A life of ease? Being able to digest and critically review advertising imagery from a Christian world worldview is essential to furthering the development of a Christian mindset. What are advertisers doing to convince us we need their products? Too often students can enter a classroom with little more than a simple belief advertisers "only" educate their public buyers with their offerings. And little or no consideration is given to the many techniques used to convince us to spend money on products we may not necessarily need. Godly visual discretion is an essential Christian discipline. Godly visual literacy is possessing an essential understanding for the Christian mind so that effective resistance works to thwart attempts by the evil one to derail us from a life of faith in the Living God. There is no such thing as a Christian perspective in graphic arts without the Word of God held firmly in the center.

In some past teaching appointments, I often found myself held back from fully being able to present my Christian views in the classroom. I couldn't correct students that pornography is not an art form when there is no moral framework to make that claim. Certain works of art are clearly wrong, even if a student has no "problem" with it. How can I stress that we cannot trust our feelings, that we are prone to failure, to sin, if we take our eyes off the Word of God, off Jesus, the "author and perfecter of our faith..."? (Heb. 12:2) That we cannot trust our hearts above God - regardless of our feelings?

The realm of graphic design holds a special place in the world of art. While an artist has the "freedom" to name anything he considers art, the graphic artist must generate work found to be effective by others. Regardless of his original intent: it must "pay it's own way" and bring positive results. There has perhaps

never been a greater need for graphic artists who can and will design and create art from a Christian worldview.

Over my years of teaching and designing for a number of different institutions and organizations (charitable, faith-based, for-profit, educational), I have found a Christ-centered mindset does far more to enhance creative pursuits than to limit them. Teaching students to uphold a Godly worldview will strengthen their creative skills and their career paths in the design industry by providing a solid foundation from which they can draw. A solid, Biblical-based foundation is essential for design careers considering this industry's excessive vulnerability to short-term fads and "feel good" activity.