I was flying home from Boston one day, and seated next to me was a brilliant scientist who had graduated from Harvard. We began talking about education and I asked him, “If you had to do it all over again, would you do anything different?” He said, “Yes, I’d change everything. I’d get a liberal arts degree. I’d get the widest range of exposure and opportunity to learn and then, as I got more into advance graduate school, I’d hone in on some specific skill.”

I was recently reading a survey from the University of Virginia in which they asked their graduates what type of education they would recommend to new students considering the careers they currently represented. Ninety-one percent of them responded that they would pursue a liberal arts degree.

The University of Virginia went on to discuss what they thought were the key skills that any person should gain out of their college education:

1. Communication skills. The ability to communicate.
2. Interpersonal skills. The ability to interact with people at a meaningful level and learn how to work alongside others.
3. Critical thinking skills. The ability to assess, analyze, and correlate information to come up with problem solving solutions.

These are, without question, the key skills you want to learn in college. It is not really important that you learn some formula to make money, it is much more important in these years of your life that you learn how to communicate, how to work with people and how to think analytically.

From an educational standpoint, those are the three goals of The Master’s College (TMC). Primarily, what we want to do is to teach you how to communicate. The world belongs to people who communicate and you learn how to communicate by reading, writing, and speaking. It is crucial that in any college environment you learn how to read. You learn the breadth of literature that is available to you that exposes you to ideas and style and teaches you the creativity of communicating on a printed page. One of the wonderful legacies that any reader has is not just the expanding exposure to thought, but the expanding exposure to communication. I remember when I wrote my first book. I took it to an editor. It had the facts, the words but no music. It was very stiff and wooden and every once in a while I’d try to be flowery and throw in a description of a sunset or something and it just didn’t make it. A very skilled and mature editor told me to just say what I meant. I finally got the idea that if I was going to communicate on a page I had to say what I meant, not what I thought people wanted to hear. I re-evaluated my whole approach to writing by one six-hour period with a skilled writer who taught me how to creatively put down what I wanted to communicate on a page.

When I was in college, I was committed to athletics, student life and having a great time--I had no concept of what was ahead. Little did I know that I would spend years of my life writing books. There was nothing they could have taught me in college that I could have directly applied to those books but what I did learn was how to write. I learned English and good grammar so that I could communicate. When I was in graduate school in Seminary, writing was even more enhanced because we wrote so many papers. I don’t remember what was in those term papers but I learned how to write. That’s what education is all about. The data that you will be dealing with through your life may change, but the skill of writing and the ability to put things on a page effectively are very important. Communication is also speaking. Effective, persuasive speech moves the world—it is the power of the gifted speaker that makes things happen, that motivates, that stimulates, that generates enthusiasm and excitement, that communicates truth.

Communication skills are primary skills you want to pursue and we are committed to helping you in that pursuit at TMC. I’m always astounded and shocked that most freshmen entering college have never written a paper. What a tremendous handicap. How can you teach someone Greek and Hebrew if they don’t understand English! How can you tell them to diagram a Greek sentence when they can’t diagram an English sentence? You’re going to find that people at TMC will be involved in your life--you’re going to find opportunities to speak and write, read and interact on those matters because of the smaller class size and the great faculty dedication to your own development; things which you’re not going to find in a larger campus setting. We’re not trying to produce technicians, we’re trying to produce communicators first.

Secondly is the matter of interpersonal skills. You find out in the world that the people who are successful are capable of working with other people. I heard an interesting story yesterday about one of our graduates from last year. A large corporation was looking for a highly defined and very unique leadership position. Out of 300 names our graduate was one of the final 5 in the screening process.
The position had nothing to do with this individual's major, but when they saw the resume, he had the diversity of a liberal arts background, he was an athlete, he participated in student activities and he had developed the ability to work with people on a number of different fronts. They were looking for interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills are crucial. At TMC, you may find yourself on an athletic team, in a musical group, involved in a missions team, spending the summer with folks learning how to lead, learning how to develop solutions to problems. Eighty-five percent of CEOs in America are former college athletes--what does that tell you? It tells you about learning to work with a team, learning to go through difficulty, and pulling together. All those interpersonal relationship skills are crucial. TMC is a college that is like a family--I believe that we have an intense family environment here which leads to the development of interpersonal skills. There's a dynamic that holds us all accountable. You learn how to work with people. Part of your dorm life is learning how to interact with others and watch those who are leaders and those who rise to the top and become leaders. Those are interpersonal skills that are crucial.

The third skill the University of Virginia mentioned is the ability to develop critical thinking skills. The ability to think analytically and critically. I think this is developed by analyzing literature, contemporary and even ancient thinking and philosophy as well as theology. It involves history, because history gives you the flow of man’s behavior and the flow of his thought. In order to be a truly educated person, you must experience exposure to history, philosophy, literature, theology, and how all that pours together so that you can learn to think analytically and critically. You’ll spend your whole life evaluating ideas and concepts. It is important that you understand the principles out of the Word of God in theology—the thinking and reasoning of man, the history of the world, literature and what it contributes to analysis, synthesis, and thought. I really believe those things happen in this environment. As you learn history, you’re going to learn it in the light of what the Word of God says. As you learn philosophy, you’re going to learn it in the light of what the Word of God says. As you learn literature, you’re going to compare it with the Word of God and the Scripture which is the standard for everything; you’re going to learn to think critically like God thinks critically. You’re going to learn to analyze the way God analyzes.

Young people, there is truth and it’s God’s truth and it has a way of interweaving itself into everything else, but if you don’t know the truth of God, you don’t know how to think critically about anything. We believe that what God has to offer in His Word is at the heart of the best education possible, and that this college can present you with an education like that. I’ll say this as clearly as I can: no matter what they know, a person who does not understand the truth of God is an uneducated pagan. Did you hear that? An uneducated pagan. Because if you don’t know the eternal truth, the rest of it is superfluous. When you come to college and you’re not sure what your major will be, major in whatever interests you, what excites your heart. Get as much of a broad liberal arts education as you can. Get involved in all the extra curricular activities that you can be involved in at the college and at the church you attend. Use your summers to develop your experience in the things that interest you and move your heart. Let this be a time of more general exposure to the things that are on your heart. College is for learning all the wonderful truths, meeting wonderful people, and being enriched without having to earn your living completely at the same time; you’ll never have it again in your life. I do believe with all my heart that TMC is committed to the kind of life changing experience that can equip any of you for an effective life as a Christian and an effective life in various careers, whatever they might be.

In conclusion, Psalm 19 tells us why the Word of God is central at The Master’s College. It is law, testimony, precept, commandment, fear, and judgment. The Word of God is comprehensive, clear, reliable, it lays a right path and is without error; it is true. It will take and totally transform your inner person, make you wise, bring you joy, enlighten your eyes, give you a permanently relevant source of truth and produce in you comprehensive righteousness. What an unbelievable statement! Is it any wonder that Psalm 19:10 says what it says? The Word of God is “more desirable that gold, yes than much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey, and the drippings of the honeycomb.” The Word of God is the most valuable thing there is; gold isn’t as valuable. Honey isn’t as sweet, say the psalmist. The Word of God is the sweetest thing there is. Therefore, the Bible is our dominant theme because it is the Truth of God and all other information is measured against is. The Bible is the most important source because it is the only agency of spiritual change and maturity. In other words, the Word of God is at the heart of everything. So we could talk about our commitment to Christ, or commitment to personalized discipleship, personalized scholarship, exposing you to the world or sending you to a mission field in the summer; we could talk about helping you to develop ministry skills, making you a truly educated person; we could talk about excellence in everything we do; but, the heart and soul of The Master’s College is the authority of the Word of God because it is the basis of all Truth and it is the life changing agency that God has given us. So when we talk about education, I really believe with all my heart what we’re endeavoring to do at The Master's College is to bring together what is real education, teaching people the kind of skills that make them effective in the world, and doing it with the Word of God at the very heart. If that's the kind of education you’re after, then you’re in the right place, and we commend it unhesitatingly to you.