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2012 ACL Conference Keynote Address

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2012 ACL Conference Keynote Address

The second keynote address of the 2012 ACL Annual Conference was given by Dr. David S. Dockery, President of Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. “A much sought after speaker on issues of higher education and cultural issues, he has been invited to present lectures at more than forty colleges, universities, and seminaries across the country.” (2012 ACL Conference Notebook) Dr. Dockery titled his address, Opportunities for Christian Higher Education in the Academic Marketplace.

His address began with a reference to *The Amazon Effect*, a recent article that appeared in the June 12 issue of *The Nation*. (<http://www.thenation.com/article/168125/amazon-effect>), He shared that this article examines the skyrocketing growth of online bookselling as well as the control that Amazon has amassed over the publishing industry. Dr. Dockery noted that these events are having an effect upon libraries, higher education in general, and Christian education in specific.

Dr Dockery asked the audience to consider a series of questions: can religion and education go together, is Christian commitment compatible with higher education, is technology good or bad for religion, what are the opportunities for Christian higher education in the twenty-first century, and what is the role for libraries.

He noted that historically the American educational marketplace was shaped by Christian intellectual tradition. It was consistent with the history of the church – the apologists, Alexandria, Antioch, Augustine, the Middle Ages, and the Reformation. Today’s educational market place is a smorgasbord of ideas-public, private, for-profit, community, evangelical, and others. Dockery noted that the enlightenment, pietism, liberalism, fundamentalism, pragmatism, and post-modernism have all had an influence in creating this smorgasbord.

He shared that books, education, teaching, explanation, and tradition are important because the secular world tends to be anti-Christian, and the Christian world tends to be anti-intellectual. The contribution of Christianity to higher education is not just limited to campus ministries, chapel, student activities, or residence life, but must also be made in the classroom and in the library. We need to reclaim Christian education to a standard where it is unapologetically Christian and rigorously academic while recognizing the existence of cultural challenges. We need to remember that all knowledge has its source in God.

Dockery reminded us that piety alone does not define Christian higher education, it is also defined by our relationship with Christ. Loving God points us to a unity of knowledge and creates “a seamless whole, because all true knowledge flows from the one Creator to His one creation, which helps address discipline over specialization.” Dr. Dockery challenged that Christian education needs to promote a sense of community and collaborative learning, instead of the “Lone Ranger” concept to learning that has become prominent. We will do this by recognizing that the hallmark of building Christian community is grace.

He asserted that faith and learning need not be separated into two spheres that have no bearing on each other, as is often the case at church-related colleges and universities. Faith has an impact upon every area of learning, and enables us to understand all that is studied at a university. Authentic faith and genuine learning should be brought together.

Dr. Dockery closed with a challenge to us to “remake” our profession and become leaders in education.

*Dr. David S. Dockery
President
Union University*

*Reported by Sandra Yaegle
TCL Liaison to Conference*

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**Books Recommended By
Dr. Dockery**

Berger, P. L. (1969). *The sacred canopy: Elements of a sociological theory of religion*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday

Gaede, S. D. (1985). *Belonging*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Corp.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. New York: Basic Books.

**Recent Books Written By
Dr. Dockery**

Dockery, D. S. (2001). *The challenge of postmodernism: An evangelical engagement*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Dockery, D. S. (2012). *Faith and learning: A handbook for Christian higher education*. Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic.

Dockery, D. S. (2007). *Renewing minds: Serving church and society through Christian higher education*. Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman.

Dockery, D. S., Thornbury, G. A., Guthrie, G. H., Green, B., Poe, H. L., Gushee, D. P., Davis, J. H., Brady, T. E. (2002). *Shaping a Christian worldview: The foundations of Christian higher education*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman.

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