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Use Bible to teach God's word - not scientific principles

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Our schools: Teaching evolution vs. intelligent design

The Rev. **Willie J. Seals Jr.**

Guest essayist

During my adolescent years, I remember asking my best friend's father this question: Which is right - the story of creation I learned as part of my Christian faith or the theory of evolution I learned in my public school science class? He answered by asking me, "What's wrong with believing both?"

That response opened up a whole new world of faith and reason for me. I could believe that God created the world, and that the world very possibly evolved over millions, perhaps even billions, of years. Let me tell you, knowing I could accept both religion and science comforted me.

Another experience I had that broadened my religious outlook took place in my sophomore high school English class. There we studied the literary aspects of the Bible. We read the narratives in the book of Genesis on creation and the great flood as the ancient literature of Jewish people. Once again, my eyes were opened to new ways of seeing things. The creation and flood stories in Genesis were one of many in the literature of the ancient world. I found studying the similarities and differences of these various accounts from ancient cultures to be exciting.

Neither of those events dampened or discouraged my burgeoning religious faith; if anything, they deepened what was already there and encouraged me to continue growing.

As a person of faith, the debate that is taking place over adding the idea of "intelligent design" to the public school science curricula is problematic for me. The Bible is not a scientific textbook. That sacred text of my faith was written and formed to convey timeless truths about God, human beings and the world in which we live. That text was written to transform hearts and minds, not to be accepted as theoretical or factual scientific knowledge.

If the Bible is to be studied in public schools at all, it should be studied in an English class as the ancient literature of a great people. In the pages of the Bible there are soaring poetry, eloquent prose, dramatic myths, legends and narratives as well as creative literary devices to be discovered.

So, the Bible can be used to educate people in public schools. But it should never be used in that setting to force one's religious dogma and doctrine on others. And religious knowledge should not be used as scientific knowledge in public schools. To do so is to misuse the purpose of the

Bible, not to mention violating our nation's precious constitutional right of religious freedom.

If people desire to propagate their faith, there are plenty houses of worship to do just that.

Seals is interim pastor, Webster Baptist Church.

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