

# Biblical Worldview Scope for *Writing & Grammar 6, 3rd ed.*

**Introduction:** Writing and grammar classes provide remarkable opportunities not only to understand the mechanics and application of the English language but also to cultivate students' creativity and craft, which are given by God and which reflect their identity as bearers of His image. This document is our attempt to answer the question "How can a sixth-grade student approach writing and grammar with a biblical worldview?" In what follows, we lay out this product's biblical worldview shaping themes, qualities that should characterize the Christian writer and his writing: **verity**, **clarity**, **charity**, **sincerity**, and **dexterity**.

We engage these themes within an overarching biblical framework of Creation, Fall, and Redemption, a framework reflected in the exposition of the themes below. Under the heading of **Creation**, we discuss a theme in regard to creational norms: structural aspects of God's design for his created world and how mankind is to live in it. To discern these creational norms, we may consider man and his world before sin entered it, Jesus Christ as the perfect image of God, or biblical teaching more generally. As we discuss a theme under the heading of the **Fall**, we explore aspects of a fallen world that have been bent away from creational norms. Such investigation may address ways in which fallen man has consciously violated the way God created the world to work, or simply how sin's curse has made human progress more challenging, often due to the effects of sin upon man's mind. When we explore a theme under the heading of **Redemption**, we discuss how God means for Christians to live in a fallen world with regard to the theme. A Christian works redemptively in his own sphere, seeking to bend back toward creational norms what has been affected by sin.

Over the course of a typical chapter, students are led to engage one of the worldview themes in a way that corresponds to this Creation-Fall-Redemption framework. They will *explain* normative aspects of a given theme (Creation), *evaluate* deviations from that theme as it manifests itself in a sinful world (Fall), *formulate* a Christian understanding of the theme, and *apply* what they have learned to writing and grammar, often in connection with real-life situations (Redemption). We hope that students will show high levels of internalization whenever they are required to apply these themes.

## 1. Verity: Write in a way that is true

*"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another."*  
Ephesians 4:25

**Verity is truthfulness. Writing with verity means writing in a way that is faithful to God's enduring truth.**

**Creation:** God is true and the source of truth (Ps. 119:160); He cannot lie (Num. 23:19; Rom. 3:4; Titus 1:2). Truth is that which matches reality as interpreted by God. We need this divine perspective, for although we can know things truly, we cannot know them comprehensively, as God does (1 Chron. 28:9; Ps. 139:1–6; Heb. 4:13). When God fashioned His world, He wove true revelation of Himself throughout; His creative work was intended to proclaim truth about its Creator (Ps. 19:1–6; Rom. 1:18–20). The Scriptures, God's special revelation to mankind in written form, are the believer's ultimate source of truth (John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16). The Scriptures speak accurately about things past, present, and future, and they provide the essential foundation for evaluating truth claims.

Humans were made for verity. When God crafted mankind in His image, He designed noble truth-tellers to represent Him well. We are in harmony with our Creator and the created order when our writing leads readers to see the world the way God intends. Because writing reflects a writer's identity, living truthfully and writing truthfully go together. Verity in writing involves giving credit where it is due in citations and taking care to represent others' words faithfully in quoted material. Informative writing should reflect good research and present its subject

accurately. An argumentative piece should lead readers to embrace a thesis God would have them embrace. A narrative, fictional or not, should give an honest portrayal of how life works in God's world. Advertisements should be crafted to reflect truth in portraying and promoting helpful products and services.

**Fall:** Satan, the father of lies and the great deceiver, took the words of God and bent them, so that "God commanded" became "Hath God said?" (Gen. 2:16–17; 3:1). Because mankind without Christ is alienated from God, its communication bends away from the truth, not toward it. Fallen men and women no longer image the true God in a way that is fully true. Instead, the pattern is provided by Satan, the one in whom there is no truth (John 8:44). The hearts of fallen humans are false, so their words are false as well (Matt. 12:34–35; Rom. 3:10–14). This tendency toward untruth is detrimental for humanity and condemned by God (Prov. 6:16–17; 12:22; Rev. 21:7–8).

In its writing, fallen mankind may skew away from the creational norm of truthfulness in various ways. In informative work, writers may provide wrong information due to lack of careful research or due to the intent to deceive. Persuasive compositions may aim to sway readers to incorrect conclusions or actions while employing poor reasoning or misrepresenting evidence. Stories may portray good as evil and evil as good, influencing readers to embrace a twisted understanding of how God's world works.

**Redemption:** At times, God spoke His truth directly to man, and He moved some to write His truth in Scripture (Ps. 19:7–11; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:20–21), redemptive truth that challenges and changes a fallen world. And God's creation, even in its bondage to corruption, still speaks of Him (Rom. 1:18–20 with 8:20–22). In the fullness of time, God sent His Son, full of grace and truth (John 1:14, 17), imaging His Father in truth (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:1–3). He showed the world what it is to live and speak truly (1 Pet. 2:22). And as the Son restores the image of God in His people, they learn to love truth and live truthfully, as God has called them to do (Col. 3:9–10; 2 Cor. 3:18). They put away lying, which characterized their previous life without God, and speak truth with their neighbors (Eph. 4:22, 25). Because the hearts of those who follow Christ are being made true, their words are as well (Matt. 12:35). Christian writing also links truth with love of others, for Scripture often speaks of truth, not in an abstract sense, but in very concrete connections with one's neighbor (Eph. 4:25).

Students should learn to value and practice writing with verity. They must refuse to misappropriate the work of others, but instead represent it accurately in their own writing, whether paraphrasing or quoting. In informative writing, they should leave behind perfunctory efforts at research and instead support their work with adequate investigation, drawing legitimate conclusions consistent with a biblical worldview. In persuasive work, they should avoid fallacious arguments and instead handle evidence responsibly and use sound reasoning, seeking to convince readers of positions that align with biblical truth. They should shun manipulative tactics and instead craft advertisements that discern others' needs and offer beneficial solutions. They should use both fictional and nonfictional narratives as legitimate and powerful tools for the truth,<sup>1</sup> and they should shape and tell stories in a way that is biblically faithful.

## 2. Clarity: Write in a way that is clear

*"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak."* Colossians 4:3–4

**Clarity is understandability. Writing with clarity means writing to serve others with content they can easily comprehend.**

**Creation:** God created mankind in His image with a mind untainted by sin. He proclaimed the result of this act, along with the rest of His creation, to be "very good" (Gen. 1:31), and this included man's ability to think and communicate clearly. Man was able to do this because he was made in the image of his Creator with the ability to use

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<sup>1</sup> Nathan the prophet used fiction to convince David that his understanding of actual events was twisted and wrong (2 Sam. 12:1–7); Jesus used fiction to help people see the truth of his teaching more clearly (Luke 15).

language.<sup>2</sup> When God spoke to man, He communicated clearly and understandably,<sup>3</sup> as evidenced by man's responsibility to obey the commands he was given. Likewise, being made in God's image, man communicated in a way that was understandable and clear. God created His world in such a way that His eternal power and divine nature can be clearly perceived (Rom. 1:19–20). God has also evidenced clarity in His written word.<sup>4</sup> God gave mankind the Scriptures to be read and understood and obeyed, and He superintended the process of inspiration accordingly (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

**Fall:** The consequences of sin permeate the entire being of sinful man, including his intellect (Rom. 3:9–18; 1 Cor. 2:14). Many obstacles to clarity in communication exist in a fallen world, due both to the effects of sin upon the human mind and to sinful behavior. Man has difficulty understanding what others say and communicating his own thoughts clearly. Worse, for his own sinful purposes, man may speak ambiguously to avoid responsibility or commitment, or to deceive someone. Or he may purposefully distort what someone else clearly means.

**Redemption:** As believers communicate, they should understand that language is a divine gift meant for comprehensible communication between people and between God and man. At the same time, Christians should recognize that the renewal of their minds and the development of a biblical worldview will allow them to understand the world more clearly and thus speak of it more clearly. They should look to God to empower their communicative efforts while striving for comprehensibility themselves.<sup>5</sup>

Students should draw connections between the many strategies for increasing the clarity of their writing and the greater usefulness their writing will have in serving God and others. They should embrace the practice of clear thinking and writing so they may portray God wisely, represent the realities of God's world accurately, and demonstrate love for one's neighbor virtuously. Writing with clarity is important at every level, from word choice to sentence structure to the organization of an entire writing project. Thus, acquisition of vocabulary, mastery of

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2 In the creation account, the *imago Dei* is not explicitly described in terms of the ability to use language, but as Poythress points out, there is a parallel between God naming things and man naming things which supports the connection, a connection which can be argued in other ways. Vern Sheridan Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word: Language—A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 30. See also Richard B. Gaffin Jr., "Speech and the Image of God: Biblical Reflections on Language and Its Uses," in *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine: Systematic Theology at the Westminster Seminaries*, ed. David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 182–83.

3 "God is fully in control of his communications to human beings. When he intends to communicate with a human being, he is always able to do it successfully. But another name for successful communication is *clarity*." John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 608. While clarity marks divine communication as a rule, sometimes God chooses for His own purposes to conceal for a time the full meaning of what He says, until its time to be revealed (cf. Rom. 16:25–26; 1 Pet. 1:10–11), or to obscure His meaning for purposes of judgment (cf. Mark 4:10–12).

4 The clarity of God's Word is formally spoken of as its *perspicuity*. God's word has a general clarity in spite of certain things that are "hard to be understood" (2 Pet. 3:16). For discussion, see Mark D. Thompson, "The Generous Gift of a Gracious Father: Toward a Theological Account of the Clarity of Scripture," in D. A. Carson, ed., *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 615–43. He notes, "The clarity of Scripture needs to be placed firmly in the context of the living God's involvement with the world he has made and the people he has redeemed. It needs explicit relation to the character of God and his saving activity, in particular his determination to be known by men and women in and through the person of Jesus Christ. On such terms an exposition of the clarity of Scripture becomes a confession of faith in the benevolence of our heavenly Father, a confession anchored in the redemptive work of the Son and made possible in the present by the operation of the Holy Spirit on sinful human hearts and otherwise suspicious human minds." *Ibid.*, 616. See also "The Clarity of Scripture," in John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 201–9.

5 "All the highest aims of language are decisively the work of God. They are decisively supernatural. And no amount of poetic effort or expertise in the use of words can bring about the great aims of life if God withholds his saving power. . . . Does, then, the way we use words—does poetic effort—make any difference in whether the great aims of life are achieved? . . . The New Testament answers yes, at least in regard to the clarity of the words and the attitude of their delivery." John Piper, *Seeing Beauty and Saying Beautifully: The Power of Poetic Effort in the Work of George Herbert, George Whitefield, and C. S. Lewis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 20. Piper states in connection with Colossians 4:3–4 and Ephesians 6:18–20 that "God is the decisive cause of the aims of our ministry, and yet God wills that the *clarity* and *attitude* of our words make a difference in their effectiveness." *Ibid.*

grammatical conventions, and proper structuring of compositions make for lucid communication. Students should also be encouraged to value the discipline of revising for clarity.

## Charity: Write in a way that is kind

*“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”* Ephesians 4:15

**Charity is benevolence. Writing with charity means writing to benefit others.**<sup>6</sup>

**Creation:** From before the world began, Father and Son and Spirit have existed in a relationship of perfect love. In creating the world, God provided a venue in which to put His love on display and act in kindness toward humanity.<sup>7</sup> His perfect love toward Adam and Eve was matched in their creaturely love toward Him and reflected in their love for each other. What Jesus would later call the two great commandments were being fulfilled in the experience of our first parents: they loved God with all that was in them, and they loved each other as their own selves, saying and doing only what would benefit the other. The second great commandment encapsulates a creational norm when it comes to kindness: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mark 12:31). Kindness is certainly not all that is involved in love, but one way we express love is through kindness (1 Cor. 13:4–7). A considerateness toward others can even be embedded in certain conventions of language, such as the English convention of courtesy order.

**Fall:** Though humanity rebelled against God, God still shows kindness toward His fallen creation, both generally in His common grace to all mankind and specially in providing salvation.<sup>8</sup> In spite of this, man apart from God tends to show neither proper gratitude toward God (Rom. 1:21) nor similar kindness toward others (Matt. 18:23–35). Instead, his heart inclines in the opposite direction, perhaps most evidently in what he communicates (Luke 6:45), which is often marked by cruelty, harshness, anger, ungraciousness, false accusations, gossip, slander, and the like. His kind words may also mask a cruel heart. While unkind words have never been lacking after the fall of mankind, social media has today amplified humanity’s reach in unprecedented ways, with opportunity only a click away.

**Redemption:** The ground of our love and kindness toward others is the love and kindness shown to us by God through Christ (Titus 3:3–6). All through Scripture, we see His lovingkindness described and praised. But God’s people do not have only a far-off and impersonal model to mimic; instead, they are the very direct recipients of God’s kindness. God’s people are called to show love and kindness toward each other (Eph. 4:32). Doing this provides not only a means by which people can identify Christians as followers of Jesus (John 13:35) but also a baseline measure of their love for God (1 John 4:20). This kindness is to be shown in particular to those who are in need, who are hurting, and who cannot repay it (cf. Ruth 2:8–13; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:4, 8; James 1:27). Further, one

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6 A bit more expansively, “charitable writing’ is writing that seeks to fulfill our Lord’s great ‘double commandment’ to love God and our neighbors.” Richard Hughes Gibson and James Edward Beitler III, *Charitable Writing: Cultivating Virtue through Our Words* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 11.

7 “There is little contemplation in the OT of the goodness of God in and of itself. His benevolent activity, however, is constantly sung and recognized in hymns of praise. The words discussed here [Greek *chrēstos*, *chrēstotēs*, *chrēsteuomai*] express the abundance of good that God in his covenant faithfulness displays to his people and to all human beings as his creatures. This constant mercy and readiness to help on the part of God is one of the essential themes of the Psalter (e.g., Ps 25:7–8 [LXX 24:7–8]; 31:19 [31:20]; 65:11 [64:12]; cf. also Jer 33:11 [40:11]). This picture of the kindness of God grows deeper in the face of the bewildering recognition of the enduring nature of sin. Not even the fate of the nation after the exile, with its conviction that God’s dealings are incomprehensible, suppresses the acknowledgement that Yahweh is kind (cf. 2 Macc 1:24).” M. Silva, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 4:686.

8 Generally: Ps. 145:9; Matt. 5:45; Luke 6:35. Specially: Rom. 2:4; Titus 3:3–7. This is not to deny that God also rightly shows severity (Rom. 11:22), judgment (Rom. 2:2–5), wrath (Rom. 1:18), and so forth, as appropriate.

of the most powerful ways God's people can image Him is to show kindness to their enemies.<sup>9</sup> This sort of kindness is made possible by God's indwelling Spirit bearing fruit in the lives of His people and making them like His Son.<sup>10</sup>

Students need to be brought to understand the power of their words, for both good and ill (Prov. 18:21; James 3:2–12). The notion of writing with kindness does not exclude writing with firmness, boldness, and candor, all of which Scripture models. Neither should kindness be equated with bland niceness, but rather with speaking the truth with love (Eph. 4:15); it is compatible with courage, conviction, and confrontation. Leading students to write with love and empathy helps them to move beyond viewing their writing craft in a self-centered way and framing it primarily in terms of self-expression and self-fulfillment. Instead, they show charity to their readers as they seek to inform them of truth, persuade them of goodness, and delight them with beauty. Showing charity may be done through crafting stories that delight while they cultivate virtue and through writing to build up others in the faith as the New Testament writers did.

## Sincerity: Write in a way that is real

*“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.”* 1 Peter 2:22

**Sincerity is genuineness. Writing with godly sincerity means writing in a way that authentically reflects a changed heart.**

**Creation:** To be sincere is to be honest and straightforward in attitude and speech; sincerity “suggests . . . a correspondence between interior experience and external action.”<sup>11</sup> In the beginning, there was no insincerity at all in Adam and Eve; it was only after they had sinned that they pretended to be something they were not. The second Adam is a more robust example: Jesus could rightly call the Pharisees hypocrites because there was no disingenuousness in Him, and Peter, who knew Him so well, testified that there was no deceit found in his mouth (1 Pet. 2:22).<sup>12</sup>

**Fall:** In a fallen world, sincerity gives way to vices such as duplicity, hypocrisy, dissimulation, pretense, and double-mindedness (Mark 7:6; Titus 1:16; James 4:8). Fallen man may also be sincere about something false (Acts 18:24–28) or evil (Rom. 10:2). Our culture engages in superficial courtesies, public-image-shaping strategies, and social media hypocrisy. Mankind has long wanted to present itself as better than it is and something it is not, and there have never been more extensive opportunities to do so than in the present day. Students, in their lives and in their communication, are certainly not immune to this temptation, especially given the opportunities social media affords. A writer may write using Christian terminology and promote Christian thinking and living, but he or she may have a heart that is far from God (Matt. 15:8).<sup>13</sup>

**Redemption:** God calls believers to the same unhypocritical life that Jesus exemplified. Sincerity in and of itself is not enough; many are absolutely sincere in their false beliefs.<sup>14</sup> Peter shows us that sincere love for others is brought

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9 Among other places, Christian love of enemies is taught in Luke 6:27–36. The passage culminates in the following promise: “your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.” Regarding “*children of the Highest*,” “the force of the word here is . . . that children are expected to show the character of their father.” I. Howard Marshall, *Luke*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 365), 265.

10 “The fruit of the Spirit is the character of the Spirit of God’s Son living in us ([Gal.] 4:6; cf. 1 Thess. 4:8), God’s image in his children.” Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 516.

11 John D. Witvliet, “Planting and Harvesting’ Godly Sincerity: Pastoral Wisdom in the Practice of Public Worship,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 87.4 (2015): 294.

12 Paul is another example of godly sincerity (2 Cor. 1:12; 2 Cor. 2:17), and he looked for a “sincere and pure devotion to Christ” in 2 Cor. 11:3. Joshua called the people to serve the Lord in sincerity and faithfulness (Josh. 24:14).

13 Examples from Scripture of insincerity include Herod (Matt. 2:7–16), the Pharisees (Matt. 15:1–7; 23:1–31), and those who were not preaching Christ sincerely at Philippi (Phil. 1:15–18).

14 “We need to learn to cherish sincerity, but never treat it as an isolated virtue. . . . We might even go so far as to say that ‘sincerity’ must always be a parasitic concept – always attached to other goods, always attached to the truth and beauty of the gospel.” Witvliet, “Planting and Harvesting’ Godly Sincerity,” 302–3.

about by obedience to the truth of the gospel (1 Pet. 1:22). Christians ought to behave with godly sincerity in their lives and speech and writing.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, good writing takes more than sincerity. C. S. Lewis said, “While insincerity may be fatal to good writing, sincerity, of itself, never taught anyone to write well. It is a moral virtue, not a literary talent.”<sup>16</sup> Because it is out of the heart that the mouth speaks (Matt. 12:34–35), we should not simply emphasize sincere writing but bringing good things out of the good treasure of a redeemed heart. Writing that is authentically virtuous cannot be disconnected from the virtue of the writer. We want our students to be wholly and sincerely devoted to Christ, with that sincerity evidenced in their writing. A godly sincerity should inform what students write, but they must learn to write in a way that conveys that sincerity with a sincere tone, not in a way that works against it. When they conduct interviews, they should be sincerely interested in learning from the person interviewed and should demonstrate it in tangible ways.

## Dexterity: Write in a way that is skilled

*“And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.”* Ecclesiastes 12:9–10

**Dexterity is skillfulness. Writing with dexterity means writing with our God-given capacity for craft and beauty.**

**Creation:** Created in the image of God, man creates as well, with the capacity to craft with skill and beauty.<sup>17</sup> He uses his God-given dexterity in many areas of life, skillfully fashioning useful and beautiful things to exercise dominion over God’s skillfully created world. Beauty is an appropriate characteristic of our worship (Exod. 28:2; Ps. 29:2) and we are to attend to things that are “lovely” (Phil 4:8), so it is no surprise that God leads us to value communication that is skillful and well-crafted (Prov. 25:11). Exercising dexterity with language acknowledges our readers as image-bearers who were created to love beauty, and it shows love for neighbor by enhancing the reading experience with the beauty that skill provides.

**Fall:** The Fall has implications for our dexterity in general and for our skill in writing in particular. Sin introduced sloth to mankind, and instead of men and women applying themselves to their vocation and increasing their skill to the glory of their Creator, some give in to laziness and shoddy work. As well, sinful man does not take a humble view of his dexterity—with words or otherwise—as a gift from God to be used for God, but as an occasion for pride. And due to the Fall, people may hone their ability to write in an aesthetically pleasing way for ends contrary to God’s law. They craft alluring stories that make falsehood and evil look attractive, and they use language with dexterity to argue compellingly for untruth and wickedness.

**Redemption:** God created all things with skill, and man images God accordingly with dexterity in language. Our work in the world involves communicating the truth of God, and we have been given the privilege of doing so with all the creative skill gifted us by our Creator. Christian students need to produce informative texts which are not only truthful but also crafted with dexterity to be effective, clever, and attractive. They should write narratives which do not merely tell a wholesome story but do so with captivating storylines and believable characters. They must learn to structure well-crafted arguments with compelling logic. Because of common grace, unbelievers can smith words with dexterity, but they do so for their own ends. Christians have an even greater inheritance of word-smithery and should ply their God-given dexterity to create written works of truth, goodness, and beauty for the glory of God and the good of others.

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15 Ways that students could be encouraged toward godly sincerity include discerning and thinking about how Jesus’ words matched His life in every way, meditating on and memorizing Scripture which encourages candor and forthrightness, considering biblical examples of sincerity and biblical models of hypocrisy, evaluating one’s own life for hypocrisies, and meditating on the new life believers have in Christ and God’s work in making us like Him.

16 C. S. Lewis, “The Vision of John Bunyan,” in Lewis, *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), 150.

17 While God could not increase in skill due to his divine perfections, our first parents, though unfallen, were finite, and did increase in skill as they applied themselves to the Creation Mandate and all that was implied in it.