

# Holding Fast the Good: Developing Critical Thinking Skills in Leadership Development

1 of 3

*Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis*

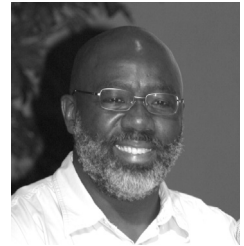
## **Theological Preparation: The Historic Orthodox Faith and Teaching Critical Dialogue**

TUMI is unashamedly committed to the historic orthodox faith, seeking to confess the same biblical truths proclaimed by the apostles and defended through the ages by those faithful to Jesus Christ and to the Word of God. We firmly believe, too, that in order to rightly divide the Word and provide a clear and compelling witness to the lost in the city, we must be well versed in the word of Christ enough to engage those who oppose our faith. For this reason, we expose students to ideas and notions with which we ourselves do not agree, and which may not be consistent with the truth as we know and confess it in Christ. The motive here is not to undercut our students' faith and convictions, but rather to strengthen them. Only if we are able to engage and refute the deceptively crafted falsehoods of much so-called biblical teaching can we protect those whom we are called to serve.

Do not be alarmed if in fact you come across materials or assertions in a textbook which seems off-center or out of sorts with what we consistently profess and teach in our modules. No leader can be effective today in our diverse, post-modern, and scientifically oriented culture without respectfully listening to positions that they do not agree with, and responding with the calmness and clarity which is due to all people, even those whose views are not consistent with historic orthodox teaching.

## **A Conflict of Visions: Sincere Christians Handling Disagreement**

Battling wrong doctrine is not the only task of the Christian leader. He or she must also learn to converse and to agree to differ with believers whose views do not line up with their own. Our students represent many faith traditions holding to differing theological systems. It is easy to demonstrate historically that godly, sincere, and biblically grounded leaders and traditions have disagreed with one another. TUMI's emphasis on the Great Tradition



**Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis,**  
*(Ph.D., U of Iowa) is the  
Director of World  
Impact's Urban Ministry  
Institute. He also serves  
as World Impact's Vice  
President of Leadership  
Development.*

© 2008. The Urban Ministry  
Institute. All Rights Reserved.

[www.tumi.org](http://www.tumi.org)

TUMI is a ministry of  
World Impact, Inc.

captured in the Nicene Creed centers our common confession and anchors us in those essential truths held by Christians everywhere and by all.

In light of this, we strongly urge all our professors, mentors, and students to be willing to engage theological and ethical viewpoints which differ from their own. We believe that critically engaging such notions without endorsing them is essential to critical thinking. Our training must make us ready and willing to give an answer to those who ask us for our rationale for our ideas, or for reasons for our disagreement with theirs. Engaging different viewpoints can promote the kind of dialogue and discussion that shape our thinking and make us better able to defend the truth.

**Education Is Not Indoctrination:  
Critical Engagement and Respectful Demeanor**

Education is not indoctrination; rather, we seek to help our leaders gain a critical mind-set, and to share with others with whom they disagree in a respectful and open manner. Truly, in things theological, we must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. The ability to engage those with whom we sharply disagree, to offer counter-arguments to rebut their positions, and then to teach without shame the truth of the Scriptures in Christ as we understand them is an essential skill for all Christian leaders. This is especially so for those serving Christ in the city, those who encounter strange doctrines, alien viewpoints, and weird religious notions constantly, and in every form.

A major part of TUMI's training, then, is to equip our students to test everything, but to hold fast, to cling to that which is good (1 Thess. 5.21). Paul's exhortations to the Thessalonians is the rule-of-thumb for all intellectual and academic dialogue in our TUMI modules and courses, and is itself our genuine desire for all our students. The aim of our TUMI studies is not to avoid knowing what others believe, as odd as some of those ideas may appear. Instead, our aim is to speak the truth in love, to engage others respectfully, grounded in the Scriptures, centered on Christ, with an aim to

persuade those who find themselves believing in falsehoods and wrong doctrine. We desire both instructors and students to respect those who hold to views of Scripture that differ from their own, without giving up their own convictions regarding the essentials of the faith (Nicene theology). Throughout our modules you will find yourself, therefore, being exposed to views that contradict your views, or even call into question our cherished evangelical faith. We include these texts and viewpoints not to get you to endorse and embrace them, but in order to equip you to think critically, to engage others respectfully, and to grow intellectually, all with the intent to mature in Christ, and to disciple others in the truth.

**Faith Seeking Understanding:  
Testing All Things, Holding Fast the Good**

May God give all our entire network the grace and humility to test all things, to hold fast to that which rings true to Scripture and to Christ, and be ready and able to engage others who differ from your own viewpoints, especially those unwittingly caught in strange doctrines. The Holy Spirit, the very One who inspired the Scriptures, will enable us to confess the truth, defend it against falsehoods, to ground others in the true doctrine of our God and his Christ.

Let us, then, obey the admonition of Paul to the Christians in Thessalonica:

*1 Thess. 5.21 (ESV) - But test everything; hold fast what is good.*

May God give us grace to know and to defend the truth that sets us free!