

## **The Williams Way**

Dr. Stan Norman

Williams Baptist University was founded in 1941 by a group of dedicated Arkansas Baptists led by pastor and visionary Dr. H. E. Williams. The vision of these founders was to create a school that equipped graduates to be transformative leaders, men and women who exemplified “salt and light” leaders for challenging times and situations. Throughout our history, our faculty and staff sought to instill in our students certain biblical characteristics that I call the Williams Way. I believe these traits reflect the way of Christ as revealed in the Bible and define the way we identify transformative leaders. The five traits of the Williams Way are: Christ-centered purpose; unwavering tenacity; courageous faith; selfless sacrifice, and work as mission.

### Christ-Centered Purpose

First and foremost, the Williams Way means that we are unapologetically committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that all we do – the way we teach and what we teach; the way we coach and what we coach; the way we compete, perform, and so on – we do these things founded upon a Christ-centered worldview, integrating the Christian faith in all aspects of learning, competing, practicing, performing, studying, living, and serving.

Dr. Williams, regularly referred to our school as a “Campus of Christian Purpose.” This means that the core of being, the reason for our existence, is to be a distinctively Christian university. A “Campus of Christian Purpose” means we are not a university like other universities. We do not educate like state institutions with “value added” Christian programs (such as chapel, prayer groups, mission trips, etc.). A Campus of Christian purpose means that the purpose of our university is unashamedly Christ-centered. Our mission is to educate and equip our students to view all of creation and the purpose of their lives through the lens of our Christian faith.

### Unwavering Tenacity

The second trait of the Williams Way is unwavering tenacity. Unwavering tenacity means that, when trials and tribulations come, we persevere; we persist; we stay the course; we do not quit. Throughout our university’s history, numerous instances arose when the challenges confronting the school were so great that the common sense thing to do would be to close the school. In all of these trials, the leadership, the faculty, the staff, and the students refused to quit. By God’s grace, they were unwavering in their commitment to persevere.

We strive to instill this character trait in each of our students – when life is difficult, when the obstacles seem insurmountable, the Williams man or Williams woman stays the course – they do not quit. This is part of the Williams Way – unwavering tenacity.

### Courageous Faith

Courageous faith refers to a deep, strong trust in Christ that moves us to bold action. One example from the WBU story certainly would be that of Dr. Williams starting a college when he did. Along with other Baptist leaders, Dr. Williams exemplified courage in the face of daunting challenges. He started a school in the midst of the greatest military conflict in human history and in the midst of the greatest economic depression in human history. Such action requires courageous faith.

Our faith in Christ will require us to take action, to do things no one else will do, to take a stand when no one else will stand. Sometimes, the trials and challenges confronting us require us to exercise our trust in Christ in courageous faith. The Williams Way is, when no one else will step up, we will.

### Selfless Sacrifice

Selfless sacrifice is closely tied to courageous faith. Selfless sacrifice refers to a commitment motivated by “loving God, loving others.” Authentic faith in Christ requires a commitment, a willingness, to forsake self-interest and self-concern for the good of others. Sometimes we will face trials, challenges, or even opportunities, that will require us to sacrifice our own needs, our own desires, our own dreams, our own aspirations – even our own comfort and well-being – for the good and well-being of others. This is the gospel way – the way of Christ. Selfless sacrifice is for the glory of God and the good of humanity. This is also part of the Williams Way

### Work as Mission

A final aspect of the Williams Way is work as a mission. Work as a mission means that God transforms our jobs into vocations and opportunities for gospel service. In Matthew 9:38, Jesus says to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.”

Transformative leaders understand that their work is their mission, their platform of influence, the way they make a gospel difference where God has placed them (education, politics, business, healthcare, entertainment, media, sports, farming, etc.). The Bible is filled with examples of marketplace ministers, men and women using their work as platforms for influence, for making a difference. The Bible teaches that the blue-collar and the white-collar worker both have work valued by God and both work in fields of ministry, ripe for harvest.

The Lord’s admonition is that the “abundant harvest” requires the preparation of men and women to serve in all venues of our world with a biblically-grounded, Christ-centered worldview, equipped for gospel ministry and transformative leadership in the particular harvest where God has sent them.

The Williams Way has served our students – and our world – for 80 years. Our past commitments in these areas will continue to guide our future vision. The world desperately needs transformative leaders. We need men and women who embody the Williams Way more

than we ever have. We pray the next 80 years will find us faithfully equipping students to be men and women of the Williams Way!