

Importance of Christian Education

by
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Education *always* transforms us, changes us. Ideally, it is more than the sum of its parts. Education prepares us for life: college, career, marriage & family, parenthood, *all* of life. Many times I hear parents justify choosing this school or that school based on the number of Advanced Placement courses or the prestige of the athletic teams. No doubt, these things may be important; but there is a far more important question. Is the education Christ-centered? Are the teachers Christian? Are the peers generally “safe” to be around? Students spend their largest number of waking hours at school. Shouldn’t the message of the school agree with the message of the home and the church? As our savior said, “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” So where do we begin?

Christian Education should first begin with the desired end or outcome in mind. If Christian schools, serving parents, are to train children according to the way they should go and expect that when they mature they will not depart from this *way*, it is important to define just what this *way* is. A biblical worldview should resonate through every area of the student’s life and guide all their important decisions. Academic, athletic, and artistic excellence should reflect God’s glory and His excellent image in which we are made. Critical (discerning), biblically based thinkers should be ready to give sound answers for their faith in every academic area, including science. Finally, learning should take place in an atmosphere where denominational distinctiveness is respected, but Christ and the beliefs that join His universal church are preeminent. In other words, we should focus on the essentials of the faith that join all Christians regardless of which church they attend. Why is all this so imperative that Christian parents must be willing to “pay twice” for their child’s education—*once in taxes for others’ children and then again in tuition for their own?*

To clearly make a case for why Christian education is necessary, it is important to first understand the intense competition for the hearts and minds of children in our current world and then to examine the historic and biblical importance of Christian education. After having established the need for true Christian education, it is then important to ask, what is the necessary scope of Christian education? The answer to this last question will define the role and limits of the Christian school in tomorrow’s world.

Never in American history has the competition for the hearts and minds of our nation’s children been so intense. The philosophy of postmodernism that dominates public and many private institutions of higher learning (which says all religions and philosophies are essentially equal; in other words, you can’t know truth) seeks to convince our children that truth itself is simply relative. In practice, this doctrine of “tolerance,” usually taught as the *most important value*, becomes a *forced* acceptance that all philosophies and religions are of equal value. This new definition of *tolerance* is the antithesis of the Christian idea of loving the sinner while hating the sin. Christians should be the most *tolerant* of all people, but we should not *tolerate* sins that destroy people’s lives and futures. In the absence of an absolute moral anchor, our nation is lost in shameless violence, drugs, promiscuity and sexual perversion. These sins are, perhaps knowingly, promoted by an educational system that, in the face of sound observational science, teaches *as a fact, and not just a humanistic theory*, that our world simply happened by accident. (There are some great Christians in our public schools, but the *system* itself is not Christian.) The evangelical pluralism (all Christian denominations working together to promote our shared values) that made this nation a great world leader by acculturating (the old idea that we are a “melting-pot”) new immigrants to a Christian worldview, to democratic/republican representative government, and to capitalistic/work-ethic based values has been replaced with a

fractionalization/balkanization (tendency to divide up into smaller and smaller groups) that is actually promoted by liberalism in the name of preserving cultural identity. Yes, it is important to treasure, respect and remember our individual heritages, but we should be joined together with historic Christian values. The new socialist economics of the Western world compete with traditional Christian notions of individual responsibility, personal accountability, and private property. In other words, philosophically, morally, socially, and economically, God's plan for man is being assaulted. Just like Israel in the days before Josiah found the books of the Law, our nation has lost its way. Nevertheless, shining beacons of light sit, often too quietly, in almost every city; they are the families, churches, and schools that remember the God of our forefathers, Jesus Christ. Our forefathers, guided by Christ, fought taxation without representation, defeated the painful internal cancer of slavery, and stood against the Nazis and godless communism (just as we now stand for the rights of women and the oppressed in the Middle East). We can continue in this tradition if we stand with Christ in our hearts, homes, houses of worship, and schools.

James Madison said that free society couldn't exist without God's law in the hearts of men; Jesus tells us that loving Him necessitates obeying His commands. What are these commands? God's first command was to "be fruitful and multiply"; this simple statement, even if it were not supported by many other verses, would necessitate marriage between a man and a woman. God also commanded us to love Him and our neighbor too. Loving Him requires believing Him, believing that Jesus is the only way to the Father, believing Paul's statement in Romans that if we will not recognize God in creation society will go astray (see Romans 1:18–32 to see a list of consequences for denying the *evidence* of God as the creator), and believing that Christ died for us because of love. This love and the resulting obedience also requires believing that people are accountable for their stewardship of the world. We care for the environment as stewards, not as sons of mother earth, but as children of God given a good creation. These few examples do not do justice to the idea that all learning points to the cross, nor do they fully illustrate that the beginning of both wisdom and knowledge is fear of the Lord (modern science is based on a knowable creation made by a knowable God). Yet when compared with the competition, these examples do begin to illustrate the need for Christian schools as beacons of light to stand against the tide and create a biblical worldview, a thinking paradigm in tomorrow's leaders... a paradigm that weighs all ideas in every area of life against biblical truth. God's command to train up a child in the way he should go has never been more important in light of the competition for their minds both now and when they are old. What then does this training consist of?

God's desire is to educate the *whole* person. He didn't just create a body, or a mind, or a spirit, but a whole person. This whole person will have to stand accountable before God in the next life, function in this life as a Christian, and serve as a citizen of both this nation and a new globalizing world. The next generation must make moral choices concerning everything from food and drink, to sex and marriage, not to mention what they will do with us—their earthly, and eventually elderly parents. They must make political decisions and economic decisions concerning debt, investments, etc. They are also called to careers which they will enjoy (hopefully) and in which they will glorify God (the Christian school professional guidance counselor can help with this). They must learn to choose wisely in this area. A good Christ-centered curriculum can cover many of these individual points, yet if the right worldview is created, then every decision, even ones not directly covered, can be made without fear. The Christian's body must be trained, and opportunities for athletics must abound. The perseverance necessary to run the race of life is often learned in athletics as the lessons of teamwork and interdependence spin-off to school, marriage, and career success. The Christian must also use their artistic "talent" for God's glory. The realms of art and media were almost lost to secularism for a season, but the resurgence in Christian art and music has the potential to reach the most visual generation yet. It is critical for leaders to have a heart to educate a young Christian's mouth (i.e.-

speech) and spend time training young people to communicate, both in dedicated classes and across the curriculum.

Math, science, languages, literature, and history must be revealed as parts of His plan. There is *no* conflict or separation between science and faith; they are natural allies. Curriculum in recent Western education has been artificially divided into areas of specialization. This is not the historic approach where *trivium*, or a firm foundation in language and grammar, dialectic (logic/reason) and rhetoric (communications skills) served as a foundation for success in partnership with an educated worldview. Christian schools must lead the next generation back to unity of thought and view. History is His story, and math points to His perfection. Every piece of literature can be appreciated for its beauty and analyzed for the worldview biases of its author. Finally, the heart or spirit must be trained, not just in chapel, Bible class, and on mission trips, but in every area and at all times. Love will outlast all other things, and the lost world will know us by our love (which, by the way should drive all philosophies, methods, and expected outcomes of discipline within Christian school environments).

How can the Christian school do all this? It can't—at least not alone! That is the only limit of Christian education. It needs partners. That's why God has ordained a partnership with families, churches, and other Christian schools; only together can we educate the whole person and create a generation of worldview-savvy thinkers that represent God in the marketplace of athletics, arts, academics and ideas in a way that shines for all to see. Secular schools separate students from their families' values and usurp parental authority. Christian schools have God given authority delegated through godly praying and paying parent-partners who voluntarily join in unity of purpose to see His power and blessing released in their children's lives. We can also, by virtue of His promise, be sure of this—trained according to His ways, they will be faithful as mature adults. How do we know this is true?

First, because He promised it, and His promise transcends any experience we have; it also transcends any season of bad choices they may have. (One Christian mother once prayed for what must have seemed like half a lifetime for her wayward, partying son to return to the faith; thanks to her prayers we remember him as St. Augustine.) Being sure of that which we do not see is simply *faith*; however, in this case I have seen His plan for the Christ-centered education of children unfold with my own eyes. With the power of God's love, I have seen an unruly, disrespectful athlete return from college as a physical education major to coach and reach for Christ those he would only have ridiculed a few years earlier. I have seen a straight "A" pre-med major take a substantially lower grade at a large Georgia college for refusing to remove a reference to the Bible in a paper. I have heard parents credit biblical worldview education with making their children successful in the armed services. *Christian education works*; we can settle for nothing less than training the body, mind, and spirit for a lifetime—trusting Him for mature fruit in season in accordance with His will. This is the desired end, and it is surely worth the investment.

The journey begins with choosing, and often making tough sacrifices for, an affordable Christian education. *All* education transforms us. Let's be careful that our most prized possession, our children, are transformed into His image and not according to the pattern of a lost world. Such an education is more than the sum of its parts. It is the beginning of a legacy that you can leave for your children and their children. Let's teach our children to *both* earn a profit and to not loose their soul; they may even win the world to Christ—this is the hope of a truly transforming Christian Education.