

Why a Christian School?

“I would advise no one to send his child where the Holy Scriptures are not supreme.”

Martin Luther's bold admonition reflects the teachings of both the Old and the New Testament. Throughout the Bible, God differentiates between light and darkness, wisdom and ignorance, saved and unsaved, and Jesus himself clearly teaches that "he who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (*Matthew 12:30*). Whether you have been committed to Christian education for years or whether you are just now exploring the possibilities, consider the following from this perspective: How can Christian parents best fulfill their obligation to train and nurture their covenant children (*Deuteronomy 6:4-8*)? Specifically, what type of education effectively prepares children for "works of service" (*Ephesians 4:12*)?

Misconceptions about Christian Education

Christian school is not a place where a few "ornaments" like prayer, chapels, and Bible classes merely complement an otherwise secular education. Genuine Christian education seeks to integrate God's Word into every facet of the curriculum as well as all cocurricular activities. As the Puritan theologian Charles Bridges wrote in his commentary, *Proverbs*, "The religious training must not be the border of the garment, which might easily be cut off. It must be the pervading substance throughout."

Second, the phrase "Christian education" should encompass more than the study of religion. Unfortunately, many evangelicals have too narrow a definition. Christian education, they think, takes place only in Sunday school, during Bible studies, or at home during family devotions, but this view is too limited. The Apostle Paul exhorts us to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (*2 Corinthians 10:5*). St. Augustine wrote that "every good and true Christian should understand that wherever he may find truth, it is the Lord's." Reflecting the same conviction, John Calvin wrote, "We shall neither reject the truth itself, nor despise it whenever it shall appear, unless we wish to dishonor the Spirit of God." True Christian education relates God's Word to every aspect of life.

Third, a Christian school is not a "safe house" from the world. Many well-meaning parents think that the Christian school offers protection from the evils of the world. A Christian school is not a guarantee against sin. The difference, however, is that the Christian school disciplines by teaching students about God's demands and His forgiveness, grace and mercy.



Finally, the Christian school is not a reform school for families who have exhausted other options to solve their problems. The Christian school should be their first choice, the place where Christian families, the church, and the Christian school can prepare students for effective lives of service in God's kingdom.

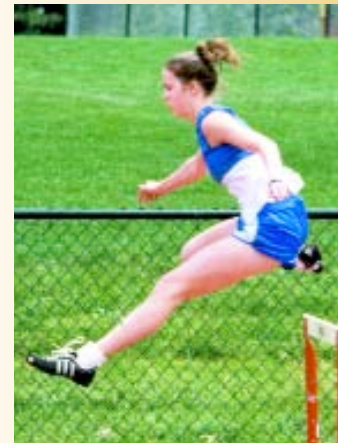


The Necessity of Christian Education

We are living in what some have labeled a "Post-Christian Age." In his book, *Against the Night*, Charles Colson describes our "barbaric" and "decadent" times as "The New Dark Ages." The church itself is reeling under the onslaught of secularism as noted by the late Francis Schaeffer in *The Great Evangelical Disaster*. Waging an all-out attack in order to win people's hearts and minds, secular forces are winning on many fronts, including education.

How should Christian families respond? Clearly, we should never despair, for the Bible teaches that "the earth is the Lord's" (*Psalms 24:1*), that God's Word will "not return . . . empty" (*Isaiah 55:11*), and that the "gates of Hell will not overcome" His church (*Matthew 16:18*). God's purposes and plans cannot be thwarted!

We can do more than just hope and pray -- this is the role of Christian education. We in Christian education do not want to destroy public schools. Their efforts involve Christian students, teachers and administrators, and we need to support them. However, an educational philosophy that does not explicitly declare Christ as Lord, that does not integrate God's Word into every action, that does not acknowledge God as the source of all truth, can only, in the words of Jesus Christ, "scatter."



The Bible clearly states that the unregenerate mind cannot please God because it places man at the center, assumes that human beings are basically good, actively suppresses the truth about God, and denies the supernatural realities of heaven and hell. The regenerate mind, from which Christian education flows, affirms the opposite: God is the Creator and Ruler of this universe; human beings, sinners from birth, are in need of redemption; all truth is God's truth; and, man is not dependent on human reason alone.

The question, therefore, is this: does a secular education enable a student to think biblically about the world? Consider the reasoning of Charles Bridges: "To expand, without soundly enlightening, the mind, is but to increase its power for evil. Far better to consign it to total ignorance, inasmuch as the uninstructed savage is less responsible, less dangerous, than the well-furnished infidel." Similarly, John Calvin believed that "a knowledge of all the sciences is mere smoke where the heavenly science of Christ is wanting."

The Basics of Christian Education

A genuine Christian education provides a quality liberal arts education that glorifies Jesus Christ and prepares students for lives of faithful and obedient service to Him. The Bible is the integrative force, and all

administrators, faculty and staff personally know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.



Specifically, Christian education is an **acknowledgement**, an **attitude**, and an **ambition**:

1. Christian education is an **acknowledgement** about God's world. He created it; He holds it together; He rules it, and we have an obligation to learn all that we can about it. We aren't simply learning about math, science and history; we are learning about God's world. Christian education seeks to produce competent graduates who know the world as well as the One who created it.
2. Christian education is an **attitude** related to God's Word; therefore, studying God's world from the perspective of the Word is critical. We can understand life only as we view it through the "spectacles of Scripture." "For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light" (*Psalms* 36:9). Seeking to bring all thought and activity under the lordship of Christ, we want our students to be passionate about their God, their lives, and their call to service.
3. Christian education is an **ambition** to do God's will. Because it is a lifelong process of transforming our minds, Christian education spans "the cradle to the grave." We want our students to be "maladjusted" to this world, to see the sin in themselves and in the world, and to commit their lives to the pursuit of justice, compassion, and integrity.



As students study God's world from the perspective of the Word, it will enable them to do God's service. "We want to serve our culture," writes

Harry Blamires in [The Secularist Heresy](#), "we want our culture to work—not because it is the only good we can conceive, and not because we are finally and securely at home in it—but because it is a great drama that we have been staged in, and it is good that we should play our parts well."



There are those who object to Christian schools, saying:

■ **"We want our children to be in the 'real' world."**

What is the "real" world for Christians? Is it a world informed by secularism, or one dominated by the love, reconciliation and forgiveness of Jesus Christ?

■ **"We don't want to abandon the public schools. We want our children to be a witness there."**

Should the youngest members of God's kingdom be on the front lines, or is it wiser first to train and prepare them much like we would care for young plants in the garden?



■ **"We would like to have our children in the Christian school, but we can't afford it."**

What better stewardship of personal and church finances than to use them for the education of covenant children? "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding" (*Proverbs 4:7*).

■ **"The Christian school is hypocritical."**

Christian schools do not claim to be perfect or without their share of sinners any more than churches do. The difference with the Christian school is the way in which it deals with the sin, how it models restitution and accountability, and how it encourages repentance and restoration.



The Mission of the Christian School

The Psalmist, writing to God's people, summarizes the mission of Christian education:

"We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands." (*Psalm 78:4-8*)



The Christian school, working together with the Christian home and the church, exists to fulfill these scriptural promises. The Christian school longs to introduce its students to the source of all truth. Therefore, the decision for a Christian education is the best choice a family can make.

Over 450 years ago, Martin Luther preached a powerful sermon encouraging his listeners to stand firm in their faith and reminding them of the nature of the conflict:

"Christendom must have people who can beat down their adversaries and opponents and tear off the devil's equipment and armor, that he may be brought into disgrace. But for this work, powerful warriors are needed, who are thoroughly familiar with the Scriptures and can contradict all false interpretations and take the sword from false teachers . . . Each Christian should be so armed that he himself is sure of his belief and of the doctrine and is so equipped with the sayings from the Word of God that he can stand up against the devil and defend himself, when men seek to lead him astray."

This is the mission of the Christian school.