

THE BLESSINGS AND BENEFITS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL MINISTRY

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Those involved in the Christian school ministry can sometimes be like the man who went to drain the swamp. In the midst of the work, he lost sight of the reason that he was there because he was up to his armpits in alligators. There are many 'alligators' in the Christian school ministry which can cause us to lose sight of the reason that we are here. During those times in our lives, it would behoove us to refocus on the reasons for which our Christian schools exist.

First, we need to remember that the Christian school is a place of philosophy. The reason that we exist is a philosophical one. We must remember that government education has as its goal to train students to be conformed to the mores of the humanistic society. Someone has defined humanism as a religion which deifies man and his knowledge and dethrones God and His Word. Some characteristics of humanism are as follows: believes in no absolutes, feels man is self-sufficient, teaches situation ethics, practices Hedonism, believes evolution, and feels that education is the cure for all man's problems. As a matter of fact, humanists are very aggressive in promoting their beliefs. The 1983 January/February issue of *The Humanist*, a magazine of the humanistic philosophy, states, "The battle for mankind's future must be waged and won in the classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizer of a new faith; a religion of humanity...utilizing a classroom instead of a pulpit to convey humanist values in whatever they teach...It will undoubt-

edly be a long, arduous, painful struggle replete with much sorrow and many tears, but humanism will emerge triumphant. It must if the family of mankind is to survive."

On the other hand the purpose of Christian education is to train students to know God and to be conformed to His Son's image. Bob Jones University Press in its booklet, *The Christian Philosophy of Education*, puts it this way: "The purpose of Christian Education is the directing of the process of human development toward God's objective for man: godliness of character and action. It bends its efforts to the end 'that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' (II Timothy 3:17)...Growth in godliness proceeds step by step from regeneration toward full maturity 'in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ' (II Peter 1:5-8). This growth, like regeneration, is made possible by divine grace (Titus 2:11-13). It results from the emulation of Christ, who, as 'the express image' of 'the Majesty on high' (Hebrews 1:3), is the visible manifestation of the divine nature that God ordained for man's imitation. As regenerated man continues to occupy his mind with the trust of God revealed in Christ, he is 'changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord' (II Corinthians 3:18.) His full conformity to the image of God in Christ—his Christ likeness—is the goal of Christian education (Romans 8:29). This goal is pursued with the recognition that its complete realization awaits the full view of Christ in the life to come, when 'we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is' (I John 3:2)."

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Because Christian education is based upon God and His Word, then our views are very different than those of the humanist. Christian education believes the following:

- ⇒ There are absolutes (Genesis 1:1).
- ⇒ Man is to be dependent upon God (II Corinthians 3:5).
- ⇒ Ethics are based upon God's Word (James 1:22-25).
- ⇒ Man is to live to please God not himself (II Corinthians 10:31).
- ⇒ God created the world, man, and all creation by a direct act (Genesis 1:1, Hebrews 11:3).
- ⇒ The cure of man's problems are found in salvation through Jesus Christ and in God's Word (Acts 4:12, Isaiah 30:21), etc.

Certainly, humanism will cause a person 'to err from the words of knowledge' as stated by Solomon in Proverbs 19:27. Therefore, it would behoove us not to place ourselves or our children in a place that teaches contrary to the Word of God because the humanistic teaching can do irrecoverable damage to each of us.

When we who are involved in Christian education refocus on the philosophical differences of government education and Christian education, it should cause us to redouble our efforts in the ministry, to be more thankful and appreciative for the ministry, and to be thankful of our calling into the ministry. "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry:..." (I Timothy 1:12)

Secondly, the Christian school is a place of principles. That is, it is a place of teaching and instruction. This teaching comes from many areas which

includes the Scripture, the lives of the teachers, and the textbooks used.

Paul says in II Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Those involved in the Christian school ministry have the tremendous privilege and responsibility to give students instruction from the Word of God and to see the Holy Spirit use His Word in the maturing process of the students. This privilege and responsibility is accomplished in Bible class, in chapel, in special meetings, in regular class instruction, in one-on-one time with students, etc.

Teachers, having been trained in Christian education and having been involved in the Christian school ministry for a number of years, have heard statements such as, 'The teacher is the key,' and 'Students only see God as he is revealed in the life of the teacher.' Those statements and others like them are certainly true. Teachers know that they must be the proper ensample or pattern to the students if their ministry is going to be effective. A few years ago Pastor Dale McCallister shared these thoughts concerning the ministry of teaching:

- ⇒ Its Responsibility—Teaching is a serious business for which the teacher will be held accountable (Luke 12:48, I Cor. 4:2, James 3:1).
- ⇒ Its Priority—The priority of those involved in teaching is to model the Master (II Cor. 12:14-15, John 4:7, I Cor. 14:32), to magnify the Master (Phil. 2:5-7, Mark 1:22, John 4:18), and to motivate the students to 'model' you in manifesting the Master (I Cor. 11:1, John 1:12, Rom. 8:29).

⇒ Its Productivity—The Lord is the immediate producer of the godly product (II Cor. 3:17-18) and the Lord is the ultimate producer of the finished product (Rom. 8:23).

The challenge for the teacher is to be constantly consistent to the call and do the charge that God has given. Paul says in I Thessalonians 1:7-8, “And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.” May the students be able to follow each teacher, and then in turn be ensamples that others can follow as well.

Teaching also occurs through the textbooks used by the students. Perhaps you have read the book written by James C. Hesley titled, *Are Textbooks harming Your Children?* In it he recounts the story of Norma and Mel Gabler—how they combated the use of humanistic textbooks used by the public schools in Texas. He not only points out the humanistic philosophy oozing from the secular textbooks but also its influence upon students and upon the society in which we live. As Christians understand the philosophy found in secular textbooks and the instruction found in Proverbs 19:27, “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge,” they will soon realize the necessity of using textbooks written from a Christian perspective. William Hadik writes in *The Distinctives of Christian Textbooks*, “Texts should be written to help accomplish the primary objective of the Christian school to bring the redeemed young person into conformity to Christ. Therefore each text should impart knowledge, teach one to think and reason, teach one to discern between Christian philosophy and humanistic philosophies,

and motivate to Christian action.” Praise the Lord that several Christian textbooks have been written to enhance the teaching ministry of the Christian school. Teachers have the privilege of using these Christian textbooks which all point the student to God. History then becomes ‘His’story or God’s providential hand dealing in the affairs of men. English, Reading, and Writing become tools to communicate God’s wonderful truth. Science and Math help us to focus upon the great God which we serve.

What a wonderful opportunity afforded in the Christian school to impart truth into the lives of young people whether in the actual teaching of the Scripture or through the testimony of a godly life or through the use of Christian textbooks!

Another blessing of the Christian school ministry is that it is a place of provision. Of course one means of provision in the Christian school is nourishment from the Word of God. Just as a

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person needs physical nourishment to grow in his physical life, he also needs spiritual nourishment to grow in his spiritual life. Just as a person progresses in his diet from milk to meat so a person needs both the milk of the Word and the meat of the Word to progress in his life spiritually. That progression can be seen in the following verses. I Peter 2:2 says, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye

may grow thereby.” Hebrews 5:12-14 says, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not strong meat. For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the Word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” What a tremendous privilege to teach the Word of God to students in the Christian school!

Another means of provision for the student in the Christian school is the care of the teachers—teachers who are genuinely compassionate; teachers who seek to meet the needs in the life of each individual student (academic, spiritual, social, emotional, etc.); teachers like Paul who says in I Thessalonians 2:7-8, “But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.” Teachers who have the testimony as Paul did for the Corinthian believers as seen in II Corinthians 12:15a which says, “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you...” Parents have tremendous confidence in a teacher who genuinely cares for their child. Students have tremendous comfort when they recognize that their teacher genuinely cares for them. The teacher who genuinely cares for his students is able then to have a more effective ministry in their lives. May the tribe of caring teachers increase!

Fourthly, the Christian school is a place of protection. All through the

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Old Testament, God gives instructions to Israel not to make covenants with the heathen, not to intermarry with them, and even at times to totally destroy a particular heathen nation. One might ask “Why?”. One reason that can be seen in the Scriptures is that God is providing a means of protection from the influence of an ungodly culture with all of its idolatrous practices. Our God is

a jealous God who desires that His people worship Him and Him alone. (Exodus 23:20-33) The same thought can be seen in the New Testament as Paul instructs the Colossian believers to “Beware lest any many spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” It is necessary for Christians not to be influenced by the humanistic society. The Christian school then provides one means of protection from the influences of humanism. Sometimes people will say to parents who send their children to the Christian school that they are overprotecting their children. They say that the children are living in a greenhouse. Dr. Charles Walker in an article titled, *The Greenhouse Theory—Are We Overprotecting Our Children?*, addresses the issue of overprotection. Dr. Walker says, “Critics consider the greenhouse sheltering approach to education...to be unnatural and unnecessary...Is such an accusation valid?...Sheltering children from potential harm has always been a concern of responsible parents. Protection, however, is not limited to guarding children from physical dangers; it also includes protecting children from unbiblical teachings and personalities. To ignore the danger of non-Christian influences in the development of a child’s value system would be spiritual apathy

or willful ignorance on the part of the parents...What then is the meaning and significance of "The Greenhouse Theory"? A greenhouse is a place where young plants are protected from undesirable and potentially dangerous climatic conditions. The environment is carefully controlled in an effort to maximize the plant's survival and growth rate when transplanted to the outdoors. The greenhouse analogy expresses how Christian school parents feel about Christian schools. To them, Christian education is an extension of the Christian home. Since Christians are to honor Christ in everything they do, Christian school advocates feel it only stands to reason that education is also included in this Biblical mandate. They want to protect their children from the influences in the public schools that could be harmful to their children's social, physical, educational, and spiritual development...The purpose of a Chris-

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tian school, like a greenhouse, is to protect and to nurture. Children need protection during their formative years. If protecting our children from unregenerate teachers, humanism, abusive habits, sex education, New Age teachings, and rebellious attitudes is overprotection, then let all Christian parents stand guilty!"

Lastly, the Christian school is a place of privilege. It is a privilege for the student to be taught in God's Word, to be in a Christian environment protected from humanism and its philosophies, and to be in a place where the teachers

care about him spiritually, academically, and in every other way. It is a privilege for parents to know that they can send their children to a place which complements the teaching of their home and of their local church. It is a privilege for teachers to know there is a place to which God has called them to minister in the lives of young people. I Timothy 1:12 says, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." When I first became a teacher, I was amazed that God allowed me to do what I loved to do (work with young people) and paid me for it, too. What a privilege! There is no greater reward than to be in His service. It is a privilege for me as a principal to watch the Holy Spirit use His Word to work in the lives of the students. It is a joy to see former students being faithful to the local church and then serving in the local church. It is a joy to see the impact that the students have in the lives of others. This impact can be illustrated from the responses of the elderly after ZCS students have ministered to them. Comments that have been made are as follows: 'This is the hope for America.' 'They didn't need to say anything. It was such a blessing having young men looking like young men and young ladies looking like young ladies.' 'Whatever you are going, keep it up.' and 'Come as often as you can.' I can say with John, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." Praise God for the privilege of ministry available in and through the Christian school!

In conclusion, when the 'alligators' come and they will come, let all of us involved in the Christian school ministry remember the blessing and benefits of the ministry. As we focus upon what God has done, is doing, and wants to do, the 'alligators' will become less distracting and we therefore will be able to continue with our whole heart in the ministry to which God has called us.