

THE NEED FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN A POSTMODERN CULTURE

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AN INFORMATIVE ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to express the need for Christian education in the postmodern culture of today. Christian families have a biblical mandate to instruct their children in the faith and Christian schools provide a presumably safer alternative, where biblical text will be emphasized. Christian schools are more necessary today due to the fact that the Christian religion and biblical teachings are not welcome in public schools. It is also important to express to the reader the focal point of the school is to make Jesus Christ known not only to the students, but everyone involved in their lives. The goal of Christian education is to produce and equip disciples of Christ to lead transformed lives in the public arena.

A good, sound, and biblical institution creates the atmosphere where learning about God's purpose for one's life is most conducive. However, the purpose of the Christian school is not to take the role of the two greatest institutions in a child's life: the parents (who are their primary and lifelong teachers) nor the local church. The church ultimately is charged with the Great Commission (to evangelize and disciple the nations). The Christian school comes along side families and churches and promotes spiritual formation and faith development in its students. They have a distinctive purpose and are distinguished from other school in that the staff members are charged with feeding the lambs of the flock by using biblically integrated curricula.

Christian education benefits the child in that instruction fosters competency in every developmental domain (cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual). This holistic approach prepares students to "act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God." (Micah 6:8). The students cultivate a biblical worldview that enables them to see issues of life from an eternal perspective. Graduates are more likely to graduate from high school, typically score higher on standardized achievement tests, are less likely to be juvenile delinquents or become

pregnant as teenagers, and are more likely to pursue higher education. A Bible based education produced prophets such as Samuel and Daniel, Queen Esther, King Josiah, Timothy and many other biblical characters.

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INTRODUCTION: THE NEED FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN CULTURE

In presenting this paper the writer main desire is to inform the reader to the fact there's a need for Christian education in our culture. Although, some who started Christian schools in the past ulterior motives when starting those schools that does not diminish the need or purpose which exist currently for schools established to exemplify Jesus Christ and have a sound academia base. There have been schools which were started primarily to prevent their children from attending classes with blacks or other students of color. However, as always God can take men evil intention and turned it for His good, (Genesis 50:20). In truth on the topic, the best Christian schools for any student at any level today in our culture are those which teaches sound biblical principles and hold its students and staff accountable to the principles conveyed in the Bible.

In America it is not an exaggeration to assume one needs a good education in order to be successful in life. In this wonderful country that was slated to be built on Christian principles the term success has somewhat been altered. Although, a Christian education is not for everyone, for those of us who profess to be Christians a Christian based education is not a must, but, is beneficial in our culture today, more than ever. There are a some exceptions to this rule, however, you can find successful people who conduct themselves in integrity and character who are not Christian, and you can find people who garnered success who were not considered smart by conventional standards. But regardless what direction one may choose to take as a career path it will behoove him/her to arm themselves with a solid education today. However, what may be one of the greatest misconceptions about the education system in America is many are highly looked upon by others based on where they attended school rather than what degree of knowledge they acquired while in school.

The greatest gift a parent can offer his/her child today is a sound education. Education today can be offered from different perspectives such as home-school, traditional public school, boarding school, Montessori school, Private Special Education school, Magnet school, and even today virtual or online schools. Although, there are many listed here the list is not exhaustive. It is important to note each school is beneficial for those who attend. A pupil may attend the most prestigious institution in America with the best educators and learn little to nothing if he choose not to be a willing participant in the process of learning. The system of educating American children publicly began in 1635 at the Boston Latin School. Georgia along with other colonies after the American Revolution begin to establish partially funded public Grammar schools.

Next to a good Home School Education a solid Christian School can prepare students from Christian families how to prepare themselves to live as believers in a culture which is becoming more anti-Bible on a daily bases. A good Christian school purpose is not to teach its students to separate from the world, but the better Christian schools teach its students how to live and represent Christ while in the world. For example, the reason Abraham was so valuable to God and the Body of Christ is God knew Abraham would teach his children. (Genesis 18:19)¹ Moses charged the Israelites to make teaching their children a priority throughout the day. (Deuteronomy 6:4) The Apostle Paul instructs Christian Fathers to bring their children up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4) Jewish communities are still recognized for passing their history down to their children even today. Since prayer and ten commandments were removed from public schools and buildings, we've seen a dramatic increase in school

¹ Kahn, Pinchas. "The Mission of Abraham: Genesis 18: 17-22: 19." *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2002): 155-163.

violence, teenage pregnancies, drug use, juvenile delinquency, and high school dropout rates.² Apparently God believes the key to overcoming the negative influences of society can only be achieved by teaching children his commands. Amazingly, it has been reported by one source taking the Commandments from the Schools and one state was necessary because if they were there the students might read and obey them. The scriptures declare that they will not rebel and be disobedient if they are taught God's ways and commands. (Psalm 78:5) Current political and social issues are creating a demand for Christian instruction.³ The Bible has a lot to say about government authority and accountability, Jews and the state of Israel, abortion, sexual identity, sexual immorality, religious persecution, witchcraft, and family roles and relationships.⁴ Bible based education positively influences believing and lifestyle.

CHAPTER ONE. That the next generation may know God and His commands

God created mankind for relationship with Him. Contemporary brain research indicates we are wired for meaning or as the scripture declares eternity is in our hearts.⁵⁶ It should be apparent to everyone what has taken place in our public school over the past fifty years. There is false perception among many of those who are fortunate enough to acquire Private and Christian education that public schools are bad and those associated with them would not do well in a

² Jeynes, William H. "A meta-analysis on the effects and contributions of public, public charter, and religious schools on student outcomes." *Peabody Journal of Education* 87, no. 3 (2012): 305-335.

³ Barna, George. *America at the Crossroads: Explosive Trends Shaping America's Future and what You Can Do about it*. Baker Books, 2016.

⁴ Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews*. David C Cook, 2017.

⁵ Shortt, John. "Education for shalom: dimensions of a relational pedagogy." In *Teacher Education in Challenging Times*, pp. 80-90. Routledge, 2016.

⁶ Emmons, N. A., & Kelemen, D. (2014). The development of children's prelife reasoning: Evidence from two cultures. *Child development*, 85(4), 1617-1633.

private school setting, there's nothing farther from the truth. Christian school is not for everyone. There are many Christian parents who can afford their kids to attend Christian school, but prefer to allow their child to face what they deem as the real world experience. So, the point must be stated here not all students who attend Christian schools will live according to the standards of the school no matter how sound the instructors or instructions taught. Back to the subject. The fact of the matter, the name Jesus Christ is no longer welcome in the Public Schools and was removed back in 1963 when the Bible was no longer allowed, just as He's been removed in most of the arena of public life in America. Whenever or wherever God is not allowed in a place, chaos dwells there.

In years past when the Ten Comments were posted in schools the main problems taking place in the classrooms were acts such as chewing gum, kids talking out and throwing paper. Today, kids are being bullied, molested, raped, buying and selling drugs in our Public and some Private schools. Also, in those days there were great respect for teachers and staff by not only students, but parents as well. In many communities the school faculty were held in high esteem much like that which is placed on professional athletes and entertainers today. Today, things are different in many instances due to the staff and faculty members mainly because the way some are conducting themselves in such manner not warranted of respect. Sadly, due to the actions of a few, there are those who feel it is proper to disrespect all the staff. By now it should be public knowledge kids will not always do what they hear from adults, but they will repeat the actions they see more times than not.

The organizations running schools today in many cases do not want kids to bring bibles to school, reading their Bibles in school, praying over meals, praying at athletic competition or anything else. The American Civil Liberties Union often bring litigation against

schools and their individual systems to threaten and sue those who do not know their rights. The method which the ACLU often use when bringing litigation is the separation of Church and State, however, citizens are becoming more informed of their rights through such organizations as The Center For Law And Justice founded by Jay Sekulow and his son Jordan.

God's Purpose for Creating Mankind

An intimate knowledge of God can only come through acceptance of Jesus Christ and spiritual disciples that promote conformity to his image. "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3) Prayer is one way we fellowship with God. In spending time with Him we learn of His character and nature. Private and public prayer has preserved Judeo-Christian traditional values in culture for centuries. The deterioration of the family can be traced by the removal of prayer from schools. Of course, this was precluded by the abandonment of these disciples in the home. In 1962, The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a prayer approved by the New York Board of Regents for use in schools was unconstitutional. It was ruled a violation of the first amendment that warns against the establishment of religion by the government. The following year the Abington School District vs. Schempp case made Bible reading in schools illegal.⁷ Even children are created to serve in missions and ministry.⁸⁹

⁷ Gooch, D. M., & Abel, C. F. (2017). Supreme Court Religious Expression Doctrine in the Public Schools: A Test of the Composite Model of Policy Compliance in a Study of Texas School Administrators. *Journal of Church and State*.

⁸ Meyers, Dave. "Rise Up Church—for Children and Youth!." *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2018): 66.

⁹ Keeley, Robert J., and Laura Keeley. "The Building Blocks of Faith." *Story, Formation, and Culture: From Theory to Practice in Ministry with Children* (2018): 284.

Man was created to worship God and when he is not in a state to carry out his purpose he normally becomes destructive. Man was created in God's image, likeness and for God's purpose. (Genesis 1:27). A solid Christian home and Christian school will create the proper atmosphere so a child/student will learn and understand who God is and how to enhance a true relationship with him. In today's atmosphere which restricts faculty and staff members from praying with or talking about God in most public schools it's not a place conducive or encouraged for spiritual growth. Although, God's people are everywhere and He can use anyone, at anytime, to do anything. A teacher, coach, or any adult affiliated with most public school systems today talking about religion in a school setting or during a school activity in America today is frowned upon, and possibly will cost that teacher his job.

God's main reason for creating mankind was so He could express His love upon him. Therefore, it is of extreme importance for a biblically based institution as a Christian School to put its greatest emphasis on Jesus, and it's the will of Jesus that he love his fellow man and any Christian school which does not or chose not to convey this truth may as well shut its doors because it does not represent the God of the Bible according to Scripture. The first commandment with promise is to love God with all your heart, mind, body and soul. And the second commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. The love of a public school teacher or staff member is no less important to one of his pupils than that of a Christian School teacher. However, one is encouraged to inform his student where his ability comes from to love his student. While the other must refrain from sharing with the student from Whom that love comes while on campus, He Who not only created the agape love the teacher express, He Who is also the giver of life.

Parents as Primary Teacher

Possibly one of the greatest failures of the Church of the 20th Century has been its failure to instruct parents properly they are the first educators of their children. In too many schools the teachers are expected to be miracle workers, they receive students from homes where no effort has been put forth to teach the child anything, not even how to spell his name in some cases. The child enters a classroom with one teacher in most cases with 20 to 30 students and the teacher is expected to teach the kids to read, write, and count all while keeping order within the class room. What is most amazing there are some extremely gifted and talented teachers in the public school sector today that are able to do so. The Proverbs encourage parents to train up their children in the way they are to go. (Proverbs 22:6). However, today there are many challenges that are preventing this command from God from being carried out. The two parent/home mother and father is not the norm in many communities today. Also, in a plethora of homes today the parent(s) greater focus is on the almighty dollar whether the family consider themselves Christians or not. In many of these homes it is likely you will find many modes of social media and very little to no parental spiritual guidance. The family unit is responsible for the socialization of children.¹⁰ Many of society's ills can be traced back to a dysfunctional family.¹¹ Christian educators partner with parents by coming alongside them in support of the values being taught in the home.¹²

¹⁰ Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J. *Let the children come: Reimagining childhood from a Christian perspective*. Fortress Press, 2019.

¹¹ Kroff, Savannah L., Katie Lee Cragun, J. Roberto Reyes, Joe D. Wilmoth, David C. Dollahite, and Loren D. Marks. "Relationship with God and the Word: Faith among American Evangelical Christian families." *Marriage & Family Review* (2018): 1-13.

¹² Martin, Kenrick E. *Parent partnerships: A descriptive study revealing parent partnership strategies being practiced in Christian schools*. Columbia International University, 2015.

CHAPTER TWO. The Role of The Church

Jesus established offices in the church for the purpose of administering the Great Commission. Pastors and teachers are charged with equipping the saints (including children) for the work of the ministry.¹³

Evangelism

The scriptures reveal that everyone is born with a sin nature and need to be born again, including children. We are to “suffer the children” to come by teaching them the gospel.¹⁴

Discipleship

Children are to show God’s glory by using the gifts and talents entrusted to them to advance God’s kingdom. They are to intentionally devoted to God in prayer, study of the words, missions and ministry in an effort to grow in Christlikeness.¹⁵

Distinctives of Christian Schools

Christian schools are on the rise around the world because of their distinctions.¹⁶

Divine Purpose

Christian educators take on the charge out of a sense of calling to evangelize and disciple the lambs of the flock. Because of this they are distinguished from their secular counterparts. The scriptures indicate they will be held accountable to God for what they teach,

13 Keeley, Robert J., and Laura Keeley. "The Building Blocks of Faith." *Story, Formation, and Culture: From Theory to Practice in Ministry with Children* (2018): 284.

14 Baart, Aaron. "Why They're Leaving and Why It Matters: Gen Z's Mass Exodus from Church." (2018).

15 Carr, Jane. "Equipping kids for ministry." *Christian Education Journal* 14, no. 2 (2017): 350-360.

16 Maddox, Marion. "Too much faith in schools: The rise of Christian schooling in Australia." *Zadok Perspectives* 127 (2015): 5.

and they are to lead exemplary Christian lives. The scriptures tell us that a student will become like his teacher.

Bible Based Curriculum

Christian schools have the Bible as the primary textbook and the Holy Spirit as the teacher and guide.¹⁷

CHAPTER THREE. The Benefits of Christian Education

A majority of students in Christian families excel academically according to standardized tests such as the College Board's Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).^{18,19,20} Wright (2016) found a correlation between years enrolled in a Christian school and composite SAT scores.²¹ Researchers have found that the achievement gap decreases for minority students. African-American students are more intrinsically motivated and have better behavior and higher grade point averages (GPA) when enrolled in Christian schools.²²

17 Horner, Jeffrey Michael. "Christian Curricular Emphases and Academic Rigor: A Mixed Methods Study." (2016).

18 Wilkens, C. P., Wade, C. H., Sonnert, G., & Sadler, P. M. (2015). Are homeschoolers prepared for college calculus?. *Journal of School Choice*, 9(1), 30-48.

19 Blount, Angie. "Intentional Practices of Christian Schools for Spiritual Formation of Third-and Fourth-Grade Students: A Multiple Case Study." (2018).

20 Vaughan, Christy. "Differences of Mean Scores on the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) for Classical Christian Schools Compared to Non-Classical Christian Schools." (2018).

21 Wright, W. (2016). *College-Bound Students: A Study of the Relationship between Religiosity/Spirituality, and Achievement*.

22 Walker, K. & Dixon, V. (2002). Spirituality and academic performance among African American college students. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 28(107), 107-121.
doi:10.1177/0095798402028002003

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement is just one of the benefits of Christian education.²³ Since Darwin's theory of evolution infiltrated public schools there has been a steady decline in achievement and a devaluing of human life (e.g. increase in abortions, euthanasia, and divorce).

Character Development

The transformative nature of Christian education produces godly character within students.²⁴ This can have a significant impact upon society. Researchers have found that Christian education can enhance physical health, crime rates, divorce rates, and general relationships.²⁵

CONCLUSION. THE ANSWER FOR A POSTMODERN CULTURE

This postmodern age demands a return to Biblical education models.²⁶ A Christian Philosophy of Education posits that the fear of the Lord is a prerequisite to teaching and learning. Children broaden their egocentric thinking and learn to trust and obey God when their parents and teachers agree that God's Word is the foundation for teaching and life (Deuteronomy). They are more likely to trust God, obey His Word, know their purpose for life, and respect others when they have a model to follow.²⁷ "Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I *am* the LORD;

23 Hoekstra, Mark, Pierre Mouganie, and Yaojing Wang. "Peer quality and the academic benefits to attending better schools." *Journal of Labor Economics* 36, no. 4 (2018): 841-884.

24 Kang, HoKyung Paul. "Teaching for Transformation: Exploring Potential Domains of Transformative Learning." *Journal of Christian Education & Information Technology* 28 (2015): 99-125.

25 Schildkraut, Jaclyn, H. Jaymi Elsass, and Mark C. Stafford. "Could it happen here? Moral panic, school shootings, and fear of crime among college students." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 63, no. 1-2 (2015): 91-110.

26 Attfield, David G. *Proclaiming the gospel in a secular age: A general theory of religious communication*. Routledge, 2017.

27 Blanc, D. Alan. "Church Planting in Post-Christian Soil: Theology and Practice." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 61, no. 2 (2018): 423.

and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.” (Jeremiah 24:7)

Biblical Worldview

A Christian education which is founded upon the Bible enables children to refute dangerous philosophies such as atheism, secular humanism, evolutionism, pluralism, relativism, materialism, hedonism.²⁸ Anti-biblical beliefs lead to the toleration, acceptance, and condoning of sinful lifestyles which lead to the destruction of man²⁹. Deception and error negatively impact a child’s self-image and how he treats others.³⁰

Implications for Society

Christian education has a providential view of God as its foundation. Its principles lay a strong foundation that will enable its students to be firmly rooted in the midst of the trials and storms that will uproot and shipwreck the faith of those who lack Jesus as the Chief cornerstone of their development.³¹ A holistic teaching pedagogy promotes development of the whole child, just as Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:52) Christian education helps student make decisions based upon an eternal perspective rather than temporal emotions. They are empowered to live in light of eternity.³²

28 Morrow, Shad Alan. *The effects of a Christian academic program on undergraduate biblical Christian worldview*. Grand Canyon University, 2015.

29 Smith, C. Fred. *Developing a Biblical Worldview: Seeing Things God’s Way*. B&H Publishing Group, 2015.

30 Mcdowell, Josh. "Models of Christian Apologetics." *Evangelical America: An Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Religious Culture* (2017): 273.

31 Spring, Joel. "The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Era." (2018).

32 Wilkie, Sharon Edge. "Living for eternity: A predictive analysis of manifestations of biblical worldview of university freshmen." (2015).

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