

Selecting a Christian School for the Right Reasons

By Jerry Haddock, EdD

For a parent, one of the most important decision in life is selecting a school that will provide the best education for your child. This can be a difficult and stressful decision. As a Christian parent, you must wrestle with the issue of whether the values and worldview taught in the school align with those taught in your home. Some Christian parents are satisfied with just knowing that their public school has one or more Christian faculty members, that crime is low in their part of town, or that the school facilities are state of the art. But are these the best criteria to use in making this significant, life-altering decision? Are there other measures worthy of consideration?

Indeed, there is an important measure for Christian parents to consider when selecting a school, namely, the worldview that the school advances. Does this worldview fit within the framework of your belief system? An effective tool to analyze worldview perspective is a grid containing four essential elements--truth, intellectual development, Christian educators and potential in Christ. Let's look closely at this grid.

TRUTH

Regardless of one's choice of schooling, a view of truth is presented in every classroom. "Proponents of virtually every ideology seek to gain a foothold in the classroom, because they know that the key to shaping the future is shaping the minds of children."¹ Thus, it remains critically important for parents and students to learn how to identify and critique worldviews. The differences center around three aspects of the Christian worldview--Creation, Fall, and Redemption--and teachers will advance their perspective, whether faith-based or secular, on these important topics.

The Christian worldview is rooted in the belief that humans are created in the image of God and therefore have great dignity and value. It is Christianity that teaches "a higher view of human nature than any other alternative worldview."² Humankind's propensity to sin illustrates the reality of the Fall and underscores our need for moral discretion and guidance. That need was met in the sacrificial death and miraculous resurrection of Jesus Christ, offering redemption to all who put their trust in Him and allowing all believers to experience God's transforming power. Now this is a very different worldview from those that are being advocated in many schools today!

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Erasmus, a sixteenth--century Dutch scholar, once said, "All studies, philosophies, rhetoric are followed for this one object, that we may know Christ and honor him. This is the end of all learning and eloquence."³ The Christian school strives to teach the students a vast array of knowledge as well as skill and understanding to grasp and interpret that knowledge within a biblical framework.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

Numerous studies reveal the tremendous influence a teacher has on the moral and spiritual development of students. Pollster George Barna states that "The implication of the research findings is clear: Anyone who wishes to have significant influence on the development of a person's moral and spiritual foundations had better exert that influence while the person is still open-minded and impressionable--in other words, while the person is still young."⁴ Concerned Christian parents,

therefore, are well served by placing their child in the care of a teacher who holds a Christian worldview, a teacher who points students toward the Savior of the world, not away from Him!

POTENTIAL IN CHRIST

Harold Best, dean emeritus of the Wheaton College Conservatory of Music, asserts that "we are unequally gifted and cannot equally achieve. Consequently, some artists are better than others. But all artists can be better than they once were."⁵ Christian students can flourish and become all that God intended them to be when they are inspired to develop their God-given talents. To accomplish this, the teacher must do more than sow seeds of knowledge. The teacher has the responsibility to help students overcome obstructions to their spiritual and academic success. With a steady, guiding hand, the Christian schoolteacher enables students to appreciate, value and fully develop their uniqueness in Christ.

So, have you used the proper criteria in selecting your child's school?

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- ¹ Nancy Pearcey, Total Truth (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004) 129-30.
 - ² Pearcey, 129.
 - ³ Bruce Lockerbie, A Christian Paideia (Colorado Springs, CO: Purposeful Design Publications, 2005) 142.
 - ⁴ George Barna, Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003) 47.
 - ⁵ Lockerbie, 91-92.



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