

CRISIS IN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

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"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" Pr. 22:6

There have been many movements that have been used of the Lord that have come and gone. The Christian School movement certainly is a much needed one in these days when public education no longer supports traditional and parental values. Many articles have been written and sermons preached on the evils that are taking place in the public school, both in teaching materials and actual class environment. I, like all Christian parents, wanted the best for my children. All three went through Christian schools including college at Bob Jones University. Some say that the growth of Christian Schools is over and that they are dropping back in number and size in many states. Since I was in on the beginning of the movement I feel constrained to mention some motives, costs and dangers encountered. I desire to offer some prayerful suggestions, both practical and spiritual.

First, consider the **MOTIVES** of those involved in the movement. Over the years I have seen many enter the Christian School for the wrong ones. To some pastors, it is the status thing; but if that is all, there must be an easier way to die. Some in the south did so because of segregation. Even just to get the kids away from the worlds "goof-off" crowd is not good reasoning. There are plenty of rascals in the Christian school, so it is not a sure escape. It is further difficult for the school to teach and maintain standards that are not taught at home. Parents that expect the school to enforce standards that are not followed at home are just fooling themselves, wasting their money and confusing their kids. The Christian school is not a reformatory although some men try to do something in that area. A successful Christian school takes the combined efforts of parents and church alike. Even the "hothouse" theory, get kids away from evil, is not complete if we do not figure out ways for them to relate to their peers, to fight some battles and to win or lose in some teenage growing experiences. Often I find a kid in public

school far more spiritual and stronger than His counterpart in the padded environment. Educator, teacher, student, pastor and parent all need to examine our motives and the results attained.

We need also to take a close look at the **COSTS**. There are a number of costs involved in Christian schooling. It costs parents who must pay double, raising money beyond their tax load to pay tuition. Often the extra job mom must get for tuition limits their family participation in their church. It costs the faculty and administration, who labor on small salaries with few fringe benefits. A faith ministry demands great vision, persistence and real love for the student. It also costs the church, for building maintenance, books and other school related finances which are a constant drain to the church ministry. It should also be said that there is a community cost as we remove the "salt" from the public schools, leaving few to stand for the right in such institutions. Perhaps there is a cost to students who grow up without any interaction with unsaved teens. Often public school Christian teens are far more aggressive, dedicated soul-winners than those with little opposition in Christian schools. My heart breaks, as one who speaks almost daily in Christian schools, to encounter so many sulking, rebellious teens who stagnate in their indifferent environment. Great will be the cost to the total cause of Christianity if we allow 12 years of Christian schooling to become a substitute for full time service in the things of eternity. The vision must not be lost in the training of the troops.

Certainly there are a number of **DANGERS** to consider. Too many Christian schools emphasize sports above spirituality; or deify high scores and academic excellence while failing to point students to a lifetime of serving Christ wherever He leads. The chapel time must be kept "hot" to deal with growth problems, temptations, and to build an evangelistic fervor for the world around us. Then there are dangers to parents. The Christian school cannot teach your kids what needs to be taught at home. Kids will seldom rise above their home life. The school is not a reformatory. Parents must not expect the Christian school to accomplish what they are not willing to back up at home. Failure in this results in double standards that hinder rather

then develop life-shaping backbones. I spot a number of dangers to the students themselves. Tragic traits of ingratitude, complacency, laziness, lack of compassion, blighted vision and little concern for the world are very evident. Many feel no need to take a stand, so they slide along in their proud, indifferent, religious rut. Often the peer pressure is even stronger than a public school, following the leaders who constantly try the rules of school administration. When rules are printed, but not enforced, personal convictions seldom develop. My experience shows the majority of Christian school teens are hungering to be like the world, trying to sneak it into their lives at every opportunity. Since the inception of Christian schools, we should have more volunteers for Christian service than ever before but this simply has not happened. As I speak to the student bodies of great Christian colleges and universities, I find the majority came not from Christian, but public schools. One has only to look in most Christian school yearbooks to see how few students are going on to a good college for further training and service.

I certainly do not have all the answers, but educators, pastors, parents, and students need to work toward motives that correct the shortages we can all see. Costs need to be evaluated and those that are worthwhile in the light of eternity must be bravely shouldered. Nothing worthwhile in this life comes without cost. But negative costs need to be addressed and ways found to do better. Dangers can be spotted and unitedly battled. Christian education must succeed. It must critically reexamine itself and all concerned must labor not to make it an educational nursery. School must be an evangelistic training ground for those who will stand the test in these humanistic end times. Our Christian kids can't just be better, they must be best. It's a job for all of us to tackle with Christ honoring dedication. Christian education must continue to succeed. It must be perfected to do the job of training our children for a lifetime of victorious living in the center of God's will for them,

MY SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

KEEP THE CHAPELS HOT:

Isa. 58:1 tells us to "cry aloud and shew my people their transgressions". Chapels tend to fall into a rut, a mere break in the day, and sometimes an only once a week mechanical event, Mediocre speakers are often engaged at the last minute, those who are cheap or available. Take a careful look at your chapel kids. Are they a bored, noisy, rebellious, know-it-all bunch? Do you ever see tears, or see tearful invitations with students deeply touched and getting right with God? Sometimes Chapel boredom invades the lives of both teachers and students and must be combated by strong preaching of the Word. I find most schools badly in need of revival which only comes by much prayer and hard preaching. It takes daily push to keep students right with God. The chapel time should be the most important time of the day. It must be a planned, prayed over event carried out in the power of the Spirit of God.

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS SHOULD CHALLENGE STUDENTS TO CHRISTIAN SERVICE:

I find the majority of Christian students feel that Christian education is just the same as Christian service. Pastors report that church participation is often better from public school students than Christian school students. Christian students must be taught to be "Steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" I Cor. 15:58. Your whole staff must see a lost world. Students must see school as basic training, a time to discover talents, accept responsibility, and prepare to serve God. Check your last years yearbook. How many seniors went on to Bible school or showed any desire for lifetime service for God?

WE MUST COUNTERACT THE "PITY PARTY, SORRY FOR SELF" ATTITUDE AMONG STUDENTS:

An officer candidate in a military school is taught he is someone special, honored to even be there and endowed with great responsibility. Christian students must be brought to see the privilege of their training and get thrilled with their potential

development. They must be taught the benefits of their Godly atmosphere, the value of interaction with fellow believers, and the opportunity to press ahead of public school students. A Christian education is not a penalty, but an experience to treasure. Christian discipleship takes "cross-bearing and forsaking" Luke 14:27-33. Christian schools control more hours of learning than either family or church. It must therefore accept more responsibility for the challenge of Rom. 12:1-2.

THERE NEEDS TO BE RECOGNITION OF SPIRITUALITY:

Emphasis in most schools is too much on sports, with trophies often given to the most worldly kids because of athletic ability. How about rewards for soul winning, Christian character, maturing growth, and service? We need to place greater honor on those who "heartily serve the Lord" Col. 3:23.

PROVIDE A NUMBER OF WAYS TO SERVE CHRIST:

If we let them wait for graduation, very few will elect to serve the Lord. Students must learn the thrill of doing things for Christ when still young. Reach beyond the usual musical department choir and encourage students to form groups to sing, minister, visit and serve God. They should visit each other's churches, rest homes, witness door to door with tracts, and anything that gives them opportunity to serve God. They must catch the vision of personal service.

BE SURE THERE IS A CLIMATE FOR SPIRITUAL GOAL SETTING:

It seems to be normal to set scholastic goals, but we must elevate spiritual ones. Elementary students are tender and pliable and can be aimed at something for God. Constant vigilance and encouragement can keep them on track for the high school years. Concentrate on "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God" I Cor. 10:31. One of the beginning goals of Christian education was to train tomorrow's leaders in great

abundance. This has not happened at most schools and needs greater emphasis.

COUNSELOR AND TEACHER EFFORTS SHOULD LEAD TO STUDENT'S DECISION MAKING:

We must counteract the selfish "do my own thing" attitudes of most students. When the majority of your seniors have made no decision by graduation as to the aim of their life, we are failing in Christian education. We must teach each student that God has a will for each life. This they must seek and "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" Phil. 3:13-14). All fields of service and much opportunity for Christian surrender must be offered. Good literature, challenging speakers, films, and a variety of information must be available for each student of varied talents to make the best choice.

PRESENT THE VISION OF A LOST WORLD:

Show students that without the dedication and surrender of others they would never have been saved. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" Pr. 29:18. We must show them a lost world, the foolishness of worldly entanglement, and the thrill of living in the light of eternity. We are indeed our brother's keeper. Every avenue must be utilized to get the sights of our students higher than to just graduate, marry, and retire from serving the Lord before they hardly begin their lives. Education is not an end, but a beginning.

MAINTAIN A FACULTY OF STANDARDS, DEDICATION, AND VISION.

Teachers must not just teach academics. They must be clear examples of dedicated discipline, teaching by precept that pleasing Christ is the most important thing in their lives. Kids sense the difference between mechanical teaching and the total commitment of instructors that really care for them. A teacher who undermines the school must be quickly dealt with for a little leaven can quickly spoil the school. Remember, bored teachers stagnate students. Students and teachers together must face the challenges of Christian education.

Example is a powerful tool of learning. "Thou that teachest another, teachest not thyself" Rom. 2:21?

MAINTAIN FIRM, BIBLICAL, GODLY STANDARDS:

I am appalled at the sag in standards now occurring in many Christian schools. Proper apparel and hair length are not burdens to bear but marks of dedication and discipline. Class and corridor rules continue the process of character building. The reason for rules must be clearly and Biblically understood and upheld. Often the rules are in the book but not upheld in daily practice. So often I talk with a tearful teacher that upholds a rule and then receives no backing from principal or board. Once these are relaxed or ignored, a great reason for Christian education is lost. Daily vigilance is required to stay on course and maintain the standards that are a distinguishing factor of Christian education. If we are not going to continue a course of Biblical standards we should close down. If our standards are not better than the world we lose the climate of Christ-honoring influence which enhances education. Beware the new musical trends and the destructive fads of the present worldly Christian crowd which cry "freedom and liberty for self indulgence" instead of dying to self and bearing the cross and diligently following the Bible.

BATHE THE SCHOOL AND EACH STUDENT IN PRAYER:

"Call unto Me and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not" Jer.33:3. Often prayer becomes a brief, expected pause of religious ritual, instead of genuine practice. Heartfelt prayer is essential to counseling, teaching, or administration. It should bathe each lesson and each activity of the day, "Pray without ceasing" I Thess. 5:17.

REQUIRE THE READING OF BOOKS ABOUT THE LIVES OF GREAT CHRISTIANS:

Students need to read of God's working in real life situations. Most have no idea of what's ahead, and many don't care. They need to catch a vision of the

battle, defeats, victories and miracles of Christian service. Little room for self pity is left after reading Foxe's Book of Martyrs. I was captivated with the thrill of evangelism by reading of the lives of great Godly evangelists. Books by missionaries can widen a student's horizon to a world in need. They must be taught that serving Christ is a challenge, not a chore. Their faith must be kindled to really believe, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" Phil. 4:13.

These are some of the things I would do if I majored in Christian education. I'm not taking the place of a critic, nor do I know it all. Further, I have had enough years of experience to have learned and seen the problems. Also I live in these problems daily. I simply wanted to try to offer some experienced, and workable answers to the problems of Christian education. A young mind and heart are fearful things to lose. Our Christian school kids are the hope of their generation. Our job is to challenge and aim them well in the goals of eternal achievement. Certainly educators should desire to hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" Matt. 25:21.