

THE EDUCATION DILEMMA FACED BY CHRISTIAN PARENTS • THE BLESSINGS OF HOME EDUCATION

FrontLine

B R I N G I N G T H E T R U T H H O M E

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A young girl with blonde hair in pigtails, wearing a dark green sweater, is smiling and raising her right hand in a classroom. In the background, another girl with blonde hair and a red headband is looking down. The background is a green chalkboard.

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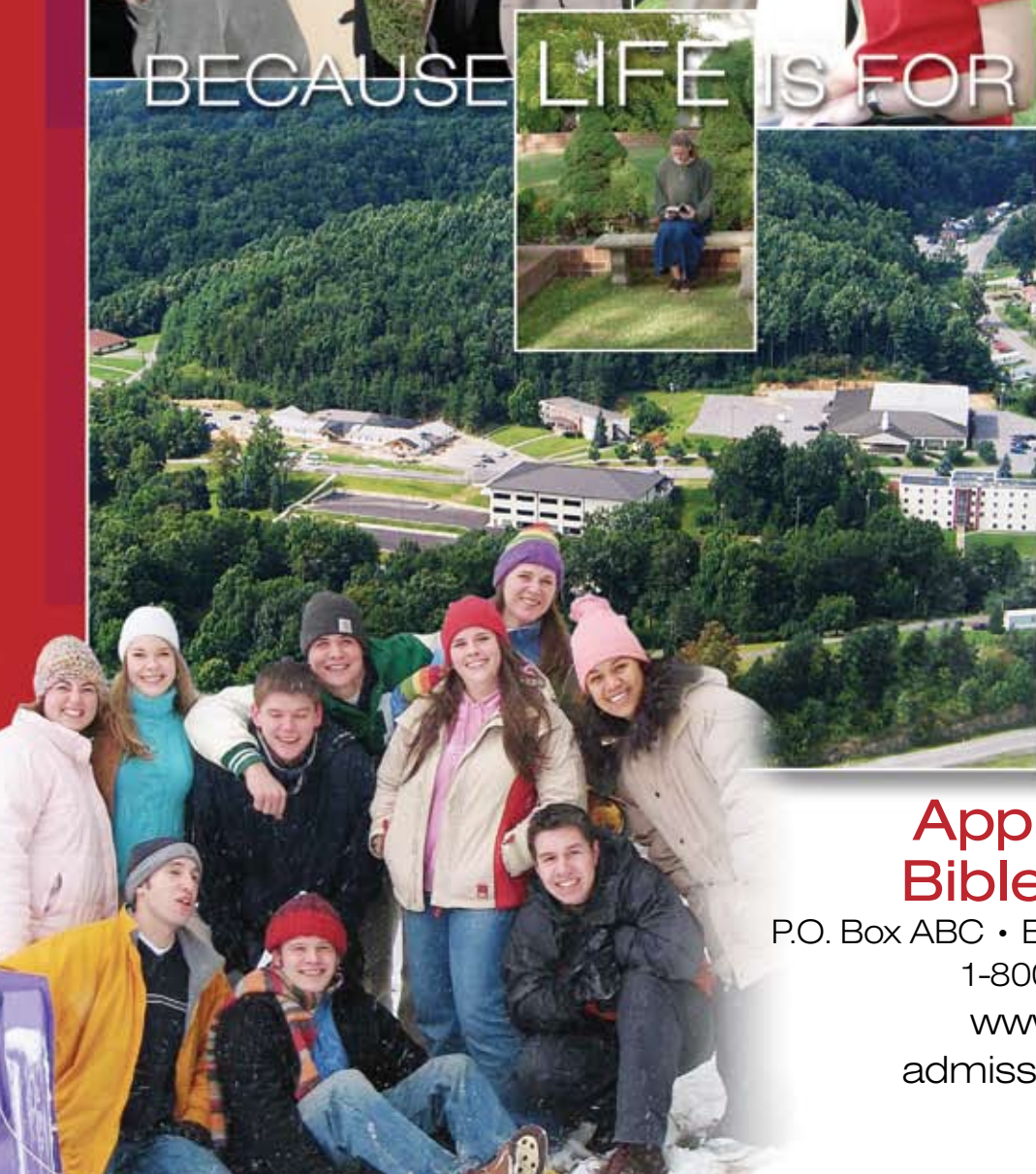
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In the July/August 2005 edition of *FrontLine* my friend David Cummins took issue with Sam Horn's review of a recent book on Zwingli edited by Mark Sidwell and published by BJU Press. Dr. Cummins's principal objection was honoring a Protestant reformer who was, in his opinion, an enemy of religious freedom and persecutor of Anabaptists, who Dr. Cummins suggests are Baptist forebears. I object to this criticism for a couple of reasons. First of all, while Zwingli's part in oppressing Anabaptists could have been mentioned by Dr. Horn, we can hardly condemn Zwingli for being an enemy of religious liberty. After all, he was killed on Kappel's battlefield defending the rights of Swiss Protestants against Catholic tyranny! I would think that Dr. Horn would agree that we should not condone the failures of Zwingli, any more than Calvin's approval of the Servetus execution or Luther's anti-Semitism. But does

this suggest that we should not honor these men as heroes of the Faith and champions of the Reformation?

But I would mention another perhaps more relevant reason for objecting to Dr. Cummins's criticism of the review: it reflects the common (although I believe mistaken) idea that Baptists are direct descendants of the Anabaptists, a view that normally embraces the so-called Anabaptist kinship theory of Baptist origins. While I wholeheartedly agree with Dr. Cummins that the study of our Baptist forefathers, Backus, Leland, Wayland, and others, would be a most valuable pursuit, I would suggest that good Baptists can and should be good Protestants without emulating their offenses. The cruel "immersion" of Anabaptists in the Limmat River was inexcusable; likewise is the sweeping condemnation of Zwingli as an enemy of religious freedom. I would also welcome a

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An Opportunity to Do Good

John C. Vaughn

As this issue was going to press, the Gulf Coast was struck with the worst natural disaster in our history, so far. Although most of our readers have probably received the following information from other sources, we must insure that you have it in hand. Relief efforts are coming from many agencies, for which we praise the Lord. Thankfully, a Bible-believing ministry was already in place to provide coordination for our efforts.

Some years ago, the Lord burdened Bro. Jan Milton of Fayetteville, North Carolina, to begin Operation Renewed Hope. This organization has become the channel through which many of us have chosen to participate in an unprecedented “opportunity [to] . . . do good” (Gal. 6:10). If any-

diate physical need—CASH—will have begun to be met. We pray that the “Hope Box” project will also be well underway.

A “Hope Box” is a standardized box of food for two days for a family of four. You can find the dimensions and contents to pack at www.operationrenewedhope.org. The plan is to collect enough boxes of food and supplies that require no refrigeration or cooking to help our brethren in need as well as to help them help others. As the immediate crisis abates, there will be other lists of needed items. Perhaps by the time you read this, clean-up teams and construction crews will already be needed.

Because of the significant increase in communication this crisis and the coordinated efforts have generated, e-

others have physical burdens; some don’t even know what their burden is (v. 3). The burden of verse 2 is the load that is too heavy for another to bear alone. The burden of verse 5 is the responsibility that every man must bear for himself. Our response to this crisis could be our finest hour. We can start today, with finances; we can continue tomorrow, with food; we can continue over the year to come, with tools and talents.

These are not just days to bear great burdens, but days to bring eternal blessings. Galatians 6:6–10 has primary application to the support of those in the ministry, but it sheds light on the current crisis as well. Those of us who have the ability should share with those who live in the strategic place of witness—those of the “household of faith” who are in the midst of the devastation. Bearing the burdens of other witnesses is an eternal investment. To “communicate” according to this verse is to share. Supporting the source of truth is not an option, it is an obligation (v. 6). Sharing is not an expense, it is an investment (v. 7). Sharing is not really a burden, it is a blessing (v. 8).

Bearing the burden of other witnesses is not only an eternal investment, it is an essential investment. Hurricane Katrina has provided an opportunity to invest in a massive relief effort. Let us not faint (v. 9). Let us do good (v. 10). Bible-believers in the Gulf Coast are under the spotlight. They are on the frontline in the battle for truth. Surrounded by wounded and dying souls, they need rations (food) and ammunition (gospel literature) to prevail. This is a time to share our goods, and to wrap them in the gospel. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

www.operationrenewedhope.org

one reading this has not yet learned of Operation Renewed Hope, please visit the website www.operationrenewedhope.org. There you will learn of the relief efforts that were immediately set in motion when the devastation occurred.

Churches are collecting funds and food for this operation. In the weeks and months ahead, teams for clean-up and construction will be coordinated through this ministry. All of us have some idea of the massive scope of this challenge. It has driven us to prayer. There are many obstacles to overcome in making a compassionate response. “Where do we even begin?” was the question on all our minds. By the time you read this, we pray that the biggest and most imme-

mail is the only practical way to conduct it. Calls and paper correspondence should be kept to the minimum to avoid clogging up the channels. Those who are leading the charge must have the ability to respond as only e-mail allows. The task ahead is daunting. The deep and widespread hopelessness of others can leave us with a sense of helplessness. But there is much that we can do that many others cannot do: we can pray!

There is also much we can do in a practical sense. We have a great opportunity to do good. As we learn from Galatians 6:1–5, this is an opportunity for Christians to bear great burdens. We know from this text that we are to “bear one another’s burdens.” Some have spiritual burdens (v. 1);

The Education Dilemma Faced by Christian Parents

Phil Suiter

What is a Christian parent to do? Faced with the clear teaching of Scripture about the education of children, the Christian parent is often limited in the options available to provide the education prescribed in the Word of God. Secondly, the Christian parent is not always firmly grounded in the teaching of Scripture regarding child rearing and thus does not address the matter of education with the resolve that is found in God's Word.

What does the Scripture say about the education of children?

First, the Bible is clear in teaching that children belong to God. This is the issue of child ownership. If one reads the literature of the day, two other teachings regarding child ownership are often stated. Sometimes children are identified as belonging to parents. Even many Christian parents subscribe to that teaching because the matter is seldom addressed in churches. What is of greater concern is the second teaching by many in the public arena—that children belong to the state for purposes of education. The legal basis for all compulsory attendance laws is that the state has a “compelling interest” in the life of each child and, therefore, can compel each child to attend a public school. Compelling means “enforceable by law.” The word *interest* means “legal entitlement.” Such thinking conflicts with the truth of Scripture.

The truth about child ownership is basic to thinking about the education of children. Ezekiel 18:4 says, “All souls are mine.” The verse goes on to clarify that God owns each of us, including adults, and that each one of us stands individually responsible before God. An individual can blame no one else for wrong choices that are made. Psalm 24:1 says, “The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” The expression “they that dwell therein” includes each of us.

The New Testament also contains clear teaching about child ownership. Romans 14:7, 8 says, “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.”

At the very least, these verses teach that children belong to God and that He should have first claim upon their lives. That claim can be exercised only as children are taught Biblical truth about God, about responsibility, and about accountability to Him. One need only be reminded of the words of Solomon in Proverbs 1:7: “The fear of the Lord is the

beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." This fear of God should be viewed as both reverential and judicial. Each of us must answer to God for the decisions we make about all things, especially the decisions we make about the education of children.

Second, the Bible is clear in teaching that the older generation of any age is responsible to educate the next generation in the ways of God. Deuteronomy 6:7–9 places that responsibility upon the shoulders of parents. Psalm 78:6 makes the same declaration. Psalm 145:4 identifies the responsibility of an older generation to a younger generation. Ephesians 6:4 highlights the responsibility of fathers. Any study of the Old Testament will show that God had a special role for fathers in the homes of Hebrews—the spiritual education of his children. Those truths have not changed.

It can be added that the church has also been assigned a vital role in providing proper instruction for both children and adults. No pastor can afford to ignore this.

Any study of the Bible concerning the education of children reveals the following truths:

1. God owns the children and should have first claim upon them.
2. Parents are responsible for the education of children and thus serve as stewards in matters of education. Responsibility means parents must one day account for decisions they make about education.
3. The older generation is responsible to the next generation for teaching Biblical truth. This places a great responsibility upon churches and pastors.
4. The education of children must include the vital component of knowledge about God, particularly His role in creation and redemption. It must also include knowledge that enables one just to get along in life, contributing to the church and to the culture.
5. The purpose of education is first and foremost the preparation of children for service to God, regardless of the vocational or professional choices in which that service might be offered.

What is happening in the arena of public education?

Parents should know that the battle to preserve the Judeo-Christian heritage of our nation is being lost. That battle, which is really a cultural war, is being waged in public settings across this nation as public policy is defined. The prime arena for the cultural war is the public school system. Children are the targets for the new philosophy of the new culture. Paul warns the church at Colossae to

"beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit" (Col. 2:8). The word "spoil" in that verse comes from a root referring to valuables. Children become the "spoils" in any cultural war. They are the valuables of that war. They are worth a strong effort and sacrifice by parents to preserve them with the truth of the Word of God.

All education deals with matters of ultimate concern. Ultimate concern is what educators consider important for life. Issues of ultimate concern provide the broad philosophic framework within which education occurs and further define the focus and emphasis of a curriculum. For example, all education, private or public, deals with issues of origin, issues related to the meaning of life, and issues of destiny. Be assured of these things: (1) public education defines the origin of life only in terms of a chance factor operating in some evolutionary process; (2) public education attaches meaning to life only in terms of the here and now and in terms of the subjectivity of human choices and human experience; and (3) public education sees no destiny beyond the human life that we

now know. In other words, there is little if any restraint to be placed upon human behavior since there is no higher authority and there is no ultimate truth to which humankind is responsible. Children are left with no strong understanding of responsibility and accountability.

With this philosophic base serving as a framework for making decisions, what has resulted? Many major tenets of our Judea-Christian heritage are being called into question. The sovereignty of God has been replaced with the sovereignty of man. It is now man himself, armed with this new religion of choice, who determines what is right and what is wrong. Rather than the Word of God serving as truth and serving as the

final authority in matters of life, truth has become totally pragmatic. If it works, it must be true. Education for the individual child is focused on self-development or self-actualization rather than preparation for service to God.

In implicit ways, children are taught that society is all wrong and must be remade to conform to the will of man. The family as created by God and the role of parents in the family have become obsolete. Government as expressed in public education is more and more assuming the role of the family in the lives of individuals, especially the children.

Student achievement in such critical areas as science and mathematics now ranks near the bottom when compared to the industrialized nations of the world. The school day in the public system now includes such programs as anger management, anti-bullying, sensitivity training, and programs to teach acceptance of different lifestyles and different cultures.

This is not the public education that this nation once

Thankfully, many Christian parents understand very well the prescription for education that is given in the Word of God. To provide that type of education for their children, they establish priorities and sacrifice to make an education with a Biblical base possible.

knew. In 1647 the state of Massachusetts passed the Old Deluder Satan Act, the purpose of which was to teach children to read so they would not be deluded by Satan. From that beginning, education today is no longer an education under a body of truth, specifically the Bible; but it has become an education that elevates humankind to a position of sovereignty, making truth subjective and a matter of human choice. Children in such an education setting can only be influenced in negative ways by that system.

What do Christian parents think about Christian education?

Thankfully, many Christian parents understand very well the prescription for education that is given in the Word of God. To provide that type of education for their children, they establish priorities and sacrifice to make an education with a Biblical base possible. Sometimes they work two jobs. Sometimes they establish a home industry. Sometimes grandparents offer to help. Older siblings now in the work force may also help. Sometimes churches are able to offer scholarships for children within the church. In all of these cases, a Biblical education is established as a top priority and the necessary sacrifices are made to enable that to occur.

Unfortunately what is described in the previous paragraph is not always that which prevails. Administrators of Christian schools hear many reasons that Christian parents do not take advantage of a Christian education program even when that choice is readily available. Among the reasons given are these:

My family cannot afford it. This is probably the reason most frequently given. And one cannot deny that private Christian school education is expensive and requires sacrificing other things so that Christian education can be provided. But many times that reason is given when the family is able to afford many other things of lesser importance.

There are many good teachers in the public system. Again,

that statement is probably true. Many good Christian teachers are employed in the public systems of education. Yet an individual teacher cannot overcome the impact of a system that seeks to remove God. The curriculum is literally filled with knowledge that does not conform to the truth that is known by the Christian believer.

We leave the decision about education to our children. This reason places the child in a position of making a critical decision when that child does not possess the knowledge and experience to make a wise decision.

The public school offers more opportunities in athletics. Again, that statement is probably true. But that reason also reveals the faulty reasoning of parents and a failure to prioritize the teachings of the Bible concerning children.

The public school offers a broader course selection. That statement may also be true. But the core of a sound curriculum is available in a Christian school setting and such schools are now being able to expand the breadth and depth of their curricular offerings. This reason lacks merit when examined in light of data from follow-up studies of Christian school graduates. They do well in college and in life.

The public school offers a greater opportunity for scholarships. This statement may not always be true. Scholarship opportunities are growing in the Christian education movement. This reason pales when contrasted with the benefits of a Christian education.

In summary, the reasons given by Christian parents for choosing a public education for their children lack substance. Generally, it is a matter of priorities. Or it may be a failure to take advantage of help that may be readily available. Public education simply cannot be viewed as an acceptable alternative. It is anti-God. The Word of God gives an explicit prescription for the education of children and parents must be concerned with what God says.

Phil Suiter served as an educator for forty-eight years in both public and private Christian schools and as a senior pastor for twenty-six years. In retirement he continues to be busy in both education and ministry.

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Much Ado about Something Truly Important

Much of this article is opinion. You may disagree with my conclusion, and that is okay with me. My goal is to stir our thinking with a big stick while turning up the heat—because the lukewarm pot of Christian education needs to be stimulated, lest it should spoil from stagnation and neglect.

Christian education is important to me. I did not enter its arena by default (not knowing what else to major in while attending college) or by jumping on the bandwagon with everyone else in the late 1970s and early 1980s. I majored in accounting, and while working for a CPA firm in Los Angeles after returning from my tour of duty in Vietnam, I volunteered as a helper on a baseball team at the Christian school where my wife taught. It was one of the few “pre-Christian school movement” schools in America. Soon I realized I received much more enjoyment in my limited time at this school than I did with my work. God was providentially moving me away from the security and stability of the business world to the dynamic and insecure world of Christian education. I resigned from my accounting job and went back to college, where I received one of the first master’s degrees in Christian School Administration offered at Bob Jones University. Thirty-three years have passed since then. I have served as a principal in two Christian schools for a total of ten years and have spent the last twenty-one years as a teacher of education students and as the Vice President for Academic Affairs at Maranatha Baptist Bible College, a college dedicated to preparing men and women to serve God. My three sons spent all of their kindergarten-through-college education in Christian schools. Along the way, I also earned an accredited doctorate in education. I say all of this to assure the reader that although I may say something that sounds critical of the Christian school movement (CSM), Christian schools are really something I love—and love loyally. They have been my life and have had a wonderful influence in the spiritual formation and education of my sons. Any wounds I may inflict are “faithful” and from a “friend.”

The Biblical Basis for a “Christian Education”

The Bible makes it clear that parents are to ensure that their children are educated in ways that prepare them to live God-honoring lives in the future. Proverbs 22:6—“Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it”—teaches the importance of parental discernment in discovering the providential gifts and propensities of a child in order to structure training in those directions. The end result will be an adult educated in what he or she enjoys and where talents lie. Such children when grown will persevere in their vocation.

Ephesians 6:4—“And ye, fathers provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”—instructs parents not to frustrate children through vexing (contradictory or inconsistent) processes but to nourish each one as a tender plant until grown.

Proverbs 19:27—“Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge”—suggests that teaching at cross purposes with Biblical mandates negatively affects one’s willingness to listen and will result in a disdain for education, both good and bad. Parents should never expose their children to instruction that they tell them to ignore. That is dangerous. Children should be encouraged to soak up all they are taught.

In Luke 6:40, Christ declares that “the disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.” Christ here declares that there should be a humble, teachable spirit in students and that as the student reaches maturity and is fully trained, he will be like his teacher. This is simply an axiom clearly stated by Christ. Effective teachers produce students who eventually become like their teachers.

The great Shema in Deuteronomy 6 teaches that parents are to expose children to continual, heart-based, accurate teaching about God.

Colossians 2:3—“In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”—boldly asserts that true wisdom and knowledge are “hidden in” or found in Christ. Correct understanding of truth is contingent on a

full understanding of the knowledge of Christ. Proverbs 29:15 declares “a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.” While this is in the context of corporal punishment, this author believes that a child left to himself *educationally* will also bring shame to the parents. God gives a stern warning to the children of Israel in Jeremiah 9:25–10:2: “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all them which are circumcised [Jews] with the uncircumcised; Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, . . . for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart. . . . Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen.” God knew that unprotected immersion in a heathen culture would result in an evolutionary adoption of their ways; and when that occurred, they would receive judgment from on high.

Christ’s teachings on salt in Matthew 5:13 (“Ye are the salt of the earth”) and in Mark 9:50 (“Have salt in yourselves”) are instructive. We are the salt of the earth. Believers are to be a purifying agent against pollution and are to stimulate or create a thirst for God. In order to be effective, we must engage the world. But two issues or cautions are presented in these passages on salt:

1. In order to give it, you first must have it. Salt is acquired by interacting with believers through fellowship and the Word. Children have little salt. First Corinthians 13:11 and Hebrews 5:14 both teach that spiritual maturity (saltiness) is developmental. It takes time. “Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age.” Children are still acquiring salt in their developmental years; they are not ready or equipped for immersion in a godless system.

2. Salt can lose its savor (effectiveness) through stagnation (a possible consequence of isolation) or corruption (mixing an alien substance with it). Neither isolation from the world nor immersion in the world for children is wise. We all know Christian schools are not islands of holiness. Yet Christian schools provide Christian teachers, godly standards and plenty of opportunities for safe testing and “salt acquisition” during one’s schooling.

These passages and others have been understood by the people of God to require parental responsibility for the education of their children. We can conclude from these passages a universal mission statement for Christian parents—“As stewards of God, we are to train and educate our children as God would. We are to educate our children to become equipped, ready servants of God.” In so doing, we:

1. Recognize that children are more impressionable and teachable when young.
2. Realize that students tend to become like their teachers.
3. Understand that a knowledge of God and Christ are essential for true education.
4. Know that children can be vexed, turned off by education that is contradictory or inconsistent with

that which is learned at home or church.

5. Are warned that cultural transmission tends to take place when children are placed in an environment that is hostile to the Bible. Children will be affected by immersion in a public school environment.

There is relatively little dispute within Bible-believing Christianity about the principles thus far articulated, but the responses to the educational environment have radically differed through the ages, especially in the last sixty years.

The Pre-Christian School Movement

Before 1970 there were few Christian schools in America. Most nongovernmental schools were operated by Catholics, Lutherans, Jews, and upper crust blue-blood preparatory schools. In those years, whenever state or federal aid to private education was proposed, the evangelical community vigorously and successfully opposed it as a way to prop up the very large Catholic parochial school system. In Bible-believing churches almost 100 percent of their young people attended public schools. (I was one such student.) Our churches knew the public schools were flawed. Prayer and Bible reading were virtually nonexistent in the non-South USA. Evolution was already dominating biology textbooks. There was yet no creation science movement.

Bible-believing churches were neither asleep nor passive at this time. Most had active youth groups whose mission was to prepare young believers to resist ungodly teaching and to take an evangelistic, aggressive stand in the midst of the public school. We were taught how to respond when asked to learn to dance in P.E. class, how to argue Biblically in biology class, and most importantly, how to witness and take a godly stand in the public school. The strong kids from our churches emboldened the less courageous among us, and we had Bible clubs at school that banded together for prayer at noon and at other times. In those days, the youth directors in larger churches had very high status. They were well-known regionally. As a high schooler I knew probably fifteen youth directors’ names. Our evangelistic activities could easily be twice the number in the youth group, and skillful youth directors saw many public school children come to Christ. When I went to a Fundamental Christian college, twenty-five public school kids from our youth group were there. Easily half were evangelized through the youth group while in junior high or high school.

Our training meeting occurred every Sunday before the evening service. The meetings were run by the young people themselves, who, with the oversight of the youth director, planned the activities, planned the Sunday service, and did most of the preaching, poems, and skits. We had knock-down, drag-out debates on dancing, drinking, premarital sex, movies, and rock music. All of this was designed to prepare us for the onslaughts we would face in public schools. We were challenged to take our Bibles to school and to have a pocketful of tracts. It was scary but exciting at the same time. When we came together at our Sunday evening youth meeting, it was like a post-battle

debriefing. We shared our successes and failures, received encouragement and instruction from our youth director, and were sent back into battle the next week.

Those days are gone, I believe, forever. I present this history simply to state that our leaders at that time were not asleep—they tried to prepare us for real battle. Our best kids were on the front lines, our less bold were given encouragement, and as some graduated, others stepped up and took leadership. There were many saved. Youth groups had a clear and important mission.

The Rise of the Christian School Movement

There were many casualties as well. As the hostility of the public school environment became more blatant, and as the rise of external permissive behavior and the emergence of the drug and sex revolution of the late 1960s captured the public schools, it became clear that one of the sayings of Dr. Bob Jones Sr. (“Don’t polish the brass rails on a sinking ship”) clearly applied. Bible believers no longer could support the morally bankrupt and spiritually antagonistic public schools.

In the early 1970s the Christian school movement boomed, and for twenty years it was a dynamic, growing movement. Even unsaved parents could see the permissive and liberal-dominated public schools were doing a poor job. In the South mandated racial integration was tolerated until forced bussing was adopted. “White flight” to Christian schools was a factor in their explosive growth (although not as much a factor as the secularist believes). As a principal, I remember when we had waiting lists in March for the following year in every class through eighth grade. Each year we were able to build new classrooms with the surplus generated by full classrooms.

During this time two large Christian school organizations emerged: the American Association of Christian Schools (AACS) under the leadership of Dr. Al Janney and the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) under the leadership of Dr. Paul Kienel. The AACS was dominated by Fundamentalists, and the ACSI was dominated by softer “Evangelicals.” The AACS used an ecclesiastical model, whereby the organization was headed by pastors. Educators were less trusted and became second-tier leaders in a supporting role. The AACS was organized into a loose confederation of state associations. The state association held the purse strings and power, and AACS survives today as a relatively weak and underfunded organization. ACSI, on the other hand, organized according to a corporate model with strong centralized leadership focusing on educational issues and coveted services to member schools. Dues were hefty, but services were significant (credit union, school start-up manuals,



Since the 1990s a consolidation or shakeout has occurred within the CSM.

professional consultants, in-service programs, and many educational resources) and all highly valued. The ACSI remains today as a theologically weak but organizationally powerful organization with 5,500 schools.

Since the 1990s a consolidation or shakeout has occurred within the CSM. AACS schools have declined in both number and size (to less than 1,000). Strong AACS schools tend to be connected to larger churches that can significantly subsidize programs. Most AACS schools charge modest or low tuition and are struggling to maintain enrollment, teacher quality, and adequate employee benefits. ACSI schools have been less adversely affected by economics. They tend to be much

more expensive (charging \$4,000–\$8,000 a year to attend), are less connected with the local churches, are more financially secure, and tend to have stronger educational programs, especially at the high school level.

The Rise of the Home School Movement

In the 1980s a new alternative of Christian education emerged—the home school movement (HSM). This dynamic factor promoted the concept that parents are the best educators of their children, that home schooling is more effective and efficient, and that it is a preferred alternative to mothers leaving home to work in order to send their children to traditional Christian schools. Gurus like Bill Gothard used considerable resources to promote and develop home school materials. Christian colleges like Pensacola Christian College and Bob Jones University began to produce materials and programs to accommodate the home school, including such devices as specialized video or satellite-delivery programs. All of these professionally produced materials gave encouragement and legitimacy to this Christian education alternative. At first, the AACS and ACSI tried to criticize or at least caution people about this alternative, but soon an uneasy truce set in whereby Christian home school families were tolerated and many churches had actually replaced the Christian school with a localized home school network. As the home school movement strengthened, many Christian schools weakened or ceased to exist.

The sheen is now off all of these movements. As we survey the field from a historical perspective, many good and some troubling realities emerge:

1. The church youth group no longer prepares its best young people to engage and thrive in the public school. To do so would imply support for public schools. I don’t know whether it is good or bad, but church youth groups today are fundamentally different in purpose and direction. Frankly, many are deeply fragmented between public, home

school, and Christian school segments. Many youth groups lack purpose and vitality.

2. Many Christian schools are so weak financially that they can no longer afford to support a head of the household teacher with a wage sufficient to support a family. Christian school faculty members are often undereducated compared to their public school counterparts. Many faculty members are second-income women. Math, science, and foreign languages are often marginal or weak at the high school level. Fortunately, there are many exceptions in the larger Christian schools, and if you have one in your community, you are truly blessed.

3. Home schools have an equally checkered track record. While many tout positive anecdotes, citing those who have gone on to prestigious colleges, these are relatively rare. Many homeschooled young people go on to Christian college and become productive Christian citizens and church workers. On the other hand, some home school families develop a type of isolationist pride, no longer wishing their children to be “corrupted” by the youth group. This “denim jumper/bag dress” culture can become critical of those who do not share their ethos. Sometimes these families go full circle, dropping out of the local church to have their own “home church.” Some disdain Christian college, and they choose a trade or internship in a secular vocation, often believing it is better to live at home and go to a secular college than to go to a Christian college or university where dress and norms are different from those distinctives practiced in their homes.

4. Positively, many Christian school and home school families choose to send their children to Fundamental Christian colleges. At Maranatha, over 70 percent of our students come from Christian schools. When the college was founded in 1968, the vast majority of incoming students had graduated from public schools. We love the home school and Christian school kids; they and their public school counterparts (the relatively few who survived) thrive in our Fundamental colleges.

Contemporary Challenges and Recommendations

Today, a youth pastor has some students in a traditional Christian school. Many of his youth activities are either affected or dominated by the Christian school calendar. Public school kids are radically different—their dress, temptations, and exposures have little in common with those of the Christian school kids. The public school kids tend to be from newly saved or weaker Christian homes. Almost all of the “faithful kids” are in the Christian or home school. Homeschooled and public school children are from different planets, and many home school parents refuse to allow their children to attend youth activities if they know a significant public school contingent will be there.

The youth group at a church with a Christian school is challenged with the Christian school kids believing the youth group is one more “chapel,” and they are often poor testimonies to the public school kids. Truly, the contemporary youth group where there are Christian school, home school, and public school contingents is an incredible challenge and beyond the scope of the article. If someone knows of a successful model in bridging these groups, please share it with us.

Recommendations

1. Pastors and parents need to recommit to the Biblical basis for Christian education. This ought to be the goal for every Christian. Parents and pastors need to teach the Biblical mandate.

2. Churches need to cooperate in supporting quality Christian schools. There is far too much silence on this subject. Not every church has the resources to start a Christian school, but they can

support those that are able. They need to encourage parents to send their students to Christian schools operated by another church.

3. Christian school and home school parents need to allow their children to be tested and tried by (a) actively supporting the child’s youth group and (b) allowing their children to engage with unsaved young people, whether it is at a youth group, Christian camp, Christian school, or in an athletic league. Trials and testing are part of any growth and maturity process. The isolation of Christian



Churches need to cooperate in supporting quality Christian schools.

young people from unsaved kids (through a controlled environment) is creating a generation of timid, calloused young people who have little heart for youth evangelism.

4. Christian schools and parents must develop realistic expectations regarding Christian education. Academic instruction from a Christian worldview in a Christian context is a commendable and admirable goal, and it is worthy of pursuit. Discipleship and Christian growth are best accomplished in the voluntary context of local churches and their programs rather than through the coercive context of academic schooling.

5. Quality generates revenue. It is impossible to offer quality education "on the cheap." Loving parents will sacrifice much for excellent Christian education, but who wants to pay \$3,000 for mediocrity? To many parents \$5,000–\$8,000 for authentic educational excellence is a bargain. Many schools charging this amount have long waiting lists. Usually, schools charging \$3000 or less have many empty seats. "Yugo" Christian schools cannot compete and should go out of business just like the car company in the U.S. market.

6. Pastors and youth directors need to win the confidence of parents with a program to unify the youth program. They need to teach home school

parents the importance of engagement with the unsaved and weak Christians. Youth programs need to somehow bring the kids together to reach common goals all parents can support.

7. Maintain or strengthen academic and behavioral expectations. Schools with high standards of behavior and academic achievement are very attractive even to unchurched parents.

Conclusion

As we survey the Christian schooling landscape, we are more convinced than ever that the underlying Scriptural basis and rationale are sound and that good Christian schools are needed more than ever. Churches need, however, some fresh thinking on how to organize, fund, and cooperate in this endeavor to build and promote excellence in our Christian schools. A corollary task is to understand the radically different dynamics of the church youth group. Fundamental Baptist churches now have a multicultural challenge that is unrelated to race. Only a few churches have successfully addressed this issue without abandoning their Christian school. May God give us wisdom to discover His will in these important aspects of the 21st century local church.

John Brock is Vice President for Academic Affairs at Maranatha Baptist Bible College in Watertown, Wisconsin.



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The Blessings of Home Education

The last twenty-five years has witnessed the growth of the home school movement into a stable, organized, and accepted means of education. Home education brings many challenges to a family in terms of time commitment. It demands great investment of energy and life, but the dividends yielded by that investment will pay out for a lifetime.

My wife and I have just completed our fifteenth year homeschooling our children. Assuming that we complete the process with all of our kids, we are just now at the halfway mark. We have also had the privilege of working with our church's homeschool helps ministry for the past eight years.

We have spoken with and counseled dozens of families contemplating home education or struggling with homeschooling issues. We have answered many questions, researched many topics, and learned many things

along the way. Our own attitudes and philosophy toward homeschooling have evolved greatly in these years, and we would like to share with you some of what we have learned.

We are going to be homeschooling this year. What do we do now?

We've seen a wide diversity of circumstances that have brought home education into a family's life. Sometimes financial pressures have put Christian schools out of reach. Sometimes discipline problems have closed other doors. Increasingly more common, however, are parents who just want to be more involved in the lives of their kids, disciplining and teaching them.

Our advice to anyone contemplating home education is to see God's hand in his circumstances. In His sovereignty, He brings to each of us exactly what we need to accom-

plish His good pleasure in our lives. The burdens and circumstances we encounter are specifically designed for us and our children by the God who knows everything, who can do anything, and who loves us with an everlasting love. If God brings home education to your family, the blessings that will come with it are without number. Be faithful and see what God does in you and your family.

So how do I get started?

As with any commission from God, we have a responsibility to be faithful. Sadly, we have seen a few parents fail to understand this principle to the academic neglect of their kids. Most of the homeschooling families that we know, however, are hard working, faithful, and committed to discipling their kids and giving them an education that will enable them to effectively serve the Lord.

Our message to those who are considering home education is to be ready to make a life investment. Minimize other activities and make time to teach your children. Our experience has shown us that regardless of the availability of materials or teacher's manuals, effective home education involves a parent who is willing to set aside other activities and interests in order to tackle the job of teaching.

There are a lot of good curricula and materials available for home education. Take time to find one that will work for you, but don't expect a set of books to do all of the work. Teaching the material will be your job. With patience and dedication to the task, a parent can grow to enjoy it. Some curricula are designed to allow the student to study on his own with little supervision. While judicious use of this kind of self-directed study can be helpful, we would urge you to make time available and teach.

Find a good home school support group in your area—perhaps just a few other families if no organized group exists—and get involved. The camaraderie and fellowship you will enjoy on group field trips and other activities will be an immense help.

What about social development? Won't homeschooling make it difficult for kids to find friends and "fit in"?

Our reply to this legitimate concern is that you will find other outlets for social activity. A home school group, your church, sports programs, and other activities will provide many opportunities for social development.

Remember, however, that you have the ultimate responsibility for the social development of your children. God has given you this wonderful opportunity to develop greater communication and relationship. Take it! We have about twenty or so years to affect our kids' hearts and help set the course of their lives. Take a few steps back and get a broader view of the opportunities God has created for you.

Where will I find the time and energy for all of this?

No direction from God comes without His offer of grace. As with any ministry God gives to us, our primary

There are a lot of good curricula and materials available for home education.

role is one of faithfulness and meekness. That's where God's grace comes into play in our lives. More than likely, you will drop some other time-consuming activities to make time for your home school.

Amazingly, you may find that homeschooling will give you time: less time in the car and more time with your kids. We have heard many parents say that they feel like they have regained their families

after they have begun homeschooling. Your time will only be as complicated as you allow it to be. Our advice would be to eliminate the clutter of your day—especially if you are just starting out.

I have tried homeschooling, and I just can't handle it.

My favorite saying on this subject came to me on a particularly trying day. "Parenting will show you where your limits are, and homeschooling will take you there." There are trials with homeschooling to be sure, but God has promised never to take us beyond the reach of His grace.

Don't make your home school harder than it needs to be. Probably the best advice my wife ever received came during her first year of teaching. We had our first son sitting in a little desk, complete with pencil in pencil groove and books under the seat. The whole ordeal was a fiasco. In desperation, my wife called the publisher of the books we were using and talked with one of their writers who said to her, "How old is he? Five? Oh honey, just put him in your lap and read to him. Enjoy your son and help him love and enjoy learning." What a remarkable transformation. We sort of relaxed and hit our stride. Like I said, that was fifteen years ago. He is now in Bible school studying for the ministry and is on the dean's list.

One of my wife's favorite sayings is "It's never too late to change." Einstein defined insanity as "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of home education is the inherent opportunity to be flexible. Within reason, you have the opportunity to try just about anything you can think of to communicate effectively with your kids. Be creative. Do what it takes to keep his attention—and yours. Take a field trip. Visit a museum. Buy an aquarium. Invite a missionary into your home. You have lots of latitude, so find ways to make your home school work for you and your children.

I'm just not sure that I am qualified to teach my children.

I can understand this concern coming from the parent of a high-school-age young person. I am amused, however, when I hear it from the parent of a first grader. My standard reply is, "What on earth can your six-year-old possibly need to learn this year that you do not already know?" If teaching technique is the concern, then I would wonder who taught him to tie his shoes. Who taught him his colors? Who taught him about Jesus? Oh, Mama, you

can teach. You do it every day. The material might be a little different, but you are probably the most perfectly suited person on the planet to teach your child. And I will guarantee that no other teacher will love your child like you do.

For your high-school-age kids, there are many very helpful programs available: video courses, computer software, and even co-op teaching with others in your area. With a little determination, you will be able to use these resources effectively. Most of the high-school-level video courses come with teacher's materials that will be very helpful to you. Don't be intimidated by high school coursework. You will be surprised to find out that you will catch on to the material much more easily than you did twenty years ago.

What about testing and evaluation?

The primary reason that classrooms are so full of quizzes and tests is that quizzes and tests are the only way for a teacher to keep up with ten or twenty or thirty students. As you work one-on-one with your child, you will know exactly what he is and is not catching. Tests and other written work will be important to document his progress and establish grading records, but you will know how your child is doing just by working with him on a daily basis.

What about my learning-disabled child?

My wife and I have struggled through this one. Several of our kids have been diagnosed with dyslexia. One has both visual and auditory dyslexia. Not only do the letters move around, the words don't sound the same every time. When we had him tested, we were told that he would probably never read past a sixth-grade level. We considered placing him in a school for special needs kids, but were told by the school principal, "The best place for him is in your home. If you can work with him there, he will get the best education available." That was ten years ago. He is now in high school and reading well.

What about getting ready for college?

In spite of volumes of evidence to the contrary, some people still consider home education to be somehow inferior to that of a traditional school. Thanks to years of proven success on the part of homeschooling families, many, if not most, colleges recognize home education to be excellent preparation for college-level course work. I contacted a large Christian university to inquire about their experience with home educated enrollees. I was told that homeschooled kids adjust well to a classroom environment, possess very good communication and independent

study skills, and do well academically in general.

You will need to get familiar with your state's requirements for high school graduation and the entrance requirements of the college your child plans to attend. Make sure that you provide course work that will meet these requirements.

Be sure to maintain records during his high school career. You would do well to find a high school transcript form and use it to keep your child's records. More than likely, you will be able to obtain a sample transcript from the college that your child hopes one day to attend. Include on the transcript any noteworthy accomplishments that are related to his educational career. This may include participation in academic or fine arts competition, sports programs, science fairs, etc. Remember that it is his transcript—not a diploma—that will be important to his entrance to college. His transcript along with the results of his entrance exam will be the criteria upon which his acceptance will be based.

Home education has become such a wonderful blessing to so many families. Lines of communication are established that will last a lifetime. Opportunities for genuine discipleship are innumerable. All of this, however, comes at a price. You will give up some of your ambitions and a great deal of your time for a few years. With faithfulness to the task, however, you will find that you can make no better investment.

Dan and Terrie Zeller are members of Faith Baptist Church in Taylors, South Carolina. They have been involved with their church's Home School Helps Ministry since 1997.



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Starting a Christian School

The usual response to my announcement, “We’ve started a Christian school,” is something like, “You must be totally insane.” If I had a nickel for every time I’ve heard that, I could probably afford to pay our teacher! Very few church planters also set out to start a Christian school. The effort it takes to begin a new church is so great that starting a Christian school seems too daunting. Beginning a new church takes an enormous commitment of financial and personal resources, and few church planters believe they have the support necessary to begin a school at the same time. It may also be that the ease of homeschooling or of having another good church school nearby has cooled the desire of pastors to delve into Christian education.

Our situation at College Park Baptist Church is different. The other good churches in our area do not have Christian schools. The independent Christian schools have become so ecumenical that I can’t recommend them in good conscience. I also believe that the choice of most New Evangelicals to infiltrate the public school system with their children and expose them to large doses of humanism is not a Biblical option. Our only choice here was either to mimic most new churches and become a “homeschooling church” or to begin a Christian school.

My personal belief is that we are making a mistake in Fundamentalism to put all our eggs in the homeschooling basket. While there are many great homeschooling families in Fundamental churches, and more than a few good pastors who are reading this column have chosen to homeschool, not every Christian family is able to do this. Forcing these families to choose either an ecumenical Christian school or public education is a mistake.

Beginning a new Christian school is a faith decision. The question for us was not, “Does God want a Christian school in our church?” The question was not, “Do we have the resources to accomplish this task successfully?” The overriding question was, “Do we have enough faith to believe that God will do what He promises?” This made the decision a bit easier for us, since beginning a new church had already required a serious faith commitment. Choosing to trust God allowed us to put the burden on Him. If God wanted us to have a church school, He would have to provide.

God did. As He always does, God gives us what we need when we need it. Almost immediately we had a teacher. God provided right out of our fledgling congregation a teacher/administrator who had two years of teaching experience and a master’s degree in special education. Our facility, another miraculous provision of God, was

just right for a small school. We began to advertise, and within a few months we had most of our students. God also gave us the privilege to minister to two students with a mild form of autism. Since our teacher has a burden for special needs children, we found that starting out with an integrated classroom was not much more difficult than merely starting out. No other Christian school in our area even considered enrolling them. The two moms commented to our teacher, “You all are angels.” Not every Christian school can provide an integrated classroom for special needs children, but more Christian schools certainly could.

Philosophically, there are myriad ways to organize a Christian school. We have taken the approach that our school is an extension of our church, not separate or distinct from it. The mission of our church drives our school ministry. Our teachers are on our church staff. They are members of our congregation. We will accept students from unsaved families on a limited basis. Many schools won’t do that, and that’s fine. That is a decision each pastor must make. But we feel that this is an opportunity to fulfill Christ’s mission to seek and to save. Our primary goal is not evangelistic, but evangelism does factor into our decision-making process. We do require that the parents sign our doctrinal statement, agreeing with us that we may train their children in the Bible. It occurred to me that it is a good deal if we can get parents to pay us to proselytize their children!

Beginning a new Christian school does not mean that your school must graduate ten high school seniors in the first year. Our goal, as many other schools before us, is to add one grade every year. That takes some of the pressure off us for the first few years. Instead of trying to eat the whole apple at once, we just take little bites.

Our new school is facing many challenges. We need more space immediately. We are going to need more teachers for next year. We need to raise extra funds because of the special needs children. We need to add a K4 program. But don’t we serve a big God? I look forward to the challenges because they keep driving me to my knees in prayer and keep me rejoicing with others about answers to those prayers. Our Christian school is no burden—it is an opportunity to prove God faithful. If He wants Park Christian Academy to survive, that is His decision. We gladly leave that to Him.

Matthew and Becky Walker planted College Park Baptist Church in Raleigh/Durham North Carolina in 2003. Park Christian Academy is affiliated with the AACS and opened this fall with a combination K5/1st grade class. Matt can be reached at pastor@collegeparkministries.org.

How Bad Can It Be?

A Look at Today's Secular College Campus

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to visit the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? Have you ever considered what Judges-era Israel must have been like—what kind of chaos would result if every man did what was right in his own eyes? This fall, you can find out. It's as easy as enrolling in your local secular college or university. Worse still, you could send your college-age son or daughter to experience this kind of amoral, anarchical lifestyle firsthand.

After having spent the much of the past two months at the state university where my wife teaches and attends summer school, I find myself grappling for an adequate illustration of the overwhelming immorality of the secular college environment. It is not sensationalism but stark reality that suggests parallels between today's college campuses and the lowest depths of human depravity in history.

Of course, there are plenty of mind-numbing statistics available that serve to illustrate just how dangerous our campuses have become. Citing several recent studies, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism estimates that more than 600,000 students aged 18 to 24 are assaulted each year by another student who has been drinking.¹ More than 70,000 students a year become victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape.² According to the U.S. Department of Education, approximately 71% of forcible sex offenses on college campuses in 2003 occurred in residence halls.³ The federally-funded Core Institute of Southern Illinois University reports that 84.7% of college students use alcohol.⁴ A 1995 study of college students in Minnesota revealed that 92% of male students and 85% of female students had participated in some form of gambling during the previous year.⁵ According an article entitled "Risky Business: Misperceived Norms of Sexual Behavior among College Students," 67% of college students surveyed had participated in sexual intercourse during the last year, and 51% had participated in sexual intercourse within the last thirty days.⁶

But cold statistics fail to describe how difficult it can be for a Christian young person to withstand the intangible influences of the secular college atmosphere. I recently discussed this problem with a Christian professor at a state university. This professor has earned a four-year degree from a Christian college and a master's degree from a state university and is now a doctoral student and teacher at another state university. We spoke about the difficulty of adequately describing the moral dangers of a secular college to someone who has spent little or no time on campus.

Is today's secular college campus similar to anything else we know of in history or in Scripture?

"Every man does what is right in his own eyes. There's no accountability; no rules; no regulations. You can go to bed whenever you like. You don't have to go to class if you don't want to. A girl can have a guy sleep overnight in her room if she wants."

For the benefit of Christian parents who have college-age young people, how would you describe the atmosphere on campus?

"Sin-filled. I've had to learn to deal with things here that I was never prepared for. I've had my students cuss me out. I've had to deal with students who are on drugs or who come to class hung over. I hear the Lord's name taken in vain every day. I also have to deal with fellow believers who do not demonstrate their faith in any way."

Some Christian parents choose to send their children to secular colleges. In your opinion, are they are not aware of the dangers, or do they think that there are advantages that outweigh the dangers?

"Both. I've had parents tell me, 'I had no idea it was like this. It wasn't like this when I was in college.' But some parents say, 'State school is cheaper; it's closer to home. They have majors that Christian schools don't have.'"

But you've been to state schools and you turned out

all right. Why not my child?

"I didn't start out in a secular university. I had thirteen years of training at a strong Christian school and went four years to a Christian college before going on to a state school. Most eighteen-year-olds are not mature enough to debate professors with PhDs or understand their hidden agendas. And I'm here because of necessity, not convenience. God has called me to a future ministry, and this is where I can get the tools for that future ministry. Also, I have two very supportive parents who understand what I am facing here. If it weren't for them, I probably couldn't make it. And there are about two dozen people who pray for me on a daily basis—that I would stand strong and not be affected by the atmosphere here."

Personal experience is more convincing than reams of studies and surveys. My teacher friend went on to tell me unsettling stories of previous experiences in the secular college setting—of a professor who openly and aggressively ridiculed the blood of Christ in the classroom—of two teachers who discussed in a school elevator how to embarrass and demean Christian students—and concluded by asking to remain anonymous because of possible repercussions in the academic "system." I felt as if I was speaking to a refugee from North Korea or some other area of intense spiritual warfare. But most Christians would not willingly enter a place like North Korea. They certainly would not choose to send their children to live there for four years. So how should a Christian parent think when faced with the option of sending his child to a secular college?

First of all, make decisions of conviction rather than convenience. State schools can be less expensive than some Christian colleges, but your child's financial welfare is not as important as his spiritual welfare. Community colleges and state universities are often closer to home than Christian colleges, but Christ-centered college education is worth the travel and inconvenience. Your children are your most valuable possession and a stewardship entrusted to you by God. How far is too far to travel to protect their purity? Your local secular college may offer more courses of study than the average Christian college. Unfortunately, your child will also have ample opportunity to learn things you never wanted him to learn—both inside and outside the classroom walls.

Second, your college-age child should have confidence that God has called him to whatever school he attends. Your child may find that, in preparation for his future ministry, he needs training that can be found only at a secular institution. Whether he attends a Christian college or a secular college, confidence in the leadership of the Lord will help carry a young person through the difficulties and strain of his college career. Even in a Christian school, the new environment, financial pressures, and academic load are too much of a burden for some students to bear. Many Christian college students drop out of school before completing even their first semester. To the basic challenges of college, a secular campus adds the pressure of relentless temptation and a pervasive humanistic anti-Christ philosophy. On a secular college campus, the danger of spiritual failure is far greater than

the danger of academic failure. A Christian young person needs to gain confidence that he is in the will of God and that God's power rests on his life before even attempting to face these spiritual challenges. Parents as well should seek confidence in that call, and not be quick to send their children into the front lines of spiritual conflict.

Finally, prepare your child for life at a secular college as if you were preparing him for the mission field. Even if the Lord grants confidence that secular college training is part of His plan, that confidence does not eliminate the need to prepare for the spiritual battle that lies ahead. Some would say that the secular college that they attend is their mission field. It is an opportunity for a believer to take a stand for Christ and make a difference. While there is no denying that a secular college campus is a mission field with numerous opportunities for ministry, what missionary would be foolish enough to head straight to one of the most difficult mission fields on earth fresh from high school with no training for the challenges that he will face? A Christian young person should seriously consider the possibility of two or four years of training at a sound Fundamental Bible college prior to enrolling at a secular college. This training will mature his faith, ground him in God's Word, protect him from fierce spiritual attacks, and give him a solid foundation upon which to stand for Christ.

By God's grace, even Sodom and Gomorrah can be fruitful mission field. However, the dangers of secular college education are dramatic. Though not always visible, the attacks on faith and morality are real. God is faithful to equip and protect believers in the midst of spiritual warfare, but parents should think soberly about sending their children into harm's way.

Stephen Zempel serves on the administrative staff of Falls Baptist Church and Baptist College of Ministry in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin.

¹"Facts About College Drinking: Problems," National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Online: <http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/Media/factsheetproblems.aspx>.

²Ibid.

³Nine hundred forty-two of 1,333 reported forcible sex offenses as reported in "Summary Campus Crime and Security Statistics—Criminal Offenses," U.S. Department of Education. Online: <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/crime/criminaloffenses/index.html>.

⁴"The . . . statistics are drawn from a sample of 68,000 undergraduate students from about 133 colleges in the United States. These colleges conducted Core Survey during 2004. All institutions used methods to insure a random and representative sample of their respective student bodies." "Core Alcohol and Drug Survey," Core Institute. Online: http://www.siu.edu/departments/coreinst/public_html/results.htm.

⁵Ken Winters, "Gambling and College Students," Gambling Problems Resource Center, Minnesota Institute of Public Health. Online: http://www.miph.org/gambling/gmb_collegestud.html.

⁶Joseph Lynch, Rebecca Mowrey, Gordon Nesbitt, and Daniel F. O'Neill, *National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Journal*, Volume 42, Issue 1. Online: <http://publications.naspa.org/naspajournal/vol42/iss1/art2/>.

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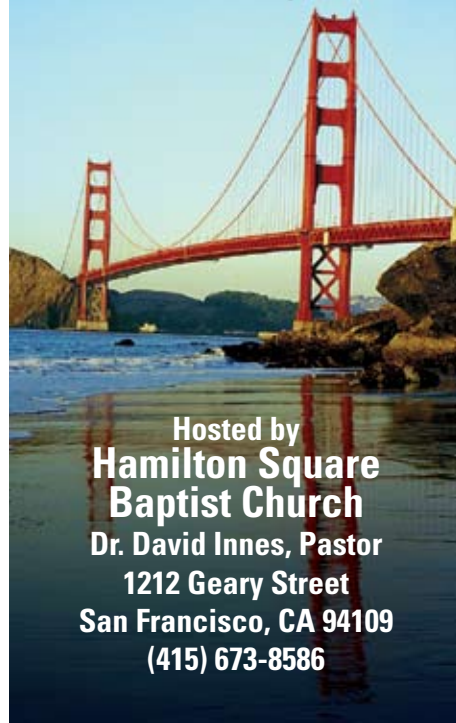
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SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

First Partaker

Richard Baxter: Pastor, Preacher, Writer

Richard Baxter stands out from among his peers as a singular example of the combination of pastor, preacher, and writer. He set a high standard in all of those endeavors. A brief historical review of the circumstances that influenced Baxter's ministry will be helpful. Richard Baxter was born November 12, 1615, in the village Rowton. The culture still felt the lingering influence of Queen Elizabeth, that powerful and very religious ruler of England who reigned until 1603. Though she was tenaciously religious, she allowed little expression of religious freedom in her kingdom. When she took the throne, Elizabeth promised to prevent the growth of the papacy. But she also planned to root out Protestantism and force the uniformity of religion under the Church of England (which ironically was Protestant).

Nevertheless, God's sovereign hand directed the nation to prepare it for the ministry of men like Baxter. A new era began in England in 1603 when Queen Elizabeth I died and James I came to the throne. At the beginning of that era, the Church seemed to thrive under its newfound freedoms and because of the pressures aggressive Protestants exerted on the king. However, in those first decades of the seventeenth century, the clergy was characterized by covetousness, sloth, dishonesty, and outright immorality. In his autobiography, Baxter commented on the despicable condition of the clergy in his hometown when he was a boy.

By the time James I took the throne, there were no hard and fast rules governing who was allowed to minister in Church of England parishes. It was simply

a matter of expediency, and that situation allowed almost anyone to lead a local church if he would take the Oath of Supremacy and could read the *Book of Common Prayer*. As a result, the influence of the Episcopacy grew rapidly. The episcopal form of church government was not equated with the papal powers of Rome, but neither did it have the uncontrollable nature of the Independents or Puritans. Against the backdrop of the strong state Church, and of pulpits and parishes occupied by men of dubious character, the Puritans (or Nonconformists, as they were commonly known) stood out in vivid contrast as men of integrity who held God's Word in high esteem. Though Elizabeth had attempted to suppress this fledgling movement, James's policies provided enough freedom for the devout servants of God to fulfill their respective ministries. Richard Baxter was born into this setting.

Shortly before Baxter's birth, his father (also Richard Baxter) experienced a remarkable change in his life that resulted in his much reading of the Bible and his support of those men who were attempting to raise the standard of ministry in England. Some even called the man a Puritan. When Richard was fifteen years old, his parents placed him under the instruction of Mr. John Owen, master of the Donnington Free School in the parish of Wroxeter. Here Richard proved to be a diligent student and a quick learner. Also at the age of fifteen, Richard Baxter was born again. Two books influenced him greatly toward conversion. One was Edmund Bunny's book titled *Bunny's Resolution* and the other was *The Bruised Reed*, a study of Jesus Christ written by the Puritan Richard Sibbes.

When Baxter came of age, he desired to enter one of the universities, where he intended to continue his studies. That desire was never fulfilled. He sat under the teaching of a few private tutors but never experienced the university training for which he longed. Baxter returned home in 1634 to care for his dying

"The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits"
(2 Tim. 2:6)

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mother, who passed away in May 1635. During the three or four years that Baxter was at home working for his father, he devoted himself to diligent study, poring over the works of Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Durandus, and Ockham. Also during these years, Richard's health began to fail—a trial he would endure as long as he lived. He maintained strenuous exercise, a strict diet, and adopted habits to strengthen his weak constitution. On March 9, 1640, the Church of England authorities invited Baxter to replace the vicar of Kidderminster, whom they had removed by petition because he was negligent in his duties. The vicar's negligence was obvious to everyone in Kidderminster in that he preached only once each quarter, was often found drunk, and was essentially ignorant of God's Word. The vicar defended his position and requested that the Church create a new position for Baxter in the parish called *preacher*. The council conceded to the vicar's request, and Baxter accepted the appointment to this position of preacher in Kidderminster, where he would minister for a total of sixteen years.

Baxter was a living paradox: He was “a man in perpetual pain whose every day began with a hymn of praise.” He lived in a day when the minister, according to popular opinion, occupied a professional position much like that of a doctor or lawyer. However, Baxter used his position as minister in the parish as an opportunity to bring everyone in the community into conformity with God’s Word.

With the death of Cromwell in 1658, English politics and religion took a new direction under the reign of King Charles II (Stuart). He offered pardon to all of his enemies, if Parliament would approve such pardons. During the early years of the reign of Charles II, Baxter exerted much influence at court and was often in the presence of King Charles himself. But before too many years had passed, Charles II began to reveal his true heart. Religiously, he favored the Roman Catholics (as the Stuart family was wont to do), and politically he introduced one of the most corrupt reigns in English history. The devout, godly Richard Baxter was certainly out of place in the court of King Charles II. It was not long before he, too, was followed by spies, persecuted, and even arrested and thrown into prison. The king's restrictions on the free exercise of religion entrenched Richard Baxter and his fellow servants of God more

deeply in nonconformity. Along with Baxter, hundreds of other nonconformists suffered removal from churches and homes, exile, harassment, arrest, imprisonment, and death. Some of the great names of Church history are listed as the fellow soldiers of men like Baxter and Bunyan. Between 1661 and 1667 Charles II and the powerful House of Commons were determined to destroy all resistance from dissenters of any and all parties. It was a time of intense trouble and persecution for all ministers who refused to conform to Commons' demands. Some church historians estimate that sixty thousand persons suffered fines, bonds, imprisonment, transportation, or death during this time of persecution. Possibly as many as five thousand Christians died in prison.

God had given Richard Baxter a wonderful wife of moral character and spiritual beauty to help him through the difficult testings that hounded him throughout the 1660s. In July 1663, he moved from London to the nearby country village of Acton, because life in the city was disrupting his study and writing. There his preaching drew large crowds, which worried a jealous vicar in nearby Windsor who managed to have Baxter arrested and imprisoned. The charge was dismissed on technicalities. For fear of being rearrested, Baxter moved to Totteridge, where he lived from 1665 to 1670 in miserable health. The persecution against Puritans, other Nonconformists, and Independents intensified in 1673, forcing Baxter to move to Bloomsbury. The move did not conceal this preacher of righteousness from the authorities, and they still constantly harassed him, spied upon him, and betrayed him. During those difficult years, Baxter was forced to move from place to place, buying up the scant opportunities to preach God's Word. The continual dogging by informants and constables was difficult for Baxter to handle. But he faced the most difficult blow when his beloved Margaret passed away on June 14, 1681. She had been a tremendous help to his ministry, facing much hardship herself, and now he was all alone. In the fall of that same year, Baxter came down with a serious illness that nearly killed him. Even in the midst of such sickness, the officers of the state came to his house, arrested him for daring to come within five miles of an incorporated town, and fined him £190 for preaching. As they were dragging the weak man to prison, Baxter's doctor apprehended them and protested their actions, claiming that they would kill him if they put him in jail. The king ordered the officers to let Baxter die in his bed. He recovered, but in 1684 the justices sent warrants to arrest him again.

God finally brought an end to King Charles II. He died in February of 1685, having been received into the Roman Catholic Church. James II replaced Charles II on the throne, and, unlike Charles, who wavered between the influence of the Presbyterians and Roman Catholics, James was a declared Roman Catholic. He only intensified the persecution against Baxter and his

type. It is interesting that Baxter's autobiography ends abruptly in January 1685, one month before the death of Charles II and just before the intensified persecution under James. The ushering in of King James II marked the beginning of Baxter's last days for doing God's ministry on this earth. During the last four years of his life, he wrote prolifically. He continued to suffer ill health during this time, which limited his preaching opportunities, but it did not stop his pen. This suffering saint of God gave the best that he had to his Master until the very end. He died on December 8, 1691, and was buried at Christ Church in London beside his mother and his beloved wife, Margaret.

Baxter the Pastor

G. D. Boyle commented on the imprint Richard Baxter left on his world in the opening words of his book about Baxter's life:

There is no figure among the eminent Englishmen of the seventeenth century more interesting than Richard Baxter. To some he appears to occupy the foremost position in the ranks of Puritan divines. To others he seems to recall many of the characteristics of the great schoolmen of the Middle Ages. Whatever opinions may be held as to the part he played in the political struggles of his time, his conduct as a pastor and his renown as the author of the best-known devotional and hortatory works in the English language have secured for him a lasting place in the religious annals of England.¹

Such accolades are well-deserved, yet Baxter was not perfect. Like modern pastors, Baxter did not always display wisdom. Boyle's foregoing observation hinted that Baxter stumbled in his political maneuvering (a trait that was especially obvious in his resistance of Cromwell). Also, some of his daily health habits appear to be bizarre in light of the modern world's greater knowledge of medicine and health issues. He believed it was best to stay in a sweat, and once swallowed a gold bullet to alleviate stomach problems. While some of Baxter's habits and practices appear quite odd to the modern mind, one must be gracious enough to allow Baxter to live in his culture. It was a day when many of the brightest minds agreed with his eccentric actions.

Baxter was a living paradox: He was "a man in perpetual pain whose every day began with a hymn of praise."² He lived in a day when the minister, according to popular opinion, occupied a professional position much like that of a doctor or lawyer. However, Baxter used his position as minister in the parish as an opportunity to bring everyone in the community into conformity with God's Word. Other ministers occupied themselves with social events where they sought to advance their church and their person in the eyes of the people. Baxter preferred to spend much of his time catechizing the eight hundred families of Kidderminster, where the church had placed him to pastor. That unflinching zeal was not always appreciated, as J. I. Packer points out in

the introduction to *The Reformed Pastor*:

Though always respected for his godliness and pastoral prowess, and always seeking doctrinal and ecclesiastical peace, his combative, judgmental, pedagogic way of proceeding with his peers made failure a foregone conclusion every time.³

But was he a failure? Packer also concludes, "As a pastor, however, Baxter was incomparable."⁴ Fifty years after Baxter's death, George Whitefield visited Kidderminster, where this servant of God had diligently exercised his pastoral gift for sixteen years, and reported that he was refreshed to discover that the influence of Baxter's doctrine, works, and discipline remained to that day. This pastor of the parish set the standard for pastoral work among his peers. He was a motivator of pastors. Many of his peers adopted Baxter's methods of visiting and catechizing. His pastoral model is still a fitting standard for modern pastors.

Baxter the Preacher

While Baxter set the standard in pastoral labors, history also remembers him as one of the great pulpiteers of seventeenth-century England. Baxter's best years of pulpit ministry came as a result of Cromwell's thrusting himself into the position of Protector of the State. Under Cromwell's influence, Protestant pulpits were thriving while being filled with Puritans, Presbyterians, Independents, and various forms of Baptists. Baxter's preaching during those years of freedom has gained the attention of churchmen throughout the centuries. A modern author observed, "Never in the history of England were times more chaotic than during the lifetime of Richard Baxter. Yet in spite of war, division, persecution, and ill health, Baxter became one of history's most memorable preachers."⁵

His preaching was strong and evangelical. Baxter believed that the power of the gospel had to bring about change in the hearts of those who heard it. He preached that gospel with a fervency that revealed his great faith in its power. Yet, of his fervency, he concluded, "I was so foolish to think that I had so much to say of such convincing force for the truth that men could scarcely be able to withstand it."⁶ Baxter owned zeal similar to that expressed by Wesley or Whitefield, but at the same time he was a scholarly man who possessed great reasoning ability. He carefully formed each word of his sermon to give it the most moving expression possible and took great pains in preparing his deliveries so that they would impact the hearer with convicting power. He concluded, "In the study of our sermons we are too negligent. We must study how to convince and *get within men*, and how to bring each truth to the quick, and not leave all this to our extemporary promptitude."⁷ He was a serious speaker, a man of unmistakable sincerity, whose voice carried the certainty of eternity in every sermon. Baxter conveyed this sincerity in spite of the fact that he read his sermons from manuscripts. While reading from manu-

scripts was a common practice for most of the preachers in his day, Baxter was one of the first preachers to practice a more conversational style of preaching.

Baxter's zeal and sincerity were rooted in his firm belief that the Scripture is the absolute authority of God. Since it is authoritative, it must be understood and believed and, therefore, it must be communicated. These were the convictions formed by a man who had no university training but was self-educated. Reading widely, he became more knowledgeable than many of his peers who were privileged to have a formal education. Baxter's natural abilities coupled with his disciplined labor produced a very effective preacher. He possessed a voice that was easy to listen to and that naturally convinced the hearer of his sincerity. Baxter honed all of his God-given abilities to razor sharpness in order to glorify God through the preaching of His Word. The man was an exemplary pastor, but he was also one of the great preachers in the seventeenth century. Richard Baxter is an admirable model for the modern pastor/preacher.

Baxter the Writer

Baxter is famous as a pastor and as a preacher, but he is known best as one of the greatest Christian writers in history. He spent much of the time between 1662 and his death in 1691 writing. A prolific writer, he produced many well-known books, pamphlets, essays, and letters, as well as many works that are no longer extant. Baxter himself referred to several of the lost works in his own writings. Estimates on the exact number of Baxter's publications vary. Packer indicates in his Introduction to Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor* that Baxter published at least 131 works in his lifetime, but many of these writings have disappeared. Albert Currier, in *Nine Great Preachers*, states that the number of published works exceeded 170 volumes. Among some of the more famous works Baxter produced are *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (published in 1650 as *The Saints' Rest* as his first major work, though, according to Baxter's autobiography, he did not consider this a major writing from the outset); *The Reformed Pastor* (originally a series of lectures sent to the Worcestershire Association Meeting in 1656 when he became too sick to preach); *A Call to the Unconverted* (1658); *A Christian Directory* (a massive index addressing every conceivable issue in the Christian's life, published in 1673); and the *Breviate of the Life of Mrs. Margaret Baxter* (a heart-touching tribute to his young wife, Margaret, which he wrote after her death in 1681).

Baxter's writings continue to exert great influence on people who desire to walk more closely with God and to be zealous in His labors. For example, *The Reformed*

Pastor is considered by Henry Durant and Phillip Doddridge to be one of the most notable works among the religious literature of the world. Henry Durant, founder of Wellesley College, was so moved by the book that he bought as many copies as he could find and distributed them among the ministers of Massachusetts, hoping that it would have the same effect on them as it did on him. Dr. Phillip Doddridge called the book "a most extra-ordinary performance."

Nothing would have a greater tendency to awaken the spirit of a minister to that zeal in his work, for want of which many good men are but shadows of what by the blessing of God they might be if the maxims and measures laid down in this incomparable treatise were strenuously pursued.⁸

Baxter was capable of expressing the full orb of human pathos in his writing as well as in his preaching. Sometimes his zeal carried him too far and drove him to write about controversial issues which he later regretted. In spite of the controversial statements that Baxter included in some of his writings, he is still considered by friend and foe alike to be one of the greatest writers in Christian history.⁹ He was brilliant, yet he wrote with words that most readers find easy to read and comprehend. Some students agree that Richard Baxter's writings are the easiest of all Puritan writings to read and understand.

Richard Baxter was a model pastor, a model preacher, and a model writer. He serves well as a standard for the modern pastor/preacher/writer. Often a man becomes a standard-setter in only one of these three areas, but Baxter has illustrated by his life that, by God's help, a man can shepherd people effectively, preach regularly with knowledge and zeal, and still have sufficient time to produce written works that have lasting value.

Endnotes

¹George David Boyle, *Men Worth Remembering* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1883), 1.

²Florence Higham, *Faith of Our Fathers* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1939), 91.

³J. I. Packer, introduction to *The Reformed Pastor*, by Richard Baxter (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997 reprint), 10.


⁴*Ibid.*, 11.

⁵Clyde E. Fant Jr. and William M. Pinson Jr., *20 Centuries of Great Preaching*, Vol. 3, *Wesley to Finney* (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1971), 231.

⁶Albert H. Currier, *Nine Great Preachers* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1912), 125.

⁷Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997 reprint), 70.

⁸Currier, 129-30.

⁹William Orme, Robert Boyle, Benjamin Fawcett, and Albert Currier indicate in their works that Baxter left an indelible mark on English church history and even on English literature in the broadest sense. 

David Whitcomb, senior pastor of Community Baptist Church in Taylors, South Carolina, is guest contributor in this issue for Dr. Mark Minnick.

Bring . . . the Books

William Borden—God's Man Through and Through

Posterity has preserved the effect of a memorial service a century ago:

"Second Chronicles 16:9 has been in my mind ever since Friday evening. God is ever intently looking for those whose hearts are right toward Him, that in and through them He may 'show himself strong.' And oh, the joy of His heart when He finds such a one!" As William grew in knowledge of God, he lived up to that knowledge; as he learned more of God's will, he obeyed that will. He followed the Lord wholly. As with absorbing interest the great company listened to what God had wrought, one could not but feel that the fire of a holy purpose was lighted in the hearts of some of those young men and women.


William Whiting Borden was a wealthy young American who had given away most of his large inheritance as the heir of the Borden dairy estate. He dedicated himself instead to the work of the gospel as a missionary to the Muslim communities in China. His name and story are still familiar to many. Though his life and service to Christ were cut short (he died at the age of twenty-five), his story continues to stimulate others to Christian ministry. Perhaps the most familiar account of his life is Mrs. Howard Taylor's *Borden of Yale*. It is still in print and can be obtained from Bethany House Publishers in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The book is well written and moves the reader quickly to the pertinent spiritual points of Borden's life. It is brief enough to be read in an afternoon but thorough enough to be remembered for a lifetime.

Born November 1, 1887, Borden was reared in Chicago by Christian parents. Even as a very young boy, William had an unusual interest in God's Word and came to Christ at an early age. After finishing his initial education, Borden embarked on a journey around the world. Stirred by the pervasive spiritual darkness in places such as Japan and China, he wrote to his mother that God had called him to give his life to reach the lost in foreign lands. Upon returning to America, Borden enrolled at Yale in the fall of 1905. During his student years he threw himself into his studies, college life, and spiritual service to others. He was an excellent student, an above-average athlete, and was involved in starting both a student prayer meeting and a rescue mission for the homeless. (After his death many of his classmates

from Yale expressed gratitude for the impact his life made on theirs.) After graduating from Yale, Borden was accepted at Princeton Seminary where he began preparing in earnest to go abroad and reach the Muslims in China with the gos-

pel. He was accepted as a candidate by the China Inland Mission during his second year at Princeton. During and immediately after his seminary years, William took every opportunity to speak on behalf of his beloved Student Volunteer Movement and influenced many to give themselves to foreign missions.

In 1913 Borden departed for Cairo, Egypt, where he planned to study Arabic in order to better reach the Muslims he was hoping to win in China. He took up residence at the local YMCA and immediately sought out a Bible study for Muslim foreigners from all over the world. Imagine his joy at meeting a student from the very province in China he was hoping to reach! His enthusiasm and his commitment to the cause of Christ were contagious. He labored tirelessly to advance the cause of Christ in Egypt while he prepared to go to China. However, in April of 1913, just months after arriving at Cairo, he contracted a severe case of spinal meningitis and within weeks went home to be with Christ. His mother and family arrived in Cairo hours after his death and were able to be in attendance with the small group that met for his funeral. Borden committed all his wealth to the cause of Christ, sparing no reserves for himself. He set his face toward China and there was no turning back. It is certain that upon hearing Christ's "Well done," Borden had no regrets for how he had invested his life and wealth.

As I finished the final page, I found myself stirred by the example of a young man whom I never had the opportunity to meet or hear. Yet the story of his life and joyful sacrifice for Christ communicated a passion and commitment that convicted me almost a century after his death. Nor was my response unique. Others have been deeply stirred for Christ by the story of his life in general and by its recounting in this book in particular. Ken Taylor's introduction provides an apt conclusion: "God may not use this particular book to help you in the same way it helped me, but by whatever means, I pray that you will come to the same conclusion I did, that the path of God is the only path for you." 

*"... when
thou comest,
bring with thee
... the books"
(2 Tim. 4:13)*

Dr. Sam Horn is Executive Vice President of Northland Baptist Bible College in Dunbar, Wisconsin.

What rewards shall we offer in order to encourage spiritual conduct? Jesus implies an answer to this question in the middle section of the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 6. In this section of the Sermon, Jesus contrasts true religion with the religion of the hypocrites. He insists that religious observances are the merest hypocrisy unless they are performed from the proper motivations.

Jesus deals with three specific spiritual exercises: giving (1–4), prayer (5–15), and fasting (16–18). He says that the hypocrites perform these exercises from a flawed motive: “that they may have glory of men” (2), “that they may be seen of men” (5), and “that they may appear unto men” (16). While these hypocrites give the impression that they are serving God, they are really driven by a desire for human recognition.

Jesus solemnly affirms that “they have their reward” (2, 5, 16), a commercial expression that used to appear on mercantile receipts. It means to be “paid in full”—no other compensation can be expected. In this context, it indicates that the hypocrites have been given everything that they are going to get. They bargain for human recognition; therefore, they forfeit the praise that they might have gained from God.

In contrast, Jesus tells His followers that they must perform their exercises before God who “seeth in secret” (4, 6, 18). This does not mean that all spiritual exercises must be performed absolutely in private—otherwise, how could a church pray together? It does, however, address the issue of motivation. Even if spiritual exercises must be completed where they are going to be seen by other people, the motivation must never arise from a thirst for human praise or recognition. They are to be executed with a desire for God’s approval alone. God sees even secret exercises, and He will reward them openly.

Jesus’ teaching obviously cannot be limited to giving, prayer, and fasting. He cites these as examples, but the principle applies equally to other religious exercises. Memorizing the Scriptures, meditating, witnessing of Christ’s saving work, expounding the Biblical text, and all other spiritual practices must be motivated by a yearning for God and His glory rather than by a desire for human praise.

Jesus then exhorts His audience to “lay up . . . treasures in heaven” (19–23). This introduces the topic of money, but Jesus is not changing the subject. People who pursue recognition and people who pursue money are much alike. Both desire a thing that has no eternal substance, and both stand to


suffer infinite loss (any degree of beatitude lost for eternity equals infinite loss). Earthly treasures of all sorts are going to be destroyed. Earthly wealth and recognitions cannot be taken into eternity. Only those treasures that are stored in heaven will yield eternal satisfaction.

One’s treasure and one’s heart dwell in the same place (21). A person whose investments are in this world will have a heart that is focused upon and controlled by this-worldly concerns. People who lay up treasures in Heaven will have hearts that are controlled by heavenly concerns. If one’s eyes are fixed in the wrong direction, the whole person will be misled (22, 23).

Jesus now gets to the heart of the matter: “No man can serve two masters” (24). Each master demands absolute loyalty. No one can serve both God and money. To serve money is to reject God. The worship of mammon is idolatry.

Jesus was talking to religious people. Some of them were also greedy people. He intended to force them to choose, because some of them evidently thought that they could serve God in order to get money (for example, the people who sold animals and exchanged coins at the temple). God, however, refuses to be used as a means to an end. He insists upon being the goal and end of our lives, the center from which all other things derive their value. To worship God as a means to gaining money is not to worship God at all. It is simply another way of serving money, with the difference that the idolater is now attempting to force the True and Living God into serving the idol.

Jesus’ lesson is not simply about money, however. It also links to His discussion of spiritual exercises in the first part of the chapter. If people perform religious exercises in order to gain human praise, then they are not worshipping the True and Living God. Their god is really the idol of Recognition, and because they seek recognition they are paid in full. God refuses to allow humans to use Him as an instrument to make themselves impressive. Worship of God must be motivated by love of God and a desire for His glory, or else it is really the worship of an idol.

We return to the question with which we began. What rewards shall we offer in order to encourage spiritual conduct? The answer to this question seems obvious. We must not worship idols and we must not teach others to do so. Serving God in order to gain human recognition is idolatry. Does it not follow that we create idolaters if we motivate people to serve God by offering them human recognition? For Fundamentalists, too, can and sometimes do worship idols. 

*“Rightly
dividing
the Word
of Truth”
(2 Tim. 2:15)*

Windows

TRUE HUMILITY: The Indispensable Virtue

If you could infuse just one overarching quality into the members of your church congregation, what would it be? I suggest that the foundational beatitude of *humility* would be the best choice. Andrew Murray once said that “pride and humility are the two master powers—the two kingdoms in strife for the eternal possession of man.” I think Murray was right. This battle rages within the hearts of most of us. Which has the upper hand in you?

Pride is a terrible thing. Pride says, “I don’t need God.” Pride will keep you from Bible reading and prayer—because you won’t feel like you need to hear anything from Him—or you won’t feel like you need to say anything to Him. Pride will keep you from serving believers and from witnessing to unbelievers.

On the other hand, humility is the cardinal virtue. It will put you in a constant state of total dependence upon God. Humility will keep you both on your knees and in your Bible! Humility will foster in you a servant’s heart, and will keep you on the front-line of Christian service, making you unafraid and unashamed to witness for Him.

But beside all this, pride can make one look mighty foolish. There once was a master tailor who believed that the tailors under his supervision were incapable of making any serious mistakes; or if they were, he was not likely to acknowledge them. Because of his spirit, there were regular confrontations and disputes between customers and the proprietor in the front part of his shop. (Prov. 13:10: “Only by pride cometh contention.”)

Once when a customer came in to try on a newly tailored suit, but was unable to slip into the jacket because the sleeves were too narrow, Francesco Christiani not only failed to apologize to the client, but actually behaved as if insulted by the man’s ignorance of the shop’s unique style of men’s fashion. Francesco said to him, “You’re not supposed to put your arms *through* the sleeves on this kind of jacket!” Christiani then informed his client in a superior tone, “This jacket is designed to be worn only over the shoulders!”

Being “poor in spirit” should be a constant goal for the believer, and if you believe that the Beatitudes are cumulative, then you must take seriously the command to be clothed with humility. This is the root from which all the other graces grow.

In fact, it is the loss of humility, that is, pride, which is at the root of every sin and evil. When Satan breathed the poison of his own pride—the desire of wanting to usurp God—when he breathed this pride into the hearts of our first parents, they too, fell as he

did from the high estate where God had originally placed them.

So it stands to reason that what needs to be restored in us is humility. Jesus came to bring humility back to earth—and to make us partakers of it. In Heaven He humbled Himself and condescended to become the despised Man. And on this earth He humbled Himself and even became obedient unto the death of the cross.

And it is humility like this which He wishes to impart to us. It begins with salvation and proceeds on through the paces of sanctification. Nobody can be saved or start on the road to sanctification until he submits to this kind of true humility.

This call to humility has been too little regarded in the modern church because its true nature and importance have been too little understood. The truth is, humility is not highly prized by most believers today. American Christians have little concept of it. The ancient Greeks had no symbol in their language to denote humility; any word that was akin to it has in it some element of feebleness or contempt.

Sadly, this is how humility is still viewed among most people today. The appeal to humility is certainly not an easy sell in this culture. Nearly everything gravitates against it. Asking a man to reduce himself down to nothing so that Christ can become everything in him is not a popular message in any circle. But it is the right message.

Biblical humility is not stumbled upon accidentally. It is not a matter of innate personality either. It must be made the object of special desire, fervent prayer, with unswerving faith and practice. And all the while there must be an all-out assault made on pride, too. Sinful pride must be viewed for what it is—both dangerous and debilitating to the Christian life.

Sadly, pride’s impact is grossly underrated in our lives. James 4:6 says that God resists the proud but He gives His grace to the humble. The average believer reads that verse of Scripture and feels that his pride level is in check. He believes that he has enough humility to “take a pass” on this verse. But even that thought is pride. It should go without saying that it’s impossible to be proud of your humility!

As Christian Fundamentalists I think that we are at particular risk. Our stated attempts to be holy people make us especially vulnerable. We may become satisfied, even pleased, with our own level of holiness. The problem is that we often compare ourselves with

“To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, ‘A window shalt thou make in the ark.’”

Charles Spurgeon

people who aren't even trying to be holy, so we get a false sense of our own condition.

Our pride cannot help seeing how far it is in advance of others around us. But it is a false balance. The Pharisee went up to the temple and prayed, "I thank [God], that I am not as other men are" (Luke 18:11). What a foolish prayer that was!

So the principle is this: the holiest will always be the humblest. The greatest test of whether the holiness we profess to seek or to attain is according to truth will be whether it produces an increasing humility in us. Holiness that leads to pride is not holiness at all.

In fact, the chief mark of counterfeit holiness is a lack of true humility. Every seeker after holiness needs to be on guard so that unconsciously what was begun in the Spirit is not perfected in the flesh.

No pride is so dangerous, and none so subtle and insidious, as the pride of holiness. There once was a pastor who, during the Passion Week, publicly lamented his sins, and declared himself totally unworthy of his calling. He even referred to himself in the pulpit as "a nobody." The choir director, not to be outdone, picked up on the theme set in motion by the pastor confessing that he too was "a nobody," as he introduced the special music. Then the youth pastor, not to be entirely left out, publicly deplored his own transgressions as he read the announcements, concluding that he also was "a nobody." Upon hearing that, the pastor turned to the choir director seated next to him on the platform and said, "Now just who does he think he is to be a nobody!"

Just as true humility is never an accident, it is never automatic either. It is neither natural nor easy for anyone to be truly humble. In fact, I would say that humility is the most difficult virtue both to attain and to maintain. The very moment you believe that you have mastered it, you have lost it! So this is a challenge that you never outgrow, no matter how long you have walked with the Lord.

Every year for more than a decade, *The Parachutist* (the official publication of the United States Parachute Association) has published a Fatality Summary. In that article, a writer analyzes the factors contributing to parachuting deaths in the previous year. Parachutists are classified first as "students," then after 20 jumps they receive their "A" license. After 50 jumps they receive their "B" license. At 100 jumps they receive their "C" license, and their "D" license is awarded after 200 jumps.

In the 1993 "Fatality Summary," Paul Sitter pointed to an alarming statistic. Fifty-nine percent of all parachuting fatalities were suffered by the more elite jumpers, those with a "D" license. A graph accompanying the article shows a dramatic upward spike for

fatalities among those with 200 to 1000 jumps.

The explanation for that would seem to be fairly obvious at first, except for the fact that the line on the graph falls again for those with more than 1000 jumps! So apparently just because a person is mature, doesn't mean he or she is invulnerable. In fact, isn't it quite possible that some parachutists with between 200 and 1000 jumps got overconfident?


While the danger of pride is perhaps greater and nearer than we think, the good news is that the grace for humility is greater and nearer also. Jesus Christ is our humility. His grace is sufficient for us to meet the temptation of pride. And according to James 4, our great work is to humble ourselves and His great work is to exalt us. When we do the one thing that God asks, then He will do the one thing that He has promised.

F. B. Meyer once said, "I used to think that God's gifts were on shelves, one above the other, and that the taller we grew in Christian character the easier we could reach them. I now find that God's gifts are on shelves one beneath the other. It is not a question of growing taller but of stooping lower. We have to go down, always down, to get His best gifts."

Humility is something that must definitely be put on; and when you do it will be very becoming! The proud look is something that not only God hates; nobody else really appreciates it either. President Woodrow Wilson, quoting someone else, once described Henry Van Dyke as, "the only man he had ever known who could strut while sitting down." Not a very flattering thing to say about someone!

Contrast J. Gresham Machen, the world-renowned theologian, who accepted lowly work while serving as a YMCA volunteer during World War I. He was assigned the task of making hot chocolate at a canteen. Since it had to be ready at 7 A.M., Machen would get up before 5 o'clock to start the process. He would take bars of chocolate and shave them into slivers. Then he would melt them, gradually adding condensed milk and water as the mixture heated. From 7 to 9 in the morning he kept busy serving the hot chocolate, often not getting his own breakfast until the middle of the morning.

Although Machen would have been an excellent counselor and teacher to the servicemen, he honored God by accepting a mundane task without complaint. The acid test for knowing you have a servant's heart is to gauge your own spirit; if someone treats you like a servant and you are not offended, then you pass the test. At least on this occasion, Machen passed the test.

So ask yourself, do you prefer the company of the proud crowd, or do you wish to be with the humble ones? A.W. Tozer once said, "Because Christ Jesus came into the world clothed in humility, He will always be found among those who are clothed with humility." 

A photograph of Dr. Mark Minnick, a man with glasses and a suit, speaking at a podium. He is gesturing with his right hand. The background is a light-colored wall with some greenery on the right.

Dr. Mark Minnick, BJU Seminary faculty and pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, SC

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The Importance of a Christian College Education

Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it; but the instruction of fools is folly. Proverbs 16:22

This key verse is set in a context revisiting the virtues of wisdom (vv. 20–30). This unique set of verses is actually designed to re-engage the reader with the whole of the book of Proverbs. A careful examination of this passage will reveal a chain of links that extol the benefits of wisdom. When wisdom and understanding are pursued, the result will be benefit, reputation, influence, satisfaction, healing, guidance, and a full life. But when foolishness influences our steps it leads to division, chastisement, disaster, and death. Such strong words demand careful consideration as to the sources of our valued wisdom.

Wisdom was the principal concern of Solomon when he wrote and edited the contents of this great book. He gave attention to not only knowing wisdom, but also knowing the proper sources of wisdom. The unique parallelism of verse 22 trumpets a warning for the careless soul who would think that understanding (wisdom) can be found most anywhere. That was clearly not the conclusion of the wise man. If we go to a wise person for instruction we can be sure we will always benefit. They (wise counselors) are like the refreshing fountain that gives generously of its cool, thirst-quenching water. But

the influence of a fool is always detrimental. Sitting at the feet of those whose philosophy of life and approach to the truth is a violation of God's standard will result only in folly and loss.

When I was a teenager, a college education was perceived as a very good idea. That is not the case today. No longer is a college education a good idea, it is a necessity! Unless we want our children to be extremely limited in their choices for the future, we will understand the necessity of directing them to invest in a good college education. Since this matter is so critical, doesn't it make sense that, as believers, we prayerfully consider the issues involved in choosing a college?

Not only is a college education a very important choice, but the kind of college education is critical. When I was a teenager there was a perception that if you wanted to go into some area of ministry then you should invest in a good Christian college education. But if you were going into any secular career you needed to receive your college education at a prestigious secular college. "In order to get the best education, you need to look to the best schools," many would say. The attitude then was that Christian colleges lacked credibility. I do not believe that was a valid charge then. I know for a fact that is not true today. Would you allow me to share my perspective on this matter and point out some of the

significant benefits of choosing to invest in a Christian college education?

The Perspective

For any parent, teen, or pastor to fully consider this matter, there are several key issues to consider. First, there are today a remarkable number of excellent choices available among the Christian colleges and good Bible colleges that have been raised up by God to serve the next generation. Maranatha is a member of the American Association of Christian Colleges and Seminaries. This is a group of Fundamental colleges and seminaries that are dedicated to providing an excellent education for our young people. What a joy to see the variety among these schools. I don't think this should ever be the primary consideration when choosing a college, but young people today can choose whether they want to attend a large school or a very small one. They can choose what region of our country they want to live in while attending college. They can choose whether they want a degree that is accredited or is nonaccredited. They can choose whether they attend a school that has intercollegiate sports or one that utilizes primarily intramural programs. They can choose a school that operates as an arm of a local church or a school that is independently chartered. The choices today are remarkable! With all the excellent choices available today in the Christian college arena, there is no excuse for any Christian young person to decide to pursue a degree in a secular college setting. You cannot name an acceptable profession where the degree path is not available to you at a good Christian college.

Second, I must address the dangers that lurk on the secular college campus. I will simply refer to two, though there are many other considerations that Christian parents should think through. I am referring to the matters of social engineering and sexual temptation. Both of these issues are very important when considering the dangers of the secular college campus. The education offered in the undergraduate programs of secular schools is offered in a very biased setting. Although they preach tolerance, they really mean only tolerance for every view except that of a Bible-believing Christian. A Christian young person who chooses to attend a secular college can expect to have their faith attacked every single day! All education is delivered from a biased standpoint. Unashamedly, we who believe in Christian education teach from a very biased perspective. We want our students to understand God's mind in all of these matters. The secular educator also teaches from a bias;

unfortunately, it is a bias that is anti-God, anti-Bible, and destructive of the values we have sacrificed to teach our children.

Not only is social engineering a problem, sinful temptation is also a danger on the secular campus. The consumption of alcohol is rampant on the secular college campuses. Along with heavy drinking comes all the crime one would expect. Destruction of property, injury, rape, and many other problems always accompany heavy alcohol consumption. In addition, there are no restraints when it comes to the deportment of the students. It is no longer simply a problem of promiscuity in co-ed dorms. Now, many campuses are implementing gender-blind dormitories. This means that a computer selects your child's roommate regardless of gender. What confusion!

We are privileged to have a very large number of transfer students at Maranatha who have come from secular campuses. I love having them as a part of our family. They bring a totally different perspective. They see the wisdom of restraint. They see safety. They have known what it was to be in dangerous situations because the attitude of the school's governance was, "These high school graduates are adults and need to be treated like adults." In other words, anything goes. When a student transfers to Maranatha from a secular setting he sees great benefit in restraining student conduct!

Third, let me address one more important perspective. Following World War II our government created what we call the GI Bill. For the first time in our nation's history several hundred thousand young adults were able to afford a college education. Colleges knew they needed to get a piece of this new market. What developed was the practice of offering specialty undergraduate degrees. These degrees were marketed as the ticket to getting a job upon completion of college. For the past five decades this practice has mushroomed. Now we have some problems. For one, most careers today expect a master's degree for qualification for a job. This has resulted in unnecessary redundancy in the education process. Of even more significance is the evidence that among secular college graduates, less than 30% ever use the college degree they earn. There is a very simple explanation for this. There is a great difference between the way an eighteen-year-old thinks and the way a twenty-two-year-old thinks. Many young people make college decisions based on careers they will eventually reject. Unfortunately, many students see the cost of changing majors (added semesters and added cost) and decide, "Well, I've already put this much effort into it, I may as well finish the degree I

. . . I must address the dangers that lurk on the secular college campus. I will simply refer to two, though there are many other considerations that Christian parents should think through. I am referring to the matters of social engineering and sexual temptation.

have started." The result? College graduates who don't ever use the degree they've earned. Today the pendulum is swinging away from the desire to receive a specialized college degree toward focusing on getting a good education while in college and focusing on career in graduate school or in one of the many pre-professional programs available to college graduates. I recommend that many Christian young people consider earning a humanities degree while in college. Get that degree at a good Christian college, and be prepared for focusing in on your career in a graduate program and enjoy the benefits of a comprehensive college education.

The Protection

Let me end this article by reviewing for you the protections afforded when you choose a Christian college education for your young person. I'll mention four important issues. First, when you choose a Christian college education you are choosing a top-quality education. It is completely wrong to assume that receiving an education at some prestigious secular college will benefit your child. There are many reasons the education at a Christian college is superior. Take, for instance, the attendance requirements. At secular colleges, attendance at class is completely optional. The attitude of most college professors is, "I'll lay the information on the table, but it is the student's responsibility to get an education." Students attending a secular college can get credit for courses where they only show up to take a test. I don't call that education! At every Christian college attendance is required. At Christian colleges we believe that learning must take place in the class-

It makes no sense to me that parents will sacrifice for eighteen years to provide a nurturing and spiritual environment for their child and then after high school throw them into an environment where their faith will be assaulted every day.

room and that interaction with the professor is important and to be desired.

Second, a Christian college provides the right environment for your child. It makes no sense to me that parents will sacrifice for eighteen years to provide a nurturing and spiritual environment for their child and then after high school throw them into an environment where their faith will be assaulted every day. Why not choose a Christian college where the same standards and values you have honored in your home will be continued and in many cases even be strengthened during those important college years?

Third, a Christian college is a safe place for your children to ask the question, "Why?" It is normal and necessary for your child to go through that process of determining what he believes. It is a thrilling process to witness. How important for Christian students to be on a campus where they will constantly be challenged by the faculty and the administration to look into God's Word for the answers!

Last, a Christian college campus is a great place to make friendships that last a lifetime. Ask anyone who attended a Christian college, and they will tell you that those were some of the best years of their life and that the friendships they made then have stayed and strengthened over the years.

I challenge you to carefully think through these issues and consider the importance of choosing to invest in a Christian college education. You will never regret it!

David Jaspers is President of Maranatha Baptist Bible College in Watertown, Wisconsin.

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"Cursed be all learning that is contrary to the cross of Christ."

—John Witherspoon, President, Princeton University

"The progressive system has reached all the way down to the lowest grades to prepare the children of America for their role as the collectivists of the future. . . . The group—not the individual child—is the quintessence of progressivism."

—Rosalie Gordon

"Our national heroes have been maligned, our history distorted. . . . Is it becoming opprobrious to state 'In God We Trust' when proclaiming our love of country?"

—J. Edgar Hoover

"What is the function of the National Education Association—to improve the education of America's children or to stifle criticism of present educational methods?"

—Editorial, *Tulsa Tribune*, April, 26, 1962

On September 10, 1782, the Congress of the Confederation granted approval to print "a neat edition of the Holy Scriptures for the use of schools." The following endorsement was printed on its front page: "Whereupon, Resolved, That the United States in Congress assembled . . . recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States."

In 1785–86 the State of Connecticut enacted in the legislature a provision that in each township 500 acres should be reserved for the gospel, 500 acres for schools, and 240 acres in fee simple to the first gospel minister who shall settle in such town.

"Let the children . . . be carefully instructed in the principles and obligations of the Christian religion. . . . The great enemy of the salvation of man . . . never invented a more effectual means of extirpating Christianity from the world than by persuading mankind that it was improper to read the Bible at schools."—Benjamin Rush

"The United States is an economic giant, but is suffering from a softening of the brain. The Council on Competitiveness estimates that sixty thousand mathematics and science teachers in our high schools are not fully qualified to do their jobs."

—John Chancellor, *Peril and Promise*, pg. 47

"When one considers what the public schools of America in many places already are—their materialism, their discouragement of any sustained intellectual effort, their encouragement of the dangerous pseudo-scientific fads of experimental psychology—one can only be appalled by the thought of a commonwealth in which there is no escape from such a soul-killing system."

—J. Gresham Machen

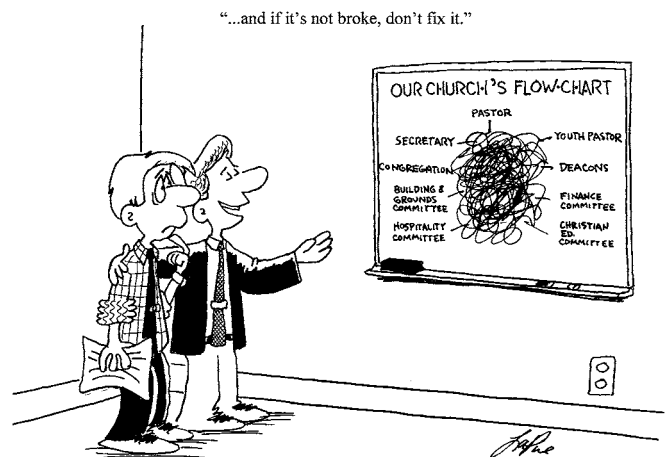
"The recent education of openness [has] no enemy other than the man who is not open to everything."

—Alan Bloom

"Comenius, a seventeenth-century Moravian bishop, is known as 'the Father of Modern Education.'"—D. James Kennedy

"I am as sure as I am of Christ's reign that a comprehensive and centralized system of national education, separated from religion . . . will prove the most appalling enginery for the propagation of anti-Christian and atheistic unbelief, and of anti-social nihilistic ethics . . . which this sin-rent world has ever seen."—A. A. Hodge

"The chief thing that is aimed at in this college is to teach and engage children to know God in Jesus Christ."—early ad, Columbia University



Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.

The Tongue Gets in the Way

Sheri E. Privett

Don't you wish that you had written down all of those cute (or not so cute) things that your children have said when they were just learning the English language or expressing profound thoughts? We think that we will remember every funny phrase or pronunciation, but as the time goes by, our minds just can't hold and recall everything that we would like them to.

I do remember a time when my son was four, and I was trying to put on his shoes. As we sat on the steps, he looked at me as I was opening the shoe and preparing it for his foot and said, "Mommy, watch out for the tongue. It can cause a lot of trouble!" Of course he was referring to the comfort of his own little foot, but his words struck me with a whole different level of meaning.

How many times would I have saved myself much anguish and heartache if I had remembered that thought! The tongue has the unique power to both help and hurt others. As I daily pray for the Lord to give me "the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (Isa. 50:4) and to "set a watch [or guard], O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Ps. 141:3), I am ever reminded of my four-year-old's warning. "Watch out for the tongue. It can cause a lot of trouble!" Out of the mouth of babes . . .

Sheri Privett serves alongside her husband, Michael Privett, pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Williamsburg, Virginia. They have three children.

vision

Dr. Chuck Phelps
Trinity Baptist Church

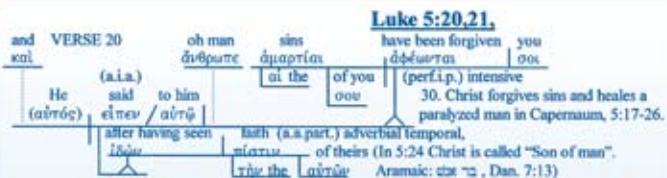
Trinity Baptist Church is thrilled to be reaching Austrians through a uniquely gifted and qualified family—the Hudsons. Their character, vision, local church philosophy, and experience are being used of the Lord to bring the light of the Gospel to a culturally brilliant but spiritually darkened people.

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The Three Dimensions of Discipline—Part 2

The second area of personal discipline that is needed in our lives deals with the discipline of the body. This is a very difficult area, and many of the Lord's people struggle in combating the appetites of the flesh. Many have a desire to see improvement but feel defeated in the constant "battle of the bulge." It is not my intention to give anyone who reads this article a guilt trip or to set myself up as the perfect example of disciplining the body. I have the same flesh and bones as you and can testify along with you of the frustrating, uphill war in bringing the body into subjection. However, I do not want you to have a pity party and succumb to the conclusion that there's no hope and go through life feeling sorry for yourself. "I can't help myself!" "I guess I was meant to be this way." "There's no use trying because it doesn't help!" This type of thinking is not Biblical; Philippians 4:13 is still in the Bible! "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." First John 4:4 declares, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." It's my desire to help you see victory in disciplining the body. First Corinthians 6:19, 20 says, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." The extent that the Lord uses us depends on how much we yield our bodies to Him. The body is not a showcase, nor is it a garbage can—it is a temple! And we are to glorify God in our bodies. How do we discipline this body?

First, by our eating habits. First Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." I've heard the old adage that some people live to eat and others eat to live. If a person lives to eat, he will pay a terrible cost for that decision. Dr. Bob Jones Sr. often said, "Every dissipation of youth will draw a draft in old age." A person cannot abuse his eating habits without someday paying the consequences. Dr. Bob Jordan from Lansdale, Pennsylvania, said, "As a Christian, you need to get to the place where you tell your body what to do and not have your body telling you what to do." If you are a slave to your body in the area of eating, there can be victory. First Corinthians 9:27 says, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." This conquest is not accomplished by will power but by Word power—the power of God's Word. As I travel across the country as an evangelist, I have to be careful in the area of eating. People are very kind in preparing meals for us, and I could dig my own grave with the dinner fork! The same can be true of anyone else.

The second way of disciplining the body is by exercise.

In 1 Timothy 4:8 we read, "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things." It is true that the benefits of exercising are limited and the profits of godly living are weighty and eternal. However, many Christians have used this as an excuse not to exercise. Many years ago I read an article written by a doctor who stated, "A person cannot be healthy without some form of exercise." This is correct and needs to be heralded across this country to the Lord's people. (It's important that a person see a physician before beginning any exercise program.) Doctors have said for years that people need to get their heart rate up at least three times a week for at least twenty minutes. There are a variety of things you can do in exercising, and I'm going to relate to you what I do. But before I do, I want to give my reason for exercising and trying to eat properly. I try to keep myself in good condition so that the Lord can use me in His service. Twenty-nine years ago I started running because of a good friend of mine, Tom Zempel. I was thirty pounds overweight and was tired all the time. I began running, and it has greatly benefited me in losing the extra weight and having a higher energy level. For years I have also done push ups and crunches on a regular basis. I have never allowed my exercise program to interfere with my ministry; however, I feel that exercising has tremendously aided me in the ministry. I have told many ministers at preachers' meetings that it would be nice if we could cut their heads off and put them onto the bodies of younger ministers. Many pastors have great "muscular" minds, but from the neck down their bodies are an absolute mess. If we could put these exercised minds on the bodies of young men, it would be a marvel to behold!

I'm sure there's someone who's thinking, "I have no time to exercise; I'm too busy serving the Lord." People who think this are headed for physical disaster; one day they'll be lying in a hospital bed with heart problems that will sideline them for months, perhaps years. Exercising does not require hours of time each day—it can be anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour. The benefits outweigh the alternative of hospital time and constant medication. The goal of eating right and exercising is so that the Lord can use us for His glory. It's my conviction that a person who exercises will actually accomplish more in his daytime hours than if he doesn't exercise. It's not wasted time but time wisely invested in a body that is a temple to glorify the Lord.

In closing, I encourage you to consider some form of exercise. Running, walking, swimming, weightlifting, and aerobics are just a few.

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A BIBLICAL MODEL

These days you cannot refer to “the Prayer of Jabez” and assume that everyone knows what you mean. In some respects this column may seem anachronistic. The initial splash of Bruce Wilkinson’s book—big as it was—is pretty much passed. But this column is about the Biblical prayer primarily, and about the book (since it is still floating about) only tangentially.

Much that has been written or said about Jabez is shrouded in speculation. The Biblical record (our sole authoritative source) regarding his background and personal information is sparse and unspecific. Wisdom counsels us to follow that Biblical example. Rabbinical traditions about Jabez’s youth (his allegedly phenomenal knowledge of the Scripture or his supposedly starting a rabbinical school in the city of Jabez) and speculations surrounding his name (his possible congenital deformity, the financial hardship his family may have faced at his birth, or the supposition that he cried to God out of deep personal affliction) are of marginal value and little interest. God could easily have corroborated or discredited any of these conjectures; He chose not to. So all those speculative details must be ultimately inconsequential to the point God wants to make. Why belabor issues about which God has withheld any authoritative revelation? The Lord intends us to focus on what He *has* written, not on what He has *not* recorded.

What, then, does the text record “for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4)?

Take a moment to read the account for yourself (1 Chron. 4:1–10). Hiebert rightly remarks that “these beautiful verses . . . draw us like a refreshing oasis in the midst of a desert of strange and unpronounceable names.” That is not to say that the surrounding verses are insignificant or unprofitable; there is a place and reason for genealogy. At the very least, it reminds us that if God cares enough to preserve the genealogy of individual and historically insignificant Jews, He certainly knows you and notes your background.

Who was Jabez? The short answer is we don’t know. At least we don’t know much. Perhaps that is part of the point. One doesn’t need to be well-known, or well-connected, or well-educated, to be outstanding in the sight of God or to secure extraordinary blessing from Him. It’s not just the Davids and Abrahams and Moseses that get God’s attention, but the Jabezses as well.

Jabez’s Reputation (4:9a)

The term “honorable” is contextually flexible. Nothing in the term necessarily connotes morality or virtue. Some people described by this word did dastardly things (Gen.

34:19; Num. 22:15). The word generally denotes either (a) the assets of a person, whether material (possessions, wealth) or immaterial (influence, dignity, nobility, position), or (b) the response which those assets elicit from others (honor, praise, respect, renown). (See 1 Chron. 11:20, 21, 22–25.)

It seems likely that verse 9 *presents* his honorable stature and verse 10 *explains* how he attained it. The implication appears to be not that his honorable stature preceded his prayer as its prerequisite, as though God heard his prayer because he was more honorable than others. God hears anyone on the basis of grace, not merit. Rather, he attained distinction because he prayed and God answered. God doesn’t hear or answer our prayer because we are honorable or moral or faithful or virtuous, but because we are humble enough to acknowledge our need and believing enough to confess that God alone is the only one who can meet that need and fulfill our desire.

Jabez’s Name (4:9b)

The text offers only a brief glimpse into why he was called Jabez. The name means “sorrow”—grief, pain, toilsome labor, and the sorrow that accompanies it. This same root word appears twice in Genesis 3:16 in the context of childbirth (“I will greatly multiply thy *sorrow* and thy conception; in *sorrow* thou shalt bring forth children”). It’s flashier for the sake of applicability to hypothesize a birth defect or strained financial circumstances as a result of his birth, but the text simply does not go there: “his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow [pain].” The words imply an irresistible simplicity; his name commemorated the pain his mother had in giving birth to him. In Genesis 3:16 terms, Jabez is Everyman. Nevertheless, the name is significant for three reasons: (1) Biblical names are often historically or prophetically suggestive; (2) the name’s background *is* provided and linked to the idea of grief or pain; and (3) the meaning of his name becomes a wordplay in his prayer (“keep me from evil, that it may not grieve [pain] me”).

Jabez’s Prayer (4:10)

One sentence. Thirty-two words in English, twelve in Hebrew. Great prayers need not be long. Jabez presents his prayer in the form of a vow (“If you will . . .”), though the vow is itself unexpressed, or unspecified, or unrecorded. He makes four requests:

“Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed”

The secret of this prayer is no secret at all. It is something so obvious that we take it for granted. *Jabez expresses a conscious request to God, as opposed to self-dependence or presumption on divine favor.* He does not merely assume but

OF PRAYER: THE PRAYER OF JABEZ

verbalizes his conviction that blessing must come from God alone, and that His blessing is worth asking for.

When you teach every day, or write, or engage in whatever ministry or other line of work to which God has called you, it is easy to slip into a kind of professional presumption. I regularly express to God my conviction that, though I know I can operate on autopilot and enunciate words and teach truth on a certain level just because I am accustomed to doing it, I don't *want* to do it without Him, I *fear* to do it without Him, and I really believe that if my teaching is to be blessed He will have to do it and empower it.

One philosophical flaw of Wilkinson's book (and a popular misunderstanding) is a tendency to equate "blessing" with "success." The underlying assumption seems to be that an increase in *successful* ministry opportunities is indicative of God's blessing, and that the lack of such "success" denotes the absence of God's blessing. This misconception infects much Christian thought. When this artificial view of success is not realized, it may result in confusion, frustration, and disappointment with God, or an introspective assumption that there is something wrong with the person. The Biblical emphasis is on faithfulness, not fruitfulness. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel were explicitly forewarned that their ministries would be conspicuously "unsuccessful" in terms of tangible positive influence and results; yet they are exemplary successes because they faithfully fulfilled God's commission for them.

"And enlarge my coast"

Is this a self-seeking, materialistic request? One commentator describes Jabez's prayer as "crude and selfish." Hiebert, however, suggests one of two possibilities, based on the language of the prayer: (1) Jabez may have been preparing to secure more of the Promised Land from the Canaanites, or (2) Jabez may have been asking God to enable him to restore the fortunes of his family in Israel as he seeks to repossess all the land given to his family by divine allotment. Either way, the request is appropriate because it is in line with God's express purposes.

I suspect Jabez's motive is even less mysterious. This phrase of Jabez's prayer appears in two key passages. In Exodus 34:22–24, God promises to enlarge the Israelites' borders as they faithfully and trustingly attend to worshipping and serving Him in Jerusalem. Again, in Deuteronomy 12:17–20, God promises to enlarge the Israelites' borders as they focus on worshipping Him where and when and how He says. Jabez is personally appropriating something God had expressly promised. This sense is admirably applicable to the needs and temptations facing the remnant back in the land (to whom Chronicles was addressed).

God delights when His children *know* what He has promised, and when we do not presume on it because He has promised it but plead with Him to do *for us* what He has said He would do. What has God promised *you*? Pray those promises back to God. Appropriate them personally in prayer. That certifies that when the answer comes it is a promise fulfilled by God, not mere happenstance.

"And that thine hand might be with me"

Again, this is a frank confession of the need and desirability of God's presence and power, provision and direction in every endeavor of life. This theme would have been familiar to the original target audience of Chronicles—the Jews who returned from the captivity. See the same theme underscored in the records of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31; Neh. 2:8, 18).

"And that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!"

In his book Wilkinson treats only the first half of the final petition ("that thou wouldst keep me from evil"). This seems to be a decision of convenience so he can more easily apply "evil" in a spiritual sense of temptation. But the context and content of the prayer suggest that Jabez probably had protection from harm or catastrophe in mind—as well as the proneness to moral evil (sin) that such negative experiences can engender.

Conclusion

This chronicle of Jewish history was written to encourage and exhort a weak, vulnerable, dispirited remnant. Preserved and restored by the hand of God, they nevertheless inhabited only a small portion of their inheritance. The chronicler records a model prayer appropriate to their own circumstances that they could latch onto and emulate, adapt, and adopt.

Is it *wrong* to pray this prayer regularly, even daily, as Wilkinson suggests? A long-term missionary couple prayed this prayer over their family and ministry for years before a popular book came out telling them to do so. Clearly there is nothing wrong, and much right, with adopting and adapting Biblical prayers. That's why they are recorded.

Should you pray this prayer regularly, even daily? That depends on your purpose, and your understanding that no power lies in reciting the phrases of the prayer itself. If you regard it as a Biblical-magical formula for "success"—even *spiritual* success—then the problem is not with the prayer but with your *perception* of it, and not with the use of the prayer but with *your* use of it. The power lies in the vision and values behind those statements—and the impact upon *us* when we adopt that vision and those values as our own.

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Relief Efforts

Operation Renewed Hope, a ministry of Tri-City Baptist Church in Blue Ridge, Missouri, is at work in relief efforts in the regions devastated by Hurricane Katrina. This ministry needs funds and work teams to help those in the Gulf region. For more information, go to their website at <http://www.operationrenewed-hope.org>.

Missionary John Leonard

On Sunday evening, July 3, 2005, John Leonard was the victim of an attempted murder and was critically wounded in the assault. Three men were waiting outside the church that John pastors in Coqueiro Seco, Brazil. In a joint effort between Baptist Mid-Missions, John's family, and his missionary colleagues in Brazil, an air ambulance evacuated John to Des Moines, Iowa, where he underwent surgery. According to an updated report from Baptist Mid-Missions, John has been moved to the rehabilitation wing of the Iowa Methodist Medical Center, where he has started a rigorous regimen of physical therapy. However, some infections have flared up again, which have made it necessary to move John out of rehab until he recovers sufficiently. Currently John has only a little movement in his upper arms and is paralyzed from the neck down.

John still has some infection in his lungs and has a tracheotomy but is able to breathe and to speak on his own. The Leonards' commissioning church, Saylorville Baptist Church in Saylorville, Iowa, has created www.prayforjohn.com to communicate current information. (<http://www.bmm.org>)

Starbucks Coffee

Starbucks Coffee is in hot water after its selection of quotes in its "The Way I See It" series. Starbucks prints quotes from selected authors on its coffee cups. Among those quotes are the words of Armistead Maupin encouraging homosexuality. Concerned Women for America and other groups are accusing the coffee maker of promoting the homosexual agenda. (<http://www.info-shop.org/inews/article.php?story=20050829103642857>, accessed 08/30/05)

SHAM

A new book by Steve Salerno punctures the Self-Help and Actualization Movement (SHAM, *How the Self-Help Movement Made American Helpless*). In his first chapter, Salerno says, "Surprisingly, Empowerment preaches that you can achieve whatever you set out to achieve, that this success is a function of desire and/or commitment. But there is an inescapable converse: that failure is a function of lack of desire and/or commitment. In its purest form,

Empowerment admits no circumstances that are unresponsive to the human will. Every shortfall in achievement must be accounted for somehow. And if it's not the program's fault, or the guru's fault . . . then whose? Whether you are plagued by inner demons you can never quite exorcise (as Victimization intones) or by your demonstrated inability to 'conquer all' (as Empowerment insists you must), you arrive without fail at the same despairing place: the dismal state of woe-is-me-ism." (<http://www.randomhouse.com/crown/Sham/>)

Pregnant Teens

"There are 490 female students at Timken High School, and 65 are pregnant, according to a recent report in the *Canton Repository*. The article reported that some would say that movies, TV, videogames, lazy parents and lax discipline may all be to blame. According to the Canton Health Department, statistics through July show that 104 of the 586 babies born to Canton residents in Aultman Hospital and Mercy Medical Center had mothers between 11 and 19." (<http://www.news-net5.com/news/4885861/detail.html>, accessed 08/17/05)

Fetal Pain

The University of California at San Francisco has produced a report indicating that babies in the womb are incapable

of feeling pain until they are about twenty-eight weeks old. The report was designed to downplay the need for fetal pain relief during abortions. This appears to be in preparation for proposed federal legislation that would require clinics to give fetal pain information to women requesting abortions. This report has been vehemently challenged by other researchers such as Dr. Kanwaljeet Anand, a fetal pain researcher at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. He believes that fetuses twenty weeks old and older feel pain. (AP, 08/23/05)

Crying in the Womb

Ultrasound videos have concluded that twenty-eight-week-old babies in the womb cry in response to noise stimulus; even the bottom lip quivers. The findings were published in the journal of the Archives of Disease in Childhood—Fetal and Neonatal Edition. (LifeSiteNews.com, accessed 08/26/05)

Religion at the Air Force Academy

An Air Force panel has recommended new guidelines that discourage public prayer and instruct officers to be "sensitive" about what they say about their religious faith. Their study of the Air Force Academy concluded that "some students and staff at the school have the perception that the academy favors evangelical Christians

and is intolerant of those who do not share their faith. Rob Boston, spokesman for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and Abraham Foxman, head of the New York-based Anti-Defamation League, both said the big question now is how the rules will be implemented." According to an Air Force spokesman, most of the guidelines had already been incorporated into the Academy. The father of present Academy students said, "The new guidelines fail to control evangelical zealots." The new guidelines insist "that 'abuse or disrespect' of Air Force members based on their religious beliefs, or lack of such beliefs, is unacceptable." (http://news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/ap/20050830/ap_on_re_us/academy_religion_7, accessed 08/30/05)

Largest Jewish Community

Next year, Israel will become the home for the largest Jewish community on earth, surpassing even the United States. These are the findings of the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute, a pro-immigration think tank. The most recent surveys place the Jewish population in Israel at 5.24 million and growing rapidly. The US presently has 5.28 million Jewish residents. The report "predicted the Jewish population of Israel would grow to 6.23 million by 2020 from 650,000 when the state was founded in 1948." (http://reuters.myway.com/article/20050712/2005-07-12T113446Z_01_N12537201_RTRIDST_0_NEWS-ISRAEL-NUMBERS-DC.html, accessed 07/15/05)

Bored with the Sermon?

"I have no problem with

NOTABLE QUOTES

It is possible to store the mind with a million facts and still be entirely uneducated.—Alec Bourne

Iam afraid that the schools will prove the very gates of Hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures and engraving them in the heart of the youth.—Martin Luther

Education . . . has produced a vast population able to read but unable to distinguish what is worth reading.—G. M. Trevelyan (British historian, 1876–1962), *English Social History* (1942)

Iam sure as I am of the fact of Christ's reign that a comprehensive and centralized system of national education, separated from religion, as is now commonly proposed, will prove the most appalling enginery for the propagation of anti-Christian and atheistic unbelief, which this sinrent world has ever seen.—Alexander Hodge

Education has for its object the formation of character.—Herbert Spencer, English philosopher (1820–1903)

Iam determined that my children shall be brought up in their father's religion, if they can find out what it is.—Charles Lamb, English critic and essayist (1775–1834)

How ironic it is that many Christian parents who are concerned about the kind of school environment in which their children are being trained are completely unconcerned about or even unconscious of the environment that affects their own way of thinking. A mind that is exposed constantly to a barrage of secular television, secular advertising, secular literature, and secular ideas is probably going to turn out to be a secular mind.—Douglas Moo

Without Christian education, without the principles of Christ inculcated into young life, we are simply rearing pagans.—Peter Marshall (1943–), U.S. government officer

Unlike other forms of education which stress content, command of material, skill acquisition, and other data base requirements, Christian teaching includes the necessity of a change in living habits. We teach the Word of God not to satisfy curiosity but to transform lives.—Michael Lawson

Compiled by Robert Condict.

This news is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International.

people quietly sending an email or surfing the Internet in church, as long as they respect the church." This was the statement of Reverend Keith Kimber of St John's Rectory of Cardiff, Wales. "British telecoms operator BT Group Plc has wired up the church in Wales to allow the congregation to hook onto local high-speed Internet connections when they want a break from the sermon." (<http://news.yahoo.com/>, accessed 06/13/05)

Churches in Europe

"Every major religion except Islam is declining in Western Europe, according to the Center for the Study on Global Christianity at the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Mass. The drop is most evident in France, Sweden, and the Netherlands, where church attendance is less than 10% in some areas."

Video Gaming

An article by Christine Rosen entitled "Playgrounds of Self" appeared in the *New Atlantis* magazine (<http://www.thenewatlantis.com/archive/9/rosen.htm>). The article highlights the connections between video gaming and the loss of personal identity.

"Improved hand-eye coordination is not the reason most people play video games. It is the opportunity to be somebody else—somebody else with limitless powers and absolute control. As one gamer told the authors of the recent study, *Got Game*, 'Games give us freedom to be, think, do, create, destroy. They let us change the answer to the question, "who am I?" in ways never before possible.'" (<http://www.thenewatlantis.com/archive/9/rosen.htm>)

Is Education Necessary to Fulfill a Global Vision?

Pearson Johnson

Education. Certainly teachers and pastors should be educated. But what about the missionaries? While the needs are urgent, we are convinced that our missionaries need to invest adequate time in preparation. We hope to encourage missionaries and churches to consider the preparation necessary to fulfill a global vision by keeping in mind the following two principles. First, spirituality and educational preparation are not competing characteristics when choosing a missionary. Second, true mission work is perhaps the most challenging task in Christian work, and so it may require more intense preparation.

Are Spirituality and Educational Preparation Incompatible?

Is it more important for a missionary to be spiritual or educated—to have character or credentials? The best answer is certainly a “yes.” A spirit-filled Christian who is well educated will make for the best kind of missionary in the long run. Of course, spirituality is of primary importance. Vital to the life of any missionary is a sincere commitment to a personal relationship with God through His Word and prayer. One could say that these commitments form the heart which supplies the necessary sustenance for all a missionary does in his work.

We should not stop with a great heart, however. God’s revelation is given in the form of truth statements that need correlated and clearly communicated to a target audience. In some places the Bible may need translated, but in every place it will need to be carefully taught. The Word is given “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). A good education provides the sharp tools whereby missionaries learn to correlate truth claims into doctrines and determine where errors need reproof and corrected so that they can instruct their hearers in righteousness with the Word.

A proper education will aid the missionary in his understanding of culture and language as well. Cross-cultural missions is not a task for the faint of heart or mind. It is an arduous undertaking to learn new languages and to do translation work. It is a taxing ordeal to make the adjustments necessary to function well in a new culture. Time invested in preparing for the encounters to come may save your missionaries from many experiences that may otherwise derail their mission. A Spirit-filled, adequately prepared missionary is the best one we can send to the needy fields of the world!

The Challenging Task of Missions

Many well-intentioned people enter mission work

with the thinking that “As long as I am a step ahead of the people I plan to reach, I am adequately prepared.” This thinking focuses only on evangelism and initial discipleship and ignores the rest of the missionary task. You must have a long-term viewpoint to be successful in missions. One man preaching the gospel will very soon be passed by in influence by another who is not only preaching the gospel himself, but who is also equipped to train other men to preach. The pattern of Scripture has been that times of great missionary outreach are preceded by times of intense preparation. Jesus taught His disciples personally for the few years preceding their commission. Michael Griffiths, in his book *Give Up Your Small Ambitions*, notes


It was fourteen years from the time of Paul’s conversion to the time of his departure with Barnabas from Antioch. Those largely “hidden” years were not wasted. God was preparing His instrument: tempering and hardening him, hammering him into shape, teaching him. Paul was learning about discipleship, thinking out his own theology so that it could be taught with simplicity and clarity.

A cross-cultural missionary’s goal is not to go and stay indefinitely in one place. The best missionary is one who plans to work himself out of a job in a particular place by training national believers to take over the work. He begins by going, evangelizing, and planting a church. As soon as possible, he appoints leaders from among the people in the church. Then he trains pastors to lead existing works and to plant churches. He is careful not to encumber the church with institutions that the national churches cannot support on their own. Eventually the goal is to see those churches training their own people for the work so the missionary can move on. This process does not happen overnight, nor in one term of service, but it should be taking place nonetheless. This method was Paul’s missionary method, and is one we should emulate. We should begin our work with the end of seeing self-perpetuating churches established on a field. If we begin with that global vision in mind, we will invest in the preparation necessary.

Pearson and Ben can be reached at pjohnson@intercity.org. They would welcome your input and interaction.

Join Ben and Pearson for the Student Global Impact National Conference, January 3-5, 2006, at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan. See www.studentglobalimpact.com for details.

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Encouraging Those on the Frontline

Bob Ellis

O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good.

Psalm 106:1

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

2 Corinthians 9:15

The coming holiday season, Thanksgiving and Christmas, provides opportunity for Christians to give thanks to God for His special watch care over us and to give gifts to individuals who are special to us.

Also, the holiday season provides an opportunity for God's people, of all ages, to be a blessing to our U.S. military personnel. Using the following suggestions, individuals, families, churches, Sunday school classes, senior saints, a group of veterans, or Christian school classes can be instruments of encouragement.

Using small boxes, make care packages. One box should be marked for the chaplain. All other boxes should be gift wrapped and marked "male" or "female." Fill each box and pack it so that items will not move and be damaged. Pack several small boxes into a larger box and send it to the chaplain. The chaplain will give the boxes to military personnel of his choice.

FBFI chaplain deployed to the war zone:

Michael T. Shellman
FOB 32 CJSOTF A
APO AE 09354

Do not use rank or title in the chaplain's address. Also, *be sure a legible return address is on the box.*

Suggested Items

Written materials:

A note of encouragement giving brief information about you or your family, Sunday school class, school class, or group.

An attractive gospel tract that gives the plan of salvation, a copy of John/Romans combination, a small pocket-sized New Testament. *Do not* send any materials that criticize the Muslim religion.

Personal Items:

Practical, durable items such as a toothbrush, toothpaste, stick deodorant, disposable razors, shaving gel, shampoo, bars of soap, a comb, a hairbrush, lotion,

Chap Stick, other practical items. Items such as shampoo and lotion that might leak should be put in a Ziploc bag.

Food Items:

Hard candy (individually wrapped pieces), chewing gum, canned nuts, etc. Do not send items that will spoil or become stale. During the winter months, chocolate (candy bars, etc.) can be sent. Their winter months coincide with ours.

FBFI-endorsed chaplains are among the best educated, most dedicated chaplains in our Armed Forces. Your participation in project "Encouraging Those on the Frontline" will enable them to minister in another way, thereby opening the door for witnessing. All will be very thankful for your concern and effort in helping to encourage and reach those to whom they minister. If they could speak with you personally, their request would be "Brethren, pray for us" (1 Thess. 5:25).

Bob Ellis is the National Field Representative for the FBFI Commission on Chaplains. He and his wife travel extensively, visiting Fundamental Christian colleges and seminaries, promoting the FBFI chaplaincy ministry. He is also available to speak in churches and can be contacted at (850) 261-6647.



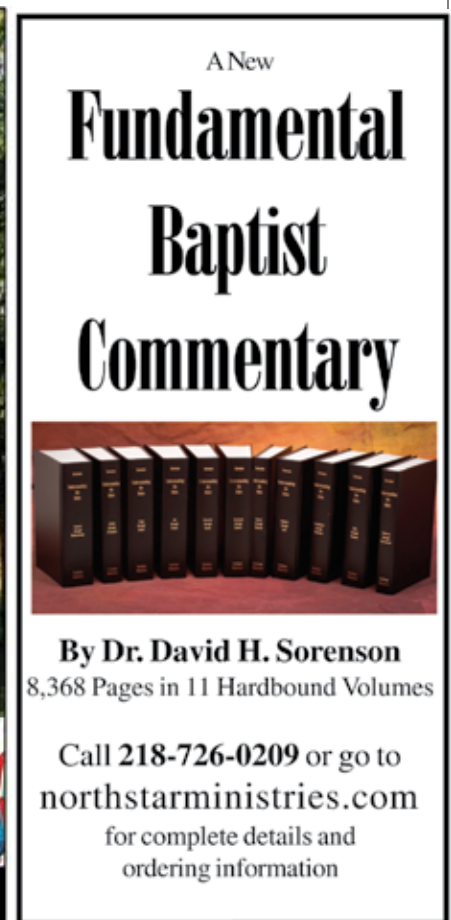
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Mail Bag (Continued)

friendly debate for it might reveal that Baptists have as much in common historically and theologically with Protestants as with Anabaptists, perhaps even more.

Gerald Priest
Allen Park, MI

In the July/August 2005 issue I was distressed to read the article that is by and large supportive of Dr. John Piper's theology. What the writer fails to disclose to readers is that John Piper is not just an ardent Calvinist and advocate of Lordship Salvation, but he also holds to the position on the gospel which states regeneration must precede faith.

The following excerpt is from Piper's *Desiring God: Meditations of A Christian Hedonist*, pp. 65-66.

The native hardness of our hearts makes us unwilling and unable to turn from sin and trust the Savior. Therefore conversion involves a miracle of new birth. Thus new birth precedes and enables faith and repentance. And so when we hear the gospel we will never respond positively unless God performs the miracle of regeneration. Repentance and faith are our work. But we will not repent and believe unless God does his work to overcome our hard and

rebellious hearts. This divine work is called regeneration. New birth comes first and enables the repentance and faith of conversion.

This is a position so extreme, even among Calvinists, that Charles Spurgeon took a stand against and preached to refute it.

The writer expresses concern over John Piper's lack of Biblical separation, which I believe is a mere bone thrown to appease militant Fundamentalists. To give John Piper passing marks while failing to disclose his extremes is dangerous. Unsuspecting Christians because of this article may read Piper and be drawn into the same out-of-balance positions.

Lou Martuneac
Bolingbrook, IL

I found myself saying "Amen" repeatedly throughout Dave Barba's article (July/August 2005). He has clearly stated the core reasons and requirements for starting new churches in the USA. The requirements for starting churches are the very ones needed to re-ignite existing ones. Far too many stateside churches need re-igniting. Every pastor needs to "do the work of an evangelist" and [train] his people to join him.

Whether it is easier to start a new church or revitalize an existing


one is a debate for another article. All I know is that closing the doors on Bible-centered churches damages the testimony of Christ and denies the power of His gospel.

Pastor Mark J. Smith
Director, Bible Tracts, Inc.
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What about the Scorners?

Gordon Dickson

Can you educate a scorner? This question seems to cut to the heart of a matter that still divides many who are involved in Christian education. What is the purpose of Christian education? Is it primarily for the evangelization of the lost or for the edification of Christians? Your answer to this question comes into sharp focus when you answer the earlier question: can you educate a scorner?

Who is the scorner? The scorner is the critic who will not devote his heart to God's concerns. He is the one who is critical, griping, sarcastic, or cynical. He or she publicly or passively challenges the authority of God, parents, teachers, or other authorities continually. Let's not be hasty here. Has a genuine attempt been made to reconcile this person? Have the Christians among these authorities carefully "taken the beams out of their own eyes" in order to see the problems more clearly? Have these attempts to help this person been repeated with longsuffering? Many who read these lines could point to supposedly incorrigible students who were helped to change by compassionate Christian confrontation. They could also name students who rebuffed every attempt and have insisted on trying to exercise control over those around them. So, can you educate the scorner?

Let's look at the scorner through the window of the Word to get a clearer picture of him. All of the references below are found in the book of Proverbs unless otherwise indicated. First, let's understand that the scorner

really enjoys his scorning (1:22). He will not take instruction to heart and tries to cut apart those who want to help him. The scorner does this even though he reaps the consequences of his own scorning (9:12). He won't listen to authorities (13:1), though he is very frustrated in his own attempts to find meaning in life (14:6). This scornful person doesn't appreciate wise people or their attempts to help (15:12). When rules are enforced, he becomes especially critical (19:28). Bear in mind that scorners can resist authority either publicly or privately.

Before we go on, I would like to pause for a quick exhortation. It may very well be that your parents or your principal has placed this article in front of you and asked you to read it. Rather than getting upset, would you take a few minutes to look up the Biblical references in this article and carefully examine your own heart? If you would humble yourself and ask the Lord for wisdom and understanding right now, He will give it to you!

In Christian education, we have to carefully consider how the scorner affects others. Proverbs speaks to this as well. The fact is that he is disgusting to others (24:9) just as surely as he is destroying others (29:8). If you can't have any significant influence in this person's life, how long can you allow him to have significant influence over others?

Attempts to help this scoffer will be rewarded with his hatred (9:8), and you may be ashamed of the attempt (9:7). Carefully and finally, those who believe God's Word con-

clude that the scorner has to be put out (22:10) in order to bring the contention and strife to a halt.

The scorner's rejection of authority stems from his rejection of God. But the scorner needs to carefully consider God's attitude toward him! God scorns the scorner (3:34) "but he giveth grace to the lowly." The Lord has prepared punishment for scorners (19:29), and He does so in order that others may be warned (19:25).

Can you educate a scorner? When you look at this through the wonderful lens of the Lord that we call Proverbs, the answer is obviously "no." No, you can't educate a scorner, and your attempts to continue to do so will hurt you and those whom you serve. But are these lines written because we intend to "write off" this person and refuse to try to help him? No. When Israel rebelled against the Lord, He employed a standard procedure. He placed them under the dominion of a rebel king. Under those awful, wicked kings, they softened their hearts and began to cry out to the Lord, who delivered them. In the New Testament, the procedure commonly called "church discipline" is carried out for the same purpose: "to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5). Knowing full well that the Lord is in complete control, faithful believers must obey God's Word and trust Him to turn the heart of the scorner. We grieve while we watch the scorner bloody himself on the brick walls of life. Our continual prayer is that he would hear the reproofs of life and of the Word with a softened, teachable heart. Until that time comes, it is impossible to educate him.

*... those who believe
God's Word conclude
that the scorner has to
be put out.*

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