

## What is a Christian School?

by Michael W. Lee

Are there different types of Christian schools? Which Christian school is right for me? These questions are some of the questions that Christian families struggle to answer. It is an incredibly important issue. I would like to take a few minutes to address some of the questions in a Q&A format that will hopefully settle the issue in your mind. Our goal is to answer the questions truthfully from the one great source of truth—the Bible.

**Q. What is a Christian school?**

A. Many books have been written on the subject of Christian schools, but for our purposes we will simply define a Christian school as a school that “strives to honor the Lord Jesus in all it does by using the Word of God (Bible) as the guide and rule for every area of philosophy and education, including planning, policies, curriculum and interaction among teachers, parents, students and administration. In addition, a Christian school strives to be used by God in order to bring every student to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to know and do all that He has commanded.”

**Q. Are there different types of Christian schools?**

A. Yes. There are two types of philosophies in Christian schools. The main difference is found primarily in the enrollment process. There are schools that would be described as Evangelistic and schools that would be described as Covenant.

Evangelistic schools will enroll students/families from any faith or background in the hope that they will be exposed to the gospel and one day turn to Christ. Typically, a waiver is signed by the parents allowing the school to freely teach from the Bible to children from both Christian and non-Christian families.

On the other hand, Covenant schools strive to enroll only Christian families. A Christian family is usually defined as having at least one parent who is a professing Christian, but there is no requirement for the child to be a professing Christian. This

allows the school to form a working partnership with students, parents and even grandparents.

**Q. I understand the Evangelistic approach but I am not sure I fully understand the Covenant philosophy. I do not really know what the word “covenant” means. Could you go into greater detail?**

A. The Biblical meaning of the word “covenant” is a compact or agreement between two parties, which is stronger and deeper than a promise.

Covenant schools agree with parents to provide a consistent, Christ-centered education. This partnership must be based on worldview similarities between home and school. And this worldview must be rooted in Scripture. Because the Bible says that a non-Christian is in darkness and is unable to understand or love the Word of God, true partnership between home and school in the Christian education of their children is impossible when dealing with a non-Christian.

It is vitally important for the parents and the school to be like-minded. When the parents and school have significantly different views in any area of theology or how they live out their Christianity, there will undoubtedly be strife.

For instance, a Christian school might teach children that Jesus rose from the dead, and people who do not believe that fact are heretics. Hopefully, the child will take that information to heart. But what if the parents of the child consider the resurrection to be a fairy tale? There will be problems. Further disagreements between the school and non-believing parents are likely as the school teaches what the Bible says about how Christians should think, live and work for the Lord.

Covenant schools believe that their degree of success in educating children is in part based on both the school and parents agreeing that:

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- The Bible is the only source of truth; it is authoritative and relevant to education.
- Every child is created in the image of God, born a sinner because of Adam and redeemable by the grace of God in Christ.
- The world was created good by God, but cursed because of sin. However, it too is redeemable by Christ and His work through His people.
- The purpose of education is preparing citizens of Christ’s kingdom to live all of life under His Lordship.

Lastly, the Covenant Christian school must look at all of the children and their families in the school, considering how well they will fit together, anticipating that the children will have plenty of social interaction with other school families.

***Q. Does this mean Covenant schools do not evangelize because they are not called Evangelistic?***

A. No! The terms Covenant and Evangelistic are simply terms to define a school’s approach or philosophy of Christian education. The philosophy of a school is critically important to every aspect of how a school is conducted, from enrollment to school discipline.

The fact is that Evangelistic Christian schools will enroll families that are Christian as well as non-Christian in order to teach God’s word. Covenant Christian schools will enroll Christians (in order to partner with them) and will also be evangelizing to every child and parent that enrolls in the school. Both types of schools rely on “the power of God for salvation” to change the heart of an unbeliever to a heart that loves the Lord. (Romans 1:16)

***Q. What else might I expect to see at a Covenant school that I may not see at an Evangelistic school?***

A. Because the Covenant Christian school does not enroll non-Christian families, it is less likely to have rapid growth and more likely to be criticized by the world around it because of its philosophy of Christian education.

Additionally, Christian schools that are Covenant are less likely to have significant downward trends

in enrollment because of the Christian families’ commitment to Christian education, and more likely to have greater cohesiveness among the school families because they are bound together as a community of the Lord’s people.

***Q. Which Christian school is right for me?***

A. Unfortunately, any school can represent itself as a Christian school by simply stating that they are. However, as the Apostle Paul noted in Scripture, we must be Bereans, and use the Scripture as a means of testing things that are called truth to see if those things are indeed truth (Acts 17:11). This behooves the Christian to be a good student of the Word of God so that he is not in the position of being fooled or misled.

With the above definition of a Christian school in mind, the 21st century parent who is looking for a Christian school for their child will find schools that range from “supposedly-Christian,” to “light weight-Christian,” to “real-Christian.” The challenge for a Christian school is the same as the challenge for the individual Christian. That is, how much of my professed Christian life is compromised because of the pressures of the world around me, the temptations that I face daily, and the failure to trust God in all things? Christian schools, like churches and all ministries, are always tempted to compromise.

The parents must then ask themselves the question, “Do I want anything less than a faithful, real Christian school for my family?”

***Final word to parents***

What a great responsibility to have as parents. We hope that this has been a helpful and thought provoking brochure as you begin the difficult task of researching Christian schools in your area. May the Lord be glorified in your family!

Cherokee Christian Schools are providing Christian worldview perspectives on education and family. For other perspectives please visit our Web site at [www.cherokeechristian.org](http://www.cherokeechristian.org). ■

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