

Why Christian Education?

by Michael W. Lee

Should you send your child to a Christian school? What difference does it make? Is there a Biblical directive to do so?

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 does God tell us to do with our children?

A. The first part of this answer has to do with the role of the parent. The parent is the God-appointed leader and teacher of a child. This should come as no surprise to everyone including a non-Christian. The overwhelming task of raising a child is in the hands of the parents.

Ps. 127:3: Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him.

Eph. 6:4: Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

But teach them what? Clearly, God has a great deal to say about this. And before that question is answered, another must be dealt with: “What or who is the most important thing or person for the child to know?” The answer is, “God is the most important person for a child to know.” The goal of Christian parents is for their child to know God in a personal way and to know all about God. Nothing could be more important.

With those two simple facts in place as the foundation of our discussion, we can now look at what God has to say more specifically. God says that the education of children and youth is a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week process that must take place from birth through maturity. Note the

Deuteronomy passage below and the context. God is instructing His people how to live as they prepare to go into the Promised Land. Critical to the life and health of His people is the teaching of the Word of God by parents on a daily basis in every situation.

Deut. 11:18-21: Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.

Proverbs 22:6: Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

As you can see above, the education of children and youth must be based on God’s Word as absolute truth.

Matthew 24:35: Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Psalms 119:89: Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.

Q. Do you mean that I should send my child to a Christian school so that he may become a Christian?

A. If that were the only reason, it would certainly be enough of a reason for every parent to send his child to a Christian school. However, the Bible tells us two important facts: while God does not promise salvation for everyone that hears the gospel message, He does say that faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and the Word of God is heard daily in a Christian school.

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The Bible teaches us that God has a greater plan than one that focuses only on ourselves. A Christian education prepares a child to understand the Bible, know how to defend the faith, and share the gospel and disciple others. The next generation must be considered as part of the responsibility of the present generation.

Matthew 28:19-20: Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Psalms 78:6-7: so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

Q. I think that I have a Christian teacher this year in the public school system. Does that handle my responsibility of making sure that my child is instructed and trained in the Lord?

A. Christian teachers in a school that are not allowed to teach about God are in an incredibly difficult position. They are trying to be an influence for the Lord, but the most important tool that they have they are not permitted legally to use—the Word of God.

Children and adults alike must learn and be changed by the Word of God. It is the very basis for all truth. In John 17:17 Jesus prays for His people and says, “Sanctify them by the truth, Your word is truth.” Christians grow and are made more like Christ as they hear the Word of God. This is why a Christian education is critical.

Q. You have shown me that the Bible says the parents are responsible for the education of their children. Does that mean I have to home school?

A. No. Some parents are led by the Lord to Homeschool. In such families, it is imperative that the parents realize the scope of homeschooling and are fully committed to doing an excellent job. Other parents may decide that they wish to obtain assistance in the godly education of their children and choose a Christian school. In that case, the parents remain responsible even though they are delegating part of the job to others. That

delegation, or partnership with another, must be carefully chosen by the parents and must adhere to the following Biblical principles.

Ex. 18:21: But select capable men from all the people— men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain— and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.

Q. Many of my friends say that they want their children to be “salt and light” in the non-Christian school. Shouldn’t we do that?

A. I appreciate their concern. We should be “salt and light” in the world. However, I think a closer look at the passage and the context will help us see who that mission is actually directed to.

In the gospels where this is written, salt and light are meant to be Christian influences in a dark and sinful world. It is only logical that in order to be a Christian influence in the culture, you must be a Christian. So, first you must ask yourself if your child is a born again believer.

Second, we must ask, “In what way can my child be salt and light?” “Is my 1st grader or 5th grader or 8th grader able to have an effect for Christ in the school?” “Can he effectively explain the gospel?” “Can he disciple a believer?” “Can he defend his faith when under attack?” “Can he withstand the constant bombardment of non-Christian teaching, non-Christian thoughts, and non-Christian acquaintances?”

In the vast majority of cases the answer would be no, and if the answer is no, then your child can’t be “salt and light.” In a rare case the answer may be yes, but you are obviously putting your child at great risk. Sending a child into an environment that is anti-Christian in philosophy is subjecting the mind of your child to daily teaching that is determined to replace God in every subject and every area of life. How many young Christians can even discern that they are being fed worldly ways of thought?

You might ask why the vast majority are not able to be “salt and light?” It is really quite simple—they are just kids, and kids are not the ones that Jesus told to be salt and light—it is adults. It is the same reason that children do not lead Bible studies, become pastors, or go to foreign countries as missionaries. They are not mature enough

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emotionally or spiritually, and for that matter, can’t even provide their own physical needs. They are at a time in their life when their primary function is to be a good student, not someone who teaches or disciples others. They are still being trained for adulthood and are still in the care and direction of their parents.

That goes full circle back to the Christian parents’ responsibility. We are called to protect and nurture our children in the ways of Christ so they can grow up to be world changers for Christ—no longer little saplings, but instead, strong oaks for the Lord!

Q. But will I be sheltering my child from the “real world?”

A. There is a common misconception that Christian schools shield children from every temptation and sinful exposure. This is not true, nor is it even possible. Christian schools have the same types of kids non-Christian schools have—sinners! Because all children come into this world with a sin nature, they are all prone to selfishness, anger, malicious talk, coveting, and the list goes on. In addition, they are exposed to many of the worldly influences that all children are exposed to in movies, books, television and more.

The difference in the Christian school is that the Christian school brings the Word of God to every situation in the lives of the children. The Christian school is able to apply the Word of God to every instance of sinful thought or action, and by God’s grace, renew the mind of the child. Hence, the goal to produce adults that have been trained unto godly living and thinking in a world full of temptations and their own weaknesses as a fallen human being.

Q. When is the best time to put them in a Christian school?

A. Based on what we have found in the Bible, there is a better question: “When should they not be in a Christ-centered environment?” The answer is plainly never. If at all possible, have them taught from a Christian perspective every day of their life.

Q. I don’t know if I can afford the tuition. What do I do?

A. First, take an honest and careful look at your finances. Can you make some adjustments to how

you spend money? Remembering that all of your money is actually God’s money (He owns it and you are just a manager), pray to God to help you know if you are spending His money in a way that honors Him. Look to see if you are spending money on things that only bring you short term pleasure rather than things of eternal value. In light of all that and all that we have discussed here, ask yourself if you have placed less important things above the awesome God ordained task of educating your children the way God wants you to rear them. Remember the words from Jesus in Matthew 6:33: “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

You may come to a sobering conclusion that you know that your child should be in a Christian school, but you have put your family in a position that makes it impossible to do so. If that is the case, make plans to make changes that will enable you to afford a Christian education, even if it will take 2-3 years before you accomplish the goal.

If you review your situation and simply can’t afford it, and you can’t make any changes to your personal budget/spending habits, pray that God will make a way. Some schools offer financial aid to qualified applicants.

There may be a few other questions that come to your mind that are not directly related to the topic of this publication:

Q. I went to a public school and I turned out OK. Can’t my children do the same?

A. It is difficult to know what “OK” means. If you are saying “OK” means that you became a Christian, and you are a “nice” person with a “normal” life, give thanks to God.

But if you are saying that “OK” means that you are the same person today that you would have been if you had attended a Christian school, then we must think about what is assumed behind that statement.

God says that His word does not return void, that there is power in His word, and that it is the tool that He uses to change and mold a person’s mind and heart. If that is true (and God cannot lie), then it is impossible that you could become the same person whether you were or were not in a place

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where His word was taught and studied for as much as 13 years (K through 12th grades).

Imagine where you might be in your Christian walk if you had daily study of the Bible from Kindergarten through high school! Think of how God’s word might be more readily available to your daily thoughts and struggles. Think how you might have been used by God for His glory if you were better versed in God’s truth.

Q. What would happen if Christians left the public schools? Wouldn’t that be a disaster for the public school system?

A. God is in charge of all that happens, so it is impossible to predict what might happen to the public school system if large numbers of Christian families decided to choose Christian education. Certainly, Christians are not called to support institutions that teach in opposition to the Bible and questions about the legitimate functions of government are complex. However, this publication doesn’t seek to answer those questions. We seek to address what God requires of Christian parents for their children.

Q. I am a teacher in the public school system. Are you saying that I am sinning to be there?

A. The Biblical direction for a mature adult Christian who teaches in the public school system is completely different than a child who is learning how to think.

It is possible for an adult Christian to be salt and light in a dark world. However, the Christian teacher may be faced with being charged by the school system to teach children things that are in direct opposition to the teaching of the Bible. Individual public schools are often quite different in what degree they enforce the government teaching of things like same sex parenting, homosexuality, and evolution. Each Christian teacher must evaluate his own situation in light of Biblical principles, and pray before the Lord to discern what is pleasing to God.

Final Thoughts

God’s directions to Christian parents regarding Him being primary in the education of their children’s lives are clear. As long as Christians allow their children to be educated and trained in godless schools, our country will never become a Christian nation, and in fact, will continue to fall away from Christian principles for living and government. How could we expect any other result? Each one of us must decide how we will account to God for the educational path that we chose for our children. My hope is that you will choose the path that is built on His word and honors Him.

Cherokee Christian Schools are providing Christian worldview perspectives on education and family. For other perspectives please visit our Web site at www.cherokeechristian.org . ■

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