

Christian(s) Schooling 2.0

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A compelling reality confronts Christian educators today that at the same time poses a great challenge and a great opportunity for Christian schooling. The challenging reality is that many Christian schools are struggling due to the lack of resources needed to effectively educate under-resourced and educationally vulnerable children. In all too many instances it is a case of the dying trying to give life to the dying or the under-resourced trying to supply the under-resourced; not much unlike the blind trying to lead the blind—the fate of one inevitably leads to the fate of the other. At the same time, most suburban Christian schools are beyond the financial and physical reach of most low and moderate-income families or inaccessible for other reasons.

Many Christian schools have been hemorrhaging to death due primarily to the slow exodus of students whose families can no longer afford the cost of educating them. A host of Christian educators struggle because they are ill-equipped to meet the high-resource needs of their under-resourced students. Children who desperately need an effective Christ-inspired education in order to have some semblance of a normal life have to go without. Some very godly men and women who are absolutely certain of the call of God upon their lives to serve as His educators find themselves perplexed as they languish in doubt due to the lack of His resources to do so in a traditional Christian school setting.

Moreover, there are Christian educators who have felt called and prepared to serve in Christian schools have their plans altered because of a lack of options, school closures, downsizing, or closed doors. Similarly, there are Christian educators who have felt called to serve in public schools to make a difference in the lives of children who have their faith challenged and their hopes dashed by the multiplicity of barriers and issues they confront. Sometimes they feel stifled or ineffective as a Christian educator because they lack the information or wherewithal to integrate their faith into the education profession where they serve.

Hence the modern quandary of Christian education. *Under-resourced and underserved children have extremely limited access to Christian educators in Christian schools, and Christian educators who serve these children in public schools are often under-resourced and underserved in their attempt to provide them with a Christ-honoring education.*

Biblical Basis

An examination of the Scriptures can produce the instructions, guidance, principles, and examples that provide a biblical basis for forging a new paradigm for Christian educators where faith and education are integrated and brought to bear to make a meaningful difference in the lives of children who cannot afford or have access to Christian schooling. To understand this, it is important to distinguish among three aspects of “biblical.”

- ***Biblical*** means the word of God clearly mandate’s something or gives principles, practices or instructions. For example, showing mercy (Luke 6:36), being gracious (1 Peter 5:5), and forgiving children (Ephesians 4:32) in school are biblical practices.

- **Unbiblical** is the opposite of biblical which means that something is a clear violation of a mandate, instruction, and/or practice in scripture. For example, failing to treat children as image-bearers of God is unbiblical since the scripture clearly states that they were created in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:27).
- **Non-biblical** means the scripture is silent concerning something, meaning it does not speak to it either positively or negatively. For example, having children bow their heads and close their eyes to pray is non-biblical in that nowhere in scripture are there instructions to pray that way, nor any examples of anyone in scripture closing their eyes and bowing their head to pray.

It is noteworthy that from a *biblical* standpoint, Jesus never spoke the words that are translated “Christian,” “school,” “schooling,” or “education” in the languages of His day. As such, institutional Christian schooling is not *biblical*; but it is also not *unbiblical*. Rather, it is *non-biblical* since the Holy Scriptures do not say “thou shalt do Christian schooling” nor do they say “thou shalt not do Christian schooling.” And, relatedly, God’s word makes no specific statements about what should be done in a Christian school.

What is a *biblical* mandate, however, is what Christians do in relation to children in schools. This can be gleaned from observing the words and deeds of Christ starting with a review of the miracles Jesus and His disciples performed which He described as “works.”

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (John 14:12)

Here is the biblical summation of the “works” that Jesus did as He started His earthly ministry:

When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many... (Luke 4:40, 41)

This is how Jesus summarized those “works:”

Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. (Luke 7:22)

And, these are the “works” He instructed His disciples to perform:

And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Matt. 10:7)

In every one of these “works” the Lord and His disciples were simply improving the quality of life of those in need and who wanted it. Jesus practiced and gave His disciples the ability to make a difference in the lives of people by improving the quality of their lives. Jesus did not give

people more abundance of things; rather, He gave them a more abundant life. Note how He stated it:

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

By doing so, blind people saw, deaf people heard, lame people walked, dead people lived, mute people spoke, bound people were liberated, hungry people ate to the full, bent over people straightened up, sick people were healed, leprous people were cleansed. In each instance, people experienced an improvement in their lives. And, in each instance, no one was ever charged a single penny for the services (works) they received that resulted in their improved quality of life. Likewise, there were no preconditions or requirements for the services other than the recipients had to simply want it and believe.

*Now He did not do many mighty **works** there because of their unbelief.* (Matthew 13:58)

Moreover, Jesus performed good works indiscriminately and on a non-contractual basis.

*And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing **all** kinds of sickness and **all** kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout **all** Syria; and they brought to Him **all** sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.* (Matthew 4:23-24)

He sent His disciples out to do the same:

And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Matt. 10:7, 8)

The good works that Jesus instructed His disciples to perform were to be done indiscriminately (all were healed) and non-contractually (freely given). During the feeding of thousands, the disciples were never instructed to do so conditioned on the responses of the recipients.

Implication

By this measure, a Christian who educates to improve the quality of life for children in need is just as *biblical* as a Christian who educates to lead a child to Christ, to strengthen a child's relationship with Christ, or to simply be able to share the gospel of Christ. For example, there were many people whose lives were improved by Jesus and there are no indications whatsoever that they committed their lives to Him. Where were the life-improved recipients when Jesus was on trial for His life? When Jesus improved the quality of life of 10 lepers, only one even responded with a "thank you."

Application

The current version of Christian schooling (Christian Schooling 1.0) is financially out of reach for vast numbers of low and moderate-income families. No amount of school choice programs and tuition assistance mitigates the cost barrier for the more than 25 million children in this nation who live in or near poverty. A new version of Christian schooling is needed that takes Christian education to where under-resourced and underserved children are as opposed to requiring them to access it and pay for it in the Christian schools where it is offered. Version 2.0 of Christian schooling makes the shift from an institution-based approach (Christian schooling) to an individual-based approach (Christians schooling).

Moreover, Version 1.0 of Christians schooling involves children coming to Christ's disciples to receive the *works*, while version 2.0 of Christians schooling involves Christ's disciples going to where children are to do the *works*. While the practice of either version is non-biblical, the more biblical pattern is to go to where people in need are, as Jesus and His disciples practiced.

Christian Schooling 2.0 involves good works that endeavor to improve the quality of life of children in need without charging them or requiring them to meet certain preconditions. This is just as biblically based as (and can be argued that it is more biblical than) Version 1.0 which requires the recipients of the good works to pay for the services (although a biblical argument can be made for Version 1.0 that the laborers are worthy of their hire).

Since neither Jesus as the Living Word nor the Written Word said to do Christian schooling and/or how to do Christian schooling, there is latitude and license for various approaches using biblical examples and principles. There is no human court or authority to determine and declare that one is biblically valid, and the other is not (Romans 14:22-23). Only Christ can make that determination and we already have the example that He set.

We are uniquely poised at this point in history to see the emergence of Version 2.0 of Christians schooling. It is akin to the spread of the gospel by the early church. The disciples who were with Jesus, observed His miracles, sat under His teachings, and performed miracles themselves were instrumental in Version 1.0 of spreading the gospel as recorded in Acts 1 – 12. Beginning in Acts 13, however, these original disciples are only mentioned one other time throughout the entire Book of Acts in chapter 15 where they are still in Jerusalem debating what was happening as the gospel was being spread throughout the world. Jesus had made it clear that His scope was “the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8) but Version 1.0 of spreading the gospel only made it as far as Samaria. Version 2.0 kicked in beginning in Acts 13 and, interestingly, it did not involve any of the disciples who actually walked with Christ and were instrumental in Version 1.0. Version 2.0 in a different form carried the gospel to the “ends of the world.” (Acts 13-28) Equally interesting is the fact that the Version 1.0 group had trepidations and serious reservations about Version 2.0.

I am convinced that we are witnessing a different version/iteration of Christian schooling that has the potential of impacting children in the uttermost parts of this nation's schools. It is not a shadow of or subservient to Version 1.0 Christian schooling. Instead, it is a biblically based education approach to improving the quality of life of children in need just as Jesus and His first group of disciples endeavored to do for the people of their day. They were letting their light shine so that people would see and experience their good works which made a difference in their

lives. God's educators aspire and endeavor to function above that of world-class educators since the call of God upon their lives reaches Kingdom-Class.

As Kingdom-Class educators, God's people endeavor to live out the Lord's three-dimensional requirements that constitute "good."

He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

Internal Dimension—Do what is right from within. To do justly means to be in alignment with (such as a justified margin on a page). It means to not do what is wrong or hurtful. The Kingdom-Class educator aligns with God's word and purposes within themselves to do what is right by children by being God's living curriculum. Right-ness pertains to matters of the heart recognizing that the issues of life flow from the heart. (Proverbs 4:23)

External Dimension—Show mercy to others. To show mercy means to treat others the way one wants to be treated. It means going beyond simply doing what is right to doing what is gracious, merciful, and kind. It means engaging in good works that result in improved quality of life for the recipient even at the expense of the giver. Kingdom-Class educators give of themselves in such a way to their students in need that it results in increase life chances and improvement in the quality of their lives.

Eternal Dimension—Walking with God. To walk with God means to submit to Him and rely upon Him in all matters of life. The internal and external dimensions are contingent upon the eternal dimension for their effectiveness. Herein lies the promise, potential, and power of the Kingdom-Class educator. They recognize that God is the Source of their own strength and the Sole One who can transform a life. If anything transpires in the life of a child, it will be because of what the Lord does for the child. The Kingdom-Class educator endeavors to be a conduit for God's transforming love.

As such, Micah 6:8 can be paraphrased and applied accordingly:

He has shown you, O Christian, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you as an educator but do what is right, treat your students in ways to improve their lives, and depend on God at all times for the results.