

# Redefining Christian Education

By Vernard T. Gant

The word that's translated "Christian" appears three times in the Bible beginning in Acts 11:26.

*And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.*

In Antioch, the followers of Christ were distinguished from other followers (disciples) with the more definitive term "Christian." A person's followers or students were their disciples. For example:

*The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" (Mark 2:18)*

The term Christian was never used in reference to an institution, a nation, biblical content, practices, or the like. It was only used as a designation of one who followed Christ.

From a purely biblical standpoint a "Christian" education technically denotes an education delivered or administered by Christ followers. Likewise, a "Christian" educator is simply and merely an educator who is a follower of Christ. To define or describe a "Christian" education in terms of a school, educational content, a curriculum, textbooks, a facility, or a program is non-biblical. These terms are not unbiblical in that they don't violate the scriptures. They are simply non-biblical in that they are not found in the scriptures as historical examples, commandments, or instructions.

It is more in keeping with the scriptures to focus on the motives and actions of the persons delivering the education as followers of Christ. Consider the following passages of scripture:

*Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)*

*By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be **My disciples**. (John 15:8)*

*That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work (Colossians 1:10)*

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)*

*For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)*

*And let our people also learn to maintain good works, **to meet urgent needs**, that they may not be unfruitful. (Titus 3:14)*

In summation, God created His followers (disciples) to glorify Him by doing good works that make a difference in the lives of others. (Recall the illustration of the Good Samaritan.) As such:

***A Christian Education is one that is administered by a follower of Christ as a good work to glorify God by meeting the academic needs of children.***

The same can be said of a Christian giving food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, shelter to strangers, hospitality to the sick and imprisoned. These are all good works done by Christ

follower that glorify God by meeting “urgent needs.” It is the basis upon which everyone will be assessed and judged in the end.

Likewise:

***A Christian Educator is one who does good works to glorify God by meeting the academic needs of children.***

With this, I suggest that there are two models of “Christian” education—an extraction model and an infiltration model.

The **Extraction Model** is based on children being selected by Christian educators to receive their education in a setting or institution controlled by Christian educators.

The **Infiltration Model** is based on the Christian educators deploying to educate children in settings or institutions controlled by others.

(From a biblical standpoint, the Old Testament depicts an extraction model in that people had to leave their nations to go to Israel to encounter God. While the New Testament depicts an infiltration model in that God came to people in their settings.)

**Again, no settings or institutions can be Christian; only people who follow Christ can be.**

Thus, there are Christian educators who operate as extractors and Christian educators who operate as infiltrators. The Holy Spirit is the One who makes the assignments. The assignments, however, do not make the educators either more or less Christian.

Children with academic needs because they are disenfranchised, different, and/or disadvantaged represent an occasion for an education of good works that ultimately glorifies God. This is the essence of a biblically based Christian education because it is an education of good works done by Christians unto the Lord for His glory.

*But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? (1 John 3:17)*

***For a Christian to have the wherewithal to meet the educational needs of children in need and to fail to do so is to fall short of the glory of God.*** It amounts to educational malpractice in the same vein of medical malpractice for a physician to fail to save a life when they have the ability to do so.

In reference to the disadvantaged and the disenfranchised, a Christian education can be one that:

- Esteems children as created in God’s image
- Embraces children for who they are
- Encourages children to develop character
- Equips children to be productive
- Enhances children’s God-given abilities
- Elevates children beyond their circumstances
- Enables children to escape poverty

Such an education can be delivered in both an extraction setting and an infiltration setting. There are no limitations on good works, love cannot be outlawed, and there are no geographical boundaries on the work of the Holy Spirit. A Spirit-filled Christian interacting with children in need will result in ministry taking place. It is the nature of the Holy Spirit to do so.

Therefore, whether provided by a Christian educator in an extraction setting or an infiltration setting, a Christian education shines in such a way that children will experience the good works and ultimately will glorify the Father in heaven.