



## The Good Mentor

James B. Rowley

As formal mentoring programs gain popularity, the need for identifying and preparing good mentors grows.

Can you name a person who had a positive and enduring impact on your personal or professional life, someone worthy of being called your mentor? Had he or she been trained to serve in such a role or been formally assigned to help you? I frequently ask veteran teachers these questions. As you might guess, most teachers with 10 or more years of experience were typically not assigned a mentor, but instead found informal support from a caring colleague. Unfortunately, not all teachers found this support. In fact, many veterans remember their first year in the classroom as a difficult and lonely time during which no one came to their aid.

Much has changed in the past decade, however, because many school districts have established entry-year programs that pair beginning teachers with veteran, mentor teachers. In the majority of such cases, the matching occurs before they meet and establish a personal relationship. This prevalent aspect of school-based mentoring programs presents special challenges that are further exacerbated when mentor teachers receive no or inadequate training and only token support for their work.

## Qualities of a Good Mentor

During the past decade, I have helped school districts design mentor-based, entry-year programs. In that capacity, I have learned much by carefully listening to mentor and beginning teachers and by systematically observing what seems to work, and not to work, in formal mentoring programs. As a result of these experiences, I have identified six basic but essential qualities of the *good mentor* and the implications the qualities have for entry-year program design and mentor teacher training.

***The good mentor is committed to the role of mentoring.*** The good mentor is highly committed to the task of helping beginning teachers find success and gratification in their new work. Committed mentors show up for, and stay on, the job. Committed mentors understand that persistence is as important in mentoring as it is in classroom teaching. Such commitment flows naturally from a resolute belief that mentors are capable of making a significant and positive impact on the life of another. This belief is not grounded in naive conceptions of what it means to be a mentor. Rather, it is anchored in the knowledge that mentoring can be a challenging endeavor requiring significant investments of time and energy.

What can be done to increase the odds that mentor teachers possess the commitment fundamental to delivering effective support? First, good programs require formal mentor training as a prerequisite to mentoring. Veteran teachers unwilling to participate in a quality training program are often indicating their lack of dedication to the role. Second, because it is unreasonable to expect a teacher to commit to a role that has not been clearly defined, the best mentoring programs provide specific descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of mentor teachers.

Third, good mentoring programs require mentors to maintain simple logs or journals that document conferences and other professional development activities involving the mentor and mentee. But such record-keeping devices should keep paperwork to a minimum and protect the confidentiality of the mentor-mentee relationship.

Finally, although the majority of mentor teachers would do this important work without compensation, we must not overlook the relationship between compensation and commitment. Programs that provide mentors with a stipend, release time from extra duties, or additional opportunities for professional growth make important statements about the value of the work and its significance in the school community.

***The good mentor is accepting of the beginning teacher.*** At the foundation of any effective helping relationship is empathy. As Carl Rogers (1958) pointed out, empathy means accepting another person without making judgments. It means setting aside, at least temporarily, personal beliefs and values. The good mentor teacher recognizes the power of accepting the beginning teacher as a developing person and professional. Accepting mentors do not judge or reject mentees as being poorly prepared, overconfident, naive, or defensive. Rather, should new teachers exhibit such characteristics, good mentors simply view these traits as challenges to overcome in their efforts to deliver meaningful support.

How can we encourage mentor teachers to be more accepting of new teachers? A training program that engages prospective mentors in reflecting on the qualities of effective helpers is an excellent place to begin. Reading and discussing passages from the works of Rogers (1958) and Combs, Avila, and Purkey (1971), for example, can raise levels of consciousness about this important attribute. Equally important in the training protocol is helping prospective mentors understand the problems and concerns of beginning teachers (Veenman, 1984; Fuller & Bown, 1975) as well as stage and age theories of adult development (Loevinger, 1976; Sprinthall & Theis-Sprinthall, 1980). Training exercises that cause mentors to thoughtfully revisit their own first years of teaching in light of such research-based and theoretical perspectives can help engender a more accepting disposition toward beginning teachers regardless of their age or prior life experiences.

***The good mentor is skilled at providing instructional support.*** Beginning teachers enter their careers with varying degrees of skill in instructional design and delivery. Good mentors are willing to coach beginning teachers to improve their performance wherever their skill level. Although this seems obvious, many mentor

teachers stop short of providing quality instructional support. Among the factors contributing to this problem is a school culture that does not encourage teachers to observe one another in their classrooms. I often ask mentors-in-training whether they could imagine helping someone improve a tennis serve or golf swing without seeing the athlete play and with only the person's description of what he or she thought was wrong.

Lacking opportunities for shared experience, mentors often limit instructional support to workroom conversations. Although such dialogue can be helpful, discussions based on shared experience are more powerful. Such shared experiences can take different forms: mentors and mentees can engage in team teaching or team planning, mentees can observe mentors, mentors can observe mentees, or both can observe other teachers. Regardless of the nature of the experience, the purpose is to promote collegial dialogue focused on enhancing teacher performance and student learning.

What can we do to prepare mentors to provide instructional support? The quality of instructional support that mentor teachers offer is largely influenced by the degree of value an entry-year program places on such support. The mentor training program should equip mentors with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions prerequisite to effective coaching. Such training helps mentors value description over interpretation in the coaching process; develop multiple methods of classroom observation; employ research-based frameworks as the basis for reflection; and refine their conferencing and feedback skills. Finally, we need to give mentors and mentees time and opportunity to participate in the preconferences, classroom observations, and postconferences that lead to quality clinical support.

***The good mentor is effective in different interpersonal contexts.*** All beginning teachers are not created equal, nor are all mentor teachers. This simple fact, when overlooked or ignored by a mentor teacher, often leads to relationship difficulties and diminished support for the beginning teacher. Good mentor teachers recognize that each mentoring relationship occurs in a unique, interpersonal context. Beginning teachers can display widely different attitudes toward the help offered by a mentor. One year, a mentor may work with a beginning teacher hungry for advice and the next year be assigned a beginning teacher who reacts defensively to thoughtfully offered suggestions.

Just as good teachers adjust their teaching behaviors and communications to meet the needs of individual students, good mentors adjust their mentoring communications to meet the needs of individual mentees. To make such adjustments, good mentors must possess deep understanding of their own communication styles and a willingness to objectively observe the behavior of the mentee.

How can we help mentors acquire such self-knowledge and adopt a positive disposition toward adjusting their mentoring behaviors? Mentor training programs that engage mentors in completing and reflecting on self-inventories that provide insight into their leadership or supervisory styles are particularly helpful.

*The Supervisory Beliefs Inventory* (Glickman, 1985) offers an excellent vehicle for introducing mentors to the challenges of interpersonal communication. In similar fashion, *The Leadership Adaptability and Style Inventory* (Hersey & Blanchard, 1974) can provoke mentors to reflect on the appropriateness of their mentoring behavior given the maturity and commitment of their mentees. In my own mentor training, I follow discussions of such theoretical perspectives with the analysis of videotaped conversations between mentors and mentees from the *Mentoring the New Teacher* series (Rowley & Hart, 1993).

***The good mentor is a model of a continuous learner.*** Beginning teachers rarely appreciate mentors who have *right* answers to every question and *best* solutions for every problem. Good mentor teachers are transparent about their own search for *better* answers and *more effective* solutions to their own problems. They model this commitment by their openness to learn from colleagues, including beginning teachers, and by their willingness to pursue professional growth through a variety of means. They lead and attend workshops. They teach and enroll in graduate classes. They develop and experiment with new practices. They write and read articles in professional journals. Most important, they share new knowledge and perplexing questions with their beginning teachers in a collegial manner.

How can we ensure that mentors continue their own professional growth and development? Quality entry-year programs establish clear criteria for mentor selection that include a commitment to initial and ongoing mentor training. In addition, program leaders work hard to give veteran mentors frequent opportunities to participate in high-quality professional-growth experiences that can enhance their work as a mentor teacher. Some programs, for example, reward mentors by giving them additional professional development days or extra support to attend professional conferences related to their work.

***The good mentor communicates hope and optimism.*** In "Mentors: They Simply Believe," Lasley (1996) argues that the crucial characteristic of mentors is the ability to communicate their belief that a person is capable of transcending present challenges and of accomplishing great things in the future. For mentor teachers working in school-based programs, such a quality is no less important. Good mentor teachers capitalize on opportunities to affirm the human potential of their mentees. They do so in private conversations and in public settings. Good mentors share their own struggles and frustrations and how they overcame them. And always, they do so in a genuine and caring way that engenders trust.

What can we do to ensure that beginning teachers are supported by mentors capable of communicating hope and optimism? Quality programs take the necessary precautions to avoid using veteran teachers who have lost their positive outlook. If teachers and administrators value mentoring highly and take it seriously, mentoring will attract caring and committed teachers who recognize the complex and challenging nature of classroom teaching. It will attract teachers who demonstrate their hope and optimism for the future by their willingness to help a new teacher discover the same joys and satisfactions that they have found in their own career.

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**SECOND TIER**

**WALKING ALONGSIDE THE FIRST-YEAR TEACHER**

**FIRST MEETING RESOURCES**

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David J. Engelsma

REFORMED

Education

# The Goal of Reformed Education

Chapter

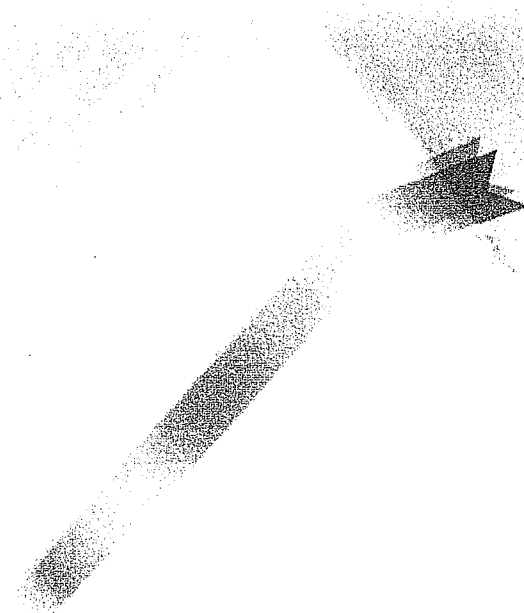
*That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

—II Timothy 3:17

What is our goal, our aim, our objective with our Christian schools?

This is the question that we must answer now. It is an important question. It is necessary to have the goal of Christian education clearly in mind from the very outset of the instruction and not to forget it for a moment in the course of educating. Aimlessness renders the whole work futile. The pursuit of wrong goals will subvert the education that is given. On the other hand, the goal single-mindedly striven for determines the nature of the entire work of Christian education and makes that education good, worthwhile and profitable. Not only the parent and the teacher, but also the student, should know what the purpose is and remember it throughout his education. This requires parents and teachers to tell him the goal and to remind him of it repeatedly. The student must know the answer to his questions: "Why must I go to school? Why must I study? What am I doing here? Why do my parents put up our own schools?"

The goal gives sense and meaning to the activity of educating.



The Christian School  
as Demand of the Covenant

"What is all this good for?" is a valid question, and there had better be an answer. The goal kept in mind is the incentive to the teacher to teach, to the student to learn, and to the parent to maintain the school where this teaching and learning go on. Especially for the student, this amounts to something like, "Eat your spinach, so that you can become a strong, husky man like your father." The goal unifies and directs the mass of material that makes up the instruction and, in fact, everything that has a place in the Christian school. The goal will also serve as a criterion by which to judge that which has no place in Christian education. Besides, the goal of Christian education is simply an end in itself, vital in Christian education, not only because of what it does but also because of what it is in its own right.

It becomes increasingly urgent that we know the goal because other goals are proposed and fought for vigorously. This is true as concerns education in the world, but it is also true as concerns education among Reformed Christians. There is an effort to *redirect* Christian education. If that effort is successful, it will deflect our aim from heaven to earth, from God to man, from the *Civitas Dei* to the *Civitas Mundi*; and the whole of education will be spoiled. In this case, it would be better for us that a millstone were hanged about our collective neck and we were drowned in the depth of the sea, for we would be a stumblingstone to multitudes of Christ's little ones.

We must derive our goal from our basis of Christian education: the covenant of God with believers and their children. The foundation determines the completed structure that stands on that foundation. On the foundation of the Sears Tower you do not build a chicken coop. Our aim in Christian education must be that contained in and expressed by the covenant command of Jehovah to believing parents.

We must not begin in the Spirit and end in our flesh, begin with the covenant of grace and end in the goals of the

Greeks, of the humanists, of the American pragmatists, or of our own proud, carnal ambitions for our children. This is easily done. Christian education, too, is constantly beset by the temptation to be conformed to this world. Today, in addition, there are enemies within the gates of the Reformed camp. They are deceitful. Evil men and seducers wax worse in the realm of Christian education, deceiving and being deceived. They speak of the covenant to get the parents' children and money, then labor for an end that has nothing to do with the covenant. They become more cunning still and disguise their noncovenantal goal as "the Reformed world-and-life-view" or "the kingdom of God."

In asserting this goal from the covenant basis of education, and especially in pursuing it in our schools, we must willingly expose ourselves to ridicule. Why should we suppose that Christian education is exempt from the law of the kingdom that the wisdom of God is folly to man, especially to the wise among men, to the "Greeks"? All that will live godly in Christ Jesus in education shall suffer persecution. We have heard, and still do hear, the jeers: "Anabaptists!" "Narrow, dogmatic, denominational schools!" "Schools without any kingdom-vision!"

### ***As Regards the Covenant Child Who Is Educated***

Many false goals are proposed for education. There is even a popular view that in education there is not, and may not be, a goal for the child. The child must simply be allowed to develop without hindrance. The work of the educator is to remove whatever might hinder the child's free development and to enhance the possibility of this development. On this view, it is educational heresy to speak of directing a child, much less all the children, to one, specific goal. This is radical aimlessness in education. But it is true, after all, to

the principles of evolution, the theory of the goodness and centrality of man, and the conviction of the nonexistence—or irrelevance—of God. Goalless education becomes apparent in many ways, both in the educating itself and in the lives of the children so educated.

There are many outrightly man-centered, earthly goals of education. There is the goal of the cultured gentleman; the goal of the well-adapted citizen in American society; and the goal of the successful man: wealthy, powerful, well-positioned, famous, and happy. In a totalitarian state, such as China, the goal is well-functioning cogs in the machinery of the state.

There are various false, religious goals. One is the saving of the child's soul in a school that practices evangelism. Another is the goal of the school dominated by fundamentalism: that there be some religion in the soul as well as knowledge in the mind. Educators committed to the social gospel, including the "Reformed" humanists of our day, aim at the betterment of society. ICS men and women work zealously to produce kingdom-visionaries and activists and, thus, their kingdom.

Radically different is the goal of Reformed, covenantal education. We have a goal. Our goal is a mature man of God, who lives in this world in every area of life with all his powers as God's friend-servant, loving God and serving God in all of his earthly life with all his abilities, and who lives in the world to come as a king under Christ, ruling creation to the praise of God, his Maker and Redeemer.

This is the goal proposed by Scripture, particularly in those passages that call parents to the Christian rearing of covenant children. To say that we derive our goal from the covenant basis of education is to say that we derive it from Scripture. Scripture sets forth the goal of the rearing of children; Scripture sets forth the end of man. In the Christian school movement, we must shut our ears to all the clamor of

man and must listen only to the Word.

According to Deuteronomy 6, the goal of the diligent teaching of the children is that they love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and might. Negatively, the purpose is that they not forget the Lord, forget Him when they inhabit great and good cities, forget Him in houses full of good things, forget Him when they eat and are full. Negatively, the goal is that they "not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you" (v. 14). These gods are named Baal, Mammon, Pleasure, and Self.

The goal is not children growing up to fear Jehovah *as well as* to live earthly life. Nor is it children growing up to fear Jehovah by *avoiding* earthly life. But the goal is children growing up to fear Jehovah *in* earthly life, that is, children growing up to live all earthly life unto Jehovah.

Psalms 78:1-8 teaches that the purpose of fathers' showing God's praises to the generation to come is that those children "set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: And . . . not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation . . ."

II Timothy 3:14-17 is an especially clear, pertinent passage. The covenant child, instructed by his grandmother and mother, becomes a man of God, a *mature* man of God ("perfect" is not "sinless," but "mature"), whose maturity manifests itself in this, that he is thoroughly furnished unto every good work. He is prepared for a life of good works here and now in the world. Such a life of good works does not consist of running around distributing tracts or making an occasional visit to the jail to sing Arminian hymns, but of loving and being faithful to his wife, providing for his family, patiently submitting to a forward foreman, paying his taxes, and the like. The goal is holiness: the consecration of oneself and the totality of one's life to God in thankfulness.

There is no need to list more texts; every passage of



Scripture that reveals God's purpose in creating man and in redeeming the new humanity in Christ teaches the same thing.

However, we should recall the message of Ecclesiastes. That message is not the vanity of earthly life absolutely. Ecclesiastes is not the shaken cry of the pessimist, who then kills himself. It is not the doleful dirge of the monk, who forthwith betakes himself to the monastery. But the message is the vanity of all earthly life, absolutely *all* earthly life—kingship, farming, learning, bookmaking—*apart from fearing Jehovah and keeping His commandments*. Knowledge apart from knowing God, all activity not motivated by the love of God and directed to Him, and life itself lived apart from God and away from God are vain. The application of this message, therefore, is: Know, be king, write books, drink wine, and farm in the fear of Jehovah! And teach the children to do this!

This goal of Christian education accords with that proposed by Reformed thinkers. Herman Bavinck suggests this:

True piety organically combined with sound knowledge and genuine culture. Thus we form men of God, equipped unto every good work, completely equipped unto every good work.<sup>1</sup>

Herman Hoeksema gives this as the goal:

You will aim in your education at the perfect man of God, knowing the will of his God for every sphere of life and for every step he takes upon the path of life, and you will take care that in his life he is well equipped with a clear and concise knowledge of all the precepts of the Most High.<sup>2</sup>

Jan Waterink states:

If I were asked to give a single-sentence statement of

the aim of education, I should prefer to formulate the definition as follows: "The forming of man into an independent personality serving God according to his Word, able and willing to employ all his God-given talents to the honor of God and for the well-being of his fellow-creatures, in every area of life in which man is placed by God."<sup>3</sup>

Our goal has two aspects. First, our goal in the rearing of the covenant child is that child's praise of God *in eternity*. This is not sufficiently remembered. But it is expressed in the prayer after baptism in the Form for the Administration of Baptism: "they may be piously and religiously educated . . . to the end that they may *eternally* praise and magnify thee. . . ." Our children's praise of God in eternity is related to and realized through our rearing of them, also in the Christian school. I will not speculate on this, but I maintain that Christian education, in the schools, is serviceable for the child's life and reign with Christ in the new world. No genuinely Christian education is wasted, or lost.

Implied is the teacher's inability to see all of the fruit of his labor in this life. Like the husbandman, he must have long patience for the precious fruit. In education we live and work by faith in the unseen things that are eternal.

This eternal aspect of the goal ought to be the motivation of the parent and the teacher. If we are mightily moved by the pleasure we now have in "stalwart sons and daughters fair," what pleasure will we someday have when that which does not now appear shall appear fully in our children and students?

The second aspect of our goal is definitely the child's godly life on earth, here and now. We have a temporal goal. Its place, its inseparable connection with the eternal goal, and its subservience to the eternal goal, are all excellently

1. Bavinck, *Paedagogische Beginselen*, 53. The translation of the Dutch is mine.

2. Hoeksema, "Christian Education," 532.

3. Waterink, *Basic Concepts*, 41.

brought out in the prayer of the Form for the Administration of Baptism: “that they may be piously and religiously educated . . . and live in all righteousness, under our only Teacher, King, and High Priest, Jesus Christ . . . to the end that they may eternally praise and magnify thee . . .” They must live a God-centered (holy), obedient, responsible life in the world, living before the face of God in their station, as prophets, priests, and kings, and doing this out of gratitude for gracious salvation.

In this connection, we must remember that the one, great danger in the last days, according to Scripture—and present experience bears this out—is earthliness (secularism, materialism). There is a deadly divorce of holiness from everyday life in the world: God on Sunday and Mammon on Monday. The evil of those who will go under when God arises to judge the world in righteousness is not that they are grossly immoral, but “merely” that they are eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and building houses. The Christian school is, in its very existence, the denial of earthliness, for it stands for the truth that God is at the center of all knowledge and reality and for the truth that men must seek God in all of life. But it must also exert itself to teach the children these truths and thus rear them to live so.

Therefore, Christian education is useful, in the highest degree useful, fitting the child to live life as life ought to be lived and, I may add, with an eye on the book of Proverbs, preparing the child to live a life that is blessed and happy. Pursuing its goal, Christian education, and it alone, escapes the condemnation that Alfred North Whitehead passed upon modern education:

The solution which I am urging, is to eradicate the fatal disconnection of subjects which kills the vitality of our modern curriculum. There is only one subject-matter for education, and that is Life in all its manifestations. Instead

of this single unity, we offer children—Algebra, from which nothing follows; Geometry, from which nothing follows; Science, from which nothing follows; History, from which nothing follows; a couple of Languages, never mastered; and lastly, most dreary of all, Literature, represented by plays of Shakespeare, with philological notes and short analyses of plot and character to be in substance committed to memory. Can such a list be said to represent Life, as it is known in the midst of the living of it? The best that can be said of it is, that it is a rapid table of contents which a deity might run over in his mind while he was thinking of creating a world, and had not yet determined how to put it together.

Astoundingly, Whitehead concludes that “we can be content with no less than the old summary of education ideal which has been current at any time from the dawn of our civilisation. *The essence of education is that it be religious*”<sup>4</sup> [emphasis mine]. But, alas, “religion” for Whitehead does not include God. So close, and yet so far away!

Not only Proverbs, but also the New Testament tells us that godliness is *profitable*, that is, *useful*. It is useful for all things, “having promise of the life that now is,” as well as of that which is to come (1 Tim. 4:8).

### ***As Regards the Kingdom of God***

Does our goal in education have anything to do with the kingdom of God? Is the kingdom an important aspect of the goal? Even if we were of a mind to ignore this aspect of our goal, consideration of this question is forced on us by educational theories within the Reformed sphere that emphasize the conception of the kingdom of God. There are two main groups: those who yearn for social reform and the ICS.

4. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 18, 25.

The goal of the social reformers is men and women who will enter into society, joining the associations of the ungodly, in order to help in the effort to improve the human condition: solve the racial problem, assist the poor, improve working conditions, and even allay international tensions. In Reformed circles, it is wonderful to behold how John Calvin is made to fit the Procrustean bed of social improvement. One is convinced that Calvin had no other purpose for theology, preaching, or church than the improvement of man's earthly lot—until one takes the trouble to read Calvin himself, anywhere. The evangelicals also embrace this goal of education. Shimmering in the distance is the mirage of an unbelieving and unrighteous world of peace and prosperity, which is named “kingdom of God.”

The goal of the ICS is the fulfillment of the cultural mandate of Genesis 1, and thus, a grand, peaceful, glorious, earthly society dominated by evangelical Christians [read ICS men: Plato's philosopher-kings in the flesh]. To this end, they are educating boys and girls to become organizers of Christian [read: ICS] institutions in all the land. Again, shimmering in the distance is the mirage of the “kingdom of God.”

Our rejection of these kingdom-visions is as radical as can be: the kingdom envisioned is not the kingdom established by Christ, the kingdom revealed in the gospel, and the kingdom into which we believers have already been translated. The kingdoms of the social reformers and of the ICS are carnal kingdoms, earthly kingdoms, kingdoms erected by men, kingdoms based on the natural desire of men for earthly peace and pleasure. God's kingdom is spiritual, heavenly, building by the Son of God through the gospel, grounded in the righteousness of the cross of Jesus.

Since both the social reformers and the ICS have the same kingdom in mind, their occasional sparring is friendly sparring. Sooner or later they will find each other. Then,

because all roads lead to Rome, they will also find Rome, who had this kingdom-vision long, long ago.

But this may not lead us to overlook, or minimize, that we seek the kingdom of God in education. Least of all may we hide this from our children. The ICS has a powerful appeal to the young: “You may have a place in the ‘kingdom,’ may be active on behalf of the ‘kingdom,’ and may go marching on to victory with the ‘kingdom,’ if only you will adopt our vision of the ‘kingdom.’” We are foolish, we are poor Christian teachers, if we neglect to teach our children, “You are citizens of the kingdom of God. You are reared for life in this kingdom. You are called to be active in the kingdom on its behalf.” Christian schools are kingdom-schools; Christian education is kingdom-education. Listen once more to the baptism form: “. . . live in all righteousness, under our only . . . King . . . Jesus Christ; and manfully fight against, and overcome sin, the devil and his whole dominion . . .”

Indeed, we seek the kingdom in education, and we seek it first, seek it primarily, as is our plain duty according to Matthew 6:33. We do this in two ways. First, the activity of giving our children Christian education is, for us parents, God will add bread, clothes, and other earthly needs to us. Second, we so educate the children that they may live the life of the kingdom in the world.

Concerning this latter, we must be plain. We reject the carnal conception of the kingdom, and we do not allow our children to suffer the delusion or to chase the unsubstantial mirage of the social reformers and the ICS. We know what the earthly future of the people of God is. We know what kingdom will rear itself up on the earth in these last days. We must teach the youth this.

We and our covenant children live the life of the kingdom in this way. We believe and obey the gospel of Christ in all our

earthly life. We live in the world out of the new life of Christ. We faithfully and obediently serve Christ as Lord in government, labor, home, and church by doing His will in these institutions. We live the life of Matthew 5-7. This is what we aim at in the instruction of our children. It is obvious that this is the same as living the covenant life, the life of the friend-servant of God.

The goal of the life of the kingdom is emphatically not “full-time kingdom service,” as we used to hear over and over in chapel, as if the goal were only reached in preachers and Christian schoolteachers. This is not Calvinism. This is not covenantal thinking. On the contrary, every child is to live a life of “full-time kingdom service,” whether the child be scientist, mother, janitor, or lawyer.

Such rearing, like the life of the kingdom itself, is exhausting work. We confess that we do it, as we live the life of the kingdom, only in principle. We have but a very small beginning of the new obedience. Therefore, in our work of Christian education, we ought to be characterized by humility and repentance.

Yet it is glorious work. Work that aims at young men and young women living the life of the kingdom of God in the world is glorious. But even this is more believed than seen. The coming of the kingdom through Christian education is not spectacular, glamorous, and showy. The kingdom comes not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! Nevertheless, it comes. Therefore, Christian education is worthy of our finest efforts, by grace.

### ***As Regards the Glory of God***

We aim at mature men and women of the covenant. We aim, in this way, at the kingdom of God. Our ultimate goal in Christian education, therefore, is the glory of God. In having God's glory as our goal, we are true to the covenant basis of Christian education, for in the covenant God must be God,

and the covenant with us must end in Him.

The goal of God's glory underlies our goal as regards the child, namely, that the child shall be a man who serves God in this world and in that which is to come. Since the goal is God's glory, covenant education cannot merely end in the child's being saved, much less in the child's earthly success. This would make *man* the goal of education. But the goal of covenant education must be the child's active service of God. Only then is *God* the goal.

To miss the mark of God and His glory is sin in education, as it is everywhere else. This makes education vain. Gigantic campuses are built at enormous cost, and staggering energy is expended—for nothing! Upon it falls the judgment of God, in time as well as in eternity. There is no alternative to covenant education ruled by and permeated with the Word, carried out by believing parents through God-fearing teachers, and directed to the glory of the triune God. The attempt either falls apart in a chaos of uproar, ignorance, and sensuality—as is the case in many schools today—or the whole of creation and the lives of the students are bent and twisted and distorted, with ruin for creation and misery for men, towards the establishment of the kingdom of Man, that is, the kingdom of the Beast. This will fall apart, too.

The goal of the glory of God is achieved *through* our rearing of the children; God is glorified in Christian education *through* the children's loving and serving and not forgetting Him.

This is *accomplished* in Christian education by parents and teachers. The children *are* reared to maturity. God uses, really uses, our education to bring His covenant child to become the man of God, fitted to a life of good works. There is power in education. Christian education is most significant: it is a demand of the covenant. What zeal, what carefulness, what faithfulness does this not call for?

But it is God's work. Here, Christian teachers and Christian

parents rest. The covenant is God's. The covenant and the covenant promise are gracious. They depend on no man. God makes covenant children. God brings them to spiritual manhood. God works in them to will and to do the life and labor of the kingdom.

Therefore, Christian teachers, like the parents in whose place they stand, ought to pray, ought to work praying, nothing doubting.

*Jehovah, God of the covenant in the Lord Jesus, save the covenant children, and glorify Thy Name through them.*



# Teaching Christianly

Biblical Worldview Shaping and the Work of Christian Education

Bryan Smith | Biblical Worldview Sessions | November 10, 2017

The most natural way to integrate faith and learning in Christian education is to pursue this work as biblical worldview shaping. We should teach all of the academics from the perspective of a biblical worldview, and we should attempt to show students how that perspective gives meaning and direction to all of life.

In this document we will consider how to pursue biblical worldview shaping by making use of an analytical tool developed by BJU Press called the Levels of Biblical Integration.

This tool seeks to distinguish significant instances of biblical integration from less-significant instances. The logic behind these levels is degree of connection between the Bible and the subject matter being taught.

My thesis in this analysis is that if we are to do a good job of worldview shaping, we will need to focus on Levels 2 and 3.

### **Level 0: No Integration**

Level 0 inserts the Bible through devotionals, prayer requests, and non-academic counsel. Even if biblical statements are made, there are no clear connections to the academic matter. There is nothing sinful about making use of Level 0. Any devout teacher will do this regularly. The problem comes when a teacher does only (or even primarily) Level 0. Such a teacher is not teaching Christianly. She may be *living* Christianly before the students, but she is not *teaching* her subject Christianly. And a school that focuses on Level 0 is not really a Christian school. It is likely a college-prep school staffed by Christians. In order for a school to be truly Christian, the learning in the classroom must be distinctively Christian.

### **Level 1: Referencing the Bible**

On Level 1 the teacher integrates the Bible into the learning, but he does so in a way that is not deeply connected to the learning. There are two common ways of doing this.

**Level 1a: biblical analogies.** Here, a teacher notes that something in the academic matter is similar to something in biblical teaching.

1. *Science*: comparing insect metamorphosis with a Christian's growth in sanctification
2. *Math*: comparing a circle to God's love for His people
3. *English*: comparing the impact that an adverb can have on a sentence to the impact of *how* a person obeys has on the obedience itself

This kind of biblical integration can be useful, but it tends to become ineffective if it is used a great deal. If a teacher overuses analogies, he will employ (sooner or later) analogies that are not very analogous. Of course, not all biblical analogies are poorly drawn. Some are appropriate and useful. But even then, there are limitations. Biblical analogies will always be marginal to the instruction of the classroom.

**Level 1b: biblical examples.** On this level, a teacher locates instances of the academic discipline in the Bible.

1. *Science*: noting that Adam's naming of the animals was a kind of classification (Gen. 2)
2. *Literature*: locating dramatic irony in the Joseph-Judah story (Gen. 42-44)
3. *Math*: noting evidence of  $\pi$  in the building of the temple (1 Kings 7:23)

This kind of biblical integration has a tighter connection to the learning. But here too we find limitations. Level 1b is good at demonstrating relevance: it shows that the Bible is relevant to the students' learning. But, of course, we want to show students that the Bible *rules over* these subjects. To accomplish that, we have to move beyond Level 1.

## Level 2: Responding with the Bible

On Level 2 the teacher helps the student apply the subject to real-life situations using the Bible as the authoritative guide.

**Level 2a: serving with the discipline.** Here the teacher encourages the student to apply the academic matter to obeying the Creation Mandate (Gen. 1:28) and to loving his neighbor as himself (Mark 12:30-31). This will require the use of authentic learning together with the application of the Bible's moral teaching.

1. *Math*: applying linear functions to building a wheelchair access ramp (Gen. 1:28; Lev. 19:18)
2. *Literature*: writing poetry that helps people deal with the reality of death (Gen. 1:28; 3:19; Heb. 2:14-15)
3. *English*: writing a research paper that helps people see problems in the thinking of modern secularism (cf. Timothy Larsen's *Crisis of Doubt*)

This kind of biblical integration is much more deeply embedded in the teaching of the discipline. Every instance could be itself an objective on the *apply* level of Bloom's taxonomy. The students are applying their learning to an instance of the Creation Mandate guided by the Bible's teaching that we should love our neighbors as ourselves.

**Level 2b: worshiping with the discipline.** On this level the teacher shows students how to use the academic matter to declare God's glory. According to Romans 11:36, everything in this world exists, ultimately, to declare the glory of God. For this reason teachers should at regular intervals show students how to use the subject matter to appreciate and declare God's glory.

1. *Science*: keeping a stargazing journal that includes reflections on the glory of God (Ps. 19)
2. *Literature*: using skill in journaling to keep a prayer/praise journal (cf. Edward Taylor) (cf. Ps. 119)
3. *History*: researching how the gospel came to you so you can praise God for His mercy and grace



### **Level 3: Rebuilding with the Bible**

On Level 3, we rebuild the subject based on the teachings of a biblical worldview. To make use of Level 3, we must remember the impact of the Fall. Everything in this world has been damaged by our fall into sin. The human mind is no less fallen than the body. For this reason, each of the subjects we teach is a mixture of good and evil—good from the vestiges of God’s original good creation, evil because of the entrance of sin.

A Christian teacher should seek to give students the skill needed to distinguish good from evil. She should also show the student how to formulate a proper redemptive response.

**Level 3a: evaluating the premises.** Remembering the fallenness of the human mind, a teacher should help students call into question the assumptions of a given academic discipline and then evaluate them from a biblical worldview.

1. *Language arts:* rejecting the objectivity of truth and appreciated all texts and cultures (postmodernism)?
2. *Science:* affirming uniformitarianism?
3. *Social studies:* affirming early hominid development in East Africa?
4. *Math:* asserting that math is completely objective and certain?

**Level 3b: rebuilding the discipline.** On this level, we attempt to sanctify the student’s thinking within a particular academic sphere by helping him rebuild the discipline with premises derived from a biblical worldview.

1. *Language arts:* affirming the reality of revealed Truth and evaluating works of literature from this assumption (Rom. 1; John 17:17)
2. *Science:* affirming Creation and the Flood and using creation science (2 Pet. 3:3-6)
3. *Social studies:* affirming Genesis 1-11 as history and building on its philosophical basis
4. *Math:* affirming human limitations and using math to model God’s world (Eccl. 8:17)

Level 3 has the deepest connections of all. If it is done properly, it requires a series of objectives that are aligned with Bloom’s three highest levels: analyze, evaluate, and create. To distinguish the facts of a discipline from its underlying assumptions, one must engage in the cognitive process of analysis. To make a judgment (based on a biblical worldview) regarding a discipline’s assumptions, one must evaluate the discipline. And to rebuild a discipline based on biblical assumptions, one must create (or maybe we should say *re-create*).

When we consider these connections, we realize that biblical integration is not at odds with academic rigor. It is instead bound up with academic rigor. In the end, we are not seeking to teach in a way that is academically rigorous *and* biblically integrated. We are attempting to teach courses that are academically rigorous from a biblical worldview.

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**SECOND TIER**

**WALKING ALONGSIDE THE FIRST-YEAR TEACHER**

**SECOND MEETING RESOURCES**

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# THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

## "Conviction for Christian Education"

Rev. Carl Haak

(e-mail: [Rev. Carl Haak](mailto:Rev. Carl Haak))  
September 1, 2002; No. 3113

Dear Radio Friends,

For many of us, this week will mark the return of our children to school. In light of that, we want to consider the Christian's conviction for Christian education.

Next to our love for the church of Jesus Christ stands our love for Christian homes and the schools organized by and existing as an extension of these Christian homes. We love the church as the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we love the Christian home and its extension, the Christian school, as the place where the precious seed of the church is nurtured, where our children are taught to know the Lord and to stand in awe of His mighty works.

We want to ask ourselves the question, as another school year begins, Why do we have Christian, parental schools?

We want to see that a Christian school arises out of conviction, not preference. A preference refers to what one chooses for reasons other than deep-seated belief, one that arises out of a mere preference of one over another and, in that sense, a priority. For instance, you may be applying for a job and you say, "I prefer not to work on Sunday." But, when push comes to shove and you are called to come in, maybe you say, "I made plans for the day. I prefer not." But if the employer says, "Listen, the job is on the line. Come in or else," then you go in. Then you had no conviction at all about the Lord's day. You made God's commandment a preference that you would follow if it suited - not a conviction.

A conviction, you see, is founded upon the belief that God has spoken to me in His Word, and is therefore a belief which is consistently followed in my life. A biblical conviction is the persuasion of faith that my duty in this matter of my life has been made clear to me in the will of God revealed in holy Scripture.

Christian schools must arise out of conviction. That conviction is this: that it is the calling of parents to educate their children according to what the parents believe. In [Genesis 18:19](#), God's Word concerning Abraham was this: For I know him, that he will instruct or train his children in the commandments of the Lord. The conviction for Christian education is that the parent is called of God to train his child in every area of life. And the goal of this training is to equip our children to live as children of God to the glory of God in this world. It is the calling of a parent to do that.

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Christian schools must then not arise merely out of a reactionist movement. The motivation for a Christian school is not simply to get away from that evolution and sex education stuff in the public schools, as people sometimes say. Yes, there are many shameful and false teachings in many schools. But that is not the primary reason or the core of our conviction for Christian education. Nor is the conviction for Christian education a desire to establish a physical kingdom of Christ on the earth, to

bring dominion, as it is said, to every sphere by Christian education. That is not our motive either.

But the conviction out of which a Christian school arises is this: it is the calling of parents to train their children according to what they believe so that their children might know how to serve the living God in every area of life. That is a parental responsibility. Isaiah 38:19, "The father to the children shall make known thy truth." This is the distinctive calling of a parent. Deuteronomy 6, 7, "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." And in Ephesians 6:4, Fathers, nurture your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

It is only the conviction that it is a parental calling to educate one's children that can hold the weight of a Christian school. Convictions are formed by the Word of God. Convictions are formed by the Word of God being brought to bear upon the heart of the believer. Convictions are not formed by arguments. They are not formed by straight-armed tactics. They are not formed by pressure of one group upon other individuals to conform. No. Convictions are sacred. The Holy Spirit brings the Word to bear upon my heart and shows me the way that I must go.

Let us look to the Word of God to form our conviction for Christian education.

What is it that you really want for your children? What should you want, according to the Word of God?

Of course, there are many things that we want for our children which, of themselves, are right and proper and which also rest upon our heart today. I am not referring simply to carnal things, for instance, a desire that your son be the leading scorer on a basketball team, or your daughter grow up to be beautiful or popular, or that your children grow up and have a beautiful home to live in. These are the desires which would center merely in the eyes of men.

No, our desires for our children center in the eye of God. We have, in that connection, many legitimate desires for them. We have questions: Whom are they going to marry? Who will their friends be? Where will they go and with whom? What work will they get? What about their future education in a college? All of these questions center in this: Where are they going to go to school as children and young people? What education are they going to get? What will be the environment? Will this education equip them, will it serve them, or will it be inadequate? We reject with all of our souls the attitude that education is only worthwhile if it teaches us how to make a dollar and to be successful. We want an education which will serve our children, in today's world, to teach them how to be a godly person in this world -- a godly husband, a godly wife, a godly parent - to teach them to be responsible, to live in the world as the friend-servant of God. We want that for our children.

In one word, we want godliness for our children - that they live a godly life. That is the most important thing in the world, that they live godly - unto God - in this world. That is not a false piety. That is what some people think when they hear of godliness. They think of a mask, of a pious look, of someone who is of no use to present-day situations in which people live. No, biblical godliness is what we want for our children - a full-orbed, solid, faith-rooted godliness.

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In the Scriptures we read, in Genesis 17:18, that Abraham expresses this desire for his flesh-and-blood thirteen-year-old son, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" Paul says concerning Timothy, his spiritual son, "This is my desire for you, Timothy, be not ashamed of the gospel nor of me its prisoner." Look into the book of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs turns the heart of a believing parent inside out and tells you what ought to be written in that heart. And what is that desire? "My son, be thou in the fear of God all thy days." Therefore Proverbs speaks to the son and daughter about their companionship,

about sexual purity, about greed, about honesty, about industry, about integrity, about a host of other subjects. We want our children to be men and women of God, thoroughly equipped, says the Scripture, unto every good work, possessing the comfort and the attractiveness of vital godliness. We want a generation which will be to the honor of God. We want to educate them in such a way that they will be wise to discern, skillful to work. That they will be delivered from folly, immorality, greed, pride, dishonesty, all of which stalk the youth of the land, and that they be stalwart sons and daughters fair, a nobility of grace in Jesus Christ. In short, we want for our children what lies in the bottom of our own heart by grace - that they might know Jesus Christ and know God and have eternal life in Him.

Now, a vital aid in attaining this desire is a good Christian school. What is a good Christian school? A good Christian school has three characteristics. First of all, it is parental. That is, it is run directly by parents of like-minded faith, through a board, and by teachers given their mission by those parents. It is not a school handed over to supposed experts who secretly believe that parents are ineffective at best in rearing children. It is not a school which goes off to draft its own mission statement of purpose or vision. It is not a school in which parents take an antagonistic stance against the teachers. But it is a parental school - a school which reflects the faith of the parents. It is a school in which parents have vital involvement of love and covenant fellowship with teachers and children and in which the teacher stands in the place of the parent, sharing the Reformed, credal belief of the parent.

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Secondly, this school is doctrinal. The basis of instruction in the Christian school is founded upon the truth of the infallible, inerrant, perfect Word of God. There is no place in the Christian school for the leaven of relativism. Relativism is the forsaking of absolutes in truth - absolutes of God's Word. Relativism is the idea that we really cannot be sure about anything. It comes off very pious sometimes. It is the idea that an educated person, an enlightened person, is the one who sees that the former absolutes, the former beliefs of bygone eras are not really so, and there is nothing really dependable, so what we need to do is to learn how to adjust. Therefore, we need to teach our children how to cope, how to adjust as best as they can to the fluctuations of society and to the fact that ultimately there is no solid truth to stand on except that which is right for them, so that they can make decisions in harmony with their own feelings. That is abominable before God - the leaven of relativism that has infiltrated public education with shameful compromise. Whenever the authority of the Bible is questioned, relativism infiltrates Christian schools. A good Christian school is built upon the Word of truth, upon this principle expressed in Romans 3:4: "Let God be true, but every man a liar." A good Christian school does not send forth her students upon the sea of life without a chart, with one paddle in a rubber dingy, but sets their feet upon solid ground and says to the children, "Come what may, this is the truth and it will not change."

Thirdly, a good Christian school is educational. It provides a well-rounded, academically sound education. A Christian school is not just a school with a Bible class and everything else that happens in the school is OK until 3:15 when the bell rings. Then we are done. Oh, no! A biblical school means that the Scriptures are applied in every realm of education. We must nurture them, says the apostle Paul in Ephesians 6. That is, their minds. I press all things, says Paul, into the service of Christ. I bring every thought into captivity to the Lord Jesus Christ (II Cor. 10). A good Christian school is not simply a school for those who have high IQ. Oh, no! That is not the case, either. But the talent given to each child is first of all prayerfully discerned and then skillfully, zealously, passionately developed according to the guidelines of God's Word. What a glorious thing is a Christian school! You must never, as a parent, downplay learning. It is the most fascinating thing that God has given to us as children - to learn of His wonders in Himself and in His creation and in all things as all things ultimately reflect the glory of God.

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This is what we want: a good Christian school - parental, doctrinal, educational - in which our children are trained unto godliness.

That is our conviction because of our commitment to the Scriptures as the inerrant, without error, Word of our sovereign God before whom we delight to bow and whom we delight to serve.

This is our conviction because of the truth of the authority, the perspicuity, or clarity, of holy Scripture. A good Christian school and the schools that Christians organize out of conviction are schools committed to the inerrancy of the Word of God.

We weep when we see in Christianity the subtle, and sometimes more and more blatant, proud denials of the inerrancy and infallibility of holy Scripture. Someday, perhaps, you will go to investigate a school for your child. You will ask, perhaps, "Where does this school stand in its sports program? What place does it give to sports?" You might receive a vague answer. You might receive one that you disagree with. You might ask the question, "What about the band and the music here? What about extra-curricular activities? What about college preparation? What about secretarial schools? What about home-ec?" And you may receive various answers, some that satisfy you and some that may not. But here is the question that you must ask and you must receive the right answer: "Where does this school stand regarding the holy Scriptures and the Reformed, biblical faith expressed in the creeds drawn from holy Scripture? Does this school, and the parents behind it, believe that Scripture is word for word the Word of God who cannot lie and therefore is to be trusted in all of its teachings?" The answer to that is either a "Yes," or a "No."

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For any church, or any Christian school, or any Christian organization to deny the clarity and authority of the Word of God as God's word, word-for-word, is to put the word "Ichabod" above their school, church, or organization. We cry in love to God and to His cause on earth, "Maintain the truth that the Bible is word-for-word God's Word." There is where your child must be instructed.

And in that school, teachers must instruct to a godly life, training up the child in the ways of God. This is our conviction for Christian education.

May God bless it in the coming year. Those who have the grace and privilege of such a school, may you not lose your vision. May you not lose your thankfulness. And may you not become complacent concerning this great gift that God has given you.

In areas and Christian communities where such a school is not to be found, may you be encouraged by the Word of God to labor faithfully in the love of God, one with another, for the establishment of such a Christian school. And as we go forth in this school year, may we do so in confidence as parents, believers, children, and young people.

When we stop to consider the work of Christian education, like all of the other works in God's kingdom, we see that it is awesome, serious, important, and overwhelming. We feel that way as teachers. We feel that way as parents. We feel that way as pastors and elders. We are weak and the world and its sin are strong. There seem to be few who are convicted of these things - the commitment and the taxing work of getting everyone together and behind one project and agreed is so very difficult. We become discouraged and skeptical and bitter. We say, "Well, we're spinning our wheels."

Oh, no! That is not true. A little experience in the work of God will teach you that it is exactly when we

feel at an end and that we cannot go on, it is exactly then that God is delighted to work in us and to give to us.

May He give us and preserve for us Christian schools, organized out of conviction for Christian education.

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Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for Thy holy Word. We pray that Thou wilt bless it unto our hearts. Amen.

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*Last modified: 12-Sept-2002*

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# Principles and Practices of Discipline in the Christian School

Joel Minderhoud and  
Michon Alsum

In preparation for a sectional at the 2014 PRTI Convention, we were struck that, to our memory, there had not been a sectional on “Discipline” for a number of years and that in the past 5–10 years we have had many new teachers join our ranks. Being such a vital part of our work as teachers, it seemed wise to us that we all—experienced and new teachers alike—review the basic principles and practices of Christian discipline.

We are firm believers that good practices are founded on good principles. And when it comes to Christian discipline we have to base our practices on biblical principles. So we begin our sectional with some biblical principles on Christian discipline and then try to develop a few good practices.

We are confident that all of our teachers are unified on the principles—but it is worth some time to remind ourselves of the basic principles. Where we might not all agree is in the application of the biblical principles. There are a multitude of godly parents who have raised godly children, but have used different practices. Surely, there may be different ways to apply the principles. We come today, not claiming mastery or that our way is the only way to discipline. What we present today is what we have learned over the years as teachers. But there are many other parents and teachers out there who have accomplished the same goal but in different ways. So we hope you receive the sectional in that spirit—a humble willingness to share what we do and a willingness to learn also from you.

## Part A: Principles

There are at least four broad areas of principles that we must have properly set before our minds when disciplining covenant children in our schools: our goal and calling, a proper view of the child, in whose place we labor, and the nature of how to wisely conduct discipline.

## Our Goal and Calling

Scripture demands that children be disciplined (Deut. 6; Prov. 22:6; Prov. 23:13, 14; Eph. 6:4); that is, children must be directed to live a life of obedience and service to God. Discipline is that entire activity of the parents (teachers) of training and directing the child of God to obey and fear Him. It is that work of parents by which they nurture as well as chasten the child to walk in the ways of the Lord. Therefore, discipline is not optional. It is not something we may ignore or become weary in performing (Prov. 13:24; Prov. 19:18; Matt. 18: 5–7, 10, 15–18; Gal. 6:9; 2 Thess. 3:13; Heb. 12:11). For teachers, who stand in the place of parents, discipline (in this broad sense of the word) lies at the heart of our work. In fact, all of our education hinges on good discipline. Failure to properly discipline will negatively affect all of our instruction, from maintaining an orderly environment in which learning can occur, to the actual spiritual growth of the covenant seed.

This is true, in part, because our goal in instructing our covenant children is that they learn in every sphere of life to fear God and keep his commandments (Psalm 111:10). In all of our instruction in the school we strive to teach the children to bow the knee to Jesus Christ as King, and to live their entire life, in every area, as obedient friend-servants of God. If we teach them all sorts of science, for example, but do not teach them to obey and fear God, we have failed. Teaching them to obey God necessarily involves disciplining them. As we discipline the children we will punish them using both the rod and reproof (Prov. 1:7–9; Prov. 22:15; Prov. 23:13, 14; Prov. 29:15; 2 Tim. 3:16–17). Punishments are the concrete means used to discipline (direct a child in the right way). Therefore, they are administered in love with the goal of

**Deuteronomy 6:6ff**  
“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house...”

**Proverbs 22:6**  
“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

**Proverbs 23:13, 14**  
“Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.”

**Ephesians 6:4**  
“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”



nurturing the child in the ways of God. Punishments will manifest themselves as a rod and a reproof. In theology we might make a distinction between punishments (given by God to the wicked with the goal of destroying them) and chastisements (given by God to the righteous with the goal of turning them from their sin). In this article we use the terms punishment and chastisement interchangeably—defined as the corrective measure used on the covenant child to turn them from their sin.

More specifically, we want their obedience to be genuine. We want them to obey God because they see God as the Almighty who calls them to obedience. But we *also* want them to obey out of gratitude for what God has done for them. This love for God and gratitude towards God must be based on something. Therefore, our instruction will show them the wondrous works of God that they might know (intellectually) who God is and what He has done. And our discipline will also direct them to know who they are and what God has done for them. Although we cannot put love for God in their hearts (“heart knowledge” or “knowledge of love”), we can and must use the God-given *means* (instruction and discipline) to direct them towards their God.

Finally, the goal of our discipline is that the children learn to be self-disciplined. Our goal and desire with discipline is that the children learn to *willingly* obey and serve God; not because father or mother told them to do so, but because they do so out of a genuine love for God (1 Chron. 29:9; 1 Cor. 9:17). We can have complete confidence that *in the way of* faithful instruction and discipline, God’s covenant children will continue to walk in His ways throughout their lives (Proverbs 22:6). In addition, when discipline has occurred we want them to submit to that

discipline and to genuinely repent (2 Cor. 7:9–10). They must learn that in the way of discipline they are directed to Christ and the foot of the cross for forgiveness. Therefore, discipline, though not pleasurable, will bring forth good fruit (Heb. 12:5–11; Prov. 3:11–12; Prov. 12:1, 15, 16).

### ***Proper View of the Child***

It is imperative before we do any instructing and disciplining we understand clearly that the students with whom we work are covenant children. There are two important things to remember about these children—they are sinners, and they are saints who are saved by grace alone.

### ***Sinners***

First, we note that they are sinners. Covenant children will do things they ought not do. They also will neglect to do what they should do. Both of these—sins of commission and sins of omission—need correction. We must not be blind or naïve regarding our children. They will sin. They do sin. From a certain perspective, their sins ought not to surprise us, because they have inherited a sinful nature as we have. We may not grow weary and turn our head the other way because we do not want to deal with a particular situation. In addition, we may not take their sins lightly, by thinking they are just kids and will grow up one day.

Understanding their sinful natures, we must be careful not to place temptations in their pathway. We must seek to create an environment that discourages cheating, dishonesty, or harassing, etc. Failing to supervise a test closely, for example, may place the temptation to cheat before the child whose sinful nature is inclined to do so. Or, recognizing that due to one’s sinful nature a child may be tempted to lie when

### ***Proverbs 13:24***

“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.”

### ***Proverbs 19:18***

“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.”

### ***Matthew 18:5–7, 10, 15–18***

“And whoso shall receive on such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!... Take heed that despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That

in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.... Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

confronted with his or her sins, teachers must carefully verify the events of a discipline case. Teachers must be conscious of the sinful natures of their students and through diligent supervision of the classroom and halls and careful investigation in discipline cases, wisely keep opportunity and temptation to sin from the children.

### Saints

Second, we must note that although they are sinners, they are also saints. As covenant children they have the Spirit of Christ in their hearts. They can and they do good works. They must not be treated as little heathens who will steal, lie, and cheat at every opportunity. But teachers must remember that the students have a desire to do good, and will do good works. Sometimes, in a discipline situation, we can lose sight of this and wrongly *assume* that the children in our care are lying about their actions. We sometimes err in discipline by emphasizing their sinful natures over against the work of the Spirit in their hearts. Sometimes we wrongly discipline those who should not have been disciplined on the basis of a mere assumption. Unjust punishment, in part, is what I believe the Scriptures warn against when it commands fathers not to provoke their children to wrath (Eph. 6:4).

We must learn to trust our children and to accept their “yea” as “yea.” We may (and must) try to *verify* their answers, but we must give them the benefit of the doubt, rather than charge them with lying in addition to another particular sin, without just cause.

This has practical implications. If I [Joel] could not be sure of the guilt of a child in a particular case, I have let the matter drop, telling the child that the matter is ultimately between him and God. If the child has lied to me, then God will be the judge and

will reveal his sins in time. This has happened in more than one case. In time the sins were revealed (and ultimately repented of and forgiven). In other cases, my suspicions were shown to be wrongly founded—the child had not done what I suspected. And I was grateful I had not wrongly disciplined him.

This is what makes discipline so very difficult. On the one hand the children are sinners and have a nature that is inclined to lie in order to (in their minds) escape punishment. We must not be naïve regarding this. On the other hand the children are saints and have the Spirit of Christ in them so that they do tell the truth and are genuinely sorry for sin. We must remember that God is perfectly just and perfectly judges all men. And although we strive to be just in our disciplining of our students, we must face the reality that we are not always correct in our judgment. Sometimes a child “gets away” with a sin, and sometimes we punish a child who did not deserve to be punished. We must be careful and deliberate in our discipline and pray for God’s blessing on our efforts. And we may be confident that God Almighty will use our discipline (even with its errors and shortcomings) to tenderly draw and turn His children from sin.

### In Whose Place we Labor—In Loco Parentis

Our schools are based on a precious principle—that we stand in the place of the parent (*in loco parentis*). The parent’s calling is to train up the child in the fear and admonition of the Lord. That means we, who stand in their place, must discipline the children whom God has placed in our care.

There are a few important things to remember in this regard. First, we have an authority in the classroom. We stand in the classroom with the authority of the parents. We must not shy away from this but realize that we have an authority to set rules and demand obedience. And we must remember that with this authority comes a responsibility. We must discipline the children when they disobey or break the rules. To do less is to neglect our responsibility and to undermine our own authority. But above all, we must love these children, as our own, in Christ.

In addition, parents must remember that they have called teachers to stand in their place. And part of doing so involves recognizing that each teacher simply cannot apply the principles of discipline exactly as each parent would. A teacher stands in for 25 sets of parents who have a range of ways of applying the principles of Scripture. It is, therefore, unlikely that their preferred method of applying a particular principle will occur in every teacher’s classroom. Parents must learn to submit to the way in which the teacher applies the principle. Parents must

### Galatians 6:9

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

### 2 Thessalonians 3:13

“But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.”

### Hebrews 12:11

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

be careful not to undermine a teacher's authority by publicly bad-mouthing the teacher or by not submitting to the discipline meted out by the teacher. In doing so, the parent ultimately undermines his/her own authority.

On the other hand, parents have every right to discuss matters of discipline and instruction with the teachers. Teachers must be open to such dialogue and should not become immediately defensive. Parents may have very good advice for us that we would be wise to heed. That does not mean that a teacher must implement every whim of the parent, but they must be approachable and willing to listen and hear the concerns of parents.

In this context, teachers must be willing to involve the parents in discipline. Parents need to be kept abreast of the discipline situations that occur at school. Since we stand in the place of parents, then parents need to know how their children are behaving in school. Parent-teacher conferences should not be the first time that parents are informed of the misbehavior of their child. In addition, parents can be very helpful in discipline situations. They understand the weaknesses of their children and can give helpful suggestions for your dealing with their children. Finally, teachers must not hesitate to seek advice from the principal, and perhaps, even school board members. They can be very helpful in difficult situations.

#### **Wisely Administering Discipline:**

We found at least six important principle-based ideas that ought to be followed in order to wisely administer discipline: discipline or punishment ought to fit the offense, fit the child; be just, be consistent, and be brought with the Word and forgiveness.

#### *Punishment fits the offense*

A basic premise of discipline is that the punishment ought to fit the offense—be connected to the sin. This idea flows out of the principle of discipline found in Ephesians 6:4, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” To nurture the children in the way they are to go, without provoking them to wrath, requires that we as clearly as possible make them see what their sin was. Our heavenly Father deals with us in this way. For example, when King David killed Uriah the Hittite (“hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon”), his punishment was that “the sword shall never depart from thine house” (2 Sam. 12: 9–14). The chastisements we receive from God for our particular sins are obvious to us and are

related to the sins we commit. (Understand that God sends us various trials and sicknesses in this life because of our general sinfulness. We cannot link every trial or sickness to a particular sin.) When there are serious sins in our lives, God as the perfect Father, chastens us in a specific way (related to the sin) to *make us see* our particular sin and to repent of it.

If the goal in administering punishment is that it be corrective and not merely punitive, then the punishment ought to be related to the offense, if possible. The goal in giving a particular punishment is to impress upon the child the *error of his way*. When the goal of the punishment is merely punitive, the child may be pained and inconvenienced. With such discipline, however, does the child really grow to see the sinfulness of his behavior? It would be better if the punishment was connected to the sin in order to help the child recognize the nature of his sin. Understandably, this will vary with the age and the maturity of the child. A punishment, such as a spanking (or a detention), will teach a child *that* he has done wrong. As the child matures the punishments he receives ought to more and more include elements that will bring a connection to the sin.

For example, if a child smears peanut butter on the wall of the classroom, then staying in at recess to write lines about how he will not smear peanut butter on the wall does not fit the offense very well. He should clean up his mess and perhaps have some additional cleaning to emphasize the extra work that his mess would bring to others. Writing lines, or having a detention, may also be appropriate as an *additional* punishment to deter and discourage such behavior. But, a detention or writing lines *in and of itself* does not necessarily fit the offense. Discipline brings good fruit when there is a *connection* between the sin and the consequence.

#### *Punishment fits the child*

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 important principle that each child has a unique personality that must be taken into account as we discipline our students. As stated before, the goal is that students see what they have done wrong and turn from it. For some students, a stern look is enough to reprimand them and steer them onto the right path. For others, they need to spend a detention at school or have some privilege taken away to help them see the error of their ways. Similarly, different students are at different maturity levels and must be dealt with accordingly. During my first year of teaching, I [Michon] tried a warn-

ing system to keep my students in line. When students misbehaved, I started with a verbal warning. Then, if they continued misbehaving, I wrote their name on the board. Finally, if they still did not stop the behavior, they were required to stay in at recess. I found out pretty quickly, though, that 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders don't need that many warnings to behave. My warnings really turned into "free" chances to misbehave before the consequences actually kicked in. They knew just how many chances they had. My students were too old for that system, and as a result, it was not successful. Implementing discipline strategies and punishments that fit the child is necessary for effective classroom management.

### *Just*

In our discipline of our children we must be just. Their sins must be punished. We cannot ignore or minimize the seriousness of their sins. The numerous commands and instructions in Scripture to discipline our children indicate our tendency to shy away or neglect the calling to discipline. Every parent and teacher can testify to that temptation. It seems to be easier and more pleasant to pass by or overlook a particular sin or disruptive behavior.

In this context we must remember that our discipline must be firm and unpleasant for the child. Punishment that fails to be firm will not be very effective (Prov. 22:15; Prov. 23:13–14). Scripture warns of this too with the example of Eli's lack of discipline of his wicked sons, Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam. 2:17; 22–25). Eli only lightly rebuked his sons. His discipline was far too lax. We too can fall into this snare. Bringing the rod and reproof to our children is not enjoyable. But we must have our eyes set on the peaceable fruit that is produced in the way of faithful discipline (Heb. 12:11).

On the other hand, we must remember that the Lord, in His justice, is also merciful. We need to have a sense of patience and mercy when we discipline our children. Sometimes we can be very upset with a child for a particular sin, and because the student has hurt us or committed a serious sin we can come down very hard on them—perhaps rashly or too harshly.

We can err in this area in a number of ways. Sometimes our punishments are based on how inconvenienced we were, rather than based on the sin committed. Other times the punishments we mete out can be too much for the offense. A student does not clean up his lab materials one day, and we then punish the student by making him clean the lab every day for the rest of the semester. The punishment in this case is too extreme. If we view punishment as merely a puni-

itive measure we will likely err on the side of being unreasonable. But if we view punishment as a corrective, nurturing means we will give more thought to an appropriate and reasonable punishment.

As in all things a balance must be found in this regard. Too soft a punishment makes a mockery of the discipline and does not accomplish the goal. Too harsh a punishment does not reveal the justice of God, whose judgments are just and appropriate for our sins. When we discipline we must ask ourselves, "Does the child understand why he/she was punished (that is, a connection can be found between the punishment and the offense? Is the punishment reasonable and just?" Let us give more thought (and more *time*—hasty discipline often lacks wisdom and justice) to our punishments to ensure that they are firm (to teach who God is and what He requires of us) but reasonable (done in love and with compassion to direct the child in the right path).

As we have seen and will see throughout this sectional, disciplining the covenant children takes much wisdom. To find the correct balance in the sharpness and appropriateness of our discipline requires great wisdom. What parent has not been told from their older children that they have eased up in their discipline with the younger family members? What teacher does not look back at his/her early years and see all sorts of discipline failures? Perhaps some of the weaknesses in our discipline in our early years of teaching and parenting is due to inexperience and a lack of wisdom. On the other hand, perhaps as we age we grow weary and lax in our discipline. May we not fall into either ditch—too harsh or too lenient. May God grant us the wisdom we need to properly discipline His covenant children. And above all, may we remember that *in the way of faithful obedience* (disciplining our children) God is pleased to use weak and sinful means to fulfill His will.

### *Consistent*

Few things are more detrimental to discipline than inconsistency. A teacher must know and draw the line for what kind of activity warrants discipline and what kind of activity does not. Then the teacher must work hard to ensure that when that line is crossed, the appropriate discipline is administered. Failure to consistently discipline can provoke a child to wrath (Eph. 6:4) and may lead to a lack of confidence in the teacher. Similarly a teacher must try to apply the discipline fairly to all children and not overlook some while disciplining others.

In this context, there is probably wisdom in having "school-wide" rules for

punishments for certain offenses. If a child cheats on a homework assignment in one class and receives a verbal warning, while another child commits the same sin in another teacher's class and is kicked out of school, then a serious inconsistency has occurred. To avoid such inconsistencies, schools are wise to have common policies and punishments outlined in their handbooks.

### *With the Word*

We must remember the goal of our discipline—to nurture (instruct) and chasten the child, so as to not dishonor God's name. We aim not at mere outward conformity to some laws and precepts. We are interested in genuine obedience out of a love for God. Since God is a God of *means*, He has ordained that the means we use to turn a child from sinful ways is His WORD and the ROD (Prov. 29:15). In discussing how the punishments must fit the offense and the child, we have discussed to some extent how we are to use the rod. The reproof we bring must include instruction from the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

In particular, the Scriptures must be used in two ways. First, the Scriptures show us that *what we did dishonored God and was wrong*. Teachers must learn the Scriptures and apply them to the situations that are faced in the classroom. Students must be shown, from the Scriptures, that they have transgressed God's laws. Second, the Scriptures teach us *that we are forgiven* in Jesus Christ. Teachers must also show the students that *in the way of repentance*, they will *experience* that God has forgiven them their sins.

In our desire to root out sin we can often err in ONLY showing the student the error of his way without giving proper attention to the forgiveness that we have in Jesus Christ through the way of our repentance. Without being shown the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ, the child will lack the important encouragement and assurance of salvation that is key to a covenant life with God.

### *Forgive and Forget ("Far as East from West is distant..." – Psalm 280:4)*

God wipes away all memory of our sins. "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 8:12; cf. Jer. 31:34; Ps. 25:6, 7; Ps. 103:12). We need to do the same for our students. When they sin, there may very truly be consequences. But when a matter is dealt with and repentance is made, we are to put the matter behind us and not bring up the sin again or hold a grudge against the student. Our students must be assured that we do not hold these sins against them. We must be able to move on later that day with the student and not treat them differently because they had

sinned against us.

This implies that discipline should be administered fairly swiftly, without being rash. A student should not be left for a lengthy period of time experiencing the anger of a parent or teacher without the knowledge of the consequences of the sin and without the experience of forgiveness.

When children observe this kind of forgiveness, they grow to love their teachers and grow to see the love of God working in and through the teachers. This experience alone is sufficient reason to have our precious covenant schools!

## **Part B: Dangerous and Unbiblical Philosophies and Practices**

When trying to determine what our own classroom discipline systems will look like, it is important first and foremost to choose practices that will reflect God's Word and His dealings with us. It is easy to get caught up in the world's philosophies and research-based strategies, but those should only be used when they line up with what the inspired Word teaches. We must ask ourselves, "Is this a biblical way to discipline?" We include a few unbiblical philosophies and practices that, on the surface, may seem acceptable, but yet, do not follow a biblical model of discipline.

Reward systems are an easy trap to fall into. Positive reinforcement is often a much more enjoyable way of managing a classroom than by using negative consequences. Besides, our society today would much rather emphasize positive behavior rather than drawing attention to the negative. But is this really a biblical way to discipline? Proverbs 13:24 says otherwise: "He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." This does not mean that there is absolutely no place for positive words, privileges, or small treats in a classroom. However, rewards must be used sparingly and ought not be used as incentives for obedience.

Having your students create a set of classroom rules at the beginning of the school year is another practice to consider carefully before implementing. This was something I [Michon] heard about a lot in college. If you really want to make your classroom a welcoming community, where each child feels valued and takes responsibility for his/her actions, try this. Again, at first, it sounds pretty nice. But, when we examine this practice more closely, we see that it encourages teachers to give up their God-given authority in the classroom and hand it over to their students. Even if the rules that students decide upon are good, the students have no right to make their own rules. God has not determined that children

have authority over their teachers and parents, but that they must learn to live under authority. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (Eph. 6:1).

The Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) is another dangerous idea. It is a whole system for school-wide behavior management. It includes a tiered system of interventions to deal with students and encourage positive behavior. The majority of the system focuses on encouraging students to behave positively by handing out rewards for good behavior. It also emphasizes a need to teach students how to behave properly in many different environments. Within this system, the assumption is that children do not know what good behavior is, so teachers must spend ample time showing children examples and non-examples of how to behave in different settings: classroom, bus, bathroom, etc. One problem with this is that it falsely assumes children do not know the difference between right and wrong. But all men do know when they sin — “their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another” (Rom. 2:15). Another problem with this system is its extreme emphasis on positivity. If you have a rule for the kids, it must be stated positively. “Don’t budge in line” is not an acceptable way to deal with misbehavior. You should instead say, “Please wait your turn.” In addition, it seems that there is a desire to disregard the fact that our children are sinners who, at times, need to be reprimanded for things done wrong. This system also assumes that as long as students are taught how to act, most of them will behave properly. When students misbehave, then, it is not seen as a matter of a sinful nature as much as a matter of ignorance because of unclear rules. Finally, when there are students who cannot seem to behave within the system of positively stated rules and rewards, when those students are moved up to the second or third tier of more intensive interventions, even there we still find no mention of discipline based on God’s Word. Instead, interventions must be “research based” and “scientifically validated.” This is a dangerous way to discipline. When we begin to place our trust in man’s research apart from the Bible to guide our discipline, we’ve gone the wrong way.

### Part C: Practices for Preventative Discipline

We must correct and discipline the students God has placed in our care. But many situations which may require corrective discipline can easily be prevented. And so the saying is true: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. In

our experience, we have found that there are three general practices that are helpful for Preventative Discipline: Presence, Preparation, and a Proper Example.

#### Presence

In my years of teaching I [Joel] found that one of, if not the most effective way to prevent troubles in the classroom is to be in the classroom. Mr. Cal Kalsbeek always reminded us younger teachers to “meet the kids at the door.” And the veteran teachers could be found at the door waiting for the students to arrive. Two things were accomplished by that: (a) teachers could meet and greet each student (and at the same time do attendance), and (b) students knew that the teacher was right there, so no bullying, no horsing around, no cheating was going to occur as quickly.

That has been our experience as well. When we don’t meet the kids at the door, and the classroom is unlocked, the kids are invariably looking into and touching materials, equipment and other things that they ought not. But when we are present as the students arrive, trouble is averted. Or, when we teach, if we sense someone is misbehaving, we will move toward the student or students that we are concerned about. Just standing closer to them ends the problems without a word needing to be said. The same is true in the hallways. Where no teacher is, trouble is likely to be brewing. But if teachers are present, students are more quickly to behave as they ought.

If you want to avoid discipline issues, it is wise to be in your classroom—not chatting with the teacher across the hall, not out getting a cup of coffee, not sitting behind your desk grading papers or making lessons, not in the lab making solutions or cleaning up. You need to be with the students.

#### Preparation

If not the best way to prevent discipline, being prepared is a close second for preventing discipline problems.

When you walk into your classroom you must be prepared. That preparation includes what you will be teaching that day, the activities that accompany the lesson, and the homework and worksheets and other materials needed for the day.

Your preparation begins with being to class on time. Even before the bell rings, your preparation shows. Are you ready to teach? Or are you scrambling around for handouts, materials, etc.? If you are not attentive to the students and ready to teach, then trouble is brewing. You need to start engaging the students the moment class begins. For some teachers that engagement may not necessarily be

imparting new knowledge, but you have to be attentive to the students and they need to know you are in charge and in teacher-mode. How will you collect the homework? What is the most efficient way of checking homework or collecting it? What is your first move in instruction? Do you have a plan of attack for your delivery of content? Do you have all the supplies for your activity, or do you have to dig through a drawer or a cupboard or run across the hall to see if your colleague has some extra matches? Obviously, we are not perfect and sometimes we forget the matches. But if the times we overlook something is a rare situation, the students will not be ready to get rowdy. But if your lack of preparation is regularly observed, students will begin to take advantage of this. Besides this, it communicates to the students that you are not prepared to teach. They will respond with a similar attitude—they will not be prepared to learn.

Sometimes it helps to think like kids think. What would a kid do or say in this situation? If you can anticipate what will happen in your classroom, you can prevent many discipline situations. Students, in many ways, act in a predictable manner. After a number of years, you know exactly what they will do during that first lab in which distilled water bottles are available. They will squeeze them and get others wet. You must anticipate this and address this temptation before it becomes a problem. Perhaps you have done an activity and everyone seems to get bottle-necked at a certain lab station. When this happens kids are standing around and trouble ensues. So to make sure there are fewer bottlenecks, a teacher may have more than one station, or have the students start the project at slightly different times.

You must learn to anticipate and be prepared for problems. The more you can anticipate and address by the way you organize your classroom and activities, the fewer discipline issues will arise.

### ***Proper Example***

As in all things of life, you do well by being a good example yourself. Your attitude towards the school rules and the administration is quickly read by your students. You undermine your own authority if you undermine the decisions made by the administrator or the school board.

And you and I alike are sinners. Students need to see us apologizing for our sins and mistakes. Nothing is more harmful to student-teacher rapport than a teacher who never admits his mistakes. Owning your mistakes is not a sign of weakness, but shows genuine maturity. The students will grow in their love and

respect for you when they see you admit your mistakes. This in turn will help to prevent disruptive and disrespectful behavior.

## **Part D: Practices for Corrective Discipline**

Despite how much we try to prevent discipline issues, we will have to deal with sinful behaviors. This will require us to administer corrective measures. When we must correct students for sinful activity we must remember some of the areas of emphasis and basic principles that we outlined earlier. Remember the goal of your discipline. This is always the key. If you remember that the goal is to nurture and chasten the covenant child so that he grows to honor and obey God, then you will be properly guided to administer corrective discipline. In addition, you must remember that the covenant children are sinner-saints and must be approached and treated that way. Do not forget to keep parents informed and involved and be open to their suggestions. When you administer some form of punishment remember to evaluate the punishments. Does the punishment fit the offense (connected to the sin)? Is the punishment appropriate for the age and nature of the child? Is the punishment reasonable and just for the offense that was committed? Have you been consistently punishing this sin? Have you used the Word to show the child his sin? And have you used the Word to show the child the way of repentance and forgiveness in Jesus Christ? And after the matter has been dealt with (sin addressed, consequences given, repentance offered, forgiveness granted) have you assured the child that truly the matter has been forgiven and you will remember those sins no more?

We take no further space to give examples or illustrate corrective discipline. But we encourage teachers to pray for wisdom to apply these principles to the unique and challenging situations which they will encounter. In fact, we must pray for grace to discipline. Our nature is to turn away from the sins and try to ignore them. As difficult of a task as it might be, we must discipline these children—for they are children of the covenant that must be directed in the ways of God.

### ***Corporately***

One final matter to consider is the corporate nature of our discipline. The Scriptures teach that God deals with us organically. We are a body of believers and He in His perfect wisdom and justice sends judgments upon us organically. Therefore, a Daniel can pray, “We have sinned,” though he personally did not commit the sins worthy of captivity; the church in Corinth could be admonished

for toleration of the sin of fornication, though not necessarily everyone personally tolerated it; the nation of Israel suffered many defeats in battles and captivities because of the sins of the nation, though not everyone actively committed those sins. We may face the judgments of God on the United States, though not personally committing outwardly the certain sins that characterize the nation.

So, in our classrooms we sometimes discipline the entire group and we tell the kids that we do so because they share in the sin and guilt of the classmates—they are corporately responsible. This is an important principle that we must teach our children. We must all learn this truth because our natures are opposed to this. I think that we all have experienced situations where we did not think it just that we, or our children, were punished as part of a body because of the sins of the body. Nevertheless, Scripture teaches that we share in the guilt of our fellow saints. “But *the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan... took of the accursed thing; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel*” (Josh. 7:1).

The difficulty, however, is in recognizing exactly *when* we should punish the entire group and *how* to do so. Though a case could be made that all share in the guilt of the sins of individual classmates, should we in every instance punish the whole, and to the same degree? What dangers might we face in punishing corporately?

Consider what Mr. Fred Hanko, Sr. says about corporate punishments in a 1996 issue of *Perspectives* (vol. 21:2, 3).

Many teachers have gotten themselves into impossible positions through the use of mass punishments. Often it happens something like this: Some student in the class has done something very wrong, such as writing graffiti on the washroom wall, and the teacher is sure that others in the class know who is guilty. The teacher is certain that someone in his class is responsible. He tells the class that they will lose all recesses until the guilty person confesses or until others in the class report the guilty person to the teacher or persuade him to confess.

Although it's not wrong for a teacher to impose such a punishment, it is usually most unwise to do it. If no student comes forward, the teacher is in serious trouble. You can keep the students in only so long and you will have to cancel the punishment. The private code of students that says a student does not report the misdeeds of another no matter how serious will probably prevail in this situation. The students will, in such circumstances, feel required to band together against the teacher.

You need to consider all possible outcomes before you impose such a punishment.

Group punishment may sometimes be appropriate, however. I think that it can be used in the appropriate situation as a way to teach corporate responsibility. If, for example, I have to be out of the classroom for some good reason and a number of students misbehave. It is usually impossible to determine exactly which of the students were responsible. I may, then, keep the whole class in during recess and explain to them that people are responsible for the misdeeds of others *when they are aware of them and make no attempt to discourage them*. It is an important lesson: we are our brother's keeper. We may hope that this lesson will carry over to the playground where students frequently use the worst kind of language, and no fellow student even attempts to discourage them [emphasis mine, JM].

I agree with Mr. Hanko on the danger of group punishment. One better evaluate very carefully before making such a punishment (keep them inside *until* someone confesses). A teacher is in a losing situation in that case.

His comments also touch upon *when* we should punish the whole for the sins of a few. Though all the students share in the guilt of a sin to a certain degree, they do not necessarily need to be punished corporately for each sin. For example, if in a class a small group of students in the back is rowdy, we would be wise in not applying a group punishment. The individuals must be punished for their own specific sins. In the case of Achan, for example, though all of Israel was guilty, after careful examination Achan's family was specifically punished. Teachers must strive diligently to determine which individuals are primarily responsible for misbehavior in a classroom setting.

At other times, however, it is wise to punish the entire group. Although God does not necessarily bring judgments upon the entire body for *each* particular sin of an individual, nevertheless, at other times God wisely punishes the whole because we *need* to be disciplined. We may not be *actively* involved in a particular sin of some members of the congregation but we may be inclined towards that particular sin or commit such a sin in our hearts. In such cases, God wisely and lovingly visits the entire body with various judgments to make us aware and turn us from our sins, as He did with all of Israel in the matter of Achan and the loss in the battle to Ai (Josh. 7:10–12).

This should guide us in our application of group punishments. If a class repeatedly becomes rowdy we might wisely apply a group punishment. Classes



that are regularly disruptive need to learn proper behavior and it would be wise to keep them all in for recess. In such a case, students who may not have initiated the misbehavior may share in the guilt because of their “silence or connivance” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 99). As teachers, we need wisdom in considering whether or not an entire class *needs* to be punished in a particular case for the sake of leading them to see their own motives and sinful natures. Could all the students benefit from a group punishment in which we encourage them to proper behavior, and also discourage inappropriate behavior? Here the teacher must exercise wisdom to determine which circumstances necessitate a group punishment and rightly discern when the body needs a group punishment.

What can make proper corporate discipline so very difficult is the degree of involvement that can be found in a classroom. There are in a classroom the individuals that initiate the misbehavior, as well as those who laugh along and encourage a small group of students to continue in their antics. But, there can be also those who admonish and discourage their classmates from such behavior. In such cases, a teacher must use wisdom to determine whether or not all should be punished for the misbehavior of the few.

Corporate responsibility is an important principle. Applying it correctly, as is true for many things, is more difficult and requires great wisdom. We do well to examine our use of group punishments. Perhaps, we too easily use corporate punishment as the “easy way out,” rather than doing a bit more investigating and punishing the individuals who are the primary guilty parties. Or perhaps, our class would benefit from the use of some corporate punishment, by which we drive the sinful desires from the hearts of all the students, who actively or not, share in such a sin. All of this takes great wisdom. May we call upon God to grant us the wisdom in our use of corporate punishments.

## Part E: Conclusion

What an amazing and challenging work we have to do each day! God calls us to discipline the covenant children so that they learn to fear God and keep His commandments. Ultimately, all discipline is performed so that God’s name is honored and not blasphemed. This goal must govern all we do in regards to discipline.

For such a high calling, we do well to examine our teaching and our discipline efforts. Examine how things are going in your classroom. If you are having discipline issues in your classroom, ask yourself:

- a) Am I sufficiently prepared?
- b) Am I present in my classroom?
- c) Is my discipline based on biblical principles? Or have I adopted worldly techniques and philosophies of discipline?

And when you discipline, if you find that the student or parent does not agree with your discipline, ask yourself:

- a) Was the consequence just? Or did I provoke to wrath?
- b) Did the consequence fit the offense? Is there a connection, if possible, between the two?
- c) Have I been consistent? Or am I more moody or sensitive to this activity today? Or perhaps am I weary of discipline?

Discipline is required of the Christian school teacher. It takes work and wisdom. May we study God’s word to guide us in all of our work—particularly the work of discipline. May we spend much time in prayer asking God for the wisdom and grace to properly lead and discipline the lambs of Christ. Finally, be assured that God Almighty will bless the faithful labors of parents and teachers alike and will use our efforts (as weak and frail as they are) for the up-building of His covenant children. Thanks be to God for His work in and through us!

“So let there be on us bestowed  
The beauty of the Lord our God;  
The work accomplished by our hand  
Establish Thou, and make it stand;  
Yea, let our hopeful labor be  
Established evermore by Thee,  
Established evermore by Thee”  
(Psalter 246:3)

David J. Engelsma

# REFORMED

# Education

## The Protestant Reformed Teacher

### CHAPTER

*Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. Buy the truth, and sell it not...*

—Proverbs 23:22, 23

In this chapter, we come to the heart of our subject. For we treat here, not only what the Protestant Reformed teacher is to be, but also what the position of the Protestant Reformed teacher is, and what he or she does. We will take up the truth that the teacher stands in place of the parents and that this necessarily implies that the work of the teacher is essentially the work of rearing covenant children. From this follow important practical considerations concerning the credentials of a teacher, as well as certain considerations pertinent to parents.

It is fitting that we treat the heart of the subject of Reformed Christian education in connection with the teacher. Although it is a slight exaggeration to say that the school is its teachers (for God has blessed and used schools that suffered for a time with poor teachers), the thrust of the exaggeration is correct: Christian education is Christian teachers teaching covenant children.

After the building is up, the principles printed, and the teacher training completed, Christian education begins—the



*The Christian School  
as Demand of the Covenant*

mystery of teaching. It is a mystery. It is more than a good lesson plan. It is more than a brilliant scholar before children. It is a gift. A good Christian teacher and good Christian instruction are great gifts of the Holy Spirit. There was good reason why the original 21st Article of the Church Order of Dordt called for good schoolmasters: "The consistories shall everywhere see to it that there are good schoolmasters . . ."

### ***The Teacher Stands "in the Place of the Parents"***

It is an integral part of the covenantal conception of the school to view the teacher as standing in the place of the parents. The day school is a demand of the covenant, an aspect of the parents' calling in the covenant. Therefore, the school is an extension of the home, a parental school, and the teacher's status is that he stands in the parents' place, or office.

This defines the authority of the teacher with regard to the students: it is nothing less than the authority of the parent, nothing less than God's authority given to parents, nothing less than the authority referred to in the fifth commandment: "Honour thy father and thy mother . . ." (Exod. 20:12). This must be preached to the children by the pastor in sermons on the fifth commandment. It must be inculcated upon the children by the parents. It must be insisted on by the teacher himself.

For parents to connive at their children's disrespect for any teacher, much more to foster disrespect, is for parents to assist in making rebels whom God will cut off from the land, and is for parents to cut their own throats. It is the parents' own authority in the teacher that they are undermining. There may no more be disparagement of teachers in the presence of the children than a disparagement of each other by parents. As regards the teacher's weaknesses and faults, parents and students alike must always keep in mind the instruction of the Heidelberg Catechism as to how God requires

us to respond to the "infirmities" of those in authority: "patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand" (Q. 104).

That the teacher stands in place of the parents is the historic Reformed conception of Christian education. Dr. H. Bouwman wrote:

The rule ought to be, that the school originate with the parents. According to the ordinance of God, the full task of rearing rests first of all upon the parents. To the many aids which serve to assist the parents in this rearing belongs especially the school. The school takes over a part of the task of the parents. It follows from this, that the school must stand on the same foundation as the Christian family, that is to say, on the ground of the covenant . . .

When Bouwman sums up what he has said about Christian schools, his first point is this: "That according to Reformed principle, the schools must originate from the parents." As biblical basis for this position, he appeals to Deuteronomy 4:9, 10; Deuteronomy 6:7, 20; Ephesians 6:4; and Colossians 3:20, 21.<sup>1</sup> The Dutch educator, T. van der Kooy, wrote:

Considering the Christian school in its nature, we find as its distinctive feature that it pretends to be nothing further than a school; that is to say, an institution auxiliary to the family in the education of the children for their position in life. It is content with this supplementary function.<sup>2</sup>

It is necessary for us to maintain this view of the school over against a challenge to it. The challenge is that the school must be viewed as an independent, sovereign sphere, so that the teacher is independent of the parents. The school then becomes a teachers' school instead of a parental school, and the students become the pupils of the teacher rather than the children of the parents.

This challenge is raised by the ICS. This becomes apparent

1. Bouwman, *Geformeerd Kerfrecht*, 520, 521. The translation of the Dutch is mine.

2. van der Kooy, *Distinctive Features*, 30.

in the educational creed of Olthuis and Zylstra. It speaks of a free, sovereign teaching office, apart from parents.<sup>3</sup>

But this is always an incipient threat within the Reformed setup. It was a threat in the Netherlands in the 1800s, so much so that the watchword of many Reformed believers became, "The school belongs to the parents." The implication was: not to the teachers!<sup>4</sup> A sovereign school with independent teachers was suggested in discussion at the convention of the National Union of Christian Schools in 1930. After a lecture on "The Relationship between Parent and Teacher," there was a discussion that centered on the speaker's assertion that the relationship between teacher and parent was that of employer and employee. Someone suggested that the teacher's position is "something like sovereignty within a certain, particular sphere of action."<sup>5</sup>

Where this notion creeps in, the teachers regard themselves and their work as independent, resent parental "intrusion," and fail to view themselves as servants of the parents.

The justification for this view is that the teachers are competent in the field of education, whereas generally the parents are not. In fact, in many cases, the parents are not even well-educated. It is supposed that sovereign educators, unhindered by blundering parents, will make for a better school and better education.

It is essential that we turn down the challenge and retain parental schools, both in theory and in practice. An educator's school will not be better but will spell the doom of the

3. See James H. Olthuis and Bernard Zylstra, "An Educational Creed," in *To Prod*, 167-170, especially articles 6, 9, and 10.

4. van der Kooy, *Distinctive Features*, 34.

5. National Union of Christian Schools, "The Distinctive Character of the Christian School Movement," book for convention held in Chicago in 1930 (N.p.: National Union of Christian Schools, 1930), 74ff.

Christian school, because it cuts itself off from the root of Christian education, from its own life source: the covenant of God with parents and the Word of God to parents. It will either lose support—the zeal of the parents and then inevitably their money—or it will lose its Reformed covenantal character. The Christian school must fully and wholeheartedly show itself—to the parents, too—as the home's extension. There is something seriously wrong when teachers and parents begin to think of each other as "us and them." The fact is that "we are they, and they are we."

Since teachers stand in the place of the parents, they are servants. We must avoid the endless wrangling whether teachers are professionals, or sovereigns, or employees. Christian teachers are servants. They are servants of snout-nosed children, of uneducated parents, and of God; and they are servants of God by being servants of parents and children. Therefore, teachers are lowly, very lowly. But according to the law of the kingdom, exactly in this lowliness they are very great, so great that sufficient honor cannot be given them. He who would be great in the kingdom, let him be the servant; not the lord, but the servant of all, according to the example of Him who washes our feet and died for us.

The Christian teacher must be humble, not puffed up over his degrees, knowledge, and abilities, but lowly on account of his sins. He lives in this consciousness: What do I have that I have not received? As a minister, I am not unaware of what may be a sore temptation for the teacher: exposure to the constant scrutiny and criticism of everybody, including those who are less qualified in the field in which they offer criticism. One reason why so many men avoid or leave the pastorate is that in the pastorate a man is subject to the judgment and criticism of every member of the congregation. Sunday after Sunday, schoolboys, housewives, and ditchdiggers weigh his sermons and do not hesitate to find them wanting. This is a

blow to pride. It is similar with the teacher. The answer for the teacher is humility.

That the teacher is a servant does not mean that every whim of every parent is simply carried out by the teacher. This is impossible anyway. There is a school board and an association. But it does mean that the teacher is to *listen* to every whim of every parent and to listen in such a spirit as indicates that he knows the parent's right to speak on the matter of his child's education and as indicates that he is ready to give account of his teaching or discipline.

The servant position of the teacher does not mean that the teacher is allowed no liberty in the sphere of his labor, that he becomes a mere puppet of the parents. This is a warning to parents to let the teachers teach and not to be looking over the teacher's shoulder at every move he makes, as I look over the shoulder of the mechanic working on my car—to his great harassment and absolutely no advantage to myself. Within the framework of parental authority there is ample room for the free, unhampered labor of the teacher. It is impossible to spell this out in exact detail, to formulate a codebook. Love, trust, and responsibility always run the risk of meddling on the one hand and overstepping bounds on the other hand.

The general relationship between parent and teacher has been pointed out. Abraham Kuypers wrote:

The father decides in what spirit his child will be educated. The church decides concerning the principle by which that spirit can be purely preserved in the instruction. The state decides the educational standards and requirements. But the way now in which the child shall meet those standards and requirements in that spirit and according to the demand of that principle is for the instructors to decide, the teachers and professors themselves.<sup>6</sup>

6. Abraham Kuypers, "Ons Program" (Amsterdam: Hóveker and Wormser, 1880), 231. The translation of the Dutch is mine.

According to Dr. Bouwman, "As to the manner of instruction, the school itself decides, but the parents prescribe what must be taught and in what spirit."<sup>7</sup>

But the servant position of the teacher does mean, as van der Kooy said, that "the Christian school... is content with its relation to the home. It respects the rights of the family. It does not usurp any prerogatives of the home... It never undermines the home."<sup>8</sup>

7. Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, 520. The translation of the Dutch is mine.  
8. van der Kooy, *Distinctive Features*, 31.

# Discipline in the Classroom

Jay Kalsbeek

We have been interviewing lately for several positions we have open in our small school. One of the questions I ask is: How do you handle the discipline aspect of teaching? The aspiring teacher has had little if any experience in this matter. But this is not asked to trip them up. Discipline is a very important part of teaching and plays a role as we shape and guide these young children, especially in their daily walk. The root cause of this need for discipline is sin and we know that even as we sin and are in need of a Savior, so also do children sin and need the same Savior.

So I got introspective. I asked the same question of myself. How do I handle the discipline aspect of teaching? I have been teaching over fourteen years now and I also have five boys. I have a lot of experience with discipline. I know that new teachers often struggle to “lay down the law” and to be disciplinarians; they have no experience, they want their students to like them, and they want to maintain a nurturing attitude. I know that it takes time and experience to come to grips with this difficult aspect of teaching.

Is my discipline perfect? Not by any stretch of the imagination. I might be right in giving discipline but wrong in my administration of it. So I have to work very hard on what I believe is the proper administration of discipline. Discipline is leading the child (student) to know his or her sin, repent from it and live out of thankfulness for the grace shown in Christ’s sacrifice. And, oh yes, sometimes it means punishment.

My method of discipline involves sitting down with the student or students and taking a good look at the reason for being in trouble. Does the student or students understand the sin involved? If I do not have the exact passage of scripture then I reference it and look it up later. This problem is not just a sin against each other or me. It is sin in the eyes of God. Sometimes the realization of this fact is enough to bring the student to tears. But are they tears of repentance?

I try to bring that student or those students to reconciliation and

repentance. Sometimes it is about a disagreement between students. Repentance is giving a heartfelt apology and reconciliation is forgiving. This is something students understand. They apologize to one another and forgive one another. I stress that this sin is forgiven and must be put away. No more does it cause them to fight. They must now live their repentance by loving one another. If they are truly sorry then they will not repeat or fall back into that sin. They will go forward always striving to live in love. As nice as this sounds, it is hard to do. The awfulness of pride will often get in the way. If the issue is between students then they must shake hands and make eye contact before they leave the room.

I do not have many rules for my classroom. But I do have two: (1)

Love God and (2) Love your neighbor. If the problem is not between neighbors, then it is against God. Some of these sins include laziness and sloth, anger, disrespect, wasting time, wasting God-given talents, and pride. Even in these cases the student must have his sin pointed out and he must repent. And there are numerous scripture passages that can be used: Proverbs 8:13, 11:2 (pride); Proverbs 18:9, 24:30ff (laziness); etc.

God is not just a God of love as so many want to believe today. He is also a God of justice and he demands justice. Sin does not go unpunished. Even if he has to punish his own Son by way of the bitter and shameful death of the cross, sin does not go unpunished. And there are consequences for sin. David’s murder and adultery were covered in the blood of Christ but the sword would not leave his house forever. Adam and Eve were forgiven their transgression in the garden and that was also covered by Christ but they were not allowed to return to Eden. So also in our lives, there are consequences for sin; the drunken driver might lose his license or the adulterous man his wife.

Punishment must fit the transgression; giving a student a failing grade for cheating on a test is an example of the punishment fitting the crime. Giving the student a failing grade because he pushed a student at recess doesn’t really fit the crime. Making a student put his head down for being disrespectful might fit the crime but making him put his head down because he cheated might not really apply. Writing lines is not really a way to mete out punishment. It is simply busywork. I avoid it.

I do not like to discipline a student in front of class. It is belittling and humiliating for the student. I will generally speak with the student after class and discipline them then. But sometimes, in the case of public sin, I will deal with it immediately by pulling the student out of the classroom. Discipline should not be a public spectacle.

I make it a point to close all discipline sessions with prayer. In some cases

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this is necessary as the offense is before God and we must repent and reconcile with God. But prayer is also the chief means of grace and sin is the great separator, a time when we need God more than ever. So I pray with the student and for the student, and God gives the increase. And what a lesson this is for the student. I follow the same pattern with my own children and the punishment (generally a spanking) is easier than the prayer at the end.

When the discipline is finished, it is also over. No more do I go back and reference it. Does God continue to harp on our sins and errors? No, once it is confessed and forgiven it is put away. This is contrary to human nature where we want to remember sins and bring them up at times advantageous to us. So I must put it away and move onward. God knows the heart. If repentance is genuine or false, God knows. He will deal with that aspect. I put it away.

I believe it is important for new teachers to realize that they will be in charge of the hearts and activities of their students. They need to be aware that they will have to administer discipline and it is part of their calling as a teacher, who stands in the place of the parent. The question is not meant to frighten or even qualify them for the position. How could it? They have no experience. So I evaluate their response and their desire to discipline properly. And I have never been disappointed in their responses. Now, if only they remember to carry it out in their own classroom.

# Teaching Devotional Skills to Christian School Children

By Shaun Karsemeyer

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14). These words ring true to every child of God, young and old. As Christians, our fervent desire is not only that God hear us in our prayers and in our worship, but also that what God hears is beautiful to Him. This is why we ask that God incline His ear to hear us. We would not ask that if we did not intend our prayers and our worship to be false or half-hearted!

We, along with the psalmist also cry aloud, "O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97). It is in this light that we must see that it is the duty of our Christian schools to teach our children not only biblical stories, but also biblical truths and how to present these truths before others.

As school teachers, parents have entrusted their children to us for a large part of the day. While much of the day is spent learning about God's creation in our math, language, history, and science, it is also a large part of the Christian teacher's responsibility to teach the students of those in our church(es) who have special needs that should be remem-

bered in prayer. Found on that list are very general groups of people, such as the aged, the lonely, and those who wander from the church. I also include specific cases of need, such as saints having surgery or suffering from a serious illness or disease, and of course, our minister, missionaries and seminary students.

"And now, little children, abide in him" (1 John 2:28). This is the verse I use at the beginning of the year when I introduce devotions to my class.

The following are the reasons I give to the students as to why they need to learn devotional skills:

1. They abide in God when they pray to Him and discuss His Word. It must be their desire to also worship Him and to stand in His presence.
2. They must learn devotional skills at a young age. They do not have to wait until they are older. As soon as they are able to read the Bible and speak a prayer, they should be doing these things.
3. The students will one day be required to lead devotions. One day, they, too, will lead their families, societies, or perhaps even classrooms or congregations in prayer and devotions. For this reason, it is important for them to listen carefully as their parents, teachers, and

ministers pray and lead devotions. Therefore, when students are asked to prepare for devotions in school, they must do so with this in mind.

4. They are leading their peers into the Lord's presence! They are speaking and praying on the behalf of their classmates. What a large responsibility! It must be understood by the children that they must not do their devotions half-heartedly! "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).
5. "Ye are of God, little children" (1 John 4:4). They must be taught how to approach God. They must make this their desire in life and make it their habit as well.

The Christian school is only an extension of the godly home. What is taught in school does not replace what is taught at home. No, it simply extends and continues the work that godly parents have begun and have passed on to the Christian teacher. Therefore, as students, parents, and teachers, we must all have the same godly attitude toward this development in a Christian young person's life.



(Mr. Karsemeyer teaches at Hope Christian School in Redlands, California.)



# The Reformed Teacher's Devotional Diligence

Jason Holstege

Devotional time is a vital part of the day for the child of God. By “devotional time” I am referring to those parts of the day, usually at set points, when we set aside the earthly labors which occupy our time and pay especially close attention to giving glory to God in the careful reading, singing, and praying of His Word. It is an act of worship, so that we, as the covenant friend-servants of our God, might know and bless and thank Him for His efficacious saving work in Christ Jesus, as well as for His continual presence with us and with His church through the ages.

Understanding that the purpose and elements of devotions (worshipping God by careful reading, singing, and praying of His Word) are similar for all situations, whether as an individual in his “closet” (Matt. 6:6), or as the head of the household leading his family (Job 1:5), we would do well to consider the place of devotions in our schools. As we call to mind the Reformed conceptions of a father as the spiritual leader of his home,<sup>1</sup> and of the school as an extension of the home where the teacher stands in the place of the parents,<sup>2</sup> we will see that the thoughts and suggestions outlined below regarding devotions in the school can easily apply to devotional life in the home. It is my prayer that the schools are actually mirroring the home in these areas, as God gives parents the command to teach their children about His Word in family worship (i.e., devotions) in several passages of Scripture, most notably in Deuteronomy 6:7, 11:19, and Psalm 78:5.<sup>3</sup>

1 See Rev. Kenneth Koolé's article, “The Reformation and Family Worship” in the *Starboard Bearer*, 71 (Dec. 15, 1994 and Jan. 15, 1995 issues).

2 See Prof. David Engelsma's book, *Reformed Education*, pp. 62ff.

3 See Chapter 13 of *The Family: Foundations are Shaking* concerning “Family Worship” by Rev. Barry Gritters.

Teachers who understand these Reformed ideals will ever so carefully prepare for devotions with two great concerns, namely, that they are prepared to *teach* in devotions and that the class is prepared to *hear* the devotions. These concerns are really nothing new to teachers, but we do need to be reminded of them from time to time. Considering first the work of *teaching* through devotions, a teacher must take the responsibility to lead in the worship of God in the classroom as seriously as a father takes that responsibility in family worship. Just as it is unacceptable for a father to merely open the Bible, read a few verses, pray a quick prayer, and be done, so also is this unacceptable for the teachers who stand in the place of these fathers when the children are at school. Therefore teachers themselves must be diligent students of God's Word, earnest in prayer, living with a song in their hearts, knowing their covenant-Friend intimately. Only in such preparation can one be equipped to lead others, whether the members of a family or a classroom full of students.

In addition to this personal preparation, the teacher also must prepare to explain (teach!) the Word. This means that the teacher should be ready to explain difficult words, concepts, or points of grammar from the Bible passage that is read. Also, the teacher should both ask questions to and encourage questions from the students, and, as much as possible, foresee where questions might arise so that a “ready answer” (1 Pet. 3:15) is available. Proper application of the scripture should be made in the children's lives, especially if the class has a particular sin or trial that is evident in its life or in the life of one of its members. Through all of this, the children need to see, wherever they turn, whether in church, the home, or the school, that reading God's Word takes real effort, but yields very profitable results in that we come to know and enjoy God more perfectly and are thus able to live a life furnished with good works (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Prayer is also an area in which the teacher must be prepared to teach. While some feel that this is an area of concern for the home (and most certainly it is!), the fact is, as a perceptive pastor once told us at a teachers' meeting, students will learn how to pray from their teachers too, whether the teachers are trying to teach this or not. They will learn of the reverence one must have for God in the way in which the teacher addresses God in the prayer. They will learn of the confident yet humble attitude with which the petitions ought to be uttered as they listen to the voice of the teacher. And they will learn what the contents of their prayers should consist of by hearing the petitions which the teacher asks of the Lord, modeled on the way in which our Lord taught us to pray (Matt. 6).

Additionally, students at school learn through prayer that the hands of the school and home are joined together in the great work of instructing them to walk in Christ, for in each place we can pray for the mutual strengthening of the other. Also, they learn that they ought to pray to our heavenly Father for specific needs, such as for the aforementioned sins or trials that are peculiar to a class. And one other benefit of prayer at school for students is that they are taught in a very real way that there is diversity of members in the body of Christ, even within their own age group, and that they should all have the same care one for another (1 Cor. 12).

Lastly, there is a work of the teacher in teaching the children to sing. Psalm 47:7 calls us to sing praises “with understanding.” Because of the enthusiasm with which young children sing, it is easy to assume that they are comprehending the words they are singing, but this is not always the case, even with very familiar songs. Therefore teaching students to sing praises to our God involves not only training in the tune itself, but also in the text. The teacher should be prepared with age-appropriate comments about the vocabulary, grammar (phrasing), and concepts expressed in the songs. Also songs that are appropriate for various subjects being taught are a great reinforcement as eminently practical application.

The other great concern of the teacher is that the class *hears* the devotions. To be sure, it is all of God's good pleasure and in His good time that He sovereignly softens hard hearts and graciously gives His elect people the “ears to hear” as Jesus puts it in his parable of the sower (Luke 8:8). A mere man, eloquent teacher though he may be, cannot alter that fact. However, with good reason our Lord commanded in that same parable, “Take heed therefore how you hear” (Luke 8:18), and that certainly implies there must be instruction to learn *how* to listen. The Christian teacher ought to understand how the “art of hearing” must be emphasized to the students, especially in our technological age where he is tempted to embrace the visual and eschew the aural. Vitally important is hearing to our very souls, as it is written, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17)!

The reading of God's Word obviously gives many opportunities for teaching students to listen. Carefully selected passages which have a special emphasis on the knowledge of God and on the life and needs of the students are a great tool to further their hearing. The students, being viewed as those who have a “small beginning of the new obedience,” will be interested when the scriptures are brought to bear on their lives as the passage is explained to them in a manner

appropriate for their age level. Comprehension and application questions asked by the teacher are especially effective at getting students involved in listening attentively. For this purpose, it may even be helpful to solicit topics for devotions from the suggestions of the students, if they would want a particular doctrine or passage explained to them.

A great concern of the teacher is that the students listen to the prayer, as this is a time of especially close communion with God. Again, the teacher cannot ensure that the prayer is actually being heard and prayed by the student, but there are steps that can be taken to assist the students in their listening. One is that the students know that a reverent attitude is best for listening. Even a statement about that fact made at the opening of the prayer is a powerful reminder to the students that their act of listening to the prayer makes the prayer their own. Reverence is also indicated outwardly by posture, as inward attitudes of the heart always have an outward expression (Prov. 4:23, Matt. 7:17).

There is a tendency to forget that we listen to one another as we sing (Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16), but this is also a time for teaching the children to listen. What a wonderful lifelong skill the children develop when they learn to listen to their mutual building up of each other through the godly songs of Zion! Thus it is necessary that the teacher ensures that the children sing reverently, that is, under control, with the appropriate volume, and with the correct words to best glorify God. This was humorously brought out to me as the father of three little girls who loved to sing the “condescend song” (see stanza 3 of Psalter #306), as they referred to it in our family devotions. Another opportunity for teaching was afforded when I later figured out that their young ears understood it to be the “candy-send” song.

The few moments of time spent in devotions in the school day almost seem disproportionate to the special care and effort that is required from the teachers who lead them so that they are prepared to teach and see to it that their students are listening. Teachers will do well to remember that devotions are an act of worship in which the students come to know and praise our great and glorious God. May God bless our efforts of teaching children to worship Him, whether in the home or in the school.

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**SECOND TIER**

**WALKING ALONGSIDE THE FIRST-YEAR TEACHER**

**THIRD MEETING RESOURCES**

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David J. Engelsma

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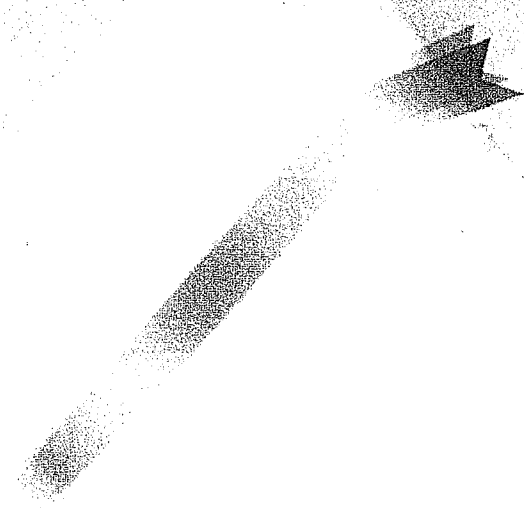
Education

### World-flight

World-flight would also like to determine the Christian's life in the world and the activity within the school. World-flight is sharply outlined in monasticism and Anabaptism. It considers the physical world and its institutions an evil and concludes that a Christian must get out of the world as much as possible. It advocates physical separation from the world, shunning normal, earthly life. Its view of the Christian life is that expressed in the Dutch proverb: *met een boekje in een hoekje* (literally: with a little book in a little corner).

The mind of world-flight shows itself in education in certain ways. For one thing, it has little use for the teaching of literature, secular history, and the other subjects of the liberal arts education. All its emphasis is on the teaching of Bible and Reformed doctrine. It is really suspicious of education as a threat to faith. Since the state demands some education, this mentality may send the children to the state schools. Or it may pull the children out of school as quickly as possible so that they can work. Or it may stress vocational education.

For another thing, world-flight, secretly or openly, esteems the Christian school mainly because it keeps the children



The Christian School  
as Demand of the Covenant

separate from the public school children.

Yet another manifestation of world-flight is its warning to covenant children: "No Christian may be a doctor!" "or a lawyer!" "or a politician!" "or an artist!"

It is worthwhile to point out that world-flight is neither the biblical view of the Christian life nor historically Reformed. It is not biblical. The book of Proverbs shows that the teaching of the covenant child, according to the demand of Deuteronomy 6, was not narrowly conceived in the Old Testament. Rather, it was understood to be the instruction of the child in all of human life in every earthly sphere: work and play, courtship and marriage, eating and drinking, conduct before the ruler—everything. The divine wisdom of Proverbs does not spurn human life or narrow it down; instead, it guides covenant children to live human life fully, in the fear of Jehovah.

Solomon's gift of wisdom was not confined to spiritual, religious, theological things—to the cultivation only of the soul—but extended to the whole range of created reality: trees, hyssop, beasts, fowl, creeping things, and fish. "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much. . . . And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men. . . . And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon. . . ." (1 Kings 4:29-34). What is so striking is not even that the divine wisdom, that is, Christ, legitimately extends to hyssop and creeping things, but that obviously these things are *important* to the divine wisdom. World-flight would say, "Why waste time on those mundane things?" Solomon was a

one-man, liberal arts Christian school, and his pupils were—and still are—people from all nations.

The God-fearing Israelite of the Old Testament did not turn his back on creation but contemplated it, knew it, and delighted in it (see Psalms 8, 19, and 104). He saw the Name of God in it, and he saw the parables in it.

The New Testament is full of doctrine about the creation and about the Christian's walking rightly in the world, here and now, in all kinds of earthly activities: eating and drinking, working, exercising the body, and the like. The New Testament indicates that Paul knew the heathen writers and did not hesitate to use their philosophical and poetical statements (see Acts 17:28 and Titus 1:12, 13).

The New Testament explicitly denies that world-flight is the proper life of the saint and affirms that the child of God may and must live the Christian life in all the human ordinances that the Creator has made. Jesus' prayer for us was "not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). Peter teaches that an excellent walk for spiritual strangers and pilgrims consists of activity, albeit *righteous* activity, in the area of government, labor, marriage, and fellowship among the saints (1 Pet. 2:11-3:17). So far is Christianity from being a doctrine of asceticism that it damns asceticism as "doctrines of devils" and calls its own ministers "good" if they warn against that error and teach God's people that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." Godliness does not despise and renounce the present life; rather, it is "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:1-8).

World-flight is not historically Reformed, specifically now as regards education. Luther's educational vision and system is proof of this. The Luther who raged against the synthesizing

of the medieval church (their imposition of the philosophy of that "damned, rascally, heathen Aristotle" upon Christianity), and who consigned schools devoted to Greek glory to the abyss, was the same Luther who opposed the world-flight spiritualism of the Anabaptists and the anti-intellectual materialism of the German peasants. Luther advocated Christian education to prepare the Christian children to live as Christians in the world, including their being officers in the state, doctors, musicians, writers, and the like.<sup>7</sup>

John Calvin was an educated man who could and did quote the philosophers. He knew the scientists and their theories. He set up a university in which there was a thorough education in the liberal arts. And he expressly condemned the know-nothings of his time:

Yes! you would drive away all men from the liberal and useful arts and sciences, and would boast among your fellows that all study and learning are useless and all the time spent in vain which is devoted to philosophy, to grammar, to logic, and even to divinity itself. You would thus cry down, I say, all useful learning for this very reason, that you might procure to yourself ignorant disciples, and make yourself great among them. And you say they that followed Christ were such. Just as if the Christian faith were a matter standing contrary to, and inconsistent with, learning! But let Christian readers here mark the difference which exists between you and me. I ever affirm that the wisest among men, until they become fools, and bidding farewell to all their own wisdom, give themselves up humbly and meekly to the obedience of Christ, are blinded by their own pride, and remain utterly unable to taste one

7. For Luther's views on Christian education, see his "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools" [1524], in *Luther's Works*, vol. 45, translated by Albert T. W. Steinhauser; edited by Walther I. Brandt (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 339-378. Also see Luther's "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School" [1530], in *Luther's Works*, vol. 46; translated by Charles M. Jacobs; edited by Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 207-258.

drop of heavenly doctrine. For all human reason is tasteless in the mysteries of God, and all human perspicacity blind. I maintain, therefore, that the beginning and essence of all divine wisdom is humility. This strips us of all the wisdom of the flesh, and prepares us to enter upon the mysteries of God with reverence and faith. You, on the contrary, bid ignorant and untaught men to come forth into public; men who, despising all learning and inflated with pride alone, rashly attempt to pass their judgment on divine things. Nor will you acknowledge any to be legitimate judges in divine matters, but those who, content with the opinion of reason and commonsense, unceremoniously reject all which does not just suit their own mind and taste.<sup>8</sup>

The Dutch Reformed wanted a good, liberal arts education for all their children. The original Article 21 of the Church Order of Dordt read:

The consistories shall everywhere see to it that there are good schoolmasters, who not only teach the children to read, to write, to speak, and the liberal arts (*vrije Conster*), but also instruct them in godliness and in the Catechism.<sup>9</sup>

The world-flight mentality has two possible effects. The one is that we reject our God-given calling to be in the world, glorifying God in all of earthly life and using and enjoying every creature of God. The other is that we become thoroughly worldly, paradoxical as this may sound. Live in the world we *must*, even the Anabaptist, but now we do so without the principle of living in the world to the glory of God and out of the new life of Christ. The result is that on Sunday we are pious, but on Monday we scabble with the ungodly in the pursuit of the dollar and the enjoyment of

8. John Calvin, "A Defense of the Secret Providence of God," in *Calvin's Calvinism: Treatises on "The Eternal Predestination of God" and "The Secret Providence of God."* Translated by Henry Cole (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, [1987]), 348.

9. Bouwman, *Gerreformeerde Kerkrecht*, 518. The translation of the Dutch is mine.

sinful pleasures. World-conformity is not the *only* threat, or the only really *bad* threat, as regards life in the world. World-flight is a doctrine of devils, a departure from the faith, and opposition to God as Creator and as Redeemer.

# The Tools of Change: Teaching Strategies that Challenge Students

BY WESLEY SCOTT

## Purpose

In Christian education today, as a whole, we find ourselves at a crucial juncture in our existence as an educational movement. Throughout our short, yet rich, history as a formal, educational movement, we have defined ourselves as the outsiders, the rebels, the “fish” who swim against the tide of the humanistic and socialistic public education system. In doing so, we may have painted ourselves into a corner by deeming nearly every new idea, strategy, literature source, and curriculum outside of Christian educational circles to be unacceptable, and, as a result, have not moved outside our comfort and security zone. In the area of teaching strategies, many of our schools have become slaves to the Christian curriculum publishers and their recommended teaching methods. While methods suggested by these companies are very good and can be effective in the right setting, are these methods most effective in moving students from simply ingesting information to be regurgitated at a later date, to the place of truly challenging students and their thinking processes about truth?

The outcome of a thorough and intensive study into effective teaching strategies for the Christian school would take volumes to present. That is not the attempt of this article. Instead, the goal is to stretch one’s thinking in the area of teaching strategies. Simply, “Do I effectively reach every student in the classroom or school and take them to a level of genuine learning?” This involves moving students from Bloom’s (1964) lowest level of learning, knowledge (data recall) through comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and finally to evaluative cognition, all with a truly, biblical emphasis and worldview. If the answer is no, then open your mind to the potential that lies within the school walls to move students to a place of effective learning and ultimately to be effective servants of our Lord.

My garage is a pig sty. I mean that both literally and figuratively. You see, not only is it the scourge of my dwelling in attractiveness and order, but it is also the home to my father-in-law’s plethora of tools. He has toolbox after toolbox full of screwdrivers, pliers, wrenches, sockets, and drill bits. He has power tools, pneumatic tools, saws, plumbing fixtures, and every nut, bolt, and screw anyone could ever wish to use. On several occasions, we have had deep and meaningful conversations about getting rid of some of his junk. As I pick up a rusted, dusty, seemingly useless hand tool, he always replies the same way, “Well, we can’t get rid of that. That’s a special tool for (fill-in-the-blank) that you can’t get anymore.” Unfortunately, as much as I hate to admit it, he is right. All of those tools have a specific purpose and use. Although, I do wish we could get them narrowed down to just a couple of hundred necessary tools. By the way, not coincidentally, my father-in-law’s nickname, by which he is known to almost everyone, is Piggy!

Within the possession of each Christian school teacher is a toolbox of sorts. No, it is not full of hammers, screwdrivers, and wrenches, but teaching strategies and each strategy has a specific purpose and use. Some teachers have a well stocked toolbox. They have invested time researching the best and most effective teaching strategies for their students. Unfortunately, many teachers in our Christian schools have limited tools in their toolboxes. Rather than seek out effective strategies to reach their students, they are content to use the same tools they have always used, and to imply that a change is needed is like trying to chisel through that five-year old fruitcake you got last Christmas! Let us look at some of the effective teaching tools available to teachers with a view for improving the educational process in schools with an ultimate goal of reaching the hearts and minds of the young people God has placed within our care.

## Characteristics

There are certain characteristics of teaching strategies that are necessary for effective teaching in a Christian school setting. First, teaching strategies must be *content-centered*. For the Christian teacher, no matter what subject is being taught and what textbook is being used, the content of classroom teaching should always be truth as it is revealed by God. He is the source of all truth (Deut. 32:4, Ps. 31:5), and reveals Himself, (1) generally through creation (Rom. 1:18-20), His providential control of human history, and moral law or man's conscience (Rom. 2:14-15); (2) specifically through Jesus (Jn.1:1), and His signs, and miracles; and 3) specially through His inerrant, inspired, written word—the Bible (Ps. 119:160, 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Teaching within the context of a biblical worldview is crucial in a Christian school setting, because students will not get a biblical worldview from society. Many will not even get it from their homes, although the Scripture is clear that it is the parents' responsibility to do so (Deut. 6:7). The Christian teacher, therefore, has the responsibility to guide students toward subject area truth within a biblical context. Subject matter and curricula are only methods to accomplish this goal.

Nancy Pearcey (2004) warns,

Christian education is likely to be an exercise in futility if it does not prepare our young people to confront and survive the worldview challenges that they will surely meet . . . training young people to develop a Christian mind is no longer an option; it is part of their necessary survival equipment.

Second, teaching strategies must be *student-oriented*. As each tool in a toolbox is meant for a specific purpose, each teaching strategy in the teacher's toolbox is meant for a specific student. A full, working knowledge of the learning styles of one's students can facilitate effective and appropriate teaching strategy utilization. Whether one follows the traditional, tripartite student learning styles: auditory, visual, and kinesthetic (or Fleming's (2002) VARK variation); or follows the learning style models of Gardner's (1993) Multiple Intelligences, McCarthy's (1981) 4-MAT model, Kolb's (1984)



experiential learning styles, or Myers-Briggs Type Inventory® (2004), the outcome is the same: the teacher becomes aware of the method whereby each student learns best. While this may sound like it “smacks” of Dewey’s principles of student-centered, progressive education, it does not. Proverbs 22:6 instructs parents and teachers to “Train” a child in the “way he should go.” This is a direct implication that children vary in the way they “should go” and each child is unique and special in this area. It is the Christian teacher’s responsibility to profile the learning styles of his or her students in order for truly effective teaching to take place. One of the most practical works I have come across on this topic is *The Way They Learn* (1998) by Cynthia Ulrich Tobias of AppLe St. It is also one of the few solid works that approaches the learning styles topic from a Christian perspective.

Third, teaching strategies must be *differentiated*. While the term “differentiated instruction” is a hot one in educational literature, implying a variety of means for student learning with a more qualitative than quantitative evaluative design, such is not the implication here. The point here is that the teaching strategies in a Christian teacher’s toolbox should be differentiated, or as numerous and varied in their applications as the students he or she has in the classroom. Not only should these strategies vary by students’ learning styles, but also by age/grade level of the students, cognitive functional level (gifted, standard, exceptional), and by subject and content areas being taught. The teacher who teaches all students using only his or her chosen teaching strategy is like a mechanic who is determined to use a hammer to fix every part on an automobile. Absurd? Yes, but every day in Christian schools across America, teachers are trying to “force” information into the minds of children, many of whom need only a gentle twist, turn, or tweak with the correct teaching strategy for the content to be received.

Fourth, teaching strategies must be *teacher-led*. The most crucial person in a Christian school for effective instruction and information transfer is the classroom teacher. If a teacher is not a qualified, dedicated, communicative leader in the classroom, then education will not happen effectively. It is the teacher who bears the responsibility to grow in his or her knowledge of learning styles, teaching strategies, communicative skills, technology integration, and classroom management. However, too often Christian schools are hiring “available” people to fill a space in a classroom, rather than securing trained, professional, pedagogical instructors who are prepared not only to be effective in the classroom now, but also are committed to continuing professional development that helps them be better teachers in the future. Unfortunately, when schools do hire these educational professionals, often administration does not see the need for, or provide the funds for, staff development, and teachers become stagnant. Teacher empowerment to implement cutting-edge, educational methods and the creation of a growing, learning community among faculty will foster growth and a desire to learn among students. I am glad that my automobile mechanic has been trained in the use of new, diagnosis technology that assists him in repairing my car. Otherwise he would have to guess at the problem and may, in the long run, not only fail to repair the vehicle, but also do more damage than originally existed.

Last, teaching strategies must be *evaluation-driven*. If my mechanic makes adjustments to my automobile steering, I trust that he also will test-drive the car to make sure it was the appropriate adjustment. While there is much debate in educational circles today concerning the value of measurement and evaluation in the Christian school setting, it is imperative that testing, measurement, and evaluation be utilized to the fullest extent. First, teachers ought to seek out teaching strategies and methods that have been evaluated and proven successful in other, similar settings. This information is available through educational periodicals, journals, and professional educational organizations. Second, before, during, and after the instruction of new content, formative and summative evaluative methods should be employed to measure the knowledge and mastery level of students in the content taught. Following Bloom's (1964) Taxonomy as a guide for testing has its advantages in this area. Third, curriculum planning should include a period of content remediation and re-evaluation if deemed necessary by the results of the measurements.

Educational literature, conferences, workshops and seminars, professional development, internet web sites, and university courses abound with the "newest and most effective" teaching strategies to help teachers in this endeavor to improve classroom instruction. Most can be used in virtually any classroom, however many are meant for a specific subject area, age/grade level, or cognitive ability. Teaching strategies can be generally categorized into five basic categories: (1) direct instruction, (2) inquiry-based instruction, (3) cooperative instruction, (4) information processing instruction, and (5) experiential instruction. Direct instructional strategies include: lecture, storytelling, and demonstration—anything that places the teacher as the primary and only output of information. Inquiry-based teaching strategies include any type of teaching where there is a dialogue between teacher and students or among students in which students are challenged to think through a topic and present an answer or response based on their thought processes. These include: discussions, simulations, journaling, debates, comparing/contrasting, Socratic dialoging, etc.

Cooperative instruction is making use of student groups who work together to accomplish shared goals, each group member with an assigned responsibility. Along with the content area, cooperative instruction teaches positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual and group accountability, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993). More popular cooperative instructional strategies include Jigsaw II, STAD Student Teams, or Group Investigation. Information processing instruction includes any type of inquiry-based strategy that moves the learner to a higher order of critical thinking. It attempts to achieve the highest of the cognitive levels in each student. Some of these strategies are: memorization, KWL, reciprocal teaching, graphic organizing, scaffolding, or webbing. Finally, experiential instructional strategies include learning environments in which the student gets actively involved in the learning process, beyond simple note taking or journaling. They are strategies that provide a hands-on experience, like: role-playing, experimentation, manipulative teaching, oral book reports, etc. Most teaching strategies can be utilized in a classroom setting, in one-on-one instruction (tutoring or

mentoring), or in cooperative efforts among groups of students working together under the guidance of the teacher.

In recent years, several books have been published which attempt to organize available effective teaching strategies. The one that stands out as the most widely accepted, because of its research-based approach to the topic, is Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock's *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement* (2001). In it, the authors summarize many of the available teaching strategies into nine essential teaching strategies for a teacher. They are: (1) identifying similarities and differences, (2) summarizing and note taking, (3) reinforcing effort and providing recognition, (4) homework and practice, (5) nonlinguistic representations, (6) cooperative learning, (7) setting objectives and providing feedback, (8) generating and testing hypotheses, and (9) cues, questions, and advance organizers. Some other recommended books on the topic would include: Rutherford's *Instruction for All Students* (2002); Stronge's *Qualities of Effective Teachers* (2002); and Zepeda's *Instructional Supervision: Applying Tools and Concepts* (2003).

## Conclusion

There are as many teaching strategies available to teachers as there are tools in my garage. One can get caught up with trying everything new under the sun, only to find that Solomon was right—there really is nothing “new,” (Eccl. 1:9). When a Christian school teacher chooses to step out of his or her comfort zone of status quo teaching, to learn about the students in the classroom and how they learn best, to stock his or her toolbox with research-based and practically proven instructional strategies, what becomes “new” and exciting is the teaching/learning process. When that happens, student achievement and behavior improves, parental communication and involvement increase in both quantity and quality, and our schools can truly move through this critical juncture in Christian education to become quality, educational institutions that not only excel in the spiritual realm, but also excel in instructional practice within a loving, leading, and learning community.

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# Grading Overload: 12 Time-Saving Assessment Strategies

Kim Haynes

There's a faculty meeting tomorrow, a parent-teacher conference the next day, you have to prep your materials for that project next week, and – almost forgot – you still haven't graded the assignments from two weeks ago, plus a new stack of papers walks in with today's students. And somewhere in all of this you might actually want to see your family or catch a movie while it's still in the theater.

Sound familiar? Don't despair – try these tips to avoid grading overload:

## **Change Your Perspective**

It's easy to get into the mindset of "It has to be graded or it doesn't count. It has to be thoroughly assessed or I'm cheating my students." But is that really true? Sometimes students are "cheated" because the teacher is so burned out from grading that she just passes out a worksheet and collapses at her desk instead of really teaching. Remember: grades are a tool – the means, not the end. There are ways to provide assessment without grades, and there are times student work doesn't need to be assessed.

## **Don't Try to Grade Everything**

Students need practice in order to master a skill. On some assignments, just check for completion. Don't weigh the assignment heavily and give points based on whether or not the student finished it. This can actually help some students who work hard but struggle to understand the content – they can get 100% for a change!

## **Shift Your Focus – grade elements of an assignment, not the whole thing**

This works well for complex assignments that occur repeatedly – writing assignments in English/Language Arts or lab reports in Science. You can't grade these on "completion," but choose one or two things to focus on in each assignment. Maybe it's the first lab report of the year, so you assess on format (did they follow the format?) and hypothesis (did they come up with a good one? How do they explain it?), and the rest is "practice for next time." In English, maybe one essay you focus on transitions between paragraphs; another essay you grade on the proper use of prepositions, and a third you focus on adjectives and adverbs.

This is better for students anyway. Have you ever spent ages marking every mistake on a paper, only to have the student throw it away, complaining, "I'll never get this right!" By strategically focusing on specific areas, the student has a better opportunity to improve her skills over time.

### **Peer Grade**

Assign students to work together in pairs or small groups to evaluate each other's work. This is a terrific step for in-progress assignments or a change of pace for homework evaluation. Ask students to fill out a form with their peer assessment – that way you can quickly review the peer grades and catch anything that is glaringly wrong.

### **Use Rubrics**

Yes, it takes time to create one, but Rubistar or Teachnology offer many standardized rubrics you can start with. Once you've created the rubric, it can simplify the grading process, especially for more straightforward assessment elements like punctuation, spelling, or formatting issues.

### **Schedule Assignments Carefully**

This requires advance planning, but it can really save your sanity. Think about your life and your schedule – what other assignments do you have coming in from other courses/subjects? – before you assign a big project or a long essay.

Try to break things up: if all your English students write an essay a week, then have Period 1 essays due on Tuesdays and Period 2 essays due on Thursdays. If you know your freshmen history students will do their research papers in March, schedule your sophomore history papers to be due in April. Of course you can't always manage this – the end of the semester will be crazy, no matter what you do – but on some assignments it's worth a try.

### **“Grade” Things as a Class**

This takes up class time, but may be worth it for some topics. Imagine this: you teach a new concept and assign homework so students can practice. The next day, you collect the assignment and have students start on something new. When you finally get around to assessing the homework that night, you realize the whole class missed a key component and you need to re-teach the entire lesson. If you grade the assignment as a class, you could have discovered the problem earlier, which would be better for your students and your sanity.

### **Use an Online Grading System**

It's hard to give up on a system you've stuck with for years, but if the grading paperwork feels overwhelming, it may be time to try something new. Programs like [Engrade](#), [MyGradebook.com](#), and [JupiterGrades](#) allow you to access your grades from home and communicate with students and parents via email or instant message. Some programs allow you to weigh your grading categories in advance, so 100% on a homework assignment automatically counts less than 100% on a semester exam. It may take practice to get used to the program, but once you start, you'll be surprised at how much time it can save.

### **Provide Verbal Feedback**

Build in student conference time periodically to help students on big projects or to give feedback on frequently used assignments, like lab reports or essays. Get the class working on something – SSR

time, finishing a worksheet, or researching information for a project – and then call up students one at a time.

Look over the student's work, identify one or two things he is doing well, and one or two things he needs to work on. Invite him to ask questions, then ask him to return to his seat. Once you get the process going, you can “check in” with a student in 3-5 minutes. Every student gets some one-on-one interaction with you and gets to hear you say something positive about her work. You won't be able to do this all the time, but even once a semester can help.

### **Build in Grading Time to Your Schedule**

For many teachers, grading just piles up because they don't make the time to get it done. Choose a set time each week when you can make some headway on your piles of papers. Maybe you can eat lunch in your room one day a week and do it then? Stay afterschool for an hour one day, but don't schedule conferences during that time? Make your spouse watch the kids while you go to a coffee bar on Saturday morning and finish a stack of papers? Every teacher's schedule is different, but setting aside a specific time can keep the piles from getting too overwhelming.

### **Give Group Assignments and Group Grades**

Many teachers resist group assignments because it's too difficult to evaluate each individual student's work. But not every assignment needs an individual grade.

If groups are too chaotic for your classroom, what about a pairs assignment? Assign students to write a paragraph or essay in pairs, and set up your stronger writers with your weaker writers. It gives the weaker writers a model to emulate and you get half as many papers to grade.

### **Got a Bunch of Grading To Do? Reward Yourself Afterward**

There's no way to avoid it: sometimes you will just have a mountain of papers to grade. Usually, you know when those times are coming, because a big project is due or a grading period ends. Build in a break – something to look forward to as you slog your way through the papers. Maybe it's a “date” with your spouse or an afterschool outing with your fellow teachers. Some teachers make a tradition out of it – the “Grades Are In” celebratory dinner with colleagues. Or just pencil in some downtime – a long walk or a chance to read a novel that you aren't teaching. Whatever appeals to you, make it a part of your schedule and take it just as seriously as getting in those grades. You'll be a happier person and a better teacher because of it.

# Report-Card Writing Strategies for First Timers

Denise Willi

Feeling clueless about writing report cards? You're not alone. Few colleges offer courses in them and most school systems don't make time to offer formal direction to new teachers. "If it weren't for teachers around me who helped me figure it out, I would have felt as if I were almost making it up," recalls Kim Wilkes, a teacher in Winter Park, Florida, about her first report-card writing experience many years ago.

"It's a time-consuming and stressful task," says Elizabeth Rae Merrill, a teacher in Dobbs Ferry, New York. "To do it well, you must do a serious evaluation of the students' work as well as their in-class performances, and then synthesize all your observations into information that's useful to parents and students." Here are some strategies and techniques to help you get started.

1. **Get the Support You Need.** "New teachers not only need help preparing report cards, but from day one they need to know what to collect for a report card," says Eileen Thornburgh, a teacher in Boise, Idaho.

A first step is finding out if there is a paid mentor in school to help you. If one isn't available, seek out a teacher you trust. "We teachers talk all the time, at lunch, or in the teachers' lounge," says Thornburgh. "Use these opportunities to find out what you need to know."

2. **Gain Clarity From Your Principal and "Model" Report Cards.** Sit down with your principal and talk about the school's grading philosophy. Check out models of report cards written by other teachers in a similar grade or content area.

For most teachers, the purpose of a report card is to provide a snapshot of a student's academic, social-emotional, and work skills. "When I'm writing a report card, I'm writing a page of history. I want to represent this individual in all that they've done," says Paula Bautista, a teacher in New York's Westchester County. "It's for the parent, for the school, and for the next teacher who might need it."

When it comes to grading, the picture isn't so clear. Teachers tend to get scant input from the school about how tough or easy to be. As a result, grading standards often vary widely. "All grades are not equal. An A in one class may not be an A in another teacher's class," says Merrill.

Merrill believes new teachers have to know precisely what they're assessing. "Are you grading a student's progress in comparison to his previous work, or are you grading work as compared to his classmates? Are you grading effort or ability?" A grading policy that is clear, consistent, and communicated to parents at the beginning of the school year will help parents get a true picture of their child's progress.

3. **Get Organized.** If you haven't done so already, check the school's academic calendar for report card due dates. Then decide what tools you will use to make your evaluations, such as portfolios, checklists, inventories, student self-assessments, anecdotal observations, and test results.



Setting up an assessment system is critical because finding time to reflect in a busy classroom isn't always easy. Says Bautista, "Kids need you; parents need you. We're just so incredibly rushed . . . and overloaded with curriculum. As a result, we assess on the spot, constantly."

To help identify a student's progress, Bautista narrows her focus. "Instead of trying to assess all of a student's work, I pull one sample a week that is truly revealing about a child. Some of the samples are going to be their best work, highlights. Other samples are their day in, day out stuff. For every big concept you're teaching, you want to have a sample to look at."

Bautista maintains a filing system that includes three separate folders for writing, math, and reading, all of which students may access. A fourth file is for her eyes only and might contain sensitive remarks or notes to parents. Bautista also uses a notebook to collect her daily observations, one for each content area. Students are listed with enough space next to their names for comments, such as this one she made about a student: "Wrote a really thorough science observation; was able to explain to me the volume of the rock she was testing."

At report-card time, Bautista sits on her bed or couch and spreads out a student's work and her notes around her. "I work like a painter. I step back and look. It's like my palette. I look, and it all comes together. I get a picture of that child." Then she begins writing.

4. **Choose Your Words Carefully.** For many teachers, the most important part of report cards is writing the narrative comments. "A child isn't a B or a C+; a letter grade doesn't tell us where a child is or how he has progressed. It's too tidy," Thornburgh says.

Some report card formats leave ample room for written comments. Others offer almost no room at all. "Basically, I have to sum up a human being in a box that is an inch-and-a-half deep and three inches wide," Thornburgh says. "It's important to write judiciously and sparingly."

Most teachers start with one or two positive sentences regarding the child's strengths and growth, academically and socially. A third sentence typically targets areas to work on, and a fourth thanks parents for their support and/or involvement, if appropriate. For example: "Tina has made impressive growth this term as a reader. Her sight-word vocabulary has expanded dramatically. We are working on using context to figure out unknown words. Thanks for exposing her to literature at home."

If a student is having difficulties or struggling with a concept, teachers need to be honest and tell parents in a professional manner. Select words that soften the blow and offer parents useful strategies for improvement so they can help address the problem. Always include at least one positive comment about the student and end the report card on an upbeat note.

"It's especially difficult to write a negative comment," says Jennifer O'Neil, a teacher in Philadelphia. "I'm always very careful how I say things. I spend hours choosing the right words so that the criticism is purposeful and constructive. I have two or three people read what I've written to make sure it's OK. My goal is to address the issue and have solutions or strategies for ways to improve the situation. I want parents to feel that we're

all working together for a common goal, which is supporting that child."

5. **Be Proactive.** Experienced teachers are emphatic about not waiting for report-card time to deliver any bad news. "Most parents appreciate the fact that they do know the situation, good, bad, or ugly," says Mary Rosenberg, a teacher in Fresno, California. "That way they are prepared when they see the report card."

Communicating well with parents before and after the report card is very important. Parent-teacher conferences can help greatly. Rosenberg sends home progress reports every three weeks, and finds parents appreciate this line of parent-teacher communication.

When a classroom crisis arises, Wilkes calls the parents right away. "Let's say you had a cheating incident; you gave the student an F, and he goes ballistic. Before the child gets home, I'll call the parent at work and say, 'Johnny left class very upset today. Here's what happened.'" Wilkes says, "You're taking the initiative instead of waiting to be on the defensive."

Being proactive also means documenting a child's behavior and academics and letting the principal in on the problem. That way the principal can be prepared or can offer support if a parent calls to complain.

You never know when a parent will respond negatively to a grade or a comment. It's best to be prepared for such situations before they happen. Rosenberg once had a child's father become furious when she told him his son was failing first grade, while the child's mother started crying. "When I called the vice principal to come in to the meeting, I was able to pull out all my copies of my progress reports, deficiency notices, phone notes, and home visits, and show the facts," Rosenberg says. "It wasn't about my having a bad day or not liking their child. It was about the whole quarter, right there. They apologized [for their outburst], and agreed to work with their son. We didn't have any more problems the rest of the year."

There's no doubt report-card time can be an emotionally intense experience for parents and teachers. "Have a Kleenex handy, especially when you discuss a report card at parent-teacher conferences," Bautista says. "And no matter what, always remember you're writing about someone's child — someone a parent loves."

## Feature

# Parent-Teacher Conferences

By Laurie Jabaay

Are parent-teacher conferences really necessary? Why do we have them? What do you expect from them? I tried to get a few ideas from fellow teachers and also from parents as I addressed these questions.

I thought I would first give you a little background about the way we do parent-teacher conferences at Hope Christian School in Redlands, California. The larger schools probably do things a bit differently. We have four classrooms and four teachers for grades K through 9. We have thirty-one students and only thirteen families enrolled in our school this year so we have several sets of siblings in the classrooms. For conferences a parent signs up for a fifteen-minute private conference for each child they have in school. That means more than one fifteen-minute session for a teacher if you have more than one student in that room. We have conferences in the fall and in the spring. The fall session usually has 100% participation. The spring has less participation, but a parent will usually have some verbal contact with the teacher to see if it is necessary to have a conference.

As teachers we felt the conferences were necessary because they were often the only one-on-one contact we

had with the parents about their children. It is a good time to bring up any concerns and any words of praise. We all felt it was important to have some feedback from the parents as to how they felt things were going in the classroom. The teachers want to know: Have the parents noticed any problems? Have they noticed anything that seems to be working really well? Is their child improving? Is their child being challenged enough in the classroom? Sometimes things cannot be changed to suit each child because of other needs and personalities in the classroom, but as teachers we want to know about it. If we know about it, then we can think about it, pray about it, enforce what is going well, or try to make adjustments.

As teachers we usually jot down some thoughts ahead of time about each student, how they seem to be doing and what their strengths and weaknesses are. Each student has strengths and weaknesses, whether it is academically or socially, whether they are a good student or a poor student. Often the discussion at conferences is not about grades but rather about attitude in the classroom and on the playground. Social skills and attitude have a lot of effect on a

need to do improve as a person and as a teacher. Hearing from the parents also gives me a time to reflect and think about my teaching. Do I need to make some changes? Is my classroom a place where students can learn to the best of their abilities?

Parents had many of the same thoughts as teachers about conferences. They too thought conferences were necessary for the one-on-one communication with the teacher. The parents wanted to hear how things were going in the classroom from the teacher's perspective. Often the child's perspective and the teacher's perspective are different and conferences were the place to discuss this difference. Parents also felt the big question was attitude and effort put into school work and not necessarily about the child's grades.

As teachers and as parents we pray that we may work together for the good of our children in the Lord. May conferences be an encouragement to us to remind our children to serve the Lord, to walk in His ways, and to do their best, both at home and at school. May we teach them to take heed to Ecclesiastes 9:10a "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."



*(Mrs. Jabaay is the kindergarten teacher at Hope Christian School in Redlands, California.)*

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**SECOND TIER**

**WALKING ALONGSIDE THE FIRST-YEAR TEACHER**

**FOURTH MEETING RESOURCES**

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## from the TEACHERS' LOUNGE

*Heritage Christian School (our school in Hudsonville, MI) reprinted last fall, on the back of one of their school notes, an October 8, 1989 Grand Rapids Press article on parent-teacher conferences. The authors, Peggy Gisler and Marge Eberts, offered helpful hints for parents who want to learn (in the short time ordinarily allotted for conference with the teacher) as much as they can about their child's progress in school. Those of our parents who have not already seen the article may appreciate being able to read it before the spring conferences which will be coming up soon in many of our schools. Here it is:*

### PLAN QUESTIONS FOR PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Q: Please explain how I can find out how my son really is doing in second grade during one 10-minute conference a year. Can you give me any suggestions so I can make the most of my conference time?

Also, is there any way I can get the teacher to start right into the conference without wasting the first few minutes making small talk?

— Limited Time  
A: Even though you are working under a tight time restriction, a face-to-face conference has many benefits. You should be able to leave the conference with a clear picture of how well your child is doing. However, the trick lies in your preparation.

You already have some idea of how your child is doing in school from studying the papers he or she brings home and conversations with the child. You also know the problem areas from last year. Think about these things as you make a list of everything you want to discuss with the teacher.

You need to have answers to the following basic questions:

\* Is my child working at, above, or below grade level in reading, mathematics, and language arts?

\* What are my child's special academic strengths and weaknesses?

\* What help can be given at school or at home to help my

- child overcome any weaknesses?  
Is special help required?  
\* What achievement, aptitude, or competency tests has my child taken in the past year, and what do his scores mean?  
\* How would you describe my child's work habits? Does he complete classwork and turn in all homework?  
\* Does my child get along well with classmates and the teacher?  
If you still have time, then you can continue with some of the following questions:  
\* Are there discipline problems?  
\* Can we look over some of my child's work together?  
\* How does my child's work compare to that of children working in his group or higher groups?  
\* Does my child show any behaviors such as squinting or not hearing instructions which might signal medical problems?  
\* What major projects will my child be required to do this year?  
More and more schools are helping their teachers prepare for conferences. And most teachers spend long hours getting ready.  
It's quite likely that the teacher will answer your basic questions without you asking them. The teacher also may ask you some questions, so be ready to answer questions like these:  
\* What is your child's attitude toward school?  
\* Does your child have any concerns or worries about any specific school situations or subject areas?  
\* Does your child have any special needs?  
\* What are your child's hobbies and special interests?  
\* Does your child have a regular time set aside to study?  
\* How much time does your child spend on homework?  
\* What are your child's strengths and weaknesses?  
You can help the conference be a success by arriving at least five minutes before your scheduled time. Don't bring the school child unless requested to do so, or younger children to the conference.  
Incidentally, you can avoid wasting minutes in aimless chit-chat at the beginning of the conference by politely mentioning right away that you have a number of questions to be asked in the limited time.  
At the conference, keep a pencil handy to write down any suggestions or things you want to remember. Try to establish rapport with the teacher so you can work together to help your child. Be warm and friendly and avoid criticism and arguments.  
Before the conference ends, express appreciation for the teacher's time. If you have all your questions written out, you

can check the ones that weren't answered and ask the teacher to answer them when it's convenient. If you discover that your child has serious problems, make arrangements to discuss them in detail at a later date.

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# Working with Veteran Teachers: Advice for New Teachers

"I strongly urge first-year teachers to utilize those master instructors around them to learn ways of managing time, organizing instruction and evaluating students materials that are the most efficient and beneficial for them." —Colleen Abbott (Eagle, Colorado)

First-year teacher Shalon Cole (South Bend, Indiana) is not likely to forget walking into her classroom and finding a table covered with presents from her fellow teachers--a supply of much-needed classroom materials.

New teachers like Shalon appreciate any effort—large or small—that veteran teachers make to welcome them. "All staff members at the school need to make new teachers feel welcomed," says Susan Woodward (Merrimack, New Hampshire). "Just showing a smile helps."

Yet, many first-year teachers said they sought more than an open door and a friendly greeting. They wanted to sit down with veteran teachers regularly and work side by side, gaining real-world insights from their more experienced colleagues.

"I set up a relationship with a veteran teacher before I started my first year," says Claudia Crase (Helena, Montana). "We set up a time every day. We would talk and listen to each other and set goals for the next week."

Getting access to knowledgeable veteran teachers can be a challenge. Some first-year teachers we interviewed initiated a relationship with a mentor rather than waiting for a veteran teacher to step forward. In an unusual case, one first-year Sallie Mae teacher drove 500 miles to meet with another first-grade teacher. She felt the teachers at her own school did not share her instructional philosophies, and she was not comfortable turning to them for support.

## Rich Rewards

The rewards of new teachers' outreach efforts to their more seasoned colleagues were rich.

"I quickly discovered the importance of discussing curriculum and problems with other educators," says Kristy Spencer (Cedar City, Utah). "Their willingness to share ideas and give advice was a great help."

"Experienced teachers have helped me with problems ranging from dealings with parents to working through mid-year weariness and fatigue," writes Robert Gress (Lexington, Kentucky). "They are an invaluable resource to the [first-year] teachers who are willing to admit that they have much to learn."

Finally, veteran teachers provided their rookie counterparts a vital head start in their professional development, according to Luann Brazill (Santa Fe, New Mexico), who began her career "working long hours during and after school and depleting my creative energy trying to reinvent the wheel!"

Then Brazill realized there was a better way to come up to speed. "I was fortunate to have chosen a career where I am surrounded by excellent veterans [and] professional mentors with a variety of resources and experiences," Brazill writes. "I realized that it was time to ask questions, put my time and energy to better use for my students and myself. Today, I wouldn't dream of beginning a new unit without inquiring about resources and possible models."

## The Negative Side of the Veteran Teacher Equation

In worst-case scenarios, veteran teachers represent negative energy—holed up in the proverbial faculty lounge that many young teachers go out of their way to avoid, and with good reason.

"Needless to say, my first experience in the faculty lounge was very interesting. I truly did not know that I had what some would call a 'problem child' until I got in the lounge and heard every teacher complain about that child," recalls Dionne Bennett (Little Rock, Arkansas). "If the teachers in the lounge were not complaining about their children, they were either griping about the facilities, or even about the teaching profession. I knew I had to do something!"

The "something" this teacher chose was to stay out of the lounge whenever possible, avoid negative conversations, and maintain a positive attitude throughout the day.

### **The Toughest Students**

Several first-year teachers said that being assigned a class of all the most challenging students with the most complicated learning needs could be overwhelming. One lucky first-year teacher avoided this fate:

Mara Esposito (Seattle, Washington) said she avoided being assigned many students with learning and motivational problems largely because the other teachers knew her from the time she spent interning at the school. It was harder for the other staff members to assign to a fellow teacher whom they knew and liked students with learning and/or motivational problems, or students who lacked support from their families.

### **Encouraging Best Practice**

Mara says her school's monthly "best practice" meetings reduce the opportunity for negative thinking and instead focus teachers on improvement.

But when veteran teachers don't take an interest in new practices, first-year teachers feel discouraged. The challenge is to keep negative teachers' lack of enthusiasm from dampening their own, first-year teachers said.

"I was told, 'Don't rock the boat.' This isn't great advice for teachers. We all rock the boat. Every day," says Claudia Crase (Helena, Montana). "Veteran teachers don't always like this. I say, 'Take a risk. Deal with it.' "

### **Firsthand: Teachers and Mentors Make It Happen**

Lori Williams (Clarksville, Tennessee) remembers the excitement of visiting her classroom before the first day of school. She can picture the bare bulletin boards, empty chairs, and vacant filing cabinets. How would she fill them, and how would she fulfill the awesome responsibility that awaited her?

With a lot of help from her mentor and veteran teachers.

"As for those five, empty filing cabinets—they are now full thanks to the generosity of my esteemed colleagues who have shared materials with me," Williams writes. "I have utilized many suggestions from these veterans. [In addition,] the mentor program to assist new teachers turned out to be a tremendous advantage. I was paired with a seasoned teacher who has taught for 31 glorious years. She guided, encouraged, and assisted me to help me become successful. Somehow, with the help of others and a willingness to do whatever it took to make things happen, I have managed to keep up with the challenges of three preparations of differing grades and abilities. I would advise a new teacher to choose a mentor, design a plan for success, implement a plan, and ask for help when needed. Looking back this year, I realized that I am like the *Velveteen Rabbit*—I am finally REAL."

### **Look to Veteran Teachers to...**

- Share lesson plans that put curriculum guides into practice
- Support and participate in a new teachers' planning process



- Offer tips on the practical problems new teachers didn't learn about in school—make do with fewer resources, classroom management, bureaucracy
- Show respect and collegial support
- Observe new teachers' classes and let them observe yours; and
- Help teachers locate materials

### **Tips on Building a Relationship with Veteran Teachers**

- Ask to visit colleagues' classrooms so you can learn about different approaches to teaching and find one you admire
- Seek the help of a mentor who has skills and knowledge you would like to develop
- If your assigned mentor is not helpful, seek out an informal mentor relationship that provides more support; look to your team teachers for help
- Don't reinvent the wheel: before you begin developing a curriculum unit, find out if any veteran teachers have materials or insights that would jumpstart your efforts; and
- Be willing to admit you have a lot to learn from experienced teachers

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**SECOND TIER**

**WALKING ALONGSIDE THE FIRST-YEAR TEACHER**

**FIFTH MEETING RESOURCES**

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## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

In Sept., 1916, we delivered before the congregation of Holland Fourteenth St. which we were then serving, a sermon on the subject of the Christian Education of the children of God's covenant. As the time is again approaching, when Catechism-classes and schools are reopened; and as, moreover, the question of a covenant-education remains principally the same, only, perhaps, becoming more serious and urgent as the years go by, we thought it not unsuitable to publish the entire sermon, as we preached it at that time. It is on the text from Deut. 6:7: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

The sermon here follows:

That education of the child is one of the most important subjects that can possibly demand our consideration, is a truth, that is clearly realized, not only by the Christian, but still more so by the children of the world. Especially is this true of our own age. Witness the many books that are published on the subject, the many magazines that see the light and that are devoted particularly to educational problems, the large sums of money that are spent, the laws that are enacted, the edifices that are raised — all in the interest of education. On the importance of education in general, therefore, we are entirely agreed.

But there is more, and I may safely limit this statement. For I am entirely safe in saying that we also agree that our children ought to have a Christian education. There is no one that would deny this, apart now from the question as to the character this Christian education ought to assume. For as Christians we all agree that we are not satisfied to know that our children receive an education of the world and for this world, but we confess that we are pilgrims, that we are travelers to another city, and that, somehow, the education of our children must be related to that other city that is in heaven. I repeat, therefore, that as Christian parents we cannot be indifferent with regard to the religious instruction of our children. Religious instruction they certainly must have, and they must be brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord, our covenant-God in Christ Jesus.

Once more I will limit this statement and maintain, that as Reformed Christians we will also insist that our children must receive a religious education of a very marked type. That we agree on this is evident from the confession we repeat every time we offer our children for Baptism. We promise to bring them up "in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein to the utmost of our power." Now this is very significant. For this doctrine is the Reformed doctrine. And one of the characteristic features of the Reformed faith is, that it confesses that all things exist for the glory of God, that even our salvation is not the ultimate end of all things, but that it is a means to an end. It is,

for the Christian of the Reformed type, not sufficient to know that his sins and the sins of his children have been washed away in the blood of Christ Jesus, and that now he and they are marching heavenward. On the contrary, his covenant-God did save him, in order that with His children he might be to the praise of His glory, here in the Church-militant and in the midst of the world, and presently in the glory of heavenly perfection. He must fight the good fight. He must walk in the precepts of His covenant-God. He must reveal himself as a child of light in every sphere of life. Now, this conviction has a definite influence upon his conception of the task of education. Were it different, it might be an irrelevant matter to him, as to what sort of education the child might receive to help him through this world, as long as he is saved. But entirely different it becomes if also the salvation of your child is in your view only the means to the highest aim: the glorification of the Most High. Then you will aim in your education at the perfect man of God, knowing the will of his God for every sphere of life and for every step he takes upon the path of life, and you will take care that in his life he is well equipped with a clear and concise knowledge of all the precepts of the Most High. And since for the Reformed Christian the subject of the education of his children is so highly important, we thought it very appropriate to devote our discussion to this topic this morning and in connection with the words from Deut. 6:7 to speak to you on:

## THE LORD'S COMMAND REGARDING THE INSTRUCTION OF OUR CHILDREN.

- I. IN RESPECT TO THE MATERIAL OF THAT INSTRUCTION.
- II. IN REGARD TO THE TIME FOR THAT INSTRUCTION.
- III. IN REGARD TO THE BASIS OF THAT INSTRUCTION.

I. I think we will all agree if we define education, in the sense in which we are dealing with that subject this morning, as the impartation to the child of knowledge regarding his material and spiritual relation in the world. With this all education has to do. We bring children into the world. And when these children come to consciousness, that world is strange to them if they are not informed about their relation to the same. But to the Christian this is not enough. No, there is not only a world, but there is also a God. And the child must also learn to see his true relation to that God. In short, principally the education of the child must give him an answer to the question: Who am I? Who am I in relation to the world in which I live? Who am I in relation to my God? And thus education becomes the transmittance of such knowledge from generation to generation. But when our text says: "Thou shalt teach them unto thy children," it uses in the original a word for teaching that places the nature of education in a very peculiar

light. The word really means in the first place "to sharpen," and is used for instance to denote the sharpening of a sword. From this basic idea it further derives the meaning "to sharpen the tongue," and further to use pointed speech, to express oneself definitely and concisely, and in this sense it is finally used to denote the idea of teaching. To teach according to this idea is to sharpen in. *Inscherpen*, the Dutch would say. Education according to this conception must not be vague or indefinite, but sharp and concise. So definitely was this idea of conciseness conceived of as essential to education, that to the view of Scripture, to teach meant actually the same thing as to express something clearly and sharply to the understanding of the child.

The question, then, is, what must be taught according to the words of our text? What is the material of this instruction? And our text tells us: "Teach *them* unto thy children." In the words immediately preceding our text the man of God says to the people: "And *there words* which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart." In our text he refers, therefore, once more to *these words*, and he enjoins the children of his people that they shall also teach them to their children, to the seed of the covenant. Nor is it difficult to find out what is really meant by "these words". They simply refer to the law of the covenant-God, as has been delivered unto Israel before, and as is now repeated by the man of God summarily, as they are about to enter the promised land, and as he is about to leave them. All the precepts of Jehovah the parent must teach definitely and concisely to his children. And these precepts are again expressed in principle in the fifth verse of our chapter where the prophet says to his people: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." In brief, Scripture, here as well as throughout, knows but of one kind of actual religion. It is the religion of obedience. And again the Word of God knows of but one kind of obedience, it is the obedience from love. Obedience and love are for that very reason often used promiscuously in Scripture, seeing that they may signify the very same thing, and the one without the other is inconceivable. For this reason, it is to the obedience of God's covenant-people, that the man of God refers in the text. The natural man does not know the love of God, for his mind is enmity against God, and he walks in darkness. But God's people, the people the man of God is here addressing, have been saved and redeemed by the power of His grace. They are once more His covenant-people. God cleansed them and forgave all their iniquities. God delivered them and formed them to be a people unto Himself. He spread abroad in their hearts a new love, the love of God in Christ Jesus. In that love they must obey the Lord their God and keep His precepts. This obedience must be an obedience from the love of their whole heart, with all their mind and soul and strength. For mark you, Scripture knows of no division of our life, one part for the exercise of this obedience in covenant-love and another part entirely

separated from that love. The Christian possesses but one life. And that whole life must be consecrated to the Lord his God, who redeemed and delivered him. In other words, all the time and everywhere in the midst of the world or in the Church, in the home or in society, he must reveal himself from the principle of the new life he received from his covenant-God by grace. Thus we promise and confess it in our Baptism-Form so beautifully and truly, when it says, that our part of the covenant is, that we love the Lord our God with all our mind and heart and soul and strength, and walk in new obedience before Him. To know, therefore, and to keep the precepts of the Lord our God and to acknowledge no other precepts than His, that is our covenant-religion. But *if* this is true, then it is also clear, that we must teach these precepts and none other to our children. For the Lord established His covenant with us and our children in the line of generations. With us and our seed the God of our salvation raises His blessed covenant. We and our children are His covenant-people. And, therefore, very logically the man of God comes to this injunction: "And thou shalt teach them unto thy children." In all our life, at home or at large, in the Church or in the world, we have to do with the precepts of our God and we acknowledge but one Lord. These precepts are the rule of our thinking and willing, of the life of the soul and of the body, our guide according to which we desire by the grace of God to walk in every sphere of life. But then, it is evident, that also these precepts must constitute the subject-material of all our education, and that it is quite impossible to conceive of any sphere or branch of instruction from which these precepts of our God may or can be excluded. If, therefore, **you ask: What**, according to Scripture, must be the material in which our covenant-children are instructed? We answer without hesitation: The precepts of the Lord our covenant-God with relation to every sphere of life.

II. That such is actually the conception of the words of our text is evident. Let us ask the question: How much time must be devoted to this instruction in the law of the Lord? A few hours, say, every day? Or must this instruction in the precepts of Jehovah perhaps be limited to the Sabbath-day? Shall we transfer the burden of this injunction to the preaching in the church and to the Sunday-school? And is it sufficient, if in addition to all this the children receive an hour's instruction in the precepts of the Lord in catechism during the week? Listen. The text says: "thou shalt talk of them (these precepts) when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou risest up and when thou liest down." Now, this is expressing the thing figuratively, but very concisely and unambiguously. It simply tells us that we must instruct our children in the precepts of the Lord all the time and everywhere, in the home and outside of the home, and that there is no education that has nothing to do with the law of the Lord. That is simply all. Always, in the home and out of the home, from morning till evening, Israel must in-

struct his seed in these precepts of Jehovah. There was nothing else for the young covenant-child to learn outside of that law of God. Nothing else might the parent-teacher have in his mind but to instruct the child in that law. And, therefore, it is perfectly clear, that our text deems the instruction in that law all-sufficient. That does not mean that the young Israelite might learn nothing but the law of the ten commandments, learn nothing but how to sing the songs of the fathers, how to celebrate the solemn feasts, and how to bring his sacrifices and tithes. No, the Jew of old did not know of such a narrow conception of religion and of the law of God. But it meant that the Israelite, always and everywhere, had to live according to the will of God, and that for every sphere of life he had to teach his children those same precepts.

Notice, in the second place that all this time, the parent is held responsible for the training of his children. Moses does not at all address the congregation of the people of God in general, but emphatically he speaks in the singular. He addresses the individual parent. Thou shalt teach them unto thy children. Thou shalt talk of them. etc. Education is therefore, the duty of the parent and of no one else. And this stands to reason. In the first place there is no one that has more right, more God-given right to the child than the parent. Education determines to a large extent what the child shall be in the future. How it shall think and act. And surely there is no one that has more right to determine this than the parent. But especially is this so with the covenant-parents. They are the believers, and they are the ones that are held responsible, and that express the promise before God and His congregation time and again that they shall see to it that the children are educated according to the doctrine of the covenant. They, therefore, have the duty to educate their children, and no one else has that obligation as they have. The parent according to the words of our text must educate his children always and everywhere, in the home and outside, from morning till evening, in the commands of the most High. It is, therefore, not true at all that the parent can educate his children at home in the precepts of the Lord, and that he can excuse himself for the rest and say that he can do no more, that he has fulfilled his duty, and lived up to his promise. No, that does not at all finish his task. The parent must also educate his children outside of the home. In the catechism and in the school? on the street and in every other place, it is the parent whose duty it is to educate his children. He may perhaps perform that duty through someone else, that is his servant, but that does not make any difference. Not the teacher, private or public, has any duty regarding your children, the duty to educate them is yours, and it can only become the duty of the teacher, by your employing him.

And from this follows in the second place that you are responsible for all that your child is taught. It is not thus, that you are responsible for what it learns

directly in the home, and someone else for what it learns in the school, and again someone else for what it learns in the catechism and in the Sunday-school, but you are responsible always and everywhere. Not as if these other persons that teach your children have no responsibility. Surely they do. But their responsibility is entirely different from yours. You are responsible for all that your child is taught, responsible before God. Of course, we realize that this was far easier in the time of Moses and the children of Israel than in our modern times. Life was so much more simple. The parent was not so busy from morning till night, that he could find no time to personally instruct his children in the precepts of God. And life was not so complicated, not so exacting, the child did not have to learn so much, all things were more simple than they are to-day. And for that reason the education in the home was either the only or the main education the child received. And the parent could realize directly his responsibility for the instruction of his children. But this is now entirely different. The parent, at least the father, is not at home from the time that he rises up till the time that he lies down, the mother is too busy or at least often makes herself too busy if she is not, and time for direct instruction by the parent is actually insufficient. Besides, if the parent did have just as much time as the Israelite of old, he would not be able to instruct his children in all the necessary branches of education. And the result is that we have now the school, the catechism, the Sunday-school, where one person systematically instructs many of our children at the same time. Especially in the school the child receives the lion-share of his education. The school it is that trains the child, that practically shapes him, and the words of the teacher have more authority for him than any other. And the result is that we begin to feel and to act more and more as if we were not responsible for that part of the education of our children. And that is a mistake. All these institutions are merely extensions of the home, the teacher is merely the servant of the parent, and even as the boss always remains responsible for the job his servants perform, so the parent is absolutely responsible for the education of his children by the teacher. The parent, also now, must instruct his children in the precepts of the most High, always and everywhere, for those precepts control our entire life. And if the teacher, the parent employs, cannot reasonably be expected to do this, it is the parent that is and remains responsible for that instruction. And thus it is with the entire system in which the child lives. From morning till night the parent is responsible. The literature the child reads, the places he visits, the friends he associates with, the recreation he enjoys, in a word, the entire sphere of his life, must be dominated by the law of the Lord, and the parent is responsible that in that sphere the child is trained and very definitely instructed in the commands of the Lord.

Let US apply this for a moment. How is our instruc-

tion in comparison with this injunction? How is it in our homes? Are we obedient in this respect? Are we talking about the precepts of the Lord, when we rise and when we lie down, so that our children hear them? No, that does not mean, that we do as a certain doctor told us not long ago, his father always did, who said nothing to his boy but: "Johnnie, Johnnie, think of that never ending eternity!" from morning till night. No, that is sickly. Surely, it is good also that we early impress our children with the truth that time is short, and that eternity is coming, but the fear of eternity must not become the principle of their religion, for that is absolutely wrong. No, but do we speak of the precepts of the Lord in the good and healthy way, so that our children learn from us definitely, how they must walk in the way of the covenant? Do we ever talk with them about their baptism? Ever speak to them about the joy of the assurance that they are covenant-children, but also of the heavy responsibility that because of that covenant rests upon them, to walk in the way of the covenant? In a word, do your children receive the impression in your homes that the precepts of the Lord are dominating there? Or are material things predominating, perhaps the one thing that receives attention? Do you, when you are with your children, perhaps leave them alone and read the newspaper? Or talk about parties and picnics and outings and automobile rides, and nice dresses, or about the homely face of the new neighbor-lady, about the new hats you saw in church, and the faults of brother so and so. In a word: what is the sphere in which your children live in the home? What is the literature you allow them to read? Is also that literature based upon and permeated by the precepts of the Lord? Where are your children when they are not at home? Who are their friends? Is this entire sphere such, nay, I will not say that they gradually drift away from Christianity in general, but yet such that they become alienated from their own church circle? Remember, it is you that are responsible as parents, from morning till night, responsible that your children are instructed and brought up in the precepts of the Most high.

And how is it when you walk by the way? In other words, how is the education of your children outside of your home life? Do they come to catechism regularly? And when they come are they well prepared? Are you co-operating with us also in this respect? Especially in respect to our young people, and still more especially in respect to our young men, I would urge you: See to it that they are educated in the precepts of the most High. And to some of you directly, I would come and remind you of the fact that Catechism again starts. Some of you, alas, already are old enough to assume your own responsibilities, and still you have not confessed your God as your personal Lord. Remember, we expect you in the class. Do not withdraw yourselves from the influences of the precepts of God. And finally, parents, how is the education of your children in the school? Oh, I hear many of you say, as you have also told me

when we visited you in your homes, the education in our public schools is good enough! According to what standard do you call it so, my brother and sister? According to the standard of the Word of God? God tells us that in the home, and without, the children must be instructed in the precepts of the Lord. And that no one but you is responsible for this education. That this education in the commands of the Lord must not be vague, but must be pointed and definite. I ask you this morning to go to your God and honestly tell Him, that you are living up to this precept in this respect, and that your child is educated, not once in a while, but from morning till evening, and everywhere, in the precepts of the Lord. No, we need not talk about our public schools. But this you know as well as I do, that they receive no covenant-education, that they cannot receive a covenant-education in those schools. And, your children must have a covenant-education and nothing less. For this is the injunction in the words of our text, that in the home and without, from morning till evening the children must be brought up in the precepts of the Lord for every sphere of life.

III. But, I hear someone remark, this command was given to Israel of old and not to the people of the New Testament. Many laws and commands are given in the old testament that are obsolete, that are not at all applicable to the days of the new dispensation, and this is one of them. And we, of course, frankly admit that the first statement is true. There are, indeed, many laws given in the O. T. that have no direct value, no binding force for our day. But it is not true, that commands as we have discussed one this morning also belong to that category. This temporal and passing character of the O. T. laws is true only of those that applied to the particular dispensation of Israel, in their religious and civic life. There were laws regarding their religious life, laws regarding sacrifices and feasts, that have passed away with the coming of Christ, that have lost their binding force, when the Lamb of God was sacrificed on Golgotha, and the veil rent in twain. There were also laws that applied to the particular civic life of the theocracy of Israel, and also they have lost their particular force with the passing away of Israel as a nation. But this is not true of those laws that dealt with general subjects, that gave precepts in regard to life in general. And such a subject is the subject of education. The education of our children is not something that applied to Israel alone but that is general in its character. And what is more, the basis of this command is not found in something that is applicable to Israel alone, but that holds as well for the people of God of all ages.

In the first place, we find that this command is based upon and brought into direct connection with the covenant-relationship of the people of God. God has established a covenant with Israel as a nation, thus the man of God has told them in the chapter preceding ours. In that covenant God had promised to bless them and to give them Canaan for an everlasting possession. But

He also had His demands. The people had received blessings from their covenant-God. He had delivered them from the house of bondage, and He would give them the land of the promise, but there was also another side. The people were in duty bound to walk in the way of the covenant and to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their mind, and with all their strength. And from this same covenant obligation follows also their duty to educate their children, always, in the fear of the Lord, so that also they may know His precepts, understand their covenant-relation, and learn to walk in the way of that covenant that God has established with them.

In the second place, the general character of this covenant-education is based upon a general principle also. It might be remarked, as we have heard it so often that instruction in the law of the Lord is sufficient if it is given in the home and in the catechism, in the home and in the church, but that school education has nothing to do with it. And again upon the basis of Scripture this must be denied. The principle of such a statement is wrong. God told His people of old that they should educate their children from morning till night and everywhere in the precepts of the Lord. And why? Because in the immediate context we read that the Lord our God is one Lord. He is Lord, Lord over all. Lord over every sphere of life. His precepts cannot be excluded from any sphere. Therefore, Israel had to educate his children only in His precepts. Not in one part of life the precepts of the Lord, and in another part these precepts excluded, but in all life, these precepts acknowledged. And thus also with our preparation for that life. Not the precepts of the Lord in one part of the education and another part nothing to do with this law of God. But all our education permeated with the precepts of the Lord. And this holds true to-day as well as in the time of Israel. Because the Lord our God is one Lord.

Also we are a covenant people. Every time when we come with our babes before God and His congregation, we confess that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God. We confess, that in that covenant God gives to us and to our children all the blessings of salvation, we confess that also our children are really in that covenant of grace. that they are partakers of grace, **that** they are sanctified in Christ, that they are members of His body, that they are children of God, heirs of the kingdom and of the covenant. And every time we confess that it is our side of the covenant to walk in new obedience from true love of that covenant-God that has so richly blessed us. And every time you, therefore, promise that you will to the utmost of your power, teach your children the way of the covenant, and that you will help and cause them to be instructed therein. You see, that same basis still exists, the basis of the covenant, for we are a covenant-people. And upon that same basis we come to you with the same word of God and say: Ye shall teach them unto your children and tall; of them in your home and outside of your home and

everywhere. And since conditions are such that undoubtedly you will have to entrust a large part of your education to others, there we again come to you and say: Send them there where you know that they receive a covenant-education, an education in the precepts of the Lord. Send them to our catechism regularly and do not neglect it, send them also to our Christian schools, where you know that they receive the education they must have.

And finally, also today, the Lord our God is one Lord. Also today He is Lord over all. Lord not only in the church, but Lord also in the state, Lord also in social life, Lord in our home life, Lord in the life of our education. And for that very reason, also today His precepts are valid for every sphere of that life. But if this is so, then it is also clear, that the child, must learn to see and honor those precepts, for all those spheres. And **that** those precepts must form the very basis of his education. Religion must not be something that is added to our life, but it must be the heart of our life. Religion must not be something that is added to our education, but it must be the heart of our education, the precepts of the Lord must be the basis from which our entire education must proceed. And, therefore, we come once more to you upon the basis that the Lord our God is one and only Lord over all, we come to you as your pastor, anxious about your spiritual welfare, anxious that also your children shall be educated in the fear of the Lord. and enjoin you to be faithful, in the home and to talk of the precepts of the Lord to the children God has given unto you, from morning till night. definitely and sharply, to be faithful in regard to the catechism classes that are presently to begin again for the coming season, faithful in regard to the education the child receives in the school, and to send them to that school, of which you are certain that they will receive a covenant-education. Then we have hope, also for the future. For then we have the promises of God for His faithful covenant-people. that He will continue to bless us and our children, as His people, and we shall walk before Him in childlike obedience, subjects of His kingdom, in the home, in the church, in society, and in the great land in which God has given us a place, acknowledging His one and only Lordship.

H. H.

#### 'S HEEREN WOORD

Laat des Heeren Woord u laven!  
 Laat het schijnen voor uw voet!  
 Zelfs de bange nacht der graven  
 Wordt verhelderd door zijn gloed.  
 Blijf aanbidden en gelooven!  
 Sta uw besten schat niet af!  
 Laat u 's waerelds haat niet rooven  
 Wat u 's hemels liefde gaf!

J. J. L. Ten Kate

Peter said in 2 Peter 1:12-13 that it was part of his ministry to remind believers of things they already knew, for this reminder would stir them up.

This chapter reviews many of the key themes addressed in this book by acknowledging the characteristics of a strong Christian school board. The following items are presented in that spirit.

### Maturity and Growth of Each Member

The quality of the board equals the sum of the quality of its individual members. The foundations of quality are the board member's spiritual maturity and current growth in Christ, which are prerequisites for all service to God on the board. Board members may be alert and have strength in an area of expertise, but if they fall short in godly maturity and growth, they may do damage to the work of the board.

### Members as a Microcosm

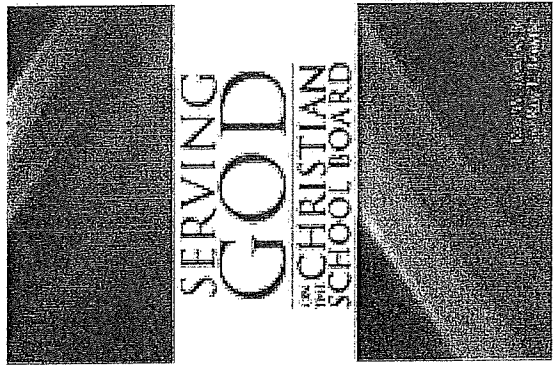
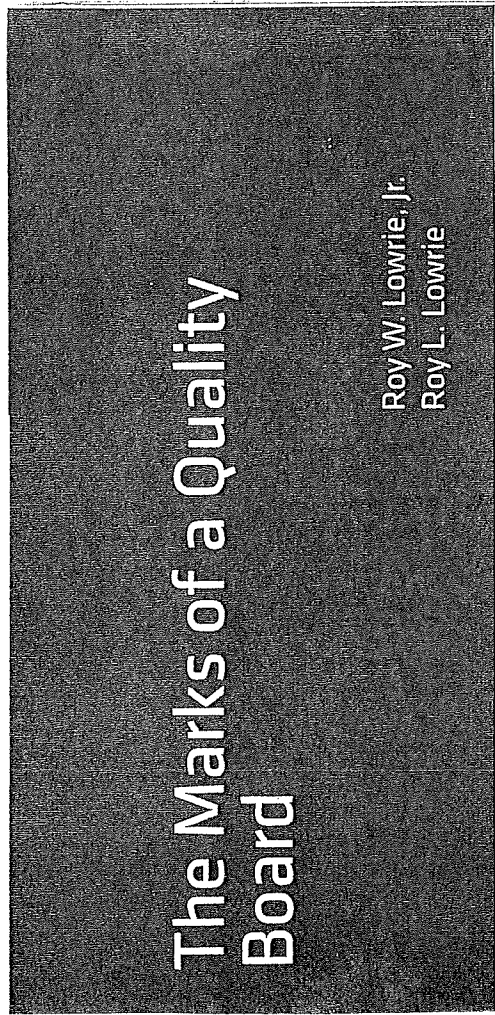
Relationships within the board are enhanced when members think of the board as a miniature of the universal body of Christ and realize that God is the head of the board. God has brought the members onto the board, has given them spiritual gifts by virtue of their new birth, and has given them responsibilities to fulfill for Him. Service should be viewed as the spiritual exercise of the body as each individual uses his or her abilities in the service of God and His Christian school.

### Christ Promoted

The school's objective is to honor Christ in education. He is the one to be promoted and not the board. To apply a familiar Scripture, Christ must increase, but the board must decrease. Occasionally boards get carried away with their talents and their success, and they give the feeling that they, rather than Christ, have done wonderful things. Any inclinations to promote the board should be recognized and resisted, following the example of John the Baptist.

### High Standards of Qualification

It is better to have a smaller board whose members are well qualified than a larger board whose membership includes some poorly qualified persons. Members who are poorly qualified dilute, damage, or even destroy the board. Nominating committees are extremely important, for if they bring only qualified candidates to the voters, it does not matter who is elected. A nominating committee that brings poorly qualified nominees before the voters does the Christian school a disservice. Board members who become disqualified after election must resign, or they must be removed.



*Editor's note: The following piece is a chapter from the book Serving God on the Christian School Board by Roy W. Lowrie, Jr. and Roy L. Lowrie. It was highly recommended by a member of the PRTI for inclusion in our journal as appropriate and beneficial, and it is reprinted with written permission from Purposeful Design Publications. I found the book on the Purposeful Design website for under \$10.*



## **Informed on Christian School Philosophy and Objectives**

The Christian school is based on a biblical philosophy of life. Its objectives are biblical, not humanistic. The school exists because of its philosophy and objectives, which board members must comprehend to make wise decisions that will enable the school to achieve its purposes. They need a clear vision of the school's educational goals if they are to lead in attaining them. Achieving such a vision requires study, reading, seminars, and discussion to sharpen each board member's focus on what the local Christian school is about.

## **Ability to Determine God's Leading**

As individuals and as a group, board members have to be experienced in knowing how to determine God's leading. They must make numerous decisions about issues on which they have no background or experience. Decisions must not be made automatically. Godly decision making starts with the desire to know God's will.

## **Unity in Christ**

The Bible says that it is good for the Lord's people to dwell together in unity (Psalm 133:1). God gives unity, but His people are responsible for maintaining it. Board members need to show respect, care, and love for each other and for the administrator. Unity on the board is tangible. It can be sensed, felt, by everyone. Disunity is recognized and healed quickly. There is no place for a devil's advocate on the Christian school board.

## **Freedom of Expression**

To deal with serious issues affecting the school, board members must be able to speak freely in their meetings. Two things are prerequisites for openness: a non-judgmental attitude towards one another and a commitment to confidentiality. Board members should not feel that they must hold back from saying what they think about a matter to avoid judgment or the risk of having their ideas passed on. When members hold back, the board does not have the advantage of its own full counsel.

## **Exercise of Faith**

The entire endeavor of the school is a walk of faith. The way of faith is always God's way. His method of showing that the school is not of man but of God. When His will in a matter is discerned, the board must exercise faith and obey it. Faith is believing that what God says is true and then acting on it. Schools grow

through several stages, and there are numerous times, some of them critical, when the board must exercise faith if the school is to be all that God intends it to be. The board should never take the position that God is strong enough to get His people out of Egypt but not strong enough to get them into the Promised Land. That attitude is sin.

## **Prayer and Praise**

Some Christian school boards are cheerful and happy in their work. Others are heavyhearted and sometimes depressed. The difference is not in the problems facing the school but in the heart attitude of the board members. The board ought to be characterized by praise and prayer, depending on God for everything and thanking God for all He is doing (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

## **Willingness to Work**

Schools make rigorous demands on members of their boards. The duties are not ceremonial but require long hours of work. A major commitment is involved. Potential members should be asked frankly about their willingness to make heavy time commitments to the Christian school. Some board members purposely do not hold demanding church offices during the years they are serving on the school board because double duty is hard on the members and their families.

## **Strong Chair**

The key to a strong board is the strong example of the chair. Even though members are volunteers, they need to be encouraged and then held to a high level of performance. Continuous exhortation and supervision by the chair is vital. The chair is a strong, visionary leader who is spiritually mature, godly, poised, and fair. In some schools, board chairs have a long tenure; in others, that tenure is deliberately limited in the bylaws. Either way, the chair is a strong leader.

## **Desire to Do Things Well**

The board should hold itself to a high level, doing things right and doing them well. If the board is willing to live with a school that has inadequate personnel and facilities, that school will be mediocre. If the board prays only for grace to tolerate those inadequacies instead of praying for solutions, the school will neither prosper nor progress. The Christian school should be a first-class operation that is respected in the community. There are no shortcuts to developing a quality school.

## **Establishment of Policies**

A strong board understands the difference between establishing board policies and administering the school. The board is responsible for establishing policies, and the administrator is responsible for administering the school within the framework of those policies. Supervision is needed to ensure that the board stays out of the school's administration.

## **Effective Board Meetings**

Both regular meetings and special meetings are important. All members attend, informing the secretary of their impending absence if an emergency arises. Prior to the meeting, each member receives, via mail or email, the agenda, the minutes of the last meeting, and the most recent financial statement. This material should be studied in advance so the board member will be prepared to address each issue. Meetings need to begin punctually. Matters should be handled with prayer and in a businesslike way. Any new policies that are enacted should be entered in a separate board policy book as well as in the minutes of the meeting. The administrator should attend all meetings, usually having a voice but not a vote.

## **Major Decisions**

Certain decisions in the life of the school are major. Therefore, the board should be nearly unanimous in making them. Still, board members must vote honestly, according to what they feel is right, not under a feeling of pressure because a nearly unanimous vote is requested. The problem with requesting a unanimous vote is that board members may feel that if they dissent they appear not to know God's will, and so they go along with the others even though they are not persuaded in their hearts.

## **No Partiality**

Favoritism, or partiality, damages a school. Respect of persons will be detected quickly, and its outcome is always bad. Board members should never ask for special treatment for themselves or their friends. They should never exert even the least pressure on the administrator to be partial in a situation. According to James 2, respect of persons is sin.

## **Good Judgment**

Good judgment is the ability to make correct decisions. In the school it means to understand the biblical teachings that apply and then to make the decision in accordance with them. To express it another way, good judgment from the

world's viewpoint is often not the same as good judgment from God's viewpoint. A board that makes major errors frequently cannot merit the confidence of the school family.

## **Relationships Within the School**

The board must establish and maintain quality relationships with the administrator, teachers, parents, and students. Relationships with people outside the school must also be good. A strong board does not allow poor relationships to persist but is sensitive in dealing with people and situations.

## **Problems Among People**

In Matthew 18, Jesus speaks of problems with people and ways to handle them. To apply this teaching to the school, the people directly involved should resolve any problems at the lowest level. If they are unable to reach a reconciliation, the administrator, and ultimately the school board, may become involved. None of these steps should be circumvented. The whole procedure is to be followed with a gentle spirit. Everyone should do what is right and should have a desire for the healing that accompanies reconciliation.

## **Faculty and Staff Welfare**

The welfare of the faculty and staff demands effort throughout the year, not just at salary time. The board should raise salaries to reasonable levels and should offer benefits that are comprehensive and always improving. Christian school personnel should view their work as a ministry and rarely complain about their salaries as do their counterparts in secular education. The fact that the Christian school personnel do not strike does not mean that they are without financial needs. Their passivity in the area of finance puts responsibility on the board to become aware of their needs, paying them according to the professional services they render. Workers are worthy of their hire.

## **Encouragement to the Personnel**

The faculty and staff are Christians who are serving God at the school, but they are also real people who need encouragement. Highly important to their morale is their attitude toward the school board. An encouraging, appreciative board follows the biblical admonition to bolster one another in the Lord.

## **Positive Leadership**

It is important for the board to give positive leadership. The work does not progress if the leadership conveys an attitude of confusion, disappointment, or

despair. Negativity from the board hinders the entire ministry. It is hard for the administrator, teachers, and parents to rise above the leadership of the board. A quality board faces and resolves negative situations while remaining positive in its approach and attitude.

### **Competent Administrator**

Some say that the most important job of the board is to hire the right administrator. It would be hard to over emphasize that need. Once the person is hired, it is equally important to retain that leader and invest in his or her further professional growth. Strong schools have stable administrators who give their lives to the ministry a day at a time.

### **Variety Among the Members**

Boards benefit from members who have a wider perspective on the school when they represent a variety of occupations, educational backgrounds, and areas of expertise. It is a blessing to observe and reflect on the ways God has been preparing people years before their election or appointment to serve Him on the Christian school board.

### **Careful Organization**

Good organization helps to get all the work done efficiently. Organizational charts are needed. Job descriptions should be written carefully. Charters and by-laws should be in good legal order. All these should be reviewed periodically and revised as warranted. They are not constantly in flux, but they are subjected to review as years pass and the school grows. A policy that was good in prior years may not be best now. Doctrine is not subject to change, but policies, procedures, and plans are.

### **Changes in Board Positions**

It is healthy to have some change in board leadership positions. When the same persons hold the same board offices or chair the same board committees for many consecutive years, they tend to become mechanical or stagnant. Changes in assignment are stimulating and encouraging to the board. Too much change annually can be chaotic, for board members require some time to become oriented to their assignments before they will perform at their best. A good balance of continuity and change is needed.

### **Board Turnover Not Excessive**

It takes time for board members to become seasoned workers. If there is excessive turnover because of dropouts or because members are allowed to serve only short terms, a veteran board cannot be developed. The result is a board that is always young, with a limited ability to see problems in perspective and with limited time to resolve the problems. Quality boards encourage veteran members while bringing in new members as well.

### **In-Service Training**

Members of quality boards are students of Christian school education. They grow in their understanding of their ministry through planned in-service activities, including the following: (1) attending conferences and seminars for Christian school board members, (2) attending workshops led by educational consultants invited to meet with the local board, (3) listening to or watching tapes made specifically for school boards, (4) visiting strong Christian schools to talk with board members and administrators, and (5) reading books and magazines concerning the ministry of the Christian school board.

### **Strong Board-Administrator Relationship**

The board-administrator relationship is the key relationship in the school, for its quality controls the quality of the school. Neither the board nor the administrator should allow anything less than an excellent relationship to occur. That relationship is preserved, nurtured, and encouraged to grow. It is not become what it should after much prayer and counsel, the administrator should leave the school, or board members who cannot get along with the administrator should resign. No stalemate and no adversarial positions can be tolerated.

### **Sound Admissions Policies**

Two things are controlled for a Christian school to reach its objectives: the personnel and the students. Although its leaders are Christian and trust God, the school is probably not equipped to handle the educational needs of all children. The school must develop admissions policies that are in harmony with what it is able and called to do. It is honest to admit that the school is unable to meet the needs of all students instead of pretending that prayer and Christian teachers can accomplish everything even though the teachers are untrained to educate children with special needs. The solution is to help the teachers get the training and

to provide the facilities needed to educate children with a broader range of needs, a trend that has increased significantly throughout the country.

### **Obedience to Governmental Regulations**

All relationships with state and federal governments should be clear and open. Particular care is taken with IRS matters and other matters involving money. Care is also needed in all dealings with the state department of education. There is wide variation among states as to how they work with their religious schools.

### **Financial Stewardship**

The following are indication of quality in financial matters: (1) the board achieves and maintains financial stability; (2) budgeting is done accurately and soundly; (3) the budget is carefully controlled; (4) reports are clear, understood by all members, and always submitted on time; (5) the system for purchasing and payment is businesslike; (6) the school negotiates well to get the best prices; (7) the financial books are audited annually by an outside certified accountant; (8) the board does not over extend the school financially; and (9) the board is good at negotiating contracts for building projects.

### **Strategic Planning**

Good Christian schools do not simply happen. They are the result of wise and forward-looking planning. Schools with adjacent land that is still available would be extremely wise to purchase it now or at least get the first option on it for future expansion. Then if the school grows, it will have space. If it does not grow, the land can be sold. Many schools deeply regret that they did not purchase adjoining land when they could have. Their vision was too small, and their strategic plans were inadequate.

### **Public Relations**

The presentation of the school to the public takes planning. Actually the school has to be presented to several publics, including churches, the community, parents, students, pastors, alumni, and the parents of alumni. Various items may be shared with all the school's publics, while others will be presented carefully to one or two of them. In all public relations, the objective is to honor Christ. If He is honored, He will take care of the school.

### **Problem Solving**

A strong school admits that it has problems, and it develops a procedure for identifying and solving them on a regular basis. Problems should be resolved at

the lowest level possible. Since the solution may produce unexpected side effects, it is prudent to adopt solutions on a trial basis and revise them as necessary before making them final. Quality schools devote extra time during the year to problem solving. A board retreat or an administrative retreat is good for this purpose. By their planning and forward thinking, good boards avoid some potential problems or conflicts.

### **Accreditation**

Accreditation is meaningful in the education world. A quality school should strive to attain accreditation if in the process the spiritual integrity of the school can be maintained. If any compromise is required, accreditation becomes undesirable. The administrator and the faculty, with the support of the board, do the greatest amount of work for accreditation. To maintain accreditation, a school must go through a renewal process every five to ten years.

### **Marginal Decisions Avoided**

Over a period of years, a Christian school becomes mediocre if the board frequently has given the benefit of the doubt in marginal decisions. For example, if marginal administrators are retained, if marginal teachers are rehired, or if marginal students are admitted or readmitted, the school will not have the quality it should have. The school exists for the students, and the board must always seek the best for them and not be satisfied with the merely adequate. Over time, the accumulation of soft decisions has a weakening effect on the school.

### **The Sense of Serving God**

The members of a quality Christian school board have a strong sense that they are serving God. They regard board membership as an honor, not for any prestige it offers but for the opportunity to serve. Members should be humble, for they realize that all genuine progress in the school comes from God. They realize that one of them plants and another waters, but it is God alone who gives the increase. At the same time, they understand that their work for the Lord will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ.

### **Prayer**

“Dear Father in heaven, work all that is well pleasing in your sight in and through the Christian school board. We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be all the honor and glory forever. Amen.”

# The Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute and the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools: Their History and Relationship

by Agatha  
Lubbers

The writing of these observations and reflections coincides with the celebration of the fiftieth convention of the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute (PRTI), which was attended by nearly all of the 129 teachers currently working in the Protestant Reformed Christian schools, plus many teachers from Plymouth Christian School and Zion Christian School. The convention met October 21-22, 2004, at the Eastside Christian School in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Since 1956, the year of the inception of the PRTI, a convention or conference has been sponsored. Because two conventions were held during the year 1956, we have reached the fiftieth convention before we have reached the fiftieth year of the existence of the PRTI.

In the late 1940s and very early 1950s, faculty members of Protestant Reformed schools attended the conventions of the Michigan Christian Teachers' Association, a profes-

sional organization of teachers that are employed in the schools belonging to the National Union of Christian Schools (NUCS) and now called Christian Schools International (CSI).

However, it was March 29, 1956, that the teachers of Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School and Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School met for a conference. This conference was later called the first convention of the Protestant Reformed Christian schools. The purpose of this conference was to bring together the faculties and boards of the two Grand Rapids PR schools so they could talk about mutual concerns. I can remember well that meeting because I was the teacher of thirty students at Hope in grades five through seven. My yellowed notes indicate that the late Rev. G. M. Ophoff was the featured speaker at 2:00 p.m. at Hope Protestant

Reformed Church on the topic "Teaching Citizenship." Later that afternoon, the faculty members and board members discussed the following topics: "Discipline and Punishment," "Intramurals: Method and Value," "Combining Subjects When Two or More Grades Are in the Same Room," and "Failure of Pupils." The evening of that day the conference or convention moved to Adams School. The evening began with group singing led by the late Mr. Al Heemstra and was followed immediately by a panel discussion on the topic "School Board and Teacher Relations." The following topics were discussed: "Discipline: Can the School Board Help the Teachers? How?" "Selection of Textbooks," "Curriculum Planning," "Failure and Promotion of Pupils," and "Hiring New Teachers: When? How?" After a recess another panel assembled to discuss the topic "The Distinctiveness of Our Schools."

Although there has always been some misunderstanding about the beginnings of the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute (PRTI) and the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools (FPRCS) and the relationship between them, let it be stated that my recollection and research indicate that the meetings of the PRTI predate the origin of the FPRCS. The PRTI is an organization of professional educators that had its origins as early as March 29, 1956, now called the first convention, while the FPRCS, an organization founded by several boards, did not have an initial meeting until December 1956.

The PRTI met next on April 2, 1956, and organized by making arrangements for the writing of a constitution. The constitution was ratified and adopted at a meeting in June of 1956 that was attended by eight teachers from Hope and Adams in the lower level of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, on the corner of Fuller and Franklin. The constitution of the PRTI established the name of the organization, the basis, the purpose, the criteria for membership, the officers, the time of the meetings, the dues, and the rules for making amendments. It is noteworthy that the early minutes indicate that each member of the organization would be assessed fifty cents per meeting. That means that the treasurer would be responsible for collecting \$7 annually from each member, and because the total membership could not have been greater than twelve or thirteen teachers, the grand total to be collected each year would be about \$90.

When one considers the amount collected and the grand goals of the organization "To create a medium through which we may produce materials of a specific Protestant Reformed nature, to be used in our own schools and thereby making our schools more distinctive," it seems necessary that several wealthy and generous patrons would have had to contribute funds to make this a possibility. By

the way, such generous donations were neither solicited, nor received by the PRTI.

Another yellowed sheet in my notebook of PRTI events includes the notes I took as the first secretary of the PRTI. The second convention was held October 18, 1956 at Adams School and at Hope School. A total of thirteen teachers and a few prospective teachers attended this convention. The teachers from Adams were Jean Dykstra, Ruth Dykstra, Fred Hanko Sr., Winifred Koole, Hulda Kuiper, Delia Slomp, and Jeanette Veldman. The teachers from Hope were Jessie Dykstra, Agatha Lubbers, Delores Mensch (Miedema), Marie Moelker, and Alice Reitsma.

Program notes duplicated in the memorable purple ink indicate that the sites for the convention were Adams in the morning and Hope in the afternoon. Alice Reitsma, principal of Hope, opened the meeting with prayer, and this was followed immediately by a panel discussion on the teaching of art in our schools. Panelists were Antoinette Borduin (Quenga), John Buitter, and Jean Dykstra. The conventioners enjoyed a recess for coffee and were treated to presentations by Hulda Kuiper on "Parent-Teacher Conferences" and Ruth Dykstra on "The Place of the Kindergarten." The Varsity Grill on Franklin and Madison, across from the original Grand Rapids Christian High School, was the site for fellowship and lunch. This was the earliest version of the annual banquet. All traveled to Hope School and assembled by 1:30 p.m. for the afternoon sessions of this second convention. Alice Reitsma made a presentation on "Oral and Written Composition." This was followed by a panel discussion with Jessie Dykstra, Winifred Koole, Delores Mensch, Thelma Pastoor, and Delia Slomp participating.

It should be noted that in those early days the teachers did attempt to publish a simple newsletter and journal that featured articles relating to the task of education. I can remember turning the crank on a mimeograph in the lower level of the Creston Protestant Reformed Church parsonage to produce this early version of the PRTI newsletter and journal that later became the *Perspectives in Covenant Education*, which was first published in October 1975.

Other goals of the organization were to work for unity and understanding between our Protestant Reformed schools and to study materials related to the field of education in conjunction with the word of God, so that the teachers could be better qualified to teach from a Protestant Reformed viewpoint. The teachers that belong to the PRTI have faithfully attempted to do exactly this.

The 140 teachers and prospective teachers that attended the fiftieth convention at Eastside in 2004 were repeatedly urged to refrain from despising "the day of small things" (Zech. 4:10). God used those small beginnings to bring us

to a time when many laborers would be working to establish and maintain Protestant Reformed Christian schools, of which there are currently fourteen. They were important beginnings, and our covenant God has blessed us so that we have continued faithful to the truth of God's word unto the present time. May God give us continued faithfulness to his cause in the world.

Also, the basis of the organization has not changed. The basis of the PRTI for these many years has been the "Word of God as interpreted by the Three Forms of Unity and as these are applied in the educational principles of the Protestant Reformed schools." Ah! What a blessed and sure basis that is, and it has served us well these many years.

The fundamental character of the PRTI is that it is an organization that is controlled by a membership that is limited to Protestant Reformed persons who are either teachers or prospective teachers. Although our schools are not controlled by the church, they are schools that have such a close relationship to the Protestant Reformed Churches that all the teachers must be members of the Protestant Reformed Churches, and they are in that way eligible to be members of the PRTI.

## The Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools (FPRCS)

The official minutes of the federation indicate that the first meeting of the FPRCS was held at Hope School on Friday, December 7, 1956. The minutes referred to this significant and monumental meeting as the first meeting of the combined Protestant Reformed Christian school boards.

Just to set the record straight, it ought to be noticed that the initial meeting of the federation and all subsequent delegate board meetings of the federation of Protestant Reformed Christian school boards were expanded board meetings. The teachers in the schools were not directly involved in these meetings. There was even some question among the teachers about the necessity of the federation, since the PRTI, which had been founded in the early months of 1956, had begun meetings with much the same purpose as that for which the federation was being founded—the further training of the teachers in the schools.

The important point, nevertheless, is that both the teachers who organized the PRTI and board members who were instrumental in organizing the federation saw the need for the development and further preparation of the teachers in the specifics of the instruction that teachers and parents were called to give students and covenant children

in the Protestant Reformed Christian schools.

The representatives at this first meeting that would result in the organization of the FPRCS were from Adams, Hope, and Oaklawn and South Holland, Illinois. Letters of interest had also been received from Edgerton, Minnesota, and Hull, Iowa. It was agreed that an attempt should be made to organize as a permanent organization that would be agreeable to the various school boards. Rev. Herman Hanko, then pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, acting as chairman pro tem, appointed a committee to draw up a tentative constitution to be presented at the next meeting, scheduled three months later on Friday, March 15, 1957.

Another important issue was the appointment of a committee to study the matter of normal courses for teachers. The committee was appointed with the understanding that they would produce an outline for a complete normal course (teachers' training course), and the committee would also come prepared with advice and suggestions concerning personnel to instruct in this course.

Although the establishment of a teacher training college was soon ruled out as being impossible, the federation did appoint a seminar committee, and a seminar program was soon established, thereby making it possible and necessary for seminary professors, ministers, teachers, seminary students, and prospective teachers to meet for eleven four-hour sessions during late 1957 through early 1959. The seminars have been described as "forums for intellectual exchange between pastors and teachers which was stimulating and spirited." It has been said that "the level of debate (not often recaptured) was the mark of the commitment of these pioneers."<sup>1</sup>

The first seminar met at Adams School on Friday, November 29, 1957. Rev. H. Hanko led by presenting a paper on "Education among the Hebrews." Rev. C. Hanko led the April 7, 1958 seminar on the topic "Education among the Greeks." Rev. H. C. Hoeksema led the June 27, 1958 seminar on the topic "Education among the Ancient Romans." Several of the sessions featured presentations by teachers now retired and in some cases deceased, that is, John Buijter, Jessie Dykstra, Fred Hanko, Winifred Koole, Agatha Lubbers, and Alice Reitsma. Our older readers will recognize the names of these teachers. The eleventh seminar on February 28, 1959, was led by Rev. B. Woudenberg on the topic "Twentieth Century Education in America."

When these seminars were finished we thought we knew it all, but the seminar concept would not soon die. Seminars were not soon discarded. Beginning in the spring of 1959 until 1969, the federation continued to sponsor and fund seminars. Eleven seminars were held on various

aspects of psychology and pedagogy, and most of these were led by the teachers.

During the years 1961-1964, eight seminars were held on methods of teaching. These seminars were all under the leadership of the first generation of teachers in the schools.

During the years 1965-1969, a new series of seminars began that dealt with topics such as, "Thomas Aquinas," "Augustine and His Teaching," "The Scholastic Movement," and "The Impact of John Dewey." These seminars were also led by teachers in our schools.

Although the seminar program ended in 1969, it was replaced during the years 1970-1979 by summer workshops. These workshops developed and produced manuals that could be used by the teachers in our schools. These manuals are presently being transferred to CDs. Mini-courses, individual writing, and study projects were also funded by the federation during the years 1970-1979. During the 1980s, much of the previous work seemed to die down, and a motion was brought to the floor of the delegates that the federation be abandoned and that the organization be ended. Through the efforts of certain people with another vision, the work and study began again in the mid 1990s and has continued on into the year 2004.

For a complete review of the seminars and workshops, I encourage you to obtain and read the pertinent section in the *Handbook of the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools*. Copies of the handbook are available from Agatha Lubbers, executive director of the federation.

The chief goal of the federation is to provide seminars and workshops to promote the development, the understanding, and the presentation of distinctive Protestant Reformed Christian education. The federation is to seek ways and means for a more thorough training of teachers and prospective teachers in Reformed Christian principles.

For nearly five decades the FPRCS has been attempting to help teachers grow, and this development is seen as a third generation of teachers begin to take their places in our Protestant Reformed Christian schools. God be praised for his faithfulness.

## The Relationship between the PRTI and the FPRCS

It ought to be very obvious that the FPRCS and the PRTI are two separate entities. Three representatives from each school board in the Michigan and Illinois area meet twice each year as the delegate board of the federation to make decisions and to determine assessments that make possible the funding of projects that are planned by the Teacher Education and Development Committee (TED), the executive and steering committee of the federation. Most recently, these projects have included art curriculum guides

and summer seminars on biblical psychology. Currently, work has begun on the writing of a physical education curriculum guide. A seminar for the summer of 2005 is being planned on the subject "The Kingdom of God and the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools."

Teachers are encouraged by the boards, the TED, and the executive director to attend and participate in these activities. The funds for these activities are made available through the dues paid by the individual school societies.


The PRTI has remained a professional organization. The main activity of the PRTI is planning and executing the annual teachers' convention. In addition, the PRTI plans several after-school meetings each year for teachers in the Grand Rapids area. Since October 1975, the PRTI has become responsible for the publication of the quarterly, *Perspectives in Covenant Education*. The activities of the PRTI are funded through the dues paid by the members and the participants in the activities of the PRTI.

A major cost for teachers from outlying areas is the travel costs to attend the annual PRTI convention each fall. The FPRCS has assisted with the funding for these travel costs by making funds available for teachers from outlying schools to attend the conventions. We are happy to report that teachers from Washington, California, Colorado, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan attended the 2004 convention, and for many of them attendance was made possible by the funding provided by the FPRCS. This is a very important indication of the collaboration between the FPRCS and the PRTI.

The PRTI is also a seedbed for many of the ideas the federation attempts to use in the projects, workshops, and seminars that are funded by the federation.

Although there was some initial misunderstanding and some resistance by the teachers to the activities of the FPRCS, we have witnessed and experienced the development of a very healthy and helpful collaborative relationship between the PRTI and the FPRCS.

We pray for continued fervency and leadership in both of these organizations so that they will continue to serve the cause of the development of principles and teaching methods in our Protestant Reformed Christian schools.

To God be the glory, and to him we give all our thanks for having preserved these sister organizations for nearly fifty years. Our prayer is that as the Lord tarries we may continue to experience this collaboration. 

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Handbook of the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools*, 19, 20.



**SECOND TIER**

**WALKING ALONGSIDE THE FIRST-YEAR TEACHER**

**SIXTH MEETING RESOURCES**

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person who educates another always does so by virtue of a mandate. "Being an educator" is always characterized by the fulfillment of a moral mandate; almost always its character is that of fulfilling an official mandate.

When a child comes into the home, a specifically parent-child relationship develops. That relationship is not described by stating that the parents are obligated to educate and guide the child, for whose life they are responsible, merely out of social considerations. We may grant the presence of such considerations, but they do not reach the heart of the matter. We might state it as follows: Parents who do not think they have a calling to nurture and guide the child which they have engendered and brought into the world (extreme radical view), have no conception of their task and calling; but neither do those parents have this who regard their task to consist merely in sustaining the child's life and in aiding the child to make the most of itself, and that simply because the child owes its existence to them (bio-sociological view). It is all wrong to say that education (*opvoeding*: nurture) implies only: bearing the consequences of the fact that you have brought a child into the world; and that education is merely the natural consequence of being the biological cause for the coming into existence of another human being. If education was truly only the result of that fact, then those who educate could content themselves with sustaining the life of the child and forming and directing him in such a manner that presently the child could maintain his own existence; in that case education would signify merely activity within the biological sphere. Fortunately, most parents feel that they have greater obligations. The special tie between parents and children is much more than is comprised in the statement: parents are the natural cause for the existence of the child and therefore they have obligations.

We know the parent-child relationship in life is included in a special ordinance of God for life. That special ordinance

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### Authority, Discipline, and Freedom in Christian Education

IN SPEAKING of authority, discipline, and freedom in Christian education, we again come to grips with one of those typically pivotal questions about which the whole problem of modern education turns. Our discussion of this question will have to be as theoretical as possible; for if, within the given time limitations, we wished merely to list all the opinions we must reject, we should not be able to set forth our own views. Consequently, I shall actually refer only occasionally to those whose opinions I do not share, even though their opinions are the background of what I say.

When we speak of educators, it stands to reason that in the first place we think of parents; in many instances we even think of them exclusively. Accordingly, the things I have to say will, as a matter of principle, apply in the fullest sense to both the parental authority and discipline, and to the freedom accorded the child by its parents.

In our approach to the problems of authority, we must begin by affirming that the authority to educate is always a derived authority. I have no right to exercise authority over a child which I encounter at random. The right "to be an educator" always presupposes a relationship of law to the one to be educated. This relationship to the young person to be educated is not in the first place the outcome of a voluntary decision on the part of the educator. (Sometimes it may be necessary to require such a voluntary decision, however.) But the

of God is linked up with the Covenant in which God includes both parents and children. And it is fortunate that thousands and thousands of parents still feel there is something unique about the parent-child relationship even though they may possess no knowledge of the Covenant of God. Many persons try to explain that uniqueness exclusively in terms of natural relationships. They say it is natural for parents to be fond of their children and consequently to desire to do everything possible for both the physical and spiritual well-being of their children. Those who speak thus think that the activities of parents, the educational or nurturing activity (in a physical and spiritual sense) is based on natural parent-child relationships.

I may observe, however, that this view of the matter merely transfers the problems to another area. Indeed, what is the cause of the love of the parents for their children? Why is there such a very special tie between parents and children? How does one explain the fact that these parents from the very outset feel responsibility toward their children; that their love impels them to such a degree that they can do nothing but seek that which is best for the physical and spiritual welfare of their children?

Everyone will realize that the simple fact of physical unity between parents and children is not enough to explain the parents' wish to educate. It has been said that the explanation must be sought in the fact that man is a rational being, and that this rationality naturally leads him to educate, that is, to bring up the child. I should like to make two observations against this view. In the first place, the spiritual education of the child on rational grounds as a rule results in bad education. When the educating takes place intuitively, it usually is better, even though it remains true that intuitive education of the spirit must be enriched by insight. But that is quite another matter. The point is we find it to be a fact that parental training which is based purely on rational grounds is worse than that based on intuitive grounds, that is, the inner com-

pulsion which motivates the parents in educating their children. And in the second place, it is a remarkable phenomenon, that when pure rationality governs life, the tie between parents and children becomes weakened and the parental urge to educate the child decreases. Cold rationality which leads men to act, because the actions can be reasoned out, as a matter of fact, makes the urge to act less and less in every area of life. Phenomena, observable in our own society, make it plain moreover, that rational insight can never be the basis—at least not a good basis—for educational activity.

In the relationship between the educator and the one to be educated—in so far as it relates to the relationship: parents-children—there is always a two-fold aspect: first, the educator's love for the child; second, the educator's awareness of responsibility toward the child of today who must become the man of tomorrow.

It goes without saying, that these two elements of love and a feeling of responsibility must be present in educators in general, and consequently also in them to whose care children have been entrusted.

This very typical element of the feeling of responsibility now leads us to the heart of the matter in our discussion of the task of the educator. Why is the educator conscious of his responsibility? Why does he know that he is responsible for what happens to the child? Surely, it is because he is aware of having a mandate. This feeling of responsibility cannot be attributed to a general feeling of responsibility present in the social community. That I should assume responsibility for a child which stands on the river-bank and threatens to fall into the river, while I am in a position to prevent that accident, is abundantly clear. In this case, however, my responsibility is of a general character. Whether it is a helpless child I can save or a drunken man makes no difference at all. What is involved

is my relationship to a fellow human being. But when a person is the educator of a child or of a youth, then the relationship is a very special one. That special relationship may have a twofold character.

There may be a very specific relationship between this educator and that pupil, as in the case of a foster-father and a foster-son; or again between a teacher and one particular boy in his section who requires special attention. Furthermore, the relationship may be one of the educator's responsibility toward a group. But as soon as we begin to speak of the role of the educator, we shall always find a specific responsibility towards a particular individual under particular circumstances. This responsibility also has a permanent character. Otherwise there can be no question of educating. An official "who must look after a boy," is not an educator: he is a guard.

Accordingly, we observe that the element of responsibility always comes to the fore in education. But now it remains true that this responsibility can be realized only by way of love. If the educator does not feel attached to the child or young person he must educate, the task of educating will fail. Without this love it is not possible to understand the child. Moreover, the educator will lack the necessary patience if he does not have love. But the most important thing is this: without love there is missing in the education that unique quality which causes the child to respond to the educational process. Education without love is nothing more than the issuing of commands. But commands do not educate, they only drill; they can make of the human being a clever creature, which knows all the loopholes of the law, but they do not form personality. Therefore education without love—assuming for a moment that this were possible—is such a tremendous danger to the child and even to society. Education without love produces automatons or permanent rebels against the social order, or formally correct but inhibited persons who dare not express themselves, or other such types.

There are, therefore, two elements without which the educator cannot teach: love and a feeling of responsibility.

Now it is possible to relate the feeling of one's responsibility directly to a mandate. I am responsible for something, but also to someone. And indeed no responsibility is conceivable without this relationship to the person to whom I am responsible for something or for someone. The feeling of responsibility is determined by this personal relationship.

I intentionally did not speak of the authority of parents until now. Indeed, if we state that love and a feeling of responsibility are the distinctive characteristics out of which educational activity grows, then we regard the activity of the parents differently than if we say they are invested with authority. Moreover, it is not possible to equate love and authority, as though they were of coordinate importance. It is frequently done, but that does not make it right. Frequently one hears it said that authority and love are both necessary in education. Now in itself this is true, but you are making a mistake when you coordinate love and authority as two entities more or less independent from each other.

We now wish to address ourselves to the question: How are these two characteristics of the educator, his authority and his love, mutually related?

There is no easy answer to this question, the more so because it is evident that in the practice of everyday living there are such persistent misconceptions of this matter. For many people the parent-child relationship is such that parents should state: "It is natural for me to love you, and besides God has invested me with authority"; or else: "I love you and you are called upon to obey me"; or again: "I have been given authority, and you must love me, your educator, so that you may receive my love in return." This problem of authority in education we intend to examine more closely, noting particularly both the relationship of authority and love, and the relationship

of that authority to the feeling of responsibility in the educator.

No one will dispute the following proposition: God has given parents authority over children, and therefore—stated otherwise—God has given particular parents authority over the young persons who are to be educated. If I state the proposition that parents (that is, educators) love their children and should love them, no one will object. Nor will anyone deny the proposition that God has entrusted the children (who are his children) to the parents for their education, and that therefore they are responsible for those children. Nevertheless, we are making a mistake when we continue to speak of these as three distinct matters: the authority of the educator, the love of the educator, and the feeling of responsibility of the educator. These differentiations which can so easily become differences have had many unfortunate results.

What is the essential character of being an educator? It is: "to fulfill a mandate." God has given the parents a mandate to bring up their children. That is a duty of the parents. From this follows their responsibility. To enable the parents to fulfill their obligation, God has vested in the parents that which they need for fulfilling their duty. And what is that? Is it possible in answer to say: on the one hand they are in need of authority and on the other hand they are in need of love? I hold that it is not so, and when I say this I know someone will wish to contradict me. But I also know that on the basis of God's Word I am convinced that I may not hold anything else. Authority and love are not a duality in education. Parental authority cannot be separated from parental love. In many respects they are even indistinguishable, because authority is love and love is authority. I would also be prepared to defend the proposition that good authority never can be divorced from love. He possesses authority who has the final say, who can lay down the law. But among human beings only he has the final say who is bound to his fellows by inner ties. Without this inner tie, authority becomes tyranny! Consequently, no

sooner does parental authority become dissociated from parental love in the consciousness of the child, or separated from the love which the child feels toward the parents, before the authority begins to miscarry. And the parents will have to understand and put this in practice every day.

Conversely, love can never be detached from authority. Love which is not at all times and in all places an expression of the task of the parents, who bear that authority, is not genuine love. Such love of the educator soon becomes coddling, soon becomes a soft-hearted indulging of the whims and wishes of the child. Such authority loses its connection with the law of God.

Here we touch upon another point which shows how harmoniously interwoven authority and love are. We now refer in particular to authority and love as they become evident in education. The concept of "law" is correlative with that of "authority." Authority demands obedience. Authority is related to the rule which we must obey, the law which calls for obedience. In the awareness of many individuals it is particularly this fact which causes an inner separation of love and authority. They say: the law commands, the law is severe, the law is cold. Love binds, love is compassionate, love is warm, and therefore the love-side of authority is evangelical. The law side of authority is legal, Old-Testament-like, and essentially it is a thing that has been transcended.

He who speaks so has no understanding of the essence of law. In our discussion of moral education, I hope to refer to this point again. However, I wish to make the observation here and now that the law of God is an expression of God's being, and hence also an expression of the love of God by which he is bound to His own cosmos. If the creature lives according to the law, the ordinance, the rule which God has laid down for His creatures, then all will be well with that creature. The creature of God will experience that the law of God is nothing but the expression of a rule which enables the creature to find and maintain its life. The law of love is like

the loving human hand which casts the fish which has floundered upon dry land back into the water; it is the love whereby one human being saves another from drowning. The law is not present to chastise us, to make us unhappy, to rob us of freedom, but the law is there to show us the way along which we can go to life, to the light. The law points us to the place where it is safe and where we can be happy.

To be sure, if we acknowledge the law in this sense, then we also presuppose that other function of the law by which we know our misery and whereby the law itself becomes our schoolmaster to Christ. But in Christ that law becomes to us a rule of life; the law becomes for us an expression of the love of God. Therefore the legal side of the authority is exactly the same as the love side.

But it is evident that on this view I cannot regard authority in education as something different from love. Indeed, the correct exercise of authority by the educator is only possible, is in fact only permissible, when carried out in love; but to this authority in love and to this love in authority there remains conjoined a responsibility. This is also true because of the fact that in bringing up our children, we are dealing with something which is not our possession, but God's possession. God says to all children of the Covenant: "You are my children," even when parents degenerate so far that they offer their children to Moloch.

Now, however, the question arises as to whether this authority of the parents, interdependent as it is with their love, and their love as well, are dependent upon the subjective recognition by the child. A parallel question is: to what extent does the law of God demand our obedience, even if we are not able to render that obedience out of love?

In answering the question as to the validity of authority, we must begin by declaring that the exercise of authority may never be such that there is a separation between love and

authority. If this unity is broken in the one who bears authority, then he is on the way to misusing that authority; and if he continues on that path, he will finally arrive at the point where he must be deprived of the authority. The fact that authority and love are one in education by no means signifies that the child or young person subject to parental authority now also has the right to reject the authority. He should obey his parents out of love. But he may not say: "If such love is lacking, I am no longer obliged to obedience, for in that case my obeying would only be a slavish obedience." If a young person were to argue in this manner, he certainly would demonstrate his lack of understanding of this relationship. The authority of love, which is exercised over him with loving authority, is balm for his loving heart; and if he obeys out of love, then all is well. But if he does not wish to obey, because he has no love, then authority remains, nonetheless. Authority exercised in the spirit of love—that most certainly is the essence of parental authority; however, this does not imply that the child who supposes he cannot respond in love by the same token does not have to acknowledge the authority of his parents. Every child must see the authority of his parents as representative of the authority of God. God's authority too is an authority in love. Therefore, rejection of that love is equivalent to defiance of God himself and consequently of his authority. Likewise, he who disclaims the love of his parents, attacks their authority, and hence the parents themselves. This also signifies that they who do not acknowledge the authority of love stand guilty before their parents, and that therefore by virtue of the parental authority and love they must receive punishment.

Accordingly, parents who understand their authority and the significance of that authority, will be expected to take disciplinary measures in due course when a child by disobeying shows its lack of love. Consequently the authority of the parents continues even when their love is rejected by the child.

continually be seen as a covenantal child. That is not to say that we should have to speak of the Covenant to the child each day. Indeed, this should not be done until the child has reached at least the years of discretion. But the attention of the child should be called on the one hand to the love of God, to the love of Christ, who loved and still loves him; and on the other to the fact that he must now also love God, that he must realize his need for forgiveness from sin, and that he should ask God to love him in spite of the fact that his heart is sinful. In all Christian education this apparent duality is in truth a unity. And it is precisely the same duality and the same unity which the educator finds in his own life. It is the duality and unity found in the declaration: "all my sins have been forgiven" and in the petition: "forgive us our debts."

Now education must primarily be of such a character that the child experiences in its educators, hence particularly in the parents, the truth described above. The entire life's attitude of mother and father, of teacher and master should manifest itself to the child as a daily walking with God. That is something quite different from the attitude revealed by some Christians who represent God only as an avenging justice, whom the child must fear, and whom you must placate from hour to hour by taking care that you do not sin against his commands.

On the one hand, discipline has bearing on the fact that the parents, in particular the educator, and even more particularly the father and mother, must give guidance to the child in growing up. Discipline has reference to restraining or bridling, but not exclusively in a negative sense; discipline is also a bridle which steers in the right path. On the other hand, it is just because the right path must be travelled and because the direction of that path is determined by both the starting-point and the end-point, that discipline is also a means to attain that end. One aspect of discipline is always the desire to attain the ideal. That is the specific character of pedagogical discipline. But as a pedagogical discipline it also includes a third aspect:

And a child, therefore, who no longer recognizes the authority of its parents as an authority of love, can expect nothing less than to experience the parental authority either as a compelling authority or as a punitive authority. In such a case what has really happened is that the child who no longer has an eye for love and accordingly rejects authority in its further contacts with that authority no longer experiences the love which is present. And the child suffers punishment in the name of this authority (which nevertheless really remains an expression of love) in order that the child may come to acknowledge that authority as the authority of love.

Although we must regard the authority of the parents as the authority of love, yet we must not overlook the fact that this authority as such also results from a God-given mandate. We should not, however, regard this mandate as one which God, after giving many other mandates and talents, now adds as a special mandate, namely, that of authority over children. Indeed not. But it does mean that in the entire covenantal relationship, authority, love, and responsibility appear as a unity. As God is one in all his virtues, so in the relation of God to his children the demand comes that we in turn experience the unity of all those virtues which God in the covenantal relationship is pleased to grant his children for their covenantal task.

As far as our analytic reasoning is concerned, it may very well be true that there is a duality in authority and love, and that it is extremely difficult to think of these two as a unity. But as opposed to this, it is equally true that in a believing acceptance of the covenantal mandate these two are indeed one; and further that in their oneness with the feeling of responsibility they form a unity for the practice of life.

Authority and love, therefore, constitute a unity. The discipline which the parents exercise over the child stems from this unity. This exercise of discipline is first of all a question of the day to day attitude of the parents. The child of the Covenant, who is to be educated in the way of the Covenant, must

its purpose to bring the child to the point where he no longer requires discipline by others, and where self-discipline will enable the child to be his own guide. That is, of course, self-guidance according to the norms laid down in the Word of God.

In discipline, therefore, there is a confrontation of educator, child, and educational objective. Discipline is a means of education. Really it can be said that discipline is the only means of education, if the word discipline is rightly understood. "Discipline" is something wholly different from what is usually designated as a "disciplinary measure." Every means by which a child is guided in the right direction is a means of discipline. If in teaching, we teach a child the most simple rules of arithmetic, this is a means of disciplining the native capacity of the child in arithmetic to the laws which hold for arithmetic. Likewise, it can even be said that a child who learns a series of irregular French verbs is being disciplined; for only in this way will the child be able to curb himself from exceeding the bounds of grammar when speaking French. Obviously, the word discipline is used here in its broadest sense. But we are deliberate in stating that this is all discipline. Indeed, in this manner we include under discipline the proper regard for correct social manners, correct speech, and correct behavior in society. Unruliness, that is, the want of discipline, usually begins at the periphery of human existence. This initial lack of discipline often is related to the lack of respect for the little things which make our societal life pleasant. People who always appear too late at meetings, who always speak a little longer than their allotted time, or people who go to bed boisterous and late while staying at a hotel, or who whisper during a concert, these people have not disciplined their lives. And as a matter of course, the attitude of such individuals finds its reflection in their children. In children, and particularly in the youth of our time, there is, generally speaking, a serious lack of discipline.

A want of discipline is not restricted to vandalism: the destruction of shrubbery in park or garden, or the smashing of windows; but a lack of discipline is also demonstrated when someone plays a noisy jazz record for hours in a rooming house full of guests, or when a group of campers troops into church just three minutes late. If parents and educators do not have an open eye for these matters, and accordingly allow children the so-called freedom to have their fling, with the resulting disturbance to other people in the community, then this points to a faulty conception of discipline and one which will have very serious consequences. Expressions such as: "It's nobody else's business," or "People shouldn't be offended so quickly," or "If I think it is fun, why shouldn't I do it?" reveal an attitude of mind which is basically undisciplined.

We do not intend, of course, to suggest that the child must be educated in a strait-jacket. Far from it. All education, also education in discipline, requires freedom. Discipline serves to protect freedom.

What is freedom? Freedom is not: "severance of all bonds." A fish is free only when it swims in water; it is bound to the water. A bird enjoys freedom only when it can fly in the air; it is bound to space. Accordingly, there are certain bonds which belong to the nature of every living being. As soon as we overlook this in discussing the concept of "freedom" we go astray in defining the character of true freedom.

A living creature lacks freedom only when it is bound by bonds which do not belong to its nature. A bird without air, or a fish without water, lacks freedom even though in all other respects it is free. They are free only by virtue of the bonds which belong to their nature. There are many bonds which do not belong to our essential humanity. If a man is bound by such bonds, he lacks freedom. But there are other bonds which are an essential part of our humanity. In the absence of



these bonds, man lacks freedom as much as the fish which is outside the bonds of water. Thus the human individual is bound by such clothing as befits the climate in which he lives. Man is likewise bound by certain social bonds. The child who prematurely frees himself from the parental bond does not gain freedom, but rather loses freedom; this is true because the bond between this child and its parents is a natural relationship which the child needs if it is to develop and give full scope to its natural gifts. Most human beings fortunately are bound to a person of the opposite sex by the very special bond of love. This being bound belongs to the nature of man and only in this restrictive bond can man truly be free; only in this being bound can he live his life to the full. There are a few individuals who are not capable of love. For them the marriage-bond means the loss of freedom. Likewise, the marriage-bond between two persons of opposite sexes which is not based on an essential compatibility of the marriage partners results in a loss of freedom.

Thus we conclude that freedom means: the rejection of those bonds which are foreign to essential nature; but that freedom also implies: the acceptance of those bonds which belong to essential nature.

Accordingly, we are now able to state that child-discipline has as its purpose the averting of all those bonds which are foreign to the essential nature of the child in general, and to this child in particular; but discipline must also serve to strengthen and fortify all the bonds which are inherent in the child in general, and inherent in any particular child. And this must take place in such a way that the child learns to be happy without those bonds which are foreign to his nature and happy with those bonds which are peculiar to his nature.

Now societal living is one of those bonds which is characteristic of the nature of the child. And the child can feel happy

only if his organic adjustment to society has been made in a harmonious way. Therefore discipline of the child also signifies that in all of his societal relationships, the child learns to live in a manner conformable to the nature of any given group or community, and so to reveal his membership in that community.

Naturally, this discipline cannot be achieved unless the child has experienced the "spirit" of a particular group. That is to say, that he learns to adapt himself to such an extent, that his feelings, the totality of his being is sensitized, as it were, to discover the *tendenz* which prevails in any particular locale. That is necessary if the child is to learn to shun any particular kind of fellowship which is wrong for him, or which in itself has a wrong purpose. Such a discipline must be practised with patience in quiet conversation with the child. But this exercise in discipline also implies that the child himself must learn to take a position with respect to the group or community. Although we do not wish to suggest that it is possible in the case of every child, yet it is the ideal of good discipline that the child learn not only to feel his way into the group or community, but that he also learns to maintain his personal independence and his critical judgment with respect to that group or community.

Moreover disciplining simultaneously has as its goal that the child may learn to restrain his inclinations, desires, passions, and instincts. It stands to reason that in relation to this objective habit-forming and habituation play an important part in the practice of living.

However, the principal goal of discipline is that the child may learn to subject himself obediently to the ordinances of God, and to do this in such a way that he daily experiences the law as love, also as love of God towards the individual child. Therefore disciplinary measures are justified only when the child experiences in that discipline the love of the disciplinarian. Every punishment given in a hot temper, every chastisement

that you can notice his embarrassment when he is forced out of it. Such a child obviously is completely different from the boy who immediately reacts to a humorous situation and enjoys it. Let us say the boy with a sense of humor has an inclination to grab a cookie; he follows his inclination, takes the cookie and quickly eats it, but he is caught in the act. Then one might very well remark: that boy has taken a cookie and consequently a punishment must follow which suits a boy who steals a cookie. The same thing could be said for the second boy, the schematic one, the boy who is much more rigid. But it would be foolishness to think that punishment is something which can be administered according to the book: "The punishment fits the crime." It must also fit the criminal. Even a physician varies his prescriptions to fit the individual make-up of the patient. And when parents resort to punishment, they should take into consideration the type of child they are dealing with.

However, it is characteristic of such situations that the parents of the boy who has remained the humorous type are as a rule themselves responsible for the fact that their boy has a sense of humor; whereas in the case of the other child the parents themselves share responsibility for the fact that their six-year old boy takes flight into schematization. Needless to say, these situations make the problem difficult in practice, for in all likelihood the latter parents will also be inclined to proceed too schematically in exercising discipline because of the cookie; whereas the former parents may have an inclination to be lax in their discipline because they cannot help laughing at the "funny face" their boy pulls in his wrong-doing. It is necessary for the parents of both children to realize the background of the trespass of their child. Let us assume (by no means unlikely) that in the case of the humorous type of child the background is as follows: An attempt to see how far the boy can go in playing a trick on his parents. The only correct discipline in that event is for the parents to disrupt at once and without much ado the general feeling of good humor existing between

administered in a fit of anger, every scolding resulting from irritation on the part of father or mother, and every snubbing out of self-preservation or nervousness, has the wrong effect, and is, in fact, not Christian discipline.

From what has been said so far it could be concluded that although the disciplining of children should conform to general rules, it is not necessary to make further distinctions. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Anyone who educates is dealing with a child who has particular characteristics, individual qualities, individual ways of reacting and individual talents. In the general practice of education and in the exercise of discipline in particular, the educator very definitely must take into account who and what the child is. The first requirement of good discipline is that the child, as he is, does not get a feeling of discouragement through the discipline because he does not experience love in discipline.

But the immediate implication of this fact is also that there must be a very great differentiation and variation in the exercise of discipline. In calling attention to the following examples, we emphasize that they are to be regarded merely as illustrations. A boy of six years, robust and strong, and possessing a genuine sense of humor, who at a given moment consciously violates a command of his father, must undergo a form of discipline which is quite different from that given another six-year old boy, equally healthy, but who lacks a sense of humor and is more rigid and schematized in his actions. Perhaps this rigid schematism in the boy is even to be attributed to his parents. But in any case there is behind this schematism in the little child a kind of fear for life, for what life may bring. Schematic people are after all always persons who take refuge in schematization because they have a fear of not being equal to life; they take flight into schematization out of ignorance, anxiety, or fear. Now schematization always has a negative cause. It is possible for a six-year old to reveal already a tendency to do everything in such a rigidly schematized manner

them and the child; and that they then say: "No, that is not nice, that is not funny at all; now you really are making a nuisance of yourself; that is naughty, and if it happens again, we shall have to punish you." This child must learn to feel what is the difference between a joke and something which is really wrong. But in the case of the second boy, the situation very probably is different. We will assume that the following condition is present: This schematic child who has in his background certain fears of life and certain inhibitions toward father and mother, has the tendency to create his own little world in which he experiences a degree of pleasure in a manner agreeable to himself. Perhaps feelings of vengeance also play something of a role. Now if this child is severely punished—and schematic parents are apt to punish severely—then the child's feeling of being isolated will be aggravated, and his feeling of vengeance will be intensified. And further, if the child is given a long lecture on the sin of stealing, he will again feel the punishment to be within the same schematization in which he has been trained all the while. Therefore, when mother notices that her child has helped himself to a cookie, it is quite possible that she would do best to put her arm around her son and say: "My boy, did you really want a cookie that badly? You may ask mother for one, but don't just help yourself; mother doesn't like that, and you shouldn't do it either. You know that, don't you? Tonight mother will give you another cookie." We have called attention to these two examples to demonstrate how the same offense may require different forms of discipline, even in the case of comparatively young children. The purpose of discipline is always to preserve, to teach the child to go in the right path. Therefore, the exercise of discipline surely does not always imply chastising, punishing. To exercise discipline signifies: to take that measure which is needed to bring the child to self-discipline. Consequently, the idea of some Christian parents who think they sin if they do not punish a certain violation of their child is wholly erroneous.

Sometimes to forgive is a much better means of discipline than to spank. That likewise depends upon the nature of the child and the nature of the wrong. In this connection it should be emphatically emphasized that in all disciplining and particularly in all punishing one must consider what the child has really done. We should not forget that we exercise discipline upon the child and not upon the deed of the child.

By discipline we must always attempt to reach the inner self of the child. Discipline must not be measured in terms of the more or less accidental external situation. Therefore discipline must always be exercised with much understanding of the inner attitude of the child toward his parents and toward the command, and thus toward him who gives the command. It is a serious mistake on the part of many parents that they do not have an eye for these matters. Perhaps it is necessary for us to admit that unfortunately the sin of many educators is their use of discipline solely as a ruler or measuring line which, moreover, is applied only to external situations. In this manner, however, discipline works inversely and accordingly the child develops a dislike for the commandment. For then he gets the feeling that the law is not love, but hate; that the law is not life, but the severance of life, that it is death to all that lives.

If discipline must be exercised in different ways for different children, then it also follows that in the form and content of disciplinary measures we should take into consideration the age of the children. The educator should possess, as it were, the gift of growing up with the child in the educational activities. The exercise of discipline here also comes into immediate contact with moral education, although not exclusively with it; in every branch of pedagogical activity it is always necessary to demand maximum achievement of the child when it is a question of the child subordinating his life to a form of self-discipline. When it is possible to persuade the child to do

something good or to avoid something bad from considerations arising out of the content of his own life, the discipline will possess far greater value, viewed pedagogically, than when the child has been obedient in response to some advice, to some rebuke previously given by the parents. There are very many extremely obedient children who are obedient until they are twenty years old, but who are of no significance for the rest of their lives. Whether it is due to innate disposition, or whether it is due to their education, they have not been brought to the point of confronting life as independent individuals. The exercise of discipline will always have to be directed toward enabling the child to make his own decisions. Not until this choosing of a position is clearly sinful, or is clearly harmful to the child, will it be necessary to resort to discipline.

It will be readily understood that in exercising discipline we must constantly keep in mind that the child is also a religious being. Discipline makes it final, if you will its highest, appeal to the religious nature of the child. This does not mean that the appeal consists exclusively in holding up to the child the command of God. Discipline makes an appeal to the entire personality in the totality of its attributes, characteristics, and qualities; and these are present only because the child is a religious being.

The various attributes of the individual such as trust, submissiveness, faith, devotion, control of natural inclinations, knowledge of God's will, awareness of life's potentialities, and experiential acquaintance with life — all of these must be viewed as an organic unity, proceeding from the ego and basically directed toward the service of God, but all of these qualities must also be incorporated into the life of discipline. The root of all discipline is to teach the child to understand "that you are not your own." That is one side of the matter. But there also is immediately and even simultaneously another side; not until our life is disciplined in submission to God and his service will our life be happy and peaceful; not until then can

we live ourselves to the full and do the things we really like; not until then will our life become one with the life of the people about us; in fact, one with the life of all creation. The purpose of discipline is therefore ever and anew to teach the child to experience the love of God which comes to us in the law and ordinances; so that we, living in discipline, may see the light and may be able to live happily and contentedly. Viewed thus the expression "to kiss the rod" is intelligible. This is not the cringing attitude of the individual who caresses the punishing hand of the master and thus tries to compel friendliness, but it is the grateful attitude of the person who feels again the love of the Father and who has been brought back into that framework of life in which he only can find happiness.