

Have You Enrolled Your Child In A Christian School For The Right Reasons?

by Dr. Paul A. Kienel

Some have referred to the burgeoning Christian school movement as the world's quietest revolution. I'm not sure the rapid proliferation of Christian schools is a revolution, but parents by the tens of thousands are transferring their children from public schools to Christian schools. Possibly you are one of those parents. Permit me to ask an important question. Have you enrolled your child (or children) in a Christian school for the right reasons? Typically there are three stages of parental motivation for enrolling youngsters in Christian schools.

1. Loss of confidence in the public schools

Many parents have lost faith in the public system of education. They hear reports that disturb them. For example, John Silber, president of Boston University, expresses the concerns parents have when enrolling their children in public schools. He writes:

*In generations past, parents were more diligent in passing on their principles and values to their children, and were assisted by churches and schools which emphasized religious and moral education. In recent years, in contrast, our society has become increasingly secular and the curriculum of the public school has been denuded of almost all ethical content. As a result, universities must confront a student body ignorant of the evidence and arguments that underlie and support many of our traditional moral principles and practices.*¹

A U.S. Senator testified in Congress, "Nothing has fallen from public favor faster than America's faith in the public schools."

The public school decline in discipline and learning and the aforementioned problems causes parents - especially Christian parents - to explore the alternatives. Understandably, when these parents come to enroll their children in Christian schools, they come not so much because they are enthusiastic about Christian school education as they are disillusioned with public education.

2. Enthusiasm for the by-products of Christian school education.

Fortunately, a wholesome change often occurs in parental motivation as parents learn more about Christian schools. They move from a negative anti-public school motivation to a positive enthusiasm for Christian education. Their first level of enthusiasm centers on the "by-products" of a Christian school education. By "by-products" I mean wholesome friends, quality academics, caring teachers, a disciplined learning environment, etc. Regrettably, some parents' motivation never moves beyond enthusiasm for the by-products of Christian education.

3. A strong conviction that children need Christ-centered instruction.

A higher level of motivation is to enroll children in Christian schools out of a firm conviction that children need Christ-centered education. By definition, Christ-centered education is an educational process that puts the Bible at the center of the curriculum and asks the student and the teacher to evaluate all they see in the world through the eyes of God. It is total surrender to the authority of the Scriptures. The following are key distinctives of Christ-centered education:

- Christian school educators emphasize the worth of every child. Each child is a unique creation of God, and God has a special purpose and plan for each youngster.
- Christian school educators educate in Christ's name. They openly share the love of Christ with students. They point students toward the Savior of the world, not away from Him.
- The opposite of Christ-centered education is man-centered education or humanism, declaring man instead of God as the authority for truth. This is blasphemy and open rebellion against God. Christian school educators lift up Christ and the Bible as the ultimate authority for truth.
- Christian schools attempt to inspire loyalty to the church. Children are taught that ministers of the church are to be regarded highly and that the church is God's House.
- Christian school educators attempt to inspire students to love their country and to have respect for civil government.
- Christian school education equips students with basic academic skills with which to effectively apply themselves to live lives that are useful and productive. ACSI Stanford Achievement test scores show our Christian school students are well ahead of the national norm.
- Christian school educators are themselves important role models for students. Someone has said, "Ninety percent of what students ultimately retain from their education is what they learn from watching the lives of their teachers." This concept is verified in the Bible: "a student... when fully trained will be like his teacher." (Luke 6:40).
- Christian schools are religious in nature. Were it not for the religious purpose of Christian schools, they would not exist.

Have you enrolled your youngsters in a Christian school for the right reasons? If you love Christ and love your children it is an easy transition to move from the lesser motivation of disenchantment with the public schools to the higher motivation of offering Christ-centered education to your children. The right reasons are always Christ-centered.

¹ John Silber, *Shooting Straight*. New York: Harper and Row. 1989, p.xiv.