

Philosophy of Christian Education

We define Christian education as an educational process in which God works through His committed teachers, biblical methods, and truthful curriculum materials to build disciples with the biblical worldview, character, and skills necessary to fulfill God's calling and live to His glory. We recognize that Christian schools have distinctive which not only separate them from secular schools (those which leave the God of Scripture out), but also distinguish them from each other. The purpose of this summary is to concisely highlight the why, who, what, when, and where of the concept of Christian education. Extensive biblical support for these distinctions is provided in the documents referenced above.

First, why Christian education? The education of children is an inherently religious activity. God commands that children be brought up in the discipline and instruction of Jehovah so that they may order their lives under the authority of Jesus Christ. Jesus instructed His disciples that, because all authority had been given to Him both in heaven and on earth, they were, in turn, to disciple all the nations..., teaching them to obey all that He commanded them. God mandates that children be disciples of Christ. They must be trained in the biblical world view which honors Jehovah, the sovereign Creator of the universe. It recognizes that man was created in the image of God, but fell into sin, thus requiring the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ to save him from an eternal lake of fire. It recognizes God's purpose for man and the universe, the absolute nature of God's physical and moral laws, and God's authority as the only legitimate basis for man's authority. Such a worldview is antithetical to that taught in secular schools which base education on secular humanistic, rather than biblical, presuppositions. The religion of the humanists denies the relevance (or even the existence) of God, believing that the material universe is self-existing and not created. Man is presumed to be an evolutionary being shaped by matter, energy, and chance, having no need for salvation, no eternal soul, and no divine purpose. Man is trained to trust in man for the perfecting of human life, and to emphasize self-preservation, creative self-realization, and happiness as his chief goals. Morality and authority are to be relativistically defined by man. God commands His people not to teach their children the way of the heathen. Christian education is mandatory, not optional, for Christian children. With this foundation, the remaining highlights can be more briefly stated.

Who is responsible for providing children with a Christian education? Scripture commands parents to teach their children to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, from the time they get up in the morning till the time they go to bed at night. Properly educating children is as important as properly feeding them physical food. Just as parents need the help of others in obtaining the food for the table, so they may need the help of professional Christian educators to help them carry out their child-rearing responsibilities.

Who is Christian education for? Most certainly, it is the only education suitable for Christian children. It is also suitable to the as yet unsaved, provided they are submissive to it, for all children will profit from education in the truth. PRCA recognizes an evangelistic responsibility which is subordinated to its function of helping Christian families carry out their educational responsibilities. Since only God knows the heart, we confess the human inability to errorlessly identify God's elect and the consequent necessity to use performance criteria for admission to the student body. All students will be confronted with the authority of Jesus Christ and His Word -- a call to the unconverted and a light to the Christian's path. Christian education is for children of all intellectual abilities, including those who have special educational needs.

The what of Christian education is biblical truth applied to every area of life. Children must be educated for Christian maturity. Parents and teachers must, by word and deed, demonstrate the Christ-like life to children who must then learn to live by every word which has proceeded out of the mouth of God. The content of Christian education must include truth regarding the nature of God, man, and the creation. Academic

excellence (in keeping with each child's God-given potential) and high standards of Christian character are harmonious goals for children being equipped with the knowledge, character, and skills needed to be competent servants of Christ. Christ deserves our best in every area of life. The emphasis of Christian education is God's truth; humanistic materials are only to be used to teach truth by contrast. The lifestyle taught is that of pleasing Christ from the heart, not simple conformance with man-made laws. Students must learn the biblical relationship between morality and spirituality.

When is Christian education necessary? From the perspective of parental responsibility, the biblical nurturing of the child begins in the womb and continues as long as the child remains under parental authority. From a personal perspective, a Christian must continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ as an aspect of the normal Christian life. For the child, he must be helped to grow as rapidly as his God-given gifts allow. There is no excuse for training young children to live by humanistic and hedonistic principles. The development of basic academic skills should begin as soon as the child can accept appropriate training. The foundation of all subjects is reading; the foundation of the Christian walk is being able to read, comprehend, and obey the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, for the child's academic and spiritual growth, as each child shows readiness, we must begin to equip him with this vital skill. (Reading skills scoring between the second and fourth-grade levels can normally be expected of five-year-old children who begin a phonics reading program at ages three or four.)

Finally, where should Christian education take place? Christian education must begin in the home, even while the child is in the womb. Children, especially in the most formative years, need to be positively schooled in a biblical worldview that insulates them from the ungodly influences of the world. That instruction may appropriately continue as long as parents can best provide for the educational needs of their children. If parents decide it is time to place their child into the social environment of the Christian school, they must choose the alternative best suited to their family goals. PRCA stands ready to support the educational needs of families on our campus.