

Basic Questions And Answers About Christian Schools

by Dr. Paul A. Kienel

Christian schools have been a part of the fabric of American society since the Pilgrims and Puritans waded ashore in 1620 and 1630. Yet there are Americans, even Christian Americans, who are woefully uninformed about Christian schools. Here are seven common questions about Christian schools:

1. How can you mix Christian faith with an academic curriculum? How do you integrate the two?

The relationship between faith and learning is as old as the Bible itself. Second Corinthians 10:5 instructs us to “bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...” The Apostle Paul said that in Jesus are “all the treasures of wisdom and... knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). One Christian school educator aptly described Biblical integration as, “Bringing the knowledge of Jesus Christ and the truths of Scripture to bear on the formation of young minds seeking to know the world.”

He said his school, “Offers an environment where change can happen in the personal lives of young people. Here, a vision of God’s grace in Christ may be glimpsed, depths of character explored, love and integrity moved from principle into action and quality in one’s life. We provide the opportunity for real change by communicating the essentials of Christian character.”¹

Biblical integration is spiritual in nature. It can only be done by educators who are true believers in Jesus Christ.

2. How can Christian school students adjust to the “real world” if they do not attend a school that teaches a non-Christian point of view?

It may surprise some people, but there is no Biblical support for training Christian children in a non-Biblical environment.

Decades ago Yale University’s President, Timothy Dwight, said, “Education ought everywhere to be religious education... parents are bound to employ no instructors who will not educate their children religiously. To commit our children to the care of irreligious persons is to commit lambs to the superintendency of wolves.”²

Christian psychologist Clyde Narramore said, “A tree that is planted in poor soil doesn’t have the advantages that one planted in good earth has. Contrary to some belief, we do not grow through resistance. Children do not develop because they resist food. Their growth comes as a result of good food and care.”³

The Bible describes life on this earth as warfare. Warriors are never trained in enemy territory. School is a training ground. A primary purpose of a Christian school is to prepare students to be non-conformists to the world. The Bible says, “And be not conformed to this world...” (Romans 12:2a), but at the same time we are to be prepared to live victoriously in the world. Note the words of the new Testament’s Dr. Luke who wrote, “...when a student is fully trained he will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). Simply put, if you want your children to live as Christians they must be taught by Christians.

3. Generally speaking, how does Christian school education compare academically with non-Christian schools?

Year after year, standardized achievement test scores affirm that students taught by Christian school educators achieve well above the national norm. In fact, in twenty-seven years of testing with the Stanford Achievement Test our students have never achieved less than one full year ahead of the national norm. It is, indeed, a commendable record.

4. Do Christian schools offer a wide range of student activities which broaden their educational experience?

Depending on the financial strength of the school, most Christian schools offer a wide range of student activities such as fine arts, speech meets, academic meets, spelling bee, student leadership conferences, cheerleading camps and all kinds of sporting activities. This past year, 56,807 students participated in student activities sponsored by the Association of Christian Schools International. This does not include of course, the wide range of student activities offered by individual schools.

5. Is the enrollment in Christian schools open to students of all races?

Each school that joins the Association of Christian Schools International must affirm annually on its school application form that students of all races are welcome. Since the message of Christ is available to all, so our schools are available to all provided student applications meet other minimum requirements of the school.

6. Are Christian schools growing in number?

Not only are new Christian schools being started, but established Christian schools are also experiencing solid growth. This past year has been the largest growth year in the history of the Association of Christian Schools International. The combined student enrollment of the 3,174 member schools of ACSI was 661,475 this year - an increase of 95,940 students. This year 35,228 teachers attended ACSI teacher conventions, an increase of over 3,367 over the previous year! These figures are remarkable indicators of the Lord's rich blessing on Christian school education.

7. What about the future of Christian school education?

I am in my 28th year of service as President of ACSI. Never have I seen the momentum for growth, for spiritual commitment and for academic excellence as I see this year in our Christian schools around the world. I believe if we will stay true to our Christian purpose God will continue to smile with favor upon us.

¹ Thad Gabelein, Stony Brook brochure, Stony Brook, New York.

² Timothy Dwight, President of Yale University (1795-1817).

³ Dr. Clyde M. Narramore, Your Questions Answered About Christian Schools, 1983, ACSI, La Habra, California, p. 49.