

Our Educational Philosophy

The foundation stone of Christian education is the infallible Word of God. Thus, the Christian unapologetically and unashamedly models the educational process after the educational imperatives and examples found in the Bible. The imitation of Christ in the intellectual, spiritual, physical and social realms is the process of a Christian education.

The Nature of Truth

The ultimate philosophical question is “What is truth?” In response to this question for the ages, a Christian philosophy of education purports that truth is found in a person. In John 14:6, Jesus Christ said that He was the truth. Naturally, the truths of the moral realm are an expression of His divine attributes. As Christ is eternal, so is truth. Christ made it plain “...my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35.) The psalmist declares that the Lord’s truth “endureth to all generations.” (Psalms 100:5). God keeps his truth forever, according to Psalms 146:6. The Lord’s name, the Bible indicates, “shall endure forever...” (Psalms 30:12). The Christian philosophy of education encompasses the belief that eternity is an attribute of truth. In Hebrews, the immutability of truth is illuminated. Truth cannot change with time or situations. The program and the person of Christ remains the same: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8). The Bible speaks of truth as being settled. Psalms 119:89 tells us that “For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.” While it is settled, it is also substantiated; the Bible has endured the test of time. (Psalms 12:6) Furthermore, the truth of God is sufficient to meet every need. The essence of truth is that it is unified and indivisible. Paul states this fact in Colossians 2:3 when he writes that in Christ “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Thus truth is Christ-centered. The worldview of the Christian is a unified one, reflecting the reality of a unified body of truth emanating from Jesus Christ. All of the commands and promises of God, the accounts of the mission and death of Christ and all of the representations of God’s character point to God’s plan and purpose—the redemption of man.

The unregenerate philosopher in searching for the answer to the question “What is truth?” may rely on three commonly used tests: 1. the realist test of agreement with fact (truth is fidelity to objective reality) 2. the idealist test of consistency (truth is found in the consistency of our judgments); 3. the pragmatist test of utility (truth is that which is useful and is workable). The Christian educator recognizes the limitations of these tests for truth. Truth is not “the faithful adherence of our judgments and ideas to the facts of experience or to the world as it is.” All truth emanates from God and is eternal, immutable, absolute, and unified.

The Nature of Man

A rudimentary understanding of the nature of man is a necessary element of a philosophy of education. Comprehending man’s true nature is critical in the process of education because the teacher’s conception of the nature of human beings will have a major impact on how he teaches. The Christian educator rejects the humanistic images of the nature of man that dominate the landscape of contemporary educational thought. The Christian view recognizes the biblical concept that man was created for a higher purpose than to be useful to society; he was created to glorify his Creator. A biblical approach to an educational philosophy takes the position that man’s basic nature is evil, as delineated in Romans 3:23. The truth of this pronouncement from Scripture is clearly evident from a cursory observance of human behavior.

The Nature of Education

The nature of education is the process of leading the student from ignorance to knowledge. The Christian would hold that the student is developing his intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects towards the objective of Christlikeness. Thus education is a process of moving away from the position of

lesser knowledge towards a position of greater understanding. Another aspect of the nature of education from the perspective of the believer is that education is viewed as a unified whole. All truth is God's truth and all knowledge therefore comes from a single source. Finally, education is value-laden; teaching and learning do not take place in a philosophical vacuum. Secular educational thought decries the teaching of creationism as teaching 'religion', yet ignores the values that humanism teaches, such as consensus morality and situational ethics. The process of education includes the inculcation of values.

Educational Objectives and Their Priorities

The basic goal of education from a secular viewpoint is the subjective proposition of preparing students to be in compliance with to societal norms. This line of thinking has led to the emergence of social engineering. The Bible gives a clarion call for Christians to be in the world, but not of the world. Thus the believer's position on the ultimate purpose of education is diametrically opposed to secular thought. Christian education has the goal of conforming the student to like the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian is to imitate Christ. In II Timothy 3:14, Paul writes that Christians should "be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." As one Christian educator states it, "Christian education should develop Christians whose activities in life anticipate their eventual conformity to the image of Christ." This understanding of the nature and purpose of education is derived from Paul's exhortation in Romans 8:29.

An ancillary goal of producing Christlikeness in students acknowledges that education is preparation for life, not just a vocation. The goal of conformity to Christ must be interwoven into the fabric of the entire school program. For example, athletic programs with a man-centered emphasis will lead to the glorification of man, exaltation of self, demeaning of authority (officials) and the objective of winning at any cost. The Christian school, if it is following a truly Christ-centered philosophy, will teach character, teamwork, respect for authority, temperance, and the greater goal of giving glory to God--no matter what the outcome of an athletic contest. The Christian school will recognize that the building of Christlike character is more important in the long run than a winning record.

Nature of Teaching and Learning

Teaching is a complex endeavor which calls for competence, commitment, and compassion. Those who God has called to a teaching ministry have a holy calling (II Timothy 1:9). The multi-dimensional aspects of teaching are demanding; the process of communicating God's truth to students forces the teacher to draw upon the power of the Holy Spirit and all available resources within his reach. The nature of teaching has five separate aspects.

First of all, teaching is an art. Some clearly have an innate ability to communicate truth. In His divine wisdom, the Lord endowed to some the gift of teaching. Ephesians 4:11-12 says "and he gave some. . . teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry." The scriptures indicate here that not all have this gift; the requirement that deacons be "apt to teach" is an admission that not all have the gift (I Timothy 3:2). Those who do not have the creative resourcefulness and skills needed for teaching do not belong in the classroom. Those who do possess the gift of teaching must nevertheless be fully prepared and trained to develop their natural talents. Secondly, teaching can be legitimately considered a science. Teaching is a science in that it contains a body of knowledge that can be researched and analyzed. The methodology of teaching attests to the validity of this claim. Education has procedures, methods, and processes. In this sense, it is a science indeed. Thirdly, teaching is a commitment. This is particularly true for the Christian educator, who may labor under less than ideal conditions, including poor classroom equipment, lack of teaching materials, or low salary. The teacher must demonstrate an unwavering commitment to the goal of educating his students in the truth. The effective teacher "knows that in order to be at his best, he must be willing to give up everything for Christ." Fourthly, teaching is a profession. The concept of professionalization includes a code of conduct, dress and manner befitting the profession. It encompasses a certain level of proficiency and intellectual achievement. A professional teacher is familiar with the techniques, methods, and process of the discipline. The Christian educator is not just a hired hand. He is obligated to do all to the glory of God which means equipping himself to be

the best teacher he can be during his career.

Lastly, teaching is a ministry that calls for personal sacrifice. The teacher's motivation should emanate from a joyful heart that is tuned to serve Christ. The Saviour did not come to earth to be ministered to, but to minister. A God-called Christian educator will look at teaching as more than a job--it is a ministry of service to Christ.

As to the nature of learning, Christian education takes the position that each student has been created in a unique manner' for a special purpose. His capacity for a truly Christian education and the realization of his ultimate purpose depend the student's willingness to accept Christ into his life and to be molded like the Master. This view recognizes the importance of man's free will; although environmental factors are important, ultimately the student's choices determine his life.

There are five levels involved in the learning process. Exposure is the first and lowest level in which the student is exposed to the facts to be learned. Next, the activation level helps him to store the data in his mind through drills and reinforcement methods. The third level of learning is comprehension in which the student understands the material. This level is not necessarily easy to ascertain by the teacher and must be determined by teacher-student interaction. The fourth level is the area of conviction in which the student internalizes the information. The highest level of learning involves application in which the student applies his understanding of knowledge in his daily life. A student receives a true Christian education when he incorporates all levels, including the highest level of application. The biblical admonition is to be not only hearers of the Word, but doers also.

Scriptural Educational Mandates

The Christian philosophy of education emanates from the source of all truth--the Word of God. The word 'mandate' is appropriate in two senses of the word. First, the Christian is given an authoritative command by God through the Scriptures to educate children in the truth. Secondly, he is given the authority by God to carry out the command.

Deuteronomy 6:7 commands believers to teach their children the precepts of God: "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 intent of this scriptural injunction was that the Word of God should be taught to future generations. Another scriptural mandate can be seen in Luke 2:52. During the childhood education of Jesus Christ, he matured in four distinct ways: mentally--"in wisdom", physically- "in stature", spiritually--"in favor with God" and socially-- "in favor with man." Although this verse refers to Jesus' maturation as a young man rather than a specific command, there is a challenge to the educator implicit in the text; that is, to educate the whole man. True education addresses man's total being and recognizes his spiritual makeup. Ignoring the spiritual nature of man in the process of education results in an incomplete education.

Conclusion

The formulation of a Christian educational philosophy that serves as the set of guiding principles for a Christian school is an absolute necessity if a school is going to accomplish the ultimate objective of conforming its student body to Christ. The adherence to biblical principles in a philosophical construct should imbue the total program of the school, from the admissions guidelines to the fine arts program to curriculum planning. A Christian school is not a Christian school simply because it includes the name "Christian" on its school stationery and uses Christ-centered textbooks. A Christian school must have a foundational philosophy firmly rooted in the truth of the Word of God. The Christian school cannot be found guilty of Francis Schaeffer's assertion that Christians have not understood the severity of the dichotomy of the secular versus the Christian worldview.

The philosophy of Christian education, in its assertion that all truth is God's truth and its call for separation from the world, including secular philosophical moorings, stands in stark contrast to the intellectually and morally bankrupt educational philosophies of the day.