

A Few Things Christian Schools Cannot Do For Your Child

by Dr. Paul A. Kienel

There are 662,350 students attending ACSI member schools and colleges this year. A conservative estimate of the cost parents will pay in tuition this year adds up to a combined total of \$1,854,580,000. If the taxpayers were paying for the expense of educating our Christian school students in the public school (\$5,010 x 662,350) the grand total would be \$3,318,373,500. Christian school parents clearly pay less for Christian school education than taxpayers pay for public education. We pay significantly less and we clearly receive significantly more in quality academics and in positive, Christ-centered training for our children. A problem arises, however, when parents expect more from the Christian school than they should.

1. Christian schools cannot be a substitute for a quality home environment.

The number one training influence in the life of a child is his or her home. A parent, more than teachers and pastors, is the primary model for children to follow. Parents are the pattern makers for Christian living, attitudes toward life, attitudes toward others, work ethics, basic manners, money management, health habits, manner of speech, goal setting and study habits. Pastor Chuck Swindoll says, "Home is where life makes up its mind." Quite frankly, the impact of the Christian school is severely limited if the home is not what it ought to be. No teacher can compensate for an unstable home.

2. Christian schools cannot guarantee a perfect school environment.

Some parents are unrealistic about other students in their child's Christian school. They expect a degree of perfection among mortals that simply is not attainable on earth. Perhaps you have heard it said that "If you find the perfect church - don't join it - you will ruin it." Christian schools are decidedly better than the secular public school alternative but they are not perfect. Students come to the Christian school with varying degrees of spiritual maturity. Some are not Christians. There is a wide variety of intellectual ability, emotional development, home training and personality patterns among the students in any school, including the Christian school. The typical Christian school setting is not the sheltered environment that critics make it out to be. As the father of three daughters who attended Christian schools, I advised my children to carefully select their close personal friends - even in the Christian school. Remember, any time two or more people get together in any kind of institution there is room for improvement in at least one of them! If this were not so, there would be no need for Christian schools.

3. Christian schools cannot increase the level of your child's intelligence.

It simply is not true that we are all created equal. In the broadest sense, in a free society we are created with an equal opportunity. But God has fashioned each of us with varying degrees of intelligence, imagination and drive. Christian school educators cannot, nor should they, push a child beyond his or her ability to perform. Children need a reasonable level of intellectual stretching and academic challenge, but caring Christian school teachers cannot perform nor should they attempt to perform academic miracles to please parents who may have an unrealistic view of their children's abilities. Parents and teachers alike should know that a child's academic success in school is only part of the total composite of qualities that God can use to make a person worthy of our respect, love and admiration. Never judge a child's future worth to the world on his current academic prowess in school.

4. Christian schools cannot duplicate parental love and support.

Most adults have forgotten the emotional stress we experienced as children at school. The very nature of a school requires that it maintain an orderly, disciplined environment if learning is to occur. The process of learning can be emotionally stressful and mentally stretching. Parents can greatly reduce the pressure our children may feel by encouraging them, inspiring them and loving them.

Children and young people need parental love and support when they experience disappointment in a youthful friendship or even a youthful romance which has gone sour. It happens. It's part of the process of growing up and parents can help immeasurably with their understanding.

5. Christian schools cannot replace the spiritual influence of a parent.

Read the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 6:6-9, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates." Christian school education may be frustrating for your child if the Christian principles taught at school are not a continuation of the Christian principles taught in your home. If yours is not a Christian home, I urge you to respond to the invitation of Jesus Christ, the incomparable Savior of the world. Accept Him as your personal Savior and then in His strong name train your family in a manner that will please Him. You will not regret it.

Christian school education is a major force for good in the lives of our children. It can be enhanced if the church, the home and the school are all on the same spiritual and academic frequency.