

By Way of Curriculum

The course of study, or curriculum, in a Christian school provides the central avenue by which our children are led to biblical wisdom. A distinctively Christian curriculum differs from that of a non-Christian school in at least three major respects. First, the curriculum in a Christian school should reflect and display God's dynamic design for the universe. All subjects must be understood not simply as cultural products or human inventions but as determined by God's work of creation. For example, biology and astronomy could not be studied if the Lord had not created plants, animals, the sun, moon, and stars. The arts could not be practiced if the Lord had not created us to be artists or people who appreciate art. And so the curriculum in a Christian school seeks to open eyes and minds and hearts not merely to an understanding of the world as described in textbooks, but also to the marvelous plan and design of God's creation. All subjects provide a glimpse into the workings and will of the Creator. They confront our children with the revelation of God.

A Christian curriculum, then, considers the Lord's plan and program for the world. For example, the physical sciences investigate the structure of the physical universe as fashioned by God's word of power (Heb. 11:3). The life sciences study the wonderful diversity, construction, and function of God's creatures and their interaction with each other. The social sciences and language arts examine the ways in which the Lord intends human beings to relate to one another. Historical studies explore the ways in which cultures and civilizations have observed or disregarded God's will. The arts provide opportunities to respond to the beauty and design built into creation by the Creator Himself. The Bible, too, must be studied in a Christian school, for God's revelation in Scripture awakens and deepens our sensitivity to God's revelation in creation (Ps. 36:9).

Second, a Christian curriculum differs from a non-Christian curriculum by emphasizing divinely-ordained interrelatedness. The Lord did not create a chaotic, disjointed world. On the contrary, the universe, even after Adam and Eve's fall into sin with its distorting and fragmenting effects, continues to display astounding coherence and harmony. We see dependence and interdependence everywhere in our world. Since the components of the curriculum focus on dimensions of one coherent, God-ordained universe, the whole curriculum must exhibit coherence. Therefore, a Christian school ought not to over-specialize in one area to the neglect of others. Instead, it should help our children become sensitive to the wonderful unity and diversity in God's creation.

Third, a Christian school's curriculum should be designed to prepare for wisdom. The primary reason for teaching subjects and skills is not to mold students into solid citizens or prepare them for successful careers, important as these goals may be. Rather, a Christian school seeks to develop wise and responsible disciples of Christ. And so a Christian curriculum must not only display God's design for all of reality, but also show how sin has affected it and how we are to work for restoration. Our children must understand the basic structure of our environment. They must sense God's order, design, and presence there. But they must also understand how sin has distorted it; they must understand the Lord's will for all areas of the creation, and be able to act accordingly. They must develop the beginning of wisdom, as they learn to address the issues of our time.

So, a Christian school is a school with a program that leads students deeper into God's wonderful creation; helps them understand and marvel at its unity, diversity, and coherence; and teaches them to follow Christ, counteracting the forces of sin wherever they are met.