

Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing

As part of our recent Nexus Live event in Elgin, IL, I had the opportunity to interview founder and president emeritus of ACSI, Dr. Paul Kienel. At the conclusion of our interview (which will soon be available on Nexus virtual) I asked Paul to share from his heart his primary concern for the future of ACSI and the schools, teachers, parents, and students we serve. What Paul said a few weeks ago to over 5,000 convention delegates at our live site and 34 satellite downlink sites he also wrote in *Christian School Comment* (26.5) almost two decades ago—with the same title as this article. Here is that CSC article.

Dr. John Blanchard is one of the great pioneers of Christian school education, having served as a national leader for many years. I felt honored a few days ago when he visited my office in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Some years before I had asked him, “What is the number one challenge in Christian education?” Without hesitation he said, “Keeping Christian schools Christian.” Through the years when people have asked me that question, I have given the same response: “Keeping Christian schools Christian.” Most likely that will always be the right answer to that question because Christian educational institutions have a long history of starting out Christ-centered and ending man-centered. For example, all of America’s ivy-league colleges (Harvard, Yale, and others) were founded as Bible-centered institutions.

The “main thing” in Christian education is to teach and train in such a way that honoring Christ is clearly central to the school’s mission. The Bible says, “... that in all things he [Christ] might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18, KJV). That includes education. In a true Christian school, nothing is taught that offends Christ or is contrary to biblical principles. The faculty and staff are committed Christians and are fully committed to the school’s mission of inspiring students to become followers of Jesus Christ. It may sound strange to say it, but the Bible is not “on trial” in a Christian school! The Bible is respected and regarded as the infallible point of reference for all academic subjects and as the only reliable guide for Christian living. The noble objective of education is to impart truth to the next generation. There is no higher truth than biblical truth. When Jesus was praying to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane He said, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Staying true to the truth is “the main thing” in Christian school education.

It is amazing to me how many non-Christian colleges and schools quote John 8:32, “... the truth shall make you free,” in their logo or school crest. The only truth which that scriptural passage refers to is biblical truth. Sadly, the educators in those secular educational institutions think the word *truth* in their logo means man-made truth, or truth produced by human intellect. What an unfortunate distortion of the *real* truth.

I pray the day will never come when Christian school educators and the parents who support them will be so illiterate of the Bible that they will not understand the Bible verses long associated with their school. That need not happen if they will keep Christ in clear focus and keep the Word of God at the center of every subject area and school activity.




What applies to the Christian school also applies to the families our schools serve. Keeping “the main thing the main thing” is an everyday challenge at home as well. It is very difficult for a Christian school to inspire students to become mature followers of Christ if their home environment is not Christ-centered. Three institutions—home, school, and church—are major influences in the life of a child or young person. Unfortunately, a child will often gravitate to the institution with the lowest standards. If Christ and the Bible are not preeminent in the home, Christ and the Bible will not be the main thing in the life of a child. In this busy world of ours, it is easy for parents to get so caught up in their work, their friends, and their personal interests that they lose sight of the “main thing” of raising their children to bring honor to Christ.

Former U.S. Senator Bill Armstrong of Colorado said, “What is the profit to America if we have endless economic prosperity, computers and a hundred channels of television in every home ... if our families are shattered, our children corrupted?” Psychologist David Meyers talks about how easy it is for parents to get caught up in America’s “long-term social recession” resulting from our “self-indulgent tendencies”: do your own thing; greed is good. The only thing in this life we will take with us to heaven is our children, provided they have become believers in Christ. Heaven help us, as parents, if we live out our lives in such a way that our children, following our example, don’t make it to heaven....

Keeping “the main thing the main thing” is the major mission of Christian homes and Christian schools. It is difficult for some people to accept the words of Jesus when He said, “He that is not with me is against me; and he who does not gather with me scattereth abroad” (Matthew 12:30). In other words, there is no middle ground regarding Christ. Either you are for Christ or you are, on purpose or by default, against Him. I urge you to be wholeheartedly for Christ. Literally allow Him to become preeminent in your life and in your family. Allow the teachings of Christ as revealed in the Bible to become the centerpiece of your home. You won’t regret it! I’m praying for you!

The message is timeless—and as urgent today as it was then.


Brian S. Simmons, President ACSI