

“Teaching Worldview in the Circumstances of School”

By Paul E. Young

One of the greatest examples of Biblical Worldview of which I am aware during my twenty years as head of a Christian school involved a principal, a teacher, a guidance counselor, a junior high cheerleader captain, and a dad. I wish I could tell you that the shining example of Biblical thinking and behavior was led by a school employee, but that was not the case. Perhaps if I rehearse for you the events of the early morning confrontation, you will see God at work. Keep in mind that our flawed thinking is usually the result of our failure to live out Matthew 22:29 (NIV):

“You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”

It all started on a busy fall school day when a teacher, who was also the junior high cheerleader sponsor, arrived early one morning to set up for a fund-raising bake sale. Like most teachers, she had more on her plate than she needed, but she had been careful to tell the junior high cheerleading captain the night before to be sure to call all of the girls to remind them to bring something for the bake sale the next morning. The teacher had left home early enough to get tables set up and posters hung to advertise the bake sale. Now all she needed was for the girls to show up with their baked goods. One by one the girls began to arrive. One by one she noticed that no one had anything to sell. As she questioned each one, she discovered that no one had received the call reminding them that this was the morning for the bake sale. To make matters worse, the cheerleading captain was nowhere in sight. The teacher was embarrassed, frustrated, and, needless to say, a little upset with the irresponsibility of the young girl. It also probably did not help that the first sight of the perky cheerleading captain, who had not given a second thought to responsibility that morning, happened in the hall just in front of the teacher’s class room. Well, the teacher lost it! She was livid. Evidently this was not the first breach of responsibility, so the teacher reminded the girl of all her past leadership failures. Unfortunately the teacher was so frustrated that she reprimanded this young lady in the hallway in front of many others. The young junior high girl was brought to tears right away. When the teacher finished with her, the young girl ran to the phone crying and called her mother. Mother called Daddy, and Daddy called the school. His words to the secretary were, “I am on my way to the school and I would like to meet with the teacher, the guidance counselor, and the principal just as soon as I can.” Before the dad arrived the teacher, who was still rather upset, was saying, “I will tell you one thing, his daughter has been irresponsible and I am not backing down.” The principal and the guidance counselor felt like they were in a “no win” situation. This was a wonderful, supportive family whose daughter had acted irresponsibly; yet, this was an excellent teacher who had handled a situation wrongly in a moment of frustration. After the dad arrived the principal had prayer with the group. The dad was then the first to speak. He said, **“I think that you know why I am here. But the real reason I am here is because our greatest desire as parents is to have our daughter to be as much like Jesus as she can be. Evidently you folks have witnessed some character flaws in her life that have kept her from being what we want her to be. Would you be willing to share those areas with me and help me to correct them while she is young and teachable?”** The teacher, who was touched by his godly response, was the first to speak. With tears in her eyes she asked for his forgiveness and for his daughter’s forgiveness for the way she had responded in the frustration of the moment. The power of God was invoked because the dad did the right thing.

***A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
Proverbs 15:1 (NIV)***

The school offers many opportunities to teach the Biblical Worldview. I am convinced that the greatest lessons will not come from behind the teaching podium nor will they come from programs or chapel speakers. Those opportunities will come as you interact day in and day out with your students. There are days when an “old has-been” such as myself will review the last

twenty years of ministry and reflect on the things I would have done differently. I wish I had learned at an earlier stage in my ministry the importance of relationships. Rick Warren in his book The Purpose Driven Life says, "Relationships are what life is all about." He goes on to say, "One of the ways God measures spiritual maturity is by the quality of your relationships." For schools to impact the next generation we will need spiritually mature teachers and leaders whose relationships can impact the students and parents they serve. No wonder the scripture warns that "... **teachers will be judged more strictly**" (**James 3:1, NIV**). We should all realize that "**the tongue has the power of life and death . . .**" (**Proverbs 18:21, NIV**). Just think of all of the opportunities we have in the circumstance of school to build both positive and negative relationships. When I evaluate those times when I have "blown it," I can usually point back to an attitude of wanting to defend my position. What **was right** always took a backseat to defending my position or actions. It is amazing how we can rationalize our behavior! Parents don't always respond correctly either. We must realize when we are dealing with someone's child, we are dealing with their most precious possession. Therefore, we must work through the emotions of the moment with patience and grace to deal with root problems that will bring about positive behavioral changes. After all, we live out what we believe; all the rest is just religious talk. **Our greatest failure comes when we believe we can teach and model a Biblical Worldview with minimum commitment to the Word of God and His ways. Knowing the terminology, attending all of the conferences, and reading all of the books will never get the job done.** We must know His Word (the Scriptures) and live them out personally in our own lives. Like many who attended the Institute at the Big Lake, I will never forget the words in the chapel of Grace College: "To Know Him and To Make Him Known." Dr. Roy Lowrie and other ACSI leaders reminded us of our responsibility to academic excellence but that just as important was our commitment to God's Word. The wisdom that one can obtain by a life-long commitment to a study of the Scriptures is essential to a Biblical Worldview.

The relationships that you build and the examples that you set will be your greatest opportunity to teach the Biblical Worldview. Years ago I saw Peter Lord give an illustration that I have never forgotten. He took a cup of water and invited someone from the audience to come up and shake his arm. Of course, water went everywhere. Then Peter Lord asked the question, "Why did the water come out of the cup?" Most of the people in the audience responded, "Because he shook your arm." Without responding Peter Lord drank all of the water in the cup and then had the same man come up and shake his arm again. Of course, nothing came out of the cup. Dr. Lord asked the question again, "Why did the water come out of the cup?" The obvious answer was, "Because there was water in the cup."

In the circumstances of school life there are going to be many instances when you will be shaken, and many of those circumstances will push you to your limit. Students, parents and co-workers will be watching your response. What comes out will depend upon what you have put into your life. If you want Biblical thinking and a Biblical response, then you must hide God's Word in your heart.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.
Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

It is a lot easier to love and appreciate those students who have wonderful attitudes and are sharp academically. I recently was able to participate in honoring one of our former students who had just received a PhD from Johns Hopkins Medical School. She is one of those students who was easy to love and to encourage from preschool all the way through graduate school. The circumstances of school do not always give us students like I just described. When you study the life of Christ, you discover that He impacted the lovely and the unlovely. I weep every year at our church's Passion play when they show Christ healing the leper and the blind. He knew the power of God and He was not afraid to share it. On a daily basis God puts in your path students with learning disabilities, children from broken homes, children who are

confused because they see their parents act one way at church and another way at home. How are you encouraging them?

Coaches have an opportunity to work with some outstanding athletes, but every team must have a second string. How are you showing them the love and power of God with your support and encouragement? The athletic field gives us a great opportunity to teach a Biblical Worldview. I have been so disappointed to see the individualism that permeates our athletic teams today. If we could ever truly understand that God's way and man's way are opposite! The world says, "Be the greatest!" God says, "***The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted***" (Matthew 23:11-12, NIV).

Every aspect of the school must be examined in light of a Biblical Worldview. The business office needs to pay bills on time and be good stewards of what God has given them. The Board and administration must examine teachers' salaries and benefits in light of God's Word. "***The worker deserves his wages***" (1 Tim. 5:17-18, NIV).

As Christian educators we discover many opportunities in the circumstance of school life to practice a Biblical Worldview. We "***must know the scriptures and the power of God***" for we are **charged not only to do things right but to do the right things.**



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