

# What makes Christian Education "Christian"?

Isn't knowledge knowledge? Doesn't  $2 \times 2 = 4$ , whether it is taught under the banner of Christian or secular education?

Christian education is more than knowledge + Christian teaching. Christian education means that the child's education is taking place in a Christian learning environment.

A learning environment that does not have the God of the Bible at the centre cannot be Christian, but is in fact, humanistic. Humanism places man at the centre.

Christian schools and home-schooling can only be "Christian" if...

- educators are relying on the Holy Spirit to guide them in all they teach
- curriculum is God-centred
- the character and nature of God is central to all that is taught.

## Let's look at curriculum

Curriculum means "a course or a path to follow". Along this path there are many subjects, many skills, many expressions.

How do we teach skills, like spelling, reading, writing, maths skills, physical education skills and so on, in a Christian way?

Do we add 'Christian' sentences to the grammar exercises?

Do we add a few 'Christian' words to the spelling list?

Let's take the sentence:

*"I pray every day."* to teach the **ay** sound in phonics?

Would you call it 'Christian'?

How about *the cat sat on the mat*?

Is this secular because it does not refer to God?

How about maths?

Is teaching the 2 times table any more 'Christian' by referring to the animals that entered the ark 2 by 2?

While it is not wrong to make such references, it is not exactly getting to the deep things of God. Trivializing Christianity in our curriculum will produce trivial Christians who do not understand the depths of our great and personal God.

God is personal! He loves us. He knows us. He is real. We can know Him in a personal way. We can know His character. This is heart knowledge and not just head knowledge!

How can we lead students to found their lives on the truth then? How do we teach heart knowledge?

We will never bring students to know God by injecting trivial bits and pieces of Christian material into our lessons. We should teach skills as skills. Skills are a means to an end. We need to find the best and most efficient way to teach skills.

### **Let's look at the teaching of skills**

The way in which we teach skills can reflect Christian attitudes and values. The *content* does not have to be Bible-centred in order to be 'Christian'. If God is a God of order, then skills should be taught in an orderly, systematic manner. Students and teachers should *demonstrate* Godly attitudes in the teaching of skills. Learning sessions should display patience, persistence, excellence, encouragement, humility and fair-play for example.

Skills are the springboard from which we can access knowledge of the world around us. This knowledge must be placed in a Christian, God-centred framework. Without such a framework, students will see man as the measure of all things and not God. If God is left out of the picture, then students may even doubt that God made the world. His importance will be undermined. Man's importance will dominate.

In Christian education, I would see that *skills* be taught as skills, but *knowledge* of the universe to be taught with God consistently at the centre.

### **Let's look at the world of knowledge**

How then do we place God at the centre of all knowledge?

God's Word, His character and nature should be used as a measuring stick for every aspect of the world we live in.

What does God say on the topic of...

- clothes? He is a provider.
- plants? He is a creator and a provider.
- the media? He is the truth.
- the water-cycle? He is the life-giver.
- human relationships? He is loving, kind and forgiving.
- human civilization? He is a creator. All races come from Adam and Noah.
- racial groups? God is love. He created all men of equal value.

By founding topics on the character and nature of God we guide students into understanding the world around them. We *start* with who God is, and then introduce the topic...not the other way around. Doesn't God deserve to be placed first? Won't the students be awakened to His character by placing Him first, instead of as an afterthought?

Note how the following topics extend from the character and nature of God:

- God is Powerful...look at the powerful forces of the creation.
- God is Protector and Healer...apply this to the study of human biology.
- God is a perfect Creator...think about the pollution of His beautiful world.

The study of His Word, His nature and His character can saturate every topic. The possibilities are endless. We teach students to see the world through the eyes of God. As they understand *who* God is, *through* their studies, and not apart from them, then they will want to become more like Him. Studying God *through* the topics we study makes Him relevant to life. Studying God apart from these topics makes this statement: "God has nothing to do with the world I live in."

**What do we mean by studying God apart from educational topics?**

I am referring to devotions, Bible studies, assemblies and the like. There is nothing wrong with the scheduling of such programs, but we must never think that these sessions are the primary means for teaching students about God. If separate devotional periods are unrelated to academic studies, we will produce students who cannot relate Christianity to life. They will not see that God is relevant to their world. Devotions and Bible study may even become a purely religious ceremony.

**How does the study of God's character and nature through their studies impact the students?**

If students know God personally, and truly understand His character, then they will want to please Him, serve Him, live for Him and represent Him. They will put Jesus first. They will display more and more of His character in their lives.

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