

# Faith & Learning



It is that time of year when you may be addressing a very important question in your family: Is Christian schooling worth the financial cost? Choosing Christian schooling often requires a significant financial commitment, and the cost is usually borne by individual families. Thus the question is a legitimate one. As we do for most things that cost a lot, we need to ask, Is it worth it? In other words, what are the benefits?

Consider the concept of biblical integration. One of the most significant values of the Christian school is its core belief that within the curriculum—both academic and nonacademic—biblical truths and understandings must be an integral part of every planned learning experience. The idea is commonly referred to as biblical integration, or the integration of faith and learning.

We are not talking about simply hanging Scripture verses on particular academic concepts or lessons but rather the kind of teaching that emphasizes and demonstrates that every dimension of life is sacred. It is the notion of integrating God's plan for our relationship with Him and with others into every curricular and extracurricular aspect of the education experience.

In his book *The Integration of Faith and Learning* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2004), Robert Harris says,

Integration involves the development of interconnections, relationships, and mutual clarifications between Christian truth and academic content. We might call integration the construction—or discovery—of the wholeness and coherence of all knowledge, specifically of the knowledge about human nature and human destiny.

This kind of formal education strategy is a core component of the effective Christian school. As a matter of fact, it is a crucial distinctive, the very essence of effective teaching in a Christian school. It is not available in other kinds of schools. It is unique to Christian schooling.

So, how does this play out in the life of the student who has been educated in the Christian school? Kenneth Gangel, in *Foundations of Christian School Education* (Colorado Springs, CO: Purposeful Design, 2003) gives several illustrations regarding personal values. To make the point, I will focus here on the three that relate to life, work, and the world—only a few among many that reflect the results of “Christian teachers equipping their students for tasks far greater than final exams or graduation”:

**“Ideas have consequences for life and behavior.”**

—Robert Harris

*Life.* Judeo-Christian ethics places a high value on human life. The Mosaic laws were among the first in history to provide instruction on the benevolent treatment of women, children, slaves, the elderly, and the handicapped. A biblical worldview incorporates a belief in the sanctity of life from conception to death, leading believers to work for the common good....

*Work.* Christians respect all work, whether secular or sacred, that brings honor to God through the fulfillment of His commands. We sense a personal obligation to provide honest work for honest pay, and we take seriously the Scriptures that convey the responsibilities of both a worker and a master....

*The World.* Humans were given responsibility to be caretakers of God's world. This gardening concept leads a farmer to take pride in the appearance and productivity of his land. In the same way, Christians view the world as a place of responsible gardening, where they plant and harvest in ways that do not pillage and destroy the earth.

We see the above illustrated in the lives of persons who have a Christian worldview that has been nurtured and developed through effective biblical integration into every aspect of learning. Again, Robert Harris (2004) addresses students about what happens in the absence of integration:

A common result of the failure to integrate faith and learning is a split between the two, and a division between faith and mind. In other words, faith becomes compartmentalized and therefore intellectually irrelevant. Faith serves only emotional needs. New knowledge, instead of strengthening faith, is perceived as a constant threat, so it is either rejected or isolated away from the faith-in-a-box.

And so it is that students develop a worldview—either one that is biblically formed or one in which faith is compartmentalized away from the rest of life and plays a minor role if any.

I would issue a challenge then—Christian schooling *is* worth the cost. Your choice of and financial investment in education that forms children spiritually as it develops them intellectually is to be commended. You are aggressively pursuing an effective strategy to support your response to the biblical mandate “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6, NKJV).

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