

In Pursuit of Spiritual Formation

I continue to encourage you to be an appropriately engaged parent, creating a partnership with your Christian school that can only enhance your child's education. Along with that challenge, I would like to focus on the third in the series of four crucial areas of learning that the Association of Christian Schools International believes are essential in Christian schooling: (1) academic/thinking, (2) worldview, (3) *spiritual formation*, and (4) skill development.

Evan B. Howard wrote in his *Spirituality Shoppe Newsletter* (September 1999), "Christian 'spiritual formation' refers to the process by which believers become more fully conformed and united to Christ, especially with regard to maturity of life and calling. Instruction, personal relationships, spiritual disciplines—even simply reflecting on the trials of the day—all can facilitate spiritual formation insofar as they are aimed at this purpose of cultivating growth toward maturity in Christ."

To achieve such maturity in Christ is no small task, but I am convinced that throughout Scripture believers are called to this challenge. Such a focus on the spiritual formation of students is a distinctive of the Christian school. We recognize the opportunity that is afforded such an education to not only focus on the intellectual development but become thoroughly engaged in spiritually forming pursuits of learning, again heeding the call to "train a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6, NIV). Consequently, emphasis is placed on helping students understand the concept of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, not through force-feeding but rather through gently teaching about God's love for each of us and our ability to choose—exercising the free will granted by Him to come into that personal relationship through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Bible classes become a part of the core curriculum of Christian schools because we believe that knowing, understanding, and applying God's Word are crucial in daily life. Scripture is not viewed as merely great literature or a mysterious book of unbelievable tales and miracles, but as a dynamic presentation of God's story and His desire to be in relationship with us.

Such a study will include aspects of Scripture memorization and elements that lead to a deeper understanding of God's relationship to everyday life through stories of real people. The intent is that students will learn to respect and relate appropriately with integrity to the people with whom they work, play, and live—appropriateness and integrity that replicate the life of Christ.

Your child will be taught about God's special gift to His believers—the Holy Spirit, that unique indwelling of God in our lives that empowers His followers to pursue a life of faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. And with that teaching comes the development of an understanding that in reality our physical bodies become the temple of the Holy Spirit. As such, a deeper reality is developed as to the responsibility of moral, social, and physical engagements that truly attend to and nurture this "temple."

Emphasis is placed on understanding God's call for each of us to personally respond to carrying out the Great Commission locally and around the world in a culturally sensitive manner—the Great Commission to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others.

A Christian school encourages students and their families to be actively involved in a church community. Clearly, the school alone cannot carry out this role. So I ask, Is regular church attendance and participation a way of life in your family? Do you help your child to understand the importance of corporate worship and praising God? Is it important to be a vital part—a real member of a church family? Or has church become a burden to the weekend? Do you engage in times of family worship and prayer as a regular activity in your home? Do you have dinner conversations that welcome discussions of a spiritual nature? The patterns that you establish for your family will make a statement either for or against the productive spiritual formation of your child. Your school cannot and should not be assigned the sole task of that spiritual formation. Thank you for your consideration of being an appropriately engaged parent, assisting in the spiritual formation of your child.



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