



The Messenger

Washington Christian Academy
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REFORMED DISTINCTIVES AS APPLIED TO EDUCATION - Fifth in a series of seven articles

V. Man the Sinner - What it means to teach students in Adam. Part Two.

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Gen. 6:5

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the purity and simplicity that is in Christ." 2 Cor. 11:3

"The conviction of our sin, is the most important conviction that we can have." -Robert Murray M'Cheyne

Education of the Whole Person

John Milton described education as "repairing the ruins of our first parents." If sin's corruption extends to all human faculties, our program must intentionally go about the repair of the whole person. Every faculty of the soul and body groans under the effects of the Fall; we seek to make them all conform to the image of God in Christ.

This is more significant than it sounds. Analyze our unreflected mental images of education. For example, education is pictured as writing upon a blank tablet, or filling an empty glass. These assume innocence and neutrality, considering education as primarily an intellectual enterprise.

There are real dangers in conceiving of education as an activity of the mind alone. The classical description of man's faculties are the combination of the intellect, emotions, and will. The end of a classical education was the attainment of the good, the true, and the beautiful. The scripture recognizes this triune character of the human soul. God wants our hearts, minds and will (Micah 6:8). We consciously educate to develop the mind, but also to train the affections. Aristotle observed that the aim of education was to make the pupil like and dislike what he ought. We consciously introduce students to the beauty of God's creation and man's creative response in culture. And we reject relativism and select some art or literature as more worthy for its inherent beauty, its power to express, and the truthfulness of its expression.

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FROM OUR TEACHERS AND STAFF

Welcome our new teachers! God graciously answered our prayers for an Athletic Director by placing it into the heart of our own George Sanker to take this responsibility

on himself. We are so blessed to have such an able and godly AD!

How Low Can You Go? In our weekly administrator staff meetings in my office, we have been reading and discussing G. MacDonald's book *Ordering Your Private World*, and learning about how to deal with pressure and frustration and doubts and fears. If I could boil done several chapters of mature Christian perspective into one thought, it would be this:

We cannot control the circumstances and pressures of the world around us. Strokes and cancer, loss of loved ones and loss of jobs, changes in political leadership and changes in our health, the academic schedule and homework assignments: we cannot control these - but we can control our response to them. So, let our energies be put into being prepared for the times when the pressure rises.

How we can prepare? By "filling up" on the inside we can withstand the pressure on the outside. A submarine is designed to go to certain depths because the inside pressure exceeds that of the pressure outside. If the submarine becomes unstable and depressurizes or goes to a depth that exceeds its design...*squish* like grape! The same is true for us: parents, students, teachers, and administrators. We are designed to withstand pressure from this world (our jobs, our family situations, our health, etc.) if we are filled on the inside. This filling is the work of the Holy Spirit. The greater His presence within us, the better equipped we are to face the pressure from the outside.

So how do you increase that inner pressure? Prayer and private devotion...worship and the preaching of God's word...fellowship and rest...these acts God uses to strengthen you from within.

As parents at times we have a strong urge to remove the pressures our kids are under, particularly here at school. We want to make the path easier for our child. But this is not necessarily the path God would have us lay out for our covenant children. In Mathew 10, Jesus calls us to take up His cross. In John 16 Jesus tells us we will have tribulation in this world.

The second graders have a unit on butterflies each year. Each year they learn that as the caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly, it must struggle to free itself from the chrysalis. That struggle is necessary for the butterfly to strengthen its wings to be prepared to fly. The same is true for our children. They must struggle and face challenges in order to be prepared for the world beyond our

home and our school halls. To smooth their path by fighting their battles or by trying to remove every injustice (perceived or real) is as damaging to them as it is to the butterfly.

But parents, there is a job for us. That job is to strengthen the character of our children from within by renewing their mind. Build up their spiritual character on the inside so that they are equipped to respond properly to adversity and struggle. Of course, we must make sure our children do not “descend to depths” too great for them. You have to say no to that wonderful activity or that great educational opportunity for your child, when you know his or her involvement would submit them to pressures that exceed their design. Say yes to home, school, and church activities that build their inner world. In this way they, and we, will be best prepared to face the pressures of this world.

-James H. Koan, II
Headmaster

Holocaust Emphasis Week. The last week of October was Holocaust Emphasis Week in the Upper School at WCA. Activities included special speakers such as Dr. Stephen Clark, a Martin Luther scholar and senior pastor at Wallace Church, and Ms. Regina Speigel, a Holocaust survivor, and culminated with a trip to the Holocaust Museum in DC for grades 8th-12th. All teachers were emphasizing and integrating Holocaust studies into their curricula through additional speakers, artifacts, and reading materials. The historical background of WWII and the Holocaust provided a springboard to discuss the more serious issues. Teachers and students discussed how human beings could commit such horrible atrocities, why we should study the Holocaust, and other questions that get at the heart of the evil of genocide.

Dr. Clark began our studies with an insightful lecture on Martin Luther, who is quoted prominently in the museum. Dr. Clark addressed the allegations of anti-Semitism in Luther’s writings within the context of life in the Middle Ages. Luther did not really add to or detract from the views of the church of the 15th century. Early in his life he prayed for and urged kindness to the Jews. His studies inspired a love for Jewish scholarship and he had a strong desire to see the Jews converted to the “new” Biblical Christianity of the Reformation; however, near the end of Luther’s life, when they did not turn to Christ wholesale, he became very angry and denounced them, advocating the burning of books and tearing down of temples. It should be noted that Luther was bitterly disappointed with the ideology of the Jews—their unfaithfulness to the gospel—not their race. Though considered more volatile than some of his interlocutors, Luther basically spoke with the frankness of men of his time period.

This does not excuse Luther’s response to the Jews—he did not rise above the spirit of the age in this matter. C. S. Lewis addresses this in the book *God in the Dock*: Every age has its own outlook. It is especially good at seeing certain truths and especially liable to make certain mistakes...We may be sure that the characteristic blindness of the 20th century—the blindness about which posterity will ask, “but how could they have thought that?”—lies where we have never suspected it, and concerns something about which there is unhesitant agreement between Hitler and President Roosevelt or between Mr. H. G. Wells and

Karl Barth. None of us can fully escape this blindness...the only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and this can be done only by reading old books. Not, of course, that there is any magic about the past. People were no cleverer then than they are now; they made as many mistakes as we. But not the same mistakes (Lewis, 20).

WCA’s Holocaust Emphasis Week challenges the students and teachers to examine our own hearts, ideas, beliefs and cultural baggage. The Reformed understanding that the wickedness of the human heart is the fount of every kind of evil, and that even great horrors like the Holocaust begin in small corners, can equip us to be watchmen standing up in the strength of the Lord.

-Kate Dullnig
Teacher of History and Literature

Meeting the needs of students. The responsibility of the Director of Teacher/Student Development (DTSD) involves assisting teachers to assure that each student’s educational program meets his/her particular needs. How is this accomplished? Here are some examples.

Six times during the week, the DTSD meets with several children in small groups in grades 1-3 to review and strengthen their phonological skills for reading. She may readminister a test orally to a student who has learned her material but does poorly on written tests, thus improving the child’s grades. Some students, who struggle in spelling, work out contracts with their teacher and report to the DTSD’s office to take their spelling test each week. She might give a spot check and an occasional reminder to some students who need to work on follow-up skills with their homework, thus helping them to develop a more responsible attitude regarding homework. A student might report weekly to the DTSD to review her organizational skills for the week and to prepare for the week ahead. If a teacher wants to teach a math concept that is better done in small groups, the DTSD monitors seatwork progress of the students during the math hour, while each small group in turn meets with the teacher for instruction. She may also fill in for a teacher who needs to make an immediate phone call to a parent about an important behavioral issue that occurred during recess, or assist parents in locating a doctor or a testing service if their child needs professional testing for a particular academic or behavioral concern. Per the request of a teacher or a parent, when an upper school student is struggling in a particular class, the DTSD arranges a team conference, where all of that student’s teachers come together to determine if the problem is occurring only in that particular class, or more generally in all academic subjects. They can then agree on methods of intervention that will be consistent with all teachers in all of the student’s classes. And the list goes on and on.

-Carol A. Parent
Director of Teacher/Student Development

For the Children’s Sake. Many of you feasted on prime rib at the Friends of the School Banquet on the 23rd. Dr. Joel Nederhood thrilled us with his impassioned endorsement of our work. He expounded the three glories that drive our mission: the glory of God, the glory of the covenant children, and the glory of education.

Fall is the season when we seek gifts for the Academy Fund Drive. Your gifts do NOT pay the light bill (anymore); they go into the capital budget, where they are

used to pay the costs of our new modular buildings, the new roof, and other improvements at WCA. Parents, do you realize that when you join those who give, your gift does double duty? First, it contributes to the improvements we can make; second, it increases the percentage of parents who donate. In the second category, note that small and large first-time gifts are of equal value. We are applying for another grant soon, too, and those percentages matter to foundations. Did you know that students occasionally donate too? What a blessing!

All of us give somewhere. Include WCA in your tax-deductible charitable giving for 1999. If you were not able to attend the banquet, your opportunity to give or pledge will arrive by mail.

Many thanks to Pat Bushouse for coordinating the Banquet, and all the following valuable volunteers: Laurie Schoemaker, "head chef", Andrea and Cassie Schoemaker, Jane Butcher, Connie Mehrling, Coleen Lynette, Patricia DiPiazza, Mr. and Mrs. Linden, Mr. and Mrs. Tamakloe, Mrs. Prestipino, Mr. and Mrs. Campbell, Mrs. Shari Davis and her mother, Maureen Rosetta, Yvonne Hollis, Mrs. Harford, the Verbrugge family, Tom Hirsch, Sue Ewell, and others. Special thanks to our high school students for serving and cleaning up. Heartfelt thanks to you all!

- Robin Gropp
Director of Advancement

STUDENT LIFE

New Classrooms and Teachers' Lounge. With thanksgiving to our graciously providing God, the two fifth grades classes moved into their brand new classrooms in the new modular. We thank the parents who helped with the move. This also made it possible that, finally, our teachers have a room to enjoy their lunches in, work on papers, etc., undisturbed. Well, almost. They still have to share the room with some upper school classes in the morning hours. We are thankful, nevertheless.

From our students. Excerpts from 3rd graders' letters to our mighty God, after visiting the Baltimore Aquarium: "Thank you for letting me go to the Aquarium. You made great animals!"-Molly. "I liked looking at the unusual marine animals you made and the beautiful colors. Thank you God. You are great!"-Eric. "I like your dolphins and all your animals, because you made them have their own tricks."-Sandra. "I just can't believe how people can see your beauty and think it happened by chance."-Sam D. "P.s. I love you."-Henry William.

Sport teams. Watch the *Koan Zone* for the meeting schedule of our sport teams. Cheer them on, and pray for them to grow in their knowledge of Christ even through these events.

ALUMNI

WCA'99 graduate Agur Adams has survived Plebe Summer at the U.S. Naval Academy! He is now busy with his academic courses, which include advanced calculus, honors English, chemistry, naval history, leadership, and physical education. In addition to coursework, midshipmen also perform numerous military duties, and they participate in sports teams. Agur is out for Varsity Lightweight Crew. He is also a member of the Protestant Choir at the Naval

Academy Chapel, and requests prayers as he navigates new seas! Go Navy!

Look for this column, as we regularly report on the lives of our alumni and alumnae.

SCHOOL FAMILY NEWS

Moms in Touch. Continue to pray to our Lord for Luke Johnston and his family, and for those many teachers and parents who are caring for their ailing parents.

SOCIETY AND BOARD

Back to Basics. While many qualities should distinguish a Christian school such as the Washington Christian Academy, certainly one of them should be relationships between teachers, parents, and administrators that are characterized by Christian love. Indeed, the WCA Philosophy of Education (which can be found in the beginning of the Parent/Student Handbook) states: "The home, the school, and the church must work in harmony if children are to be educated to the full extent of their God-given ability. Like the home and church, Washington Christian Academy is a place where Christ's forgiveness, reconciliation, renewal, and wisdom abound." If we don't see these things abound in our school community (or our home or churches), perhaps it's time to get back to basics.

Seeking to test Jesus, an expert in the law asked him, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" To this, Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Mt 23:37-39).

Love to God and man is God's law, for God is love (1 John 4:8), and His law is a reflection of His character. If we are a Christian, by God's grace we have realized how far we fall short of loving God and neighbor as we ought. If we are honest with ourselves, we recognize that we break the great commandment daily in thought, word and deed. We often act out of love for ourselves more than out of our love for God or others. Our relationships at home, at work, in our churches, and in our school community are all too often marred by the sin of following our own selfish ways, of worshiping ourselves, and that which we feel is important to us.

Yet if we are a Christian, by God's grace we have also grasped hold of the gospel, the Good News that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). We know that "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor 5:21). Jesus Christ has redeemed us and become our righteousness. Our lives are renewed by His Spirit, and we recognize that He has placed us in His family, in His body. And one area where we find ourselves working together as Christians is at WCA, where administrators, parents and teachers labor together to nurture and educate our covenant children.

So, as we think of our role in the school community and the relationships we are building there, we should ask ourselves: do we see Christ's forgiveness, reconciliation, renewal, and wisdom abounding at WCA? Do these qualities characterize our relationships with others in the WCA community? Do they characterize our relationships as parents with our children's teachers? As members of the

school community with school administrators and leadership? As Christians with our fellow Christians in the WCA community? Shouldn't they? Couldn't they?

Perhaps, if we're honest with ourselves, we'll see the role we play in the quality of these relationships. And if we're really honest with ourselves, there are times when we will recognize a need to get back to basics—to repent of our failure to love and to seek God's grace for His love to work through us.

God describes the character of love: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs." (1 Cor. 13:4-5). In discussing these last two characteristics of love in his *Tabletalk* devotional for September 22, 1999, the Reformed teacher and theologian R.C. Sproul writes: "Love allows us to think the best of people. We make no judgments about them until we have sufficient evidence, and even then we make judgments with a heavy heart. We don't jump to conclusions based on outward appearances, and we cover over a multitude of wrongs. We can't act this way when we are insecure and don't rest in the love of God. Only when we know His love and find strength in Him are we able to show others kindness, gentleness, and grace."

In working together as parents, teachers and administrators at WCA, it is inevitable that there will be misunderstandings and miscommunications at times, as well as honest differences of opinion. Yet when such things happen, can we by God's grace treat each other in Christian love, suspending judgment without evidence and approaching others in humility?

Let us recognize that if our Philosophy of Education is to be realized, it will not be in our own strength. Let us each plead for God's grace to get back to basics. May He grant us that renewal for His glory. *-Dorry M. Kenyon, Chair for the WCA Education Committee*

REFORMED EDUCATION

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Augustine said that virtue was the *ordo amoris*, the proper order of our affections, where every object is accorded that kind and degree of love which is appropriate. Loving what we ought to love. C.S. Lewis feared the combination of a hard heart and soft mind, but saw that the well trained mind alone led to what he called men without chests; "without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism." We train the intellect, the emotions, and also the will (John 13:17).

Until recent times character training was always considered an essential part of education. Character training is a conscious part of our curriculum. Aristotle said a sleeping man cannot be virtuous, making clear the necessity of linking thoughts and action, words and deeds. The educational process is incomplete until the will is transformed and trained to aspire to the good. The mind longs for and glories in truth, the heart is fulfilled by loving what is truly beautiful, and the will is not content until it attains the good. These are the God-designed fulfillment of the three parts of our soul, and these are fulfilling because we are created in His image and only truly fulfilled when the ruins of the Fall are purposely repaired.

Teachers are Models

"Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher!" Luke 6:40. With children, more is caught than taught,

especially when the curriculum is expanded to encompass the whole person. When we seek to guide affections of the heart, it requires a heartfelt initiative. It is neither abstract nor theoretical, but personal, "I love this, I want you to love it, too." Teaching character is a modeling enterprise as well, where our lives are a multimedia presentation while our words seem like a monotone. Teachers must be the image of what we want our graduates to be like in thought, affections, and character.

Learning Involves Some Disagreeable Work.

A certain constructive level of discomfort is expected. A school is about the disciplines and skills that are not immediately accessible. It is about work, and must at many points be distinguished from entertainment. The proper subjects of a school will be those books, poems, music, and ideas that are inaccessible without some exercise. None of us expect to ever encounter a TV-watching disability, a video game-learning deficit, or a remedial course in popular music. Experienced teachers and many parents know the frustration and tragedy of a learning disability or reading handicap. The things that simply must be conveyed to the next generation require real effort.

Sin's effects strike the areas where God has commanded diligence. One of the consequences of the Fall was the curse of painful toil (Gen.3:17). Previously pleasant work took on an offensive character. Thorns became the natural order of things; nature itself worked against man. Fulfillment in God-given work was not obliterated, but it had an increased cost. As a result, we minimize the thorns, but we do not hesitate to ask students to work and to strive to meet a considered standard.

Complaints from the students are to be anticipated; work is painful but necessary. Learning can be entertaining, but that is not the measure of success. Meeting a real standard is the goal, and it is the only way to true satisfaction and self-esteem. Because of the Fall, we do not expect the child to naturally select the music or literature that the educator knows will ultimately be the most satisfying. We believe the school's role is to insure that the best and essential are included in our program, and to insure that these become accessible and familiar to the student.

If you are interested in further reading, we suggest:

C. S. Lewis, Abolition of Man

"Westminster Confession of Faith," Chapter VI and Scripture references
Victor Hansen, John Heath, Who Killed Homer: The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom, Free Press, 1998

Neal Gabler, Life, the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality, Knopf, 1998

-Sterling Mehring
President, Board of Directors

TO PONDER

"Manners are of more importance than laws. Upon them in a great measure, the laws depend. The law touches us here and there, and now and then. Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us by a constant, steady, uniform insensible operation like that of the air we breathe in."

-Edmund Burke, 1796

Coram Deo