

Why We Need & Support Hills Christian School

Hills Christian School needs our support – and we, as a church, need the school. That's why we take offerings for it twice each month. That's why we distribute its newsletters.

But ... why? Don't we need to ask that?

Why bother? Why fight the fight to keep the doors open?

That's a question we need to be able to answer if we're going to help HCS meet its current need. And we can answer it confidently – if we take the time to honestly and prayerfully consider it.

Hence the pastor's pages from which this brief pamphlet arose. As pastor of Hills URC, I believe that we should be fighting hard to meet every need of our little Christian school. In fact, I think we should be fighting hard not just to keep the doors open, but to fill each seat and to pay our teachers something that remotely approaches a worthy salary.

It's pretty evident that I'm a fan of Hills Christian School, isn't it?

But there was a time not terribly long ago when I wouldn't have been such a fan. In fact, Christian school – and my reluctance to commit to enrolling our children – was a serious source of stress in the early years of my marriage.

I want to share with you what brought about a drastic change of heart.

But first, let's be clear about something: we don't require members of Hills URC to use Hills Christian School. If a family chooses to teach their children at home or to send them to a different Christian school, the elders will be OK with that. If a family chooses to send their children to a public school, the elders will be disappointed with that decision – but it won't result in formal discipline.

That doesn't mean public schools are a good alternative. With high school students who are discerning, it can be the best of a few imperfect options. But with younger students, our consistory believes public schooling is a mistake.

But that's the thing: it's a *mistake*; an *unwise decision* – but not a sin worthy of church discipline. I would compare it to failing to contribute a full tithe, regularly missing evening worship services, or voting for either of Minnesota's current senators (in 2009). Each of those decisions reveals a failure to understand something about our responsibility as Christians. Each reveals a need for continued maturing. But they don't merit formal discipline, any more than (for example) my own too-frequent decisions to procrastinate or to waste time.

When Michal was born, I believed there were plenty of reasons to not use Christian schools. After all, I went to a public school, and I was committed to serving Christ – just like my wife, who attended Christian schools.

Meanwhile, Christian schools cost money, and our taxes already paid for the public school. Of course, government schools don't teach Bible or theology – but those, I argued, are things that we as parents should be teaching.

And even if the education is just as good or a bit better at a Christian school, shouldn't our kids be out making friends of non-Christians? How else are they to be salt and light to unbelievers?

It took time, God's mercy, and Grace's patient persistence to get me to see that those arguments really weren't all that strong.

Cost was the easiest argument to dismiss. When it comes to doing God's will, price tags should be irrelevant. Christians are called to be faithful – not cost-efficient. If the faithful path is costly, we're trust God for our provision.

And God *will* provide the way for us to do His will (Heb. 13:21; Jer. 17:7-8; Josh. 1:9). If He calls us to pay tuition twice, in a sense, by paying both taxes and Christian school tuition – well, He also called us to bear our cross daily, denying ourselves the things of this world in our confidence concerning the things of the world to come (Matt. 16:24-27). And we can be sure that He will be with us, to provide for us – because He has promised (Isa. 41:10).

(Of course, churches that believe in Christian education will do all that they can to ensure that no family is *unable* to afford it.)

The real question: *Is that God's will?* What about the Great Commission? Don't our children need to be among unbelievers in order to witness to them?

To that question, a wise friend asked: do you send soldiers directly from the recruiting office to the battlefield? Of course not! Soldiers are meant to do battle – but it would be foolish and dangerous to send them to battle without extensive training. They need the wisdom and maturity produced by basic training and combat school before they're ready to engage the enemy.

And so do our children, my friend explained. If we send our children out to evangelize unbelievers before they have matured among "friendly troops," we are endangering their spiritual well-being no less than we would

physically endanger a raw Army recruit by sending him straight into battle. In fact, it's worse: we're sending them out to be *taught* by unbelievers – who will not teach them to view the world through a Christian worldview.

That got me thinking. I had argued that I did fine with public education – but did I? But how many things did I have to re-think during my time at a Christian college? How many teachers had nearly persuaded me of unbiblical ideas like evolution? How many ungodly attitudes had I unbelieving friends taught me?

An hour or so of home instruction in the evening can't hope to overcome such an onslaught by the educational system of the world.

All of that opened me up to the *possibility* that Christian schooling was a good idea.

But ... I wasn't sold yet. I wasn't fully *convinced*.

What really *sold* me on the need for Christian education – especially in those crucial early years – was a good book and much prayerful soul-searching.

The book was one that my father-in-law bought at a pastors' conference. He stayed at our house on his way home, and I thought this book looked interesting. Skimming random pages, I read: "Upon analysis, all truth drives one to Christ. From beginning to end, man's reasoning about anything whatsoever (even reasoning about reasoning itself) is unintelligible or incoherent unless the truth of the Christian Scriptures is presupposed."

The book summarized and presented the writings of theologian Cornelius Van Til – a brilliant professor who claimed that an unbeliever can't legitimately *know* that $2 + 2 = 4$ without *assuming* the truth of the Bible. Apart from Scripture and the triune God it reveals, said Van Til, *nothing* is understandable.

Van Til's claim sounded so ridiculous to me that I had to read more. (I later ordered my father-in-law a new copy and kept his.) As I read, I became convinced that Van Til was right – because all that he wrote echoed Scripture.

The Bible says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7). On the other hand, unbelievers "by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made." Nonetheless, "although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:18-22).

In other words, unbelievers deny God, and all that they do is essentially corrupt (Ps. 14:1-3). Despite all their study and accomplishment, they are *fools* (Ps. 74:18), because they despise the Source of true wisdom. Wisdom, understanding, knowledge – these are found only in believing and trusting the Lord (Prov. 1:7; 3:5-8). Unbelievers *do* understand that two plus two equals four – but only because they believe in their hearts what they deny with their lips: that God exists, and therefore the world is logical, orderly and predictable.

In fact, the very arguments they use to *deny* God's existence make sense only if the God of Scripture truly exists. As Van Til wrote, they are like children who must stand on their father's lap in order to slap his face.

Yet slap they do – because those who do not consciously acknowledge God necessarily oppose Him (Matt. 12:30; Luke 11:23).

Grasping that reality was a breakthrough for me. It very literally opened my eyes – allowing me to see what I was witnessing every day.

At the time, I was a newspaper reporter. My job included covering several school districts, which meant attending school board meetings and writing about developments and controversies affecting the schools. As a child, I had become intimate with public education in the classroom. As a reporter, I interacted with public education "behind the scenes."

As I began to see the implications of Christianity upon education, what struck me was how spiritually *empty* our public education system is – and how "religiously" that spiritual vacuum is protected.

American public education boasts about "neutrality" and "multiculturalism." It's OK for students to learn about the fact of various religious traditions, but not OK to study the teachings themselves. It's OK to refer to Christianity and Hinduism and Judaism and cults, but wrong to give the impression that any one is superior. And it's *never* OK to give the impression that God has anything to do with what happens in the hallowed halls of learning.

But all of that is necessarily religious. It's a religious claim to say that valid education can occur in the absence of God's Word. It's a religious claim to say that students can learn the truth about American history or science without considering the impact of Christianity upon those subjects. Everything public schools touch is, at root, religious – and the religion is *not* Christianity.

If you have any doubt of that, propose introducing a course on the Bible and science to nearly any public school in America. Or make it easier: propose that Darwinian evolution be taught as an unproven hypothesis, with intelligent design taught as another valid hypothesis. (Note that I'm not even suggesting *Biblical* creationism

– just secularized “intelligent design.”) I saw such proposals introduced. And I witnessed the reaction, which was *undeniably* religious in its fervor to oppose any hint of God. But again, it was not the *Christian* religion.

For better or worse, we are *always* teaching our children about Jesus. Either we are teaching that He is Lord of all creation, apart from whom we can do nothing; or that He’s a nice man whom we don’t mention in “polite society” who has little to do with life outside of church. Either we belong to Him and find our comfort in trusting Him, or He is *optional*. But as a wise person said, there’s no *middle* road between the narrow and the wide.

Parents, here’s where the rubber meets the road for me. Here’s why I decided that I needed to pursue either a Christian school or Christian home-school education for my children.

God tells us in Deut. 6:4-9 that we are to know and love the Lord our God, who is the only God. We are to know His Word intimately. And we are to teach that Word to our children in every part of life: sitting at home, walking along the way, lying down and rising up, via our clothes and our homes – *every part*.

In Prov. 22:6, He tells us that we must train up our children in the way they should go. The way in which we train them to think and act when they are young – that’s the way they will go when they are old.

In the light of that: how can I take these children whom God has entrusted to me and send them to a school that says they need not open God’s Word to learn *the truth* about math, science, history, literature, *life*? How can I send them to a place where the teachers are *prohibited* from speaking about God or His Word, and yet tell them that this is a place where they can get *wisdom* and *learning*? If I do send them there, can I legitimately expect them to become adults who think that God’s Word is important for all of life?

If I truly believe that God and His Word are indispensable – that the fear of the Lord *truly* is the beginning of knowledge itself – wouldn’t I insist that my children’s teachers call them to know God and seek His Word *first*?

And if I *don’t* ... then what am I telling my child that I *really* believe?

I began with the contention that Hills Christian School needs our support – and that we need Hills Christian School.

But the school needs more than money. It needs prayer – because only God can sustain and use the school for the good of our children. The school also needs our *words* – our enthusiastic and committed *recommendation* to Christian parents in our community who don’t (yet) understand the deep and essential difference between a public school education and a Christian education.

Please: think hard and pray harder about how you can help. If you have questions about the school or its programs, don’t hesitate to ask me, HCS Principal Myrna Haak, or HCS School Board President Nathan Bakker.

And may the Lord provide for that little school, using it to show future generations that true wisdom comes from God alone!