BACK TO SCHOOL
SPECIAL EDITION

Moral Conflicts
Dancing, Sexual issues, Drinking and Drugs

Parental Interaction With The School System
The school buses are already running, the shopping for school supplies and clothes is almost over, and the daily grind is beginning. Our children may not recognize it at the time, but one day they will look back at these carefree days with mostly fond remembrances. And so will the parents.

I watched our five-year-old Jenny standing by the rock waiting for the bus at the end of the driveway of the preacher’s house at the Knollwood church in Beavercreek, OH. It was her first day of school. When she got on the bus and turned to wave goodbye, the tears trickled down my cheeks! By the time Corey got to that stage, going to school was “old hat.” We were just glad to have a few moments of peace and quiet!

School presents wonderful opportunities to learn. Reading, writing, and math skills, science and other subjects allow students to explore their world. The skills learned at school are designed to prepare a person for adulthood, that time when he takes his place alongside other adults who earn a living, produce goods competing in a global market, raise a family, pay their taxes, fight our wars, and otherwise carry on the activities of life. How tragic is the situation in modern education that so many are coming out of the school system without these skills!

Some children become adults and still have not developed the ability to read, write, and do basic arithmetic. They have little or no ambition to succeed. Whether this is the blame of parents or the teachers (probably both contribute) may be argued by educators and politicians, but the sad fact still remains that we have raised children who are incompetent to provide for themselves and their families.

A child who grows into adulthood and does not have the ability to provide for himself is destined to poverty. Some postpone their poverty by living with their parents until they are well into their twenties and some deep into their thirties. “Close to 14 million adult children are still living at home,” according to Dr. Phil (http://www.drphil.com/articles/article/138).

We need to be reminded that school is preparation time for work — the time when one develops and learns a skill that he can use to provide for himself in life. Some skills require more preparation time, such as a medical doctor, a lawyer, a scientist, a CPA, a teacher, etc. Other jobs can be learned in a lesser amount of time (and usually pay considerably less), such as lawn care, serving food in a restaurant, running a cash register, etc. Some skilled trades require an apprenticeship but, when those trades are mastered, a person can make a good living for his family.

An ancient Jewish proverb says, “He that does not bring up his son to some honest calling and employment, brings him up to be a thief.” There is truth in the adage. Children who drop out of school have no skills. The only ways that they see to make a living in their neighborhoods are: (a) live off welfare payments; (b) become a drug dealer; (c) be a pimp or a prostitute; (d) crime. Some try to escape their poverty through sports, but few have the athletic talents to succeed. This leaves many children unemployed and unemployable — because they have no skills.

The wise man wrote these proverbs about work and labor:

The labor of the righteous leads to life, The wages of the wicked to sin (Prov. 10:16).

The hand of the diligent will rule, But the lazy man will be put to forced labor (Prov. 12:24).

A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke (Prov. 13:1).

In all labor there is profit, But idle chatter leads only to poverty (Prov. 14:23).

Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men (Prov. 22:29).

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going (Eccl. 9:10).

Unless we train our children to provide for themselves, we send them out ill-prepared to face the realities of life and train them to fail. When children go through school without understanding why they are there, they are less likely to see the relevance of the class work and resent having to learn. One’s child might say, “Why do I care whether or
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I can still remember my wife and I taking our daughter and son to the doctor when they were babies to see where they ranked in size and weight and being so proud that they were above average in their development. We marveled over first teeth, baby steps, and the sounds of their first words. They have played baseball and softball in the past, and it is satisfying to see them growing stronger and more competitive. They have become successful in 4-H and have excelled in school and in academic competitions. My children will soon both be in the second half of K-12 education. My wife and I have often thought about what future course they will chart beyond high school, and I know that every caring parent wonders the same about their children. At a young age, we started savings accounts, college funds, and began planning for the inevitable braces and the dreaded teenage car insurance bills. We have been explaining the need for them to be financially responsible and teaching them to invest for their futures. We want them to be successful and be able to have a better life than ours.

But is this everything? Is it enough? It is easy to get wrapped up in physical preparation, and neglect spiritual preparation. We should want our children to be like Jesus who “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52). In order to do that, attention has to be paid to spiritual development.

One point that parents have to seriously accept is that the church and Bible-based schools cannot be the primary means of training children in the Scriptures. That is your responsibility. Psalm 78:5-8 says,

...parents need to be careful that we do not portray the narratives in the Bible as “stories.”

For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

“Training up a child in the way he should go” does not simply mean taking them to worship assemblies and Bible class (Prov. 22:6). Children need to develop their own faith, and parents can see to that by reading the Bible and discussing it with their children, praying with them, and showing them how God and faith play an integral role in their life and influence every decision they make. Parents also need to prepare their children for Paul’s words: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). They need to know that peer pressure, persecution, hypocrites, and disappointment will be a part of life. Hearing it from you will be far better than having to experience it all alone.

We go to the doctor to learn about growth milestones for our children. We know, at any given time, where our children should be with height and weight. What about spiritual milestones? Every child needs to know both positive and negative subjects as far as Bible knowledge is concerned. While difficult to be precise, the following is a useful guide for you to determine where your children should be as they develop.

When they are young, parents can begin by teaching children the books of the Bible, and the contents of those books. It is at this point that they can also...
Growing Up
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be taught about the important narratives and people in the Scriptures. However, parents need to be careful that we do not portray the narratives in the Bible as “stories.” “Stories” imply fables, myths, and legends; in short, something made up. Children need to have it emphasized to them that the Bible contains legitimate, historical events with legitimate, historical characters.

As children get older, more complex issues such as the existence of God and Christ, the reliability of the Bible, and the shortcomings of evolution and humanism can be taught. This middle stage is usually where children reach what we have called the “age of accountability” (Rom. 7:9). This means preparing them to obey the gospel by making sure they understand the concepts of forgiveness and redemption, and the requirements God places upon us for salvation.

The final stages of their adolescence can be used to instruct them about prevalent false doctrines such as Calvinism, Premillennialism, and institutionalism. Although it is regrettable that our brethren stray from the truth, children also need to know about current, troubling issues and trends among brethren. Matters such as the A.D. 70 doctrine, newer divorce and remarriage controversies such as the second putting away and divorce for a cause other than fornication, the house church movement, the doctrine that hell is an annihilation, compromising the days of creation, changing the nature (humanity/deity) of Christ, etc., all need to be explored, and our children taught to stand against these doctrines. It can be immeasurably helpful to test your children by staging debates over these points with them, even if it is only over dinner!

Young people who have been adequately trained in these areas are outstanding benefits for a congregation. Young men who have been raised to be knowledgeable and formidable can perhaps one day serve as deacons or elders. Young women who have been raised to be compassionate yet strong can serve a congregation by teaching and benevolence. Every congregation needs members who will help “grow up into him in all things” by being “no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14-15). By being thoroughly equipped, our children can see that “the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16).

Kyle Campbell • kylec@consolidated.net
251 Hunters Glen Drive • Lufkin, TX 75904

These lessons are designed for all Christians from upper teenage to adult. There are 13 lessons with questions following each lesson. Topics and their authors are as follows:

1) Sinful Anger—Bobby Witherington; 10) The Joy of Anxiety—Harold Tabor;
2) Avoiding Pride—Don Wright; 11) Irreverence—Tom Roberts;
3) Envy and Jealousy—Karl Diestelkamp; 12) Lack of Brotherly Love—Terry Sanders;
4) Lust: The Silent Soul Killer—Brian V. Sullivan; 13) Self-Control—Daniel Reugg;
5) Greed, A Sin of the Mind and Flesh—Don Willis;
NEW BEGINNINGS

1. A new school year is similar to a new calendar year. At the beginning of a new calendar year we often make “New Year’s Resolutions” as we resolve to begin doing certain things that we ought to do, or at least decide to do better than we have done in the past. In a similar manner, the beginning of the school year presents an opportunity to start over fresh with a determined attitude. When faced with the prospect of having to make a new beginning, the unjust steward of the Lord’s parable said, “I have resolved what to do” (Luke 16:4). As a new school year begins it is necessary to resolve what to do in the coming year. A new beginning is a time to resolve to do what is right at every opportunity and to overcome the failures, disappointments, and mistakes of the past, rather than repeat them.

2. A new school year is a new opportunity to serve God. While the new school year demands attention in many different areas, the main objective that must be kept in mind is the need to please God at all times and under all circumstances. For the Christian, the overriding principle is set forth by the apostle Paul as follows: “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:23-24). The student is not to live for his or her teachers, peers, or even parents, but for the Lord.

NEW CLASSES

1. Filter everything through the lens of God’s word. The inspired wise man writes, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7). While studying literature, math, science, and history, do not forget that true wisdom and knowledge begin with a proper view of the God who existed before the history of this world, who created the laws upon which math and science operate, and who has given man the greatest literature ever produced in the Bible. A correct understanding of the world and all things in it begins with a correct understanding of the God who created the world and all things in it.

2. Stand for truth against the evolutionary and humanistic worldview. The educational system, from kindergarten to the universities, is dominated by an anti-God, anti-Bible bias that views man as a highly-evolved animal who has arrived on the scene as the result of millions of years of random evolutionary processes. Instead of affecting only the science classes, this sort of thinking has come to dominate every area of education so that students are taught to view the world apart from God and to view the Bible as a mistake-filled book written by men. Paul wrote of a culture that is in many ways similar to ours, saying, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did...”
not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Rom. 1:20-21). Be prepared to take a stand for God, the Bible, and truth when confronted with a false view of the world.

3. Make room for spiritual growth. In the midst of all of the demands of the school year it is easy to focus on secular education and extra-curricular activities to the extent that no time is left for spiritual things. In His explanation of the seed which fell on the thorny ground in the parable of the sower, Jesus warned that “the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” (Mark 4:19). Don’t neglect the need to attend worship and Bible study, to pray, and to read the Bible just because there is schoolwork to be done.

NEW FRIENDS
1. Choose your friends wisely. “The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray” (Prov. 12:26). The new school year presents new opportunities to make new friends. Make sure the friends you choose will have a positive influence on your life and behavior. “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits’” (1 Cor. 15:33). Consider choosing friends like the psalmist, who spoke to God, saying, “I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts” (Psa. 119:63).

2. Influence your friends for good. In interacting with your friends you have a great opportunity to be a good influence toward them. Remember to set the right example by treating others the way you want them to treat you (Matt. 7:12; Luke 6:31), and by doing what is best for them at all times, with the understanding that, “Love does no harm to a neighbor” (Rom. 13:10). You can also set the right example by befriending the friendless, instead of just befriending those whom you think will raise your popularity level or make you look good in the eyes of others.

3. Teach your friends the gospel. The best thing that you can do for your friends is to introduce them to the saving message of Jesus Christ. Take advantage of the new opportunities of a new school year to develop the attitude of the apostle Paul, who said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Invite your friends to have a Bible study or to attend the worship periods of the church with you. Make sure your new friends know about the “old, old story.”

NEW CHALLENGES
1. Be the light of the world. As you begin a new school year you will be surrounded by various influences and situations that will present challenges to your faith in the Lord. Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:14-16). Make sure to shine your light in order to reflect the glory and purity of Christ to those around you.

2. Overcome temptation. A new school year often presents new temptations. You may face pressure from your peers to use foul language, engage in lascivious dancing, commit fornication, experiment with alcohol and drugs, or behave in an ungodly way so that you can fit in. Follow the advice of Scripture, which says, “You shall not follow a crowd to do evil” (Exod. 23:2). None of the things the “crowd” is doing is worth losing your soul over. Always keep in mind that the Lord will provide the way of escape so that you can overcome temptation (1 Cor. 10:13).

3. Avoid hypocrisy. The school environment sometimes brings with it the tendency for one to act differently around his school friends than he would around his family or around members of the church. Some students act like wonderful godly people on Sunday and then imitate the world for the rest of the week while at school. Overcome hypocrisy by behaving like a Christian all the time (Rom. 12:9; 1 Pet. 2:1-2).

4. Remember your Creator. In the midst of the excitement and busy schedule of the new school year, do not neglect that which is most important. “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth” (Eccl. 12:1). All of the education, achievements, awards, popularity, and academic success in the world mean absolutely nothing if God is not at the center of your life. As the wise man said, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13).

CONCLUSION
The beginning of the new school year is a reminder of new opportunities that may lie ahead. Let’s make sure that those opportunities are used to the glory, honor, and praise of our Creator and Savior. How will you use the opportunities God places before you?

David Dann • ddann1@hotmail.com
2108 Amherst Dr. • Lewisville, TX 75067
Elsewhere in this special issue the usually thought of temptations such as priorities, sports, language, world view or Weltanschauung “German”, dancing, sexual sins, drinking, drugs, etc., are being dealt with. In this article we want to focus on what has been called “spiritual temptations” that exist at school, those things that have more to do with our faith, attitude, and the spread and defense of the gospel.

PEER PRESSURE

Peer pressure is present at every stage in life, but it is perhaps more prevalent in the life of a student. To speak of peer-pressure as a temptation for students has almost become cliché. However, we must never let our guard down to this ever-present and ever-real temptation. “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals’” (1 Cor. 15:33).

What’s the solution? First, resolve that you will not defile yourself with any sin (Dan. 1:8; cf. Ezra 7:10; Acts 11:23 NASB). Second, avoid people and places you know will provide temptation (Ps. 1:1-2; Prov. 4:14-15). Third, when anyone tempts you to sin, look for the way of escape and flee that temptation (1 Cor. 10:13; Prov. 1:10; 2 Tim. 2:22; Ecclus./Sir. 21:2 KJV, “Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent: for if thou comest too near it, it will bite thee: the teeth thereof are as the teeth of a lion, slaying the souls of men.”).

HUMANISM

Humanism is a man-centered worldview (Adams, 386). Humanistic principles and personnel are present at every level of education from child care of infants to the institutes of higher learning. Satan wins when any amount of humanism penetrates the mind of a Christian. Humanism secretly subverts the minds of students in the realms of the supernatural (that is, anything associated with God, including, but not limited to, creation, miracles, inspiration, Christ’s church, and heaven and hell), situation ethics, marriage, and sexuality. (For more information on this subject, see the special issue of Guardian of Truth on humanism in the July 5, 1984, issue [vol. 24, no. 13] at http://www.truthmagazine.com/?p=46.)

What’s the solution? Moses, aware of the temptation to forget God, warned Israel of this temptation many times in his discourses of Deuteronomy (4:9, 23; 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19; 9:7). His solution, by the Spirit’s inspiration, was, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (6:4-9).

We must make certain that we are completely focused on God and His word. We must have a regular intake (multiple times every day) of spiritual nourishment in reading, studying, and meditating upon God’s word. Anything less provides the opportunity Satan needs to infiltrate our minds with the deadly poison of humanism.

ECUMENICALISM

Ecumenicalism or the Ecumenical Movement is a push and plea to “unite” all those who claim to follow Christ. It is more of an attempt at union than unity. “Union” is nothing more than an agreement to disagree and say nothing about our
differences (Chaffin, 15). It is behind the visit-the-church-of-your-choice and the we’re-all-going-to-heaven-we’re-just-taking-different-roads-to-get-there mentalities. With so many different religious organizations being represented in the student population, it is a temptation for a young Christian to fall trap to such thinking and thus think that his friends are okay in their current spiritual situation and that we should be more “loving” (read tolerant) and accepting of our differences (read compromising of the truth).

What’s the solution? We certainly need to “[speak] the truth in love,” “be not quarrelsome but kind to everyone,” and “do it with gentleness and respect” (Eph. 4:15; 2 Tim. 2:24; 1 Pet. 3:15); but at the same time we must also “take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them,” “teach … correcting [our] opponents,” and “always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (Eph. 5:11; 2 Tim. 2:24-25; 1 Pet. 3:15). We must “reason frankly with [our] neighbor,” “destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God,” and “earnestly contend for the faith” (Lev. 19:17; 2 Cor 10:3-5; Jude 3 kjv).

God has never tolerated compromise of the truth (Exod. 23:32-33; Deut. 7:1-5; 13:1-18).

SPREADING THE GOSPEL
Closely akin to the previous point is the temptation not to spread the gospel to fellow students. Thinking people are okay in their current religious beliefs (ecumenicalism) is only one aspect of the problem. There is also the fear of rejection—rejection of the gospel and rejection of friendship, the fear of not being able to answer their questions, and other fears.

What’s the solution? First, be committed to the Lord: “sanctify Christ as Lord in your [heart]” (1 Pet. 3:15 NASB). Second, have confidence in the gospel: “for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). Third, have care, concern, and compassion for lost souls: “my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved” (Rom. 10:1). Fourth, be constant in prayer: “pray … that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ” (Col. 4:2-6).

REBELLION AND LACK OF RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY
Each new generation faces the temptation to rebel against the norms and traditions of the previous generations. It is true that human traditions should never be forced or bound on anyone, nor should they cause anyone to violate the will of God (cf. Matt. 5:17-48; Mark 7:1-13; Col. 2:8). However, any attempt to rebel against authority—parents, teachers, boss, government, and especially God—is sinful and should be avoided by all.

What’s the solution? Obey the authorities (Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 6:1, 5-8; Col. 3:20-25; Tit. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-15)—simple, huh? When it comes to serving God, “Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16). Hold to the traditions delivered by the apostles (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15). And above all, “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17).

CONCLUSION
Certainly other temptations exist and could be discussed, but, Lord willing, this article will help you think about a few of the temptations to be faced by all students. Know that the enemy is real. He wants to see you turn from God and burn in hell. He will use any and every temptation to get you to sin.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. (Eph. 6:10-13)

John R. Gentry • HaveBibleWillPreach@gmail.com

Unless otherwise stated, all biblical references are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

REFERENCES
Who and what comes first in your life? For the faithful Christian and godly families, the answer will always be God and the people of God (Matt. 6:33; 22:37; Acts 2:42-47). Other things like work, school, hobbies and recreation certainly have a place in life, but must forever pale in comparison to our spiritual walk with the Lord and our responsibilities to Him.

Is it just me, or does it seem like the various school activities that exist today require more and more of one’s time and commitment than ever before? Then when you factor in a child’s involvement in two or more of these activities (often times overlapping one another), the scheduling the family must keep up with can be quite taxing and overwhelming. So how do families, and our young people, properly balance school activities with spiritual responsibilities?

To begin with, what are some of our spiritual responsibilities? In putting the Lord first, we ought to assemble faithfully with the saints for worship and Bible class (Heb. 10:24-25). We are to use our talents and abilities in a scriptural and edifying way (Eph. 4:16; Rom. 14:19). We ought to study the Bible and pray regularly (Ps. 1:2; 1 Thess. 5:17). We ought to visit the sick and shut-in (Jas. 1:27). We are to share the gospel of Christ with our fellow man (2 Cor. 5:10-11).

What are some of the more common school activities made available to our young people? In the realm of sports you may choose to participate in: football, basketball, baseball, soccer, track, golf, etc. Not into team sports? There’s the Spanish club and French club, the debating team, chess club, student government, newspaper, yearbook, 4-H, drama, choir, photography, band, speech team, math team, art club, Business Professionals of America, computer club, and more.

So what do we do when conflict arises between our spiritual responsibilities and school activities? I can assure you that conflict will arise. For example, basketball practice is scheduled at the same time as mid-week Bible study. The soccer tournament game is being played on Sunday evening. The football game is Friday night and you are expected to play in the band, but it’s the last night of the gospel meeting. You are in the choir and the director expects you to sing songs about the birth of Jesus in the school’s Christmas program. You are popular and well liked and your peers have elected you to be on the homecoming court. You are in drama, and the dress rehearsal for the musical is scheduled for Wednesday evening.

Do we simply compromise because there is only an occasional conflict? Or do we remain unyielding when it comes to our spiritual responsibilities? Whatever decisions we make in the midst of these conflicts will reveal whether we are more committed to God or school, morality or immorality, human traditions or the Bible.

School is important. Our involvement in the activities of school is often enjoyable and can build character. But what about when school activities conflict with our spiritual responsibilities? I have observed too many families in the local church compromise by demonstrating more loyalty to their school activities than their spiritual responsibilities. And we wonder why our children grow up and never obey the gospel or fall away shortly after leaving home? Could it be because in their most formative years we taught them the wrong priorities?

“We allowed them to miss part of the gospel meeting because they’re on the football team,” and thus taught them that football comes before assembling with the saints. “We let our daughter to go to the prom because all her friends were going and she wanted to go so much.” Therefore, we communicated to her that sin is not so bad, that it can be fun and enjoyable, rather than teaching her that dancing is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). “We agreed to allow our son to go to his Wednesday night dress rehearsal, because it was just Bible class he would be missing and not Sunday.” Such spiritually weak decisions will come back to haunt you and your children!

Parents, let us not neglect to give the time (and to make the time) for the most important task of all – our child’s spiritual education. Like Lois and Eunice, let us do our utmost to
make our sons and daughters “wise for salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15), to train them in the ways of righteousness, that when they are older they will not depart from the Lord (Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4).

Also, young people need to exhibit their faith and courage before their teachers, coaches, and peers whenever conflict arises. Take a stand for righteousness’ sake like Joseph, David, Josiah, Daniel, and Esther of old. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth (Eccl. 12:1).

**SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO HANDLE THE CONFLICTS**

- Talk to the coach in advance that you will need to leave early from practices or games (or even miss) whenever they conflict with church services. They will soon learn that you are serious about your commitment to the Lord. It may make them mad. They may respect you more. Regardless, you are doing the right thing (Matt. 6:33).

- Let the choir director know that you cannot sing the religious songs with instruments of music or religious songs which treat Christmas as a holy day with a clear conscience since the Bible does not reveal when Jesus was born (Gal. 4:9-11).

- Inform the director of the musical that you will practice before and after Wednesday service, but not during it (Heb. 10:24-25).

- Remove yourself from any association with the school dances (1 John 2:15-17), and explain why you cannot participate.

- Beware of immodest clothing associated with school activities. Shorts for soccer, basketball, tennis, and volleyball are typically very immodest. Also be mindful of the clothing worn in school plays and musicals. Many Christians seem to think that it is okay to compromise if it is a school activity. It’s not (Exod. 28:42-43; Isa. 47:1-3; 1 Tim. 2:9-10). One can still participate in these various school activities and still be modestly dressed. Buy long shorts or have attachments sewn on to the shorter ones. To please God, we must be holy in all of our conduct (1 Pet. 1:15-16)!

- Never compromise! Not even one time. It will leave a lasting impression upon others and especially upon your heart as you strive to serve the Lord (Rom. 12:1-2).

**A WORD OF CAUTION**

Christians today need to be very careful that their spiritual responsibilities and fruit are not being choked out by the cares of this world (Matt. 13:22). An overabundance of school activities can easily stymie and suffocate the good works of the Lord’s people (Eph. 2:10; Tit. 2:14; 3:8). Let us never forget that we are mere strangers and pilgrims. Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20)!

**A WORD OF THANKS**

Thank you to the godly parents who have and continue to instill the right priorities in the hearts and minds of their children. Thank you godly young people for refusing to compromise your spiritual responsibilities in order to remain loyal to your school activities. Thank you for missing games and practices because of the decision to put God first in your life. Thanks for leaving early from sports, band, etc. so you could study God’s Word and worship with the saints. Thank you for saying “no” to participating in the school dances, even when your peers ridiculed you for your faith (1 Pet. 4:3-4, 16). Thank for you being a salt unto the earth (Matt. 5:13) and a shining light to the world (Matt. 5:14-16). Thank you for counting the cost and for being totally committed to Jesus Christ (Luke 14:25-33). With such individuals, the Lord is well pleased!

**ESTABLISHING PRINCIPLES FOR PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL RELATED ACTIVITIES**

*Howard Whittlesey*

1. God said that godliness profits us in ALL things (1 Tim. 4:8).
2. Have a talk with God about the responsibilities of members in His church. Make some determinations therefrom concerning your school related activities. Then – At the outset of the Activity:
3. Compose a letter to your coach/activity sponsor. Tell what practices and events you cannot attend. Explain your commitment to the priorities that you have set. Be ready to carry out every single commitment. Be where you say you’ll be; do what you say you’ll do. Suggest that you will do whatever is assigned to help you serve as an effective contributor in the organization for practices or events that you miss. Go the extra mile as a free man.
4. Submit a copy of this letter to your principal. You might include your athletic director if sports are involved.

*Howard Whittlesey is a retired Choral Music Director having taught 39 years in grades 7-12. He also taught Band for 6 years. His last 32 years were spent at North Miami High School in Denver, Indiana.*
Today we live in a country that is putting great emphasis upon sports. Sports bring in revenues for schools, communities, counties, and states. A major part of a school’s budget is based upon sports. Often, sports have priority over academics in schools. Large stadiums and gymnasiums are constructed to accommodate sports in our schools. In our country, we spend more money on sports than many countries spend in their total budget. In our school systems, more money is spent upon sports and its facilities than any other part of the educational system.

Sports bring excitement in going back to school. When I coached, I was anxious for school to begin because I knew football season would begin. I would “eat and sleep” football. I put sports in a wrong perspective! During football season when our children were young, I would go for days and not see our children awake due to coaching football. I would come in at night and they would be asleep. I would leave in the morning before they got up. Football was the priority in my life instead of the things of God (Deut. 6:6-9; 1 Tim. 5:8). I would go to the worship assembly on Sunday morning and talk football in the foyer of the building. I should have been thinking and talking about the One who died for me. I should have been exhorted and being exhorted by other Christians (Heb. 10:24-25).

Schools are the center of a community. Often, sports are what a school is noted for by people. One may wish to think that academics is the center of a school but many parents can name the football coach but they cannot name their child’s math teacher. The community seems not to care how successful their school is in academics as long as they are good in sports. A successful football coach may be a weak teacher. He will keep his job at the school. In fact, the school will release an excellent academic teacher to make room for the teaching unit that is needed for the football coach. That shows to the world the perspective of sports over academics.

Sports bring about a comradeship in a community. A community comes closer together because of sports. A community will rally around the successful football team. Often times, the only time we see someone from our community is at a sports event. Sadly to say, sports bring out the bad character from some sports fans at a game. Some people get very angry when a sporting event doesn’t turn out the way they want (Eph. 4:26).

An advantage of athletics is that athletics teach young people about life. Athletes learn that they will not win every game. They learn that they must compete by the rules to be crowned a winner (2 Tim. 2:5). They learn to give their best (Col. 3:23). They learn in team sports to help each other out (Phil. 2:4). Athletics teach young people discipline. This helps the principal in maintaining order within a school.

THE CLOTHING ONE WEARS AT A SPORTING EVENT SENDS A MESSAGE

Clothes are to conceal, not to reveal! Clothes should quiet, not excite, the sensual appetite. Why do schools have dress codes? Why do some schools require uniforms? With parents, almost anything goes as far as clothes are concerned for their children. Clothes worn should not draw attention to one’s body. Clothes should be worn with such modesty that when we think of a person, we do not think of the clothing that person wore. We think of the good behavior of that person (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 2:3). It seems to me that, when the temperature comes on in the summer, the clothes come off. Schools are not exempt. As an elementary principal when the students returned back to school, I sent the school’s handbook home to be signed by the parents. Included in the handbook was the code of dress for our students.

Back to school occurs during the warmth of summer. Since sin entered the world in Genesis 3, God has instructed man to dress with modesty (1 Tim. 2:9-10). With sports, that is not always the case. As a former football coach, no clothing designer ever contacted me or any coach that I knew about the way to design clothing to enhance the athlete’s ability to perform. The world set the standard for the clothing of the athletes to wear. In some sports the clothing is provocative: the body is

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exposed in an immodest appearance (i.e. in girls’ volleyball, the uniforms are skin tight and extremely short). Does that enhance the girls’ athletic skills? I don’t think so! We need to be careful in our dress. Boys are lookers; girls are look getters! Our clothing sends a message (Prov. 7:10). Do you wear the attire of a harlot? We are not to dress in a way that could cause someone to sin. Do you think that Herodias’ daughter was dressed modestly when she danced in front of Herod and his guests (Mark 6:22)?

Jesus said in Matthew 26:41, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Satan knows this. He uses young people to wear clothing that is provocative. Satan is going to Hell. He is trying to take as many people with him as he can. He will use our children to help him lure others to sin. As parents we must set guidelines on the clothes our children are allowed to wear. Mothers, do you buy the clothing for your daughters to wear back to school? Do you allow your high school children to choose their own clothing to wear back to school without your input? By the way, parents, what kind of clothing do you wear (Matt. 5:16; 1 Tim. 2:9)?

DO SPORTS HAVE PRIORITY OVER THE LORD WHEN SCHOOL STARTS BACK?

With many high school parents, sports will come first for their children over the Lord. When school starts back, many parents will allow their children to miss Wednesday night Bible Study to practice football or volleyball. They will allow their child to miss attending a Gospel Meeting in order to play sports. Many parents who are Christians will say that the competition in their child’s sport is so intense that, if their child misses practice, their child may lose his position on the team. They feel that being at practice or a game is more important than missing the Lord! Where is our priority?

Brethren, we are in the world but we are not to be of the world (Rom. 12:2). We are to set an example for the world and our brethren (1 Cor. 11:1). We are to be a light to the world (Matt. 5:16). Our service to Christ should cast a judgment upon the world (1 Cor. 6:2), not the world casting a judgment upon us! I am afraid that the world does not see Christ dwelling within many of us. Many parents will use the excuse that their child is only young once. Fathers, are you helping your child remember their Creator in the days of their youth (Eccl. 12:1)? Our children look to their parents for guidance. Parents should look to God for guidance (Eph. 6:4). The Lord will look at all of us (Heb. 4:13).

As parents, we need to teach our children when they are small that God comes first over sports. If we start teaching them when they start kindergarten, they will understand that they are not like others of the world (Rom. 12:2). They will understand why they can’t wear shorts to school. They will understand why they can’t miss attending a Gospel Meeting in order to play sports. Are you teaching this?

LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT IN SPORTS

Communication is essential in sports. Without being able to reveal our thoughts, communication fails. Does corrupt language help in winning a sporting event (Eph. 4:29)? I coached football for years on the high school and junior high level. I did not curse. I did not allow our players to curse. That type of communication is vain. It does not profit.

Our language will reveal our character. I told our players to show their character, not be one! Do you try to spice up your language? Who are you trying to impress, man or God? Do you realize that you are responsible for every idle word that you say (Matt. 12:36)? As a coach, I tried not to say anything to our players that did not profit them. Shouldn’t that be our attitude as a Christian to our brethren and other people of the world? Words are like feathers of a pillow scattered to the wind, we can never take them back! All of us have said words that we later regret. We must be careful.

Often, players reveal the characteristics of their coach. A young person’s mind is very impressionable. Many players think that their coach is one of the greatest people on the earth. If a coach uses corrupt speech, the players will tend to use corrupt speech. If the coach dresses immodestly, the players tend to dress immodestly. If the coach doesn’t put God first in his life, he will fail to use opportunities to teach his players (Matt. 6:33). Brethren, where is our light – under a basket (Matt. 5:15)?

CONCLUSION

Sports should be in perspective. We must be careful how we represent Christ to others. We are the world’s Bible to most people. Sports are a good teacher about life, but Satan will use the way we dress, talk, and act in sports to hinder people in serving God. Remember this when your children go back to school! We must have our priorities in order (Matt. 6:33). If we miss Heaven, our lives will have been a miserable flop! Are you putting sports in its right perspective as your child returns to school this year?
Filthy language permeates our society. Speech that was once censored and filtered from the general public is now funneled into our homes and hearts without any reservation or apology. Unfortunately, one place where bad language is often at its worst is on a school campus. Young people will sometimes purposely overuse “adult” language in an attempt to establish and assert their maturity. This poses a challenge to young Christians who are exposed to such language and are tempted to use it.

The Bible condemns the use of filthy language. Paul admonished, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Eph. 4:29). The word “corrupt” means “unwholesome, rotten, worthless, not fit for use.” A “corrupt word” would be the swear words, the “four-letter-words,” that are heard so often in our society today. Not only are these types of words corrupt and rotten themselves, they also have a corrupting influence upon those who use them and those who hear them. A Christian should never, under any circumstances, be heard using these kinds of words.

This prohibition is not limited to single words. Paul continued, “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks” (Eph. 5:3-4). The telling of dirty jokes, use of sexual innuendos, retelling of sinful exploits seen on TV, etc., are unfitting conversation for a Christian (Eph. 5:12).

In an attempt to avoid using foul language, some Christians resort to the use of euphemisms. A “euphemism” is an inoffensive expression substituted for one considered to be offensive. “dang,” “darn,” “heck,” “shoot,” “shucks,” “gosh,” “doggone,” “gee whiz,” etc. While these words may appear to be harmless, a dictionary will reveal the fact that they are euphemisms – substitutes for offensive words. Euphemisms may pass as “inoffensive” conversation in some segments of our society, it is not fitting for a child of God to use these words. A euphemism means the same thing as the more offensive word that it has replaced. It comes from the same place in our heart and is prompted by the same sinful emotions as curse words and filthy language.

The Bible also addresses the sinful use of God’s holy name. In the Ten Commandments, God declared, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” (Exod. 20:7). To use God’s name in vain is to use it in a common, empty, irreverent, or careless manner. The Law of Moses called for the death penalty as a punishment for one who blasphemed the name of God (Lev. 24:16). Today, not only is the name of God used as a curse word, the names of God and His Son are used as common exclamations to express any and every emotion imaginable — and Christians are sometimes heard misusing God’s name in this way. To call upon the name of God in expressions of praise and prayer is appropriate, but to say, “Oh my God,” as a means of mindlessly expressing one’s surprise, pleasure, or disgust is to use God’s name in vain.

Advancements in technology have given today’s Christian another avenue of communication – texting. To save time, texters have come to use abbreviations in the place of entire sentences. For instance: TTYL means “talk to you later,” LOL means “laugh out loud,” BTW means “by the way.” Another popular abbreviation
is “OMG” which stands for “Oh my God!” Every time one types in these three letters and hits “send” he is using God’s name in vain. Other abbreviations include letters that stand in the place of curse words, and Christians have been known to use them in their texts and on social networking sites like Facebook. We should remember, “…the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”

**OVERCOMING THE USE OF BAD LANGUAGE**

Bad language is a habit. While some bad habits can be hard to break, the use of foul language is not one of them. This is evident in the fact that those who use foul language know when to “clean up” their speech, and can do so at will. The following points can help any Christian, young or old, overcome the use of foul language:

1. **Think before we speak.** “The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil” (Prov. 15:28). Bad language can be filtered out of our speech if we will take the time to think before we talk.

2. **Find better companions.** We learn by example, and are influenced by the behavior of those around us. Using bad language is a behavior that is learned and encouraged by association with worldly people. Paul warned of the danger of evil associations. “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits’” (1 Cor. 15:33). There are times when young Christians cannot choose their companions. When you have a choice, choose to be around those who will help you develop godly habits.

3. **Seek to edify and honor others with your speech.** When Paul condemned the use of corrupt words, he encouraged speech that would result in necessary edification, bringing grace to the hearers (Eph. 4:29). Peter commanded Christians, “Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king” (1 Pet. 2:17). It is impossible to truly honor others when we use foul language.

4. **Remember that one is always in the presence of God (Ps. 139:7-12).** God always hears the things that we say. In fact, He knows what we say before we say it (v. 4)! God listens in on every conversation. He receives every text and email that we send, and views every picture and word that we post on Facebook.

5. **Remember that we will give an account of the things that we say.** “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:36-37). Young people do not receive a “free pass” in life, even with regard to their speech (Eccl. 11:9). Is having the ability to sound like the sinful world around us worth losing your eternal soul?

6. **Pray for God’s help.** David prayed for help with his language. “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight” (Ps. 19:14). “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips” (Ps. 141:3). God can help us overcome the use of bad language if we will seek His help.

7. **Keep your heart pure.** The way we speak reveals something about ourselves. Our speech can betray the fact that we have conformed ourselves to this world (Rom. 12:2). This is because our mouth simply reveals that which is truly in our heart. “Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things” (Matt. 12:34-35). A problem with one’s mouth is, in reality, a problem with his heart. If we will strive to protect our heart, then the fruit of our lips will be pure (Matt. 12:33-35).

**CONCLUSION**

The use of bad language is evidence of a shallow mind, lack of self control, and lack of respect for God and others. There are several hundred thousand words in the English language with which we can express ourselves. Surely we can show our maturity by communicating without using bad language.
Education: Two World Views

There are two basic views of the world. One outlook sees the world as a product of the Creator and governed by Him. The other view sees the world exists because of random chance and governed by the highest form of life to evolve. The former believes man is dependent and in need of guidance from the Supernatural; the latter states man is independent, able and responsible to determine his own morals and destiny. What this comes down to is a theist versus humanist world view.

Humanism is nothing new, not even in the last millennia. Those who rejected the Creator and His rule in this world were around long ago (Rom. 1:18-32). It has manifested itself in various ways through the centuries, but has been especially aggressive in the United States since the early 1930s. In 1933 the Humanist Manifesto was published. In 1973 the Humanist Manifest II was created to affirm and add to the original. The philosophies found in these documents dominate the educational, political, and religious institutions of our nation. This was the stated design of the humanist.

I am convinced that the battle for humankind’s future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith: a religion of humanity that recognizes and respects the spark of what theologians call divinity in every human being. These teachers must embody the same selfless dedication as the most rabid fundamentalist preachers, for they will be ministers of another sort, utilizing a classroom instead of a pulpit to convey humanist values in whatever subject they teach, regardless of the educational level—preschool, daycare, or large state university. The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new—the rotting corpse of Christianity, together with all its adjacent evils and misery, and the new faith of humanism, resplendent with its promise of a world in which the never-realized Christian ideal of “love thy neighbor” will finally be achieved (The Humanist, January/February 1983 as quoted on http://www.secularhumanism.org).

This is why our children can be taught in government run educational institutions that there is no God, humans evolved from slime, animals have human rights, man causes global warming, there are no differences between men and women, abortion on demand is a right, homosexuality is normal, there is no absolute truth, and morals are relative to the situation and experience of the individual.

Before we get to specifics of what our children need to learn, let us understand they can be taught. Sometimes we get a gloom-and-doom attitude and want to throw our hands up in despair. However, other children have been raised in a paganistic culture and still learned to love God and His people.

Moses is an example of a child who received a secular education, yet turned out as a man of faith. He was educated in Egyptian wisdom (Acts 7:22). Still, Moses was taught by his parents about the one true God and His promises (Acts 7:23, 24; Exod. 2:1-15). He chose to serve God and help His people instead of enjoying the pleasures and riches of Egypt (Heb. 11:24-27). We can raise our children to believe in and serve the one true God.

FOUR BASIC POINTS TO TEACH OUR CHILDREN

1. God created the universe. This essentially relates to the creation account as found in the first two chapters of Genesis and affirmed elsewhere in the Bible. Atheistic evolution is obsessed with disproving Genesis 1 and 2. It also seeks to undermine the global flood as recorded in Genesis 6, 7, and 8. Hence, instilling our children with the facts of the first part of Genesis is imperative. It will help protect their minds against the daily assault on the Creator.

2. The Bible is God’s inerrant, inspired word. Another area
God’s word. Our children need to know, without doubt, the Bible is the truth (John 17:17). It contains all we need to live a good and righteous life (2 Pet. 1:3). Confidence in the Bible should be fostered by studies in evidences (apologetics) that show exactly how reliable the word really is. [Good books for this can be ordered from our bookstore at our new toll free number 855-49-books (855-492-6657).]

3. There is right and wrong in both religion and morals. The humanist philosophy teaches children that truth is relative. No one doctrine or moral conviction is right, except, of course, those that uphold humanist values. We must counteract this corrosive teaching. Man cannot independently determine right and wrong (Jer. 10:23). When he tries, destruction, misery, and spiritual death occur (Prov. 14:12).

Truth—right—is found in Jesus; He is THE way, truth, and life (Eph. 4:21; John 14:6). Religious beliefs and practices not found in the New Testament are sinful and must be exposed (Gal. 1:6-9; Eph. 5:11). Certain “lifestyles” are morally wrong and will cause a soul to be lost (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10).

4. We will be held accountable on the Judgment Day. Humanism teaches that when we die, we cease to exist. The only authority to which we will give an account is ourselves. Contrary to this, the Bible shows us there is life beyond the grave (Luke 16:19-31; Matt. 17:1-5). When we die, we enter the Hadean realm to await judgment by our Creator. On the Last Day, Jesus will return and hold us accountable for our actions in this life (2 Cor. 5:10). We will even answer for our idle thoughts (Matt. 12:36, 37). The standard by which we will be judged is God’s word (John 12:48).

There are other specific points our children need to learn to combat the humanist philosophy. Starting with the above broad points will help build a solid foundation so they will be equipped to withstand the attacks. With our effort in teaching, prayers to God, and His good providence, we can give our children the proper world view—the one that will help save their souls.

GUIDEPOSTS FOR DEFENSE AGAINST BULLYING
Howard Whittlesey

The problem of bullying has drawn increasing attention in the past few years. Bullying is an act of aggression by one or more perpetrators who seek to aggravate, intimidate, or coerce some type of service or submission.

The use of electronic devices has made bullying an easy mode to pose threats of varying severity. Bullying has been utilized by many age groups and social circles. Let’s consider some guideposts for defense against bullying. The first two and last steps follow God’s will whereas numbers 3-4 are good advice:

1. Be humble – Walk away and say nothing (James 4:6)
2. Resist the devil (bully) – No fighting back (James 4:7)
3. Log every encounter with the bully: Date, Time, Location, Who was there, Describe the experience.
4. Whenever you need adult help, take your documentation of the experiences with you, and talk to your guidance counselor and/or administrator.
5. Remember: Your greatest desire is heaven, not the conquest of men.

Howard Whittlesey is a retired Choral Music Director having taught 39 years in grades 7-12. He also taught Band for 6 years. His last 32 years were spent at North Miami High School in Denver, Indiana.
“Dancing: the vertical expression of a horizontal desire legalized by music” (George Bernard Shaw). He is right on the mark! The world knows exactly what dancing is all about. Yet many have tried to justify dancing with statements like the following: “I just don’t see anything wrong with dancing; I’m just having a good time. It’s not my fault if you think a dirty thought, that’s your problem, anyway they danced in the Bible, so what’s the big deal?” Have you said or heard these kinds of statements? Dancing is definitely a moral conflict that confronts us today, as it always has.

Noah Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary defines “moral” this way: “Relating to the practice, manners or conduct of men as social beings in relation to each other, and with reference to right and wrong ... and has reference to the law of God as the standard by which their character is to be determined.” He defines “conflict” this way: “A struggling of the mind; distress; anxiety.” So is it all right to go dancing? Is it all right to just go to a dance? Is it all right to watch “Dancing With the Stars”? Do you struggle with the answers to these questions? The standard by which we must answer these and any questions regarding morality is God’s Word.

Twenty-seven years ago the movie, “Dirty Dancing,” was released. The content of the movie is self-explanatory, based on its title. That movie is tame compared to today’s style of dance. Today they call it “freak dancing” or “grinding.” It is simulated sex on the dance floor. This kind of dancing should not surprise us, as I mentioned above. Have you watched “Dancing With the Stars”? This style of dancing is not just on TV or at nightclubs, but it is also in our high schools and has even been reported to be at some grade schools. Have you noticed the outfits and type of cheerleading/dancing that takes place at our schools? Parents need to be teaching their children. This conflict apparently is not just with young people, but is with parents as well.

Common sense tells us that this kind of dancing is lustful. So why is there a moral conflict? The Apostle Paul answers this question in Galatians 5:16-19 – “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality” (NASU). The only reason there is a conflict is that we want to fulfill our desires of the flesh! Paul clearly states that when you follow that desire, it will produce, “immorality, impurity, sensuality.” “Sensuality” is translated “debauchery” in the NIV, “lasciviousness” in the KJV, and “lewdness” in the NKJV. The Greek word for “sensuality” is aselgeia. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon defines it as “unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness ... indecent physical movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc.” Clearly, we can see that when one is moving his/her body in an indecent way, he/she is guilty of the sin of sensuality. The unchaste handling of our bodies means deliberately violating accepted principles of right and wrong based on Scripture. This is debauchery, wickedness, sin.

The world knows that dancing is lustful! That is the main reason that “Dancing With the Stars” is such a popular show. Do you have to be dancing to be guilty of sin? Matthew 5:28 says, “but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (NASU). So is it wrong to dance? Can I go to the Homecoming dance? Is it all right to watch “Dancing With the Stars”? Watching the way people dance today can cause one to lust, as a result that one is guilty of sin! The one who is dancing is guilty as well; that person has caused another to sin! You may think that all you are doing is having fun, but look at the cost! Furthermore, to try to justify dancing because someone in the Bible danced is a weak argument. The only kind of dancing found in the Bible that comes close to the dancing of today is like that of Herod Antipas step-daughter, Salome, when she performed a lascivious dance at Herod’s birthday feast (Matt 14:6-7). This dance was part of the plan of Herodias, Herod’s wife, who held the grudge against...
Moral Conflicts: Dancing
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John because he preached that their marriage was not lawful (Matt 14:4). She plotted to have her daughter perform a lewd dance at this birthday feast, knowing that her husband would give in to her daughter’s charms and make some rash promise to her. Herodias was right, Herod was pleased with her dance and he had John beheaded!

Being present at a dance, whether one dances or not, puts you in the wrong environment. It does not add to your spirituality. The modern dance leads one closer to fornication, not further from it. World Magazine (May 19, 2001) stated, “This year’s prom season is causing turmoil at schools across America: Dancing has become so sexually explicit that some officials call it sex with clothes on and many want it stopped. That was ten years ago and it has gotten worse! I believe that we need to pray the prayer of Elisha that we read in 2 Kings 6:17 – “O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see” (NASU). Oh LORD, open our eyes that we may see what dancing really is! There is an old saying, which goes like this: Dancing feet and praying knees do not grow on the same pair of legs.

Dancing, especially today’s dance, involving unmarried couples is a work of the flesh, and those who participate in any way “will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:21). Let us put an end to the moral conflict of dancing, “walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Gal 5:16).

“Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts” (Rom 13:13-14, NASU).

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Sexuality is pervasive in our society. Sexual references, innuendo, and portrayals abound on television shows, commercials, billboards, radio, magazines, books, and the Internet – it is nearly impossible to get through a day without encountering such things. Some may naively think that school would be a safe-haven from sexual issues. However, when you put together hundreds of young people, the hormones of puberty, and various kinds of moral training – you are going to have a sexually charged atmosphere. In truth, sexual temptation probably abounds more in school than in most any other place. The answer is not to hide young people under a rock until they are well into adulthood as some suppose – they are going to have to confront such issues and people throughout their life. Remember Paul’s words, “I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world ... since then you would need to go out of the world” (1 Cor. 5:9-10). Instead, the answer is preparing them for the sexual issues they will face in this world, both in school and later in life – by teaching principles that allow one to overcome sexual temptations and abstain from sexual immorality. Consider some Biblical principles for dealing with sexual issues both in school and beyond.

Determine to Be Pure. Paul commanded young Timothy, “Keep yourself pure” (1 Tim. 3:9). We should desire purity that we might “see God” (Matt. 5:8). If you wish to be pure, you must first have a mind that is being renewed by God’s will, instead of being conformed to the defiled ways of the world (Rom. 12:1-2; Tit. 1:15). Though bombarded daily with sexual messages, make sure you take time to “meditate on” whatever things are pure (Phil. 4:8). This is vital as the things in your heart (mind) are the things you will say and do. One does not stay pure by accident – the one who is pure is the one who has first determined to be that way. Daniel is an excellent example of a young person who “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself” (Dan. 1:8). Don’t wait until you are in a situation to decide to remain pure – you probably won’t. Before the temptation even comes, purpose in your heart that you will not defile yourself, but will remain pure. Be one who determines to keep yourself pure!

Flee and Follow. As one who has determined to keep yourself pure, there are things you must flee, and things you must follow. Paul instructed Timothy, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace...” (2 Tim. 2:22). Run away from the lusts of youth, and run towards righteousness. Be like the young man Joseph who, when tempted with sexual sin, “fled” so that he would not “sin against God” (Gen. 39:7-13). With every temptation, God will “make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). To take that way of escape might mean that you have to run like Joseph, say no, choose different friends, date different people, not go to certain events, or lose popularity among your peers. Whatever it takes, “Flee sexual immorality” (1 Cor. 6:18). Why? Because the “Sexually immoral...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8). Be one who flees youthful lusts and follows righteousness!

Dress Modestly. Just as you must flee youthful lusts, you must also be careful not to fan the flames of lust in the heart of another. We must remember that eternal punishment will be found by those who put a stumbling block for sin before another (Lk. 17:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:32-33). The way you dress sends a message about you, and has an effect on others. Thus, one should “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety...” (2 Cor. 3:1).
and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works” (1 Tim. 2:9-10). The clothes we choose to wear should be modest, show that we have a sense of the shame associated with nakedness, and display self-control. Such clothing is “proper,” as it professes “godliness, with good works.” The problem is that many men and women, young and old alike, desire to dress in a way that shows their sexiness instead of their godliness. There is nothing wrong with taking care of the way you appear physically, just make sure you are sending the right message (1 Pet. 3:3-6). Be one who dresses modestly!

**Remember There Are Consequences.** Some live as if their actions will have no consequences – they are wrong. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Gal. 6:7-8). Some encourage boys and girls to “sow their wild oats” in their youth. If one sows the “wild oats” of youth, he/she will reap the bitter fruit of what he/she has sown. Most importantly, we must not be deceived about the eternal consequences of sexual sin – “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Yet, many young people fail to realize some of the more immediate consequences of sexual sin: The reputation that will be marred for years because of sexual promiscuity; the mind that remains scarred with the pornographic images he viewed; the sexual pictures that one sent to someone he/she believed he/she could trust but who posted them on the Internet where they will live in the public domain for years; the guilty feelings that will remain with the boy who played at love looking for sex, and with the girl who played at sex looking for love; the sexually transmitted disease one contracted which may plague them the rest of their life, or even take their life; the responsibilities facing the couple that is unprepared to take care of a child that is born out of wedlock. Such a list could go on and on. Therefore, the very best advice to you who are young is, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth” (Eccl. 12:1). Remembering Him and walking in His ways, will result in reaping His good both here and in eternity. Be one who remembers that there are consequences of your actions!

Sex is not something that is wrong in itself. In fact, the sexual relationship is God’s idea. He made us male and female, and instilled the sexual desire within mankind that would move them to fulfill the command to “be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth... ” (Gen. 1:28). However, God purposed marriage for the fulfillment of men and women’s sexual desires. Paul wrote, “Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (1 Cor. 7:2). Sexual intimacy and desire are not dirty, vulgar, or wrong between a husband and wife. Sex within marriage is both honorable and beautiful, and is the fulfillment of natural desire: “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). Unfortunately, the world has taken something that God purposed to be honorable and beautiful between a husband and wife, and cheapened it by making it commonplace through their sin. Do not follow the way of the world. Remember to “flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body” (1 Cor. 6:18). To your classmates and all those around you, ever seek to “be an example ...in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).
Moral Conflicts: Drinking and Drugs

Children need to be taught at a young age that using drugs, including alcohol, is sinful for all ages. Proverbs 22:6 tells us to “train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Young people should not only know that taking drugs is illegal and that they cause harm in people’s lives physically but more importantly spiritually, causing souls to be separated from the Lord. Don’t JUST SAY NO to drugs because you may get in trouble with the principal, police, brethren, or even your parents. Say “no” because that is what Jesus would do and what God would have everyone to do. Man was put on this earth to serve Him—not ourselves (Eccl. 12:13). Drug use is simply a way for people to temporarily escape responsibility in this world for an experience of pleasure.

Doing drugs is not like driving a car. You have to be a certain age to get your permit and driver’s license. It takes much practice and training to be able to handle a car safely in various situations. Nothing can prepare us to handle drugs. It’s not something that the Christian should touch at any point in his life. Many youths look at drugs as something that will make them appear older. It is ironic how many spend their childhood not being able to wait to get older, but when they get older they wish they were young again. Ecclesiastes 11:9-10 tells the younger, “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from your heart and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity.” Don’t waste your youngest years doing drugs. Serve God while you are young and continue to do so as you age.

**Nicotine:** Tobacco use in the form of smoking, chewing, snuffing, or dipping is a sin that separates us from God (Iss. 59:2). Where is the Scripture that authorizes it? There is none. Tolerance and dependence develop because of nicotine’s addictive properties. Many smokers begin during adolescence or early adulthood. In 1929, Fritz Lickint of Dresden, Germany published a paper containing formal statistical evidence of a lung cancer–tobacco link. Here are current warnings in the US about tobacco: “Smoking by pregnant women may result in fetal injury, premature birth, and low birth weight. Cigar smoking can cause cancers of the mouth and throat, even if you do not inhale. Tobacco smoke increases the risk of lung cancer and heart disease, even in nonsmokers. Tobacco use increases the risk of infertiltiy, stillbirth, and low birth weight.” These warning labels are printed on the tobacco product itself. Ignorance is no excuse when you have the truth staring you in the face. Cancer has no cure and is a horrible disease. Why would anyone want to increase his chances of being diagnosed with it? It is unfathomable, but many do it today. Don’t join them. Don’t be like the world. Instead of using nicotine, tell others the danger of it and how important it is to serve God today.

Knowing all of this, how can any Christian even attempt to begin to justify using tobacco in any form? The answer is that it is indefensible. In the US, you have to be 18 in order to be able to purchase it. What is so magical about that age? Nothing! What makes an 18-year-old able to do something that a 17-year-old is not allowed to do? Nothing! There is no training involved here. This is simply a conditioned response that we have been taught over the years. Nicotine is a gateway drug that leads to the use of many others. I had a friend that said he only smoked when he drank alcohol. The problem was that he drank every night so he smoked cigarettes every night. Please, young people, stay away from it. Don’t even sit in smoking sections in restaurants if you can avoid them. Don’t hang out with people who smoke. “Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits” (1 Cor. 15:33). It is more than a bad habit; smoking will drag your soul to eternal torment and cause you to be dipped in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8).

**Alcohol:** Drinking alcoholic beverages is condemned by the Bible. It matters not if it is a sip of a bottle of beer, wine tasting, or “spirit” in a shot glass such as whisky, rum, tequila, vodka, etc. Ethanol is commonly known as alcohol and is a psychoactive drug that has a depressant effect. The strange thing is that the gasoline I put in my car contains 10% ethanol. Why would anyone want to drink anything like something that helps make a car run? When
consumed, alcohol reduces your attention as well as your reaction time. Like nicotine, alcohol is also addictive. There is no warning label on alcohol, but we are often told to drink responsibly. This is impossible since there is nothing responsible about drinking alcohol! Would you like to be an alcoholic? No? Then don’t take the first drink and you will never have to worry about it. 1 Peter 4: 3 states, “For and you will never have to worry of stuff you want to happen to you while you may say, “I’ll only drink one” while sober, as you drink and become intoxicated, you will not feel the same way as you did when you were sober. 1 Thessalonians 5: 22 tells Christians to “abstain from every form of evil.” What part of alcohol do you think is good? It leads many to other sins such as sexual immorality, murder, divorce, and most importantly away from God.

I also remember going to a football game in another city. We had already been drinking when we arrived. After we got there, we went to a party at someone’s house that evening and drank some more. Then we went to a club and drank some more that night. That is where my memory ends. I woke up the next morning on a couch. I did not know where I was or how I got there. My “friends” told me what happened the rest of that night. Apparently, after we left the bar we went to another party and I passed out. They could not wake me up so they loaded me in the back of a pickup bed and carried me up so they loaded me in the house that evening and drank some more. I remember nothing. I could have done anything to me that night. Honestly, I remember nothing. I could have been beat up, robbed, or killed. This happens every day in the news all across the country. Is that your idea of fun? Anyone could have done anything to me that night. Honestly, I remember nothing. I could have been beat up, robbed, or killed. This happens every day in the news all across the country. Is that the kind of stuff you want to happen to you in your life? No? Then don’t drink alcohol. It is not responsible in any way. Proverbs 20:1 tells us, “Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.” Alcohol is a poison that
kills many people. Some die quickly and some slowly. The Gospel is the answer to stopping drinking alcohol. I met a Hindu in India who wanted to study the Bible because his uncle was a drunk for many years, but one day he read it and was able to stop drinking completely. He had tried many other things but nothing worked until he read the Gospel. That is the power of God in our lives today (Rom. 1:16).

Other Drugs: Marijuana, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines, ecstasy, LSD, etc. are all other drugs that people use for “recreation.” Again there is no such thing as responsible drug use. Drugs are illegal. “Accidental overdoses” are common today from Hollywood to the backwoods. Drugs affect all ages, all races, and all economic backgrounds. They do not discriminate. Many say that they can handle drugs but the truth is once you start it gets harder and harder to stop. And once the weaker drugs fail to do the job, you have to move on to harder drugs and take more and more of them. You end up messing your mind up so badly that you can no longer think rationally. Many habitual drug users cannot take care of themselves. They have simply fried their brains on drugs. There used to be a commercial on TV when I was a kid. It had a cool frying pan and an egg cracked on it. It said, “This is your brain.” After that, it had a hot frying pan with a sizzling egg cracked on it and it said, “This is your brain on drugs.” It is so true. Many have messed their minds up permanently from drug use. We need to set our “minds on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2) or else our souls will be frying in Hell.

Another way that people commonly misuse drugs is prescription drugs. Doctors prescribe them to us to help recover from some sort of illness with which we are dealing. Instead, some people take drugs that were not prescribed to them or in ways that the doctor never intended in order to “get away from it all.” They claim that they cause them to relax. Taking painkillers in order to escape everyday life is a common occurrence today and a sin in God’s sight. Hydrocodone, Methadone (a drug used to wean addicts off of drugs), Valium, etc. are all drugs that people become addicted to that are legal and acceptable to take as Christians so long as you are taking them for the prescribed purpose. We must be very careful when taking medicines prescribed by doctors to follow their orders so that we do not become addicts.

It is not easy being a Christian (Matt. 7:14), especially when you are young. There are many things in the world calling us to sin. 2 Timothy 2:22 says, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Let us all say “no” to drinking and drugs but “yes” to serving God and making heaven our home.

info@methodiststreetchurchofchrist.com
I am very thankful to have had a twenty-six year career in the public schools – fourteen years as an elementary teacher and twelve years as an elementary school principal. My wife, my son and daughter, and a granddaughter have all chosen to become teachers in the public schools. I can look back over those years with joy and satisfaction to have experienced a wonderful relationship with both students and parents. It will be my humble desire in this brief article to offer some suggestions which might improve or enhance the interaction between parents and school personnel.

A positive and congenial parent-school relationship is really essential for children to both enjoy and be successful in their journey through the educational process. We always want to achieve success in the learning environment, but let us never forget the need for personal satisfaction and happiness as we make this journey toward knowledge, skills, and successful goals. Being emotionally fulfilled is absolutely essential for every student and for his parents.

Parents are always the students’ first teachers, and the school can readily recognize what the quality of teaching has been prior to their entrance into school. This important teaching responsibility must never stop as the home will continue to be a very important “school” in the development of children. No matter how busy parents are in their professional and personal lives, there must always be time to be totally involved in teaching and encouraging children in every aspect of their education. This will certainly include positive and productive exchanges with teachers or other school personnel.

Conflicts involving students and teachers or parents and school personnel will inevitably arise along the way, and we must prepare ourselves with the intellectual and emotional tools necessary to address and overcome these bumps in the path. And like all other things in our lives, we must, “Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16). In the educational setting, I learned early in my career that there is no such thing as problems — only challenges! When we look at conflict as a challenge which we are determined to resolve, then a better and more compatible relationship usually arises from it. Attitude and determination are key elements in achieving success in our relationships with others. We may be dealing with people who have a totally different moral code or value system than ours, but “what we are” and “how we act” will ultimately rise to the surface.

Whenever the school-parent relationship develops into an adversarial role, the real loser is the student who is trapped in a world of frustrated and angry adults. Not really any — students, parents or school personnel — enjoy such a circumstance and the student may be in danger of losing confidence in all involved parties. This is why it is so urgent for all parties to work extremely hard to develop the best relationship that is possible.

A student may develop adverse feelings toward a teacher, and the parent must address this emotional roadblock with the teacher in a calm and straightforward manner in order to achieve improvement. The parents must be very careful that they are not responsible for these adverse feelings by their own words or actions. Any conflict with the school should be addressed first without the child knowing that it is taking place. And as much as possible, the conflict must be handled without the child having knowledge of it or being involved in it at all. There will be teachers which both you and your child will love and appreciate more than others. There will be teachers who will greatly admire your child, and others who will have difficulty understanding and relating to the needs of this student. The latter situation requires greater communication and mutual effort to achieve improvement.

“...the closer you are to the school and to your child’s learning environment, the closer the school and all school personnel will be to you!”

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The major key to success in conflict resolution is communication! Talk, talk, and talk until you find solutions to whatever challenge you face! Effective communication will produce a much stronger learning environment for the student in both classrooms – the home and the school. This positive and productive parent-school relationship will, without doubt, contribute to both the cognitive and emotional success in the education of your child. It is something which teachers and parents must always keep foremost in their cooperative efforts. Mutual responsibility cannot be just an assumption, it has to be an absolute reality. Both parents and the school must recognize that the education of this child is a joint obligation, and to accomplish the best for the child, it will require mutual cooperation and tremendous effort by both the school and the parents. Success depends greatly upon the effectiveness of this partnership.

The parent must be available to assist the school. Volunteer to help the teacher in the classroom. If you work during the school day, then offer your services during the evenings or weekends to assist the teacher with tasks which the teacher or the school needs help with. Always remember this fact: “The closer you are to the school and to your child’s learning environment, the closer the school and all school personnel will be to you!” If you choose to be unrealistic in your demanding and criticism, then you will influence or win over very few to your wishes! The “scent of honey” is still very powerful!

The school will generally have a problem with parents who are overbearing and verbally demanding, and parents have the same problem if the school takes this attitude. If both parents and school personnel really want to develop a good relationship with one another, this approach must be changed. Anger and verbal attacks just won’t get the job done. Matters such as classroom changes or special intervention efforts are available to avoid traumatic situations for all parties, and especially the student. We must always remember that one thing is basic, both parents and the school are devoted to what is in the best interest of the student. It usually requires a “give and take” attitude to reach a successful conclusion. Teachers have difficulty with both “overbearing” parents and with parents who are “missing” or who refuse to be involved. Parents must recognize and accept the fact that the school has the same basic desires for your child that you have, which is to implant the love for learning and achieve success in developing that learning to the greatest degree possible.

There are teachers whom your child will love and teachers which your child may not care for. There are teachers which you will like or dislike also. There are teachers who may love and admire your child, and others who will have great difficulty understanding and relating to this same child. Whatever the challenge is, it must be addressed with patience, wisdom and reason. There are a lot of people in our lives who “push our buttons” and with whom we have a difficult relationship — but we work at it — we look for opportunities to make things better — we challenge ourselves to know those people better. I had a school director over me, when I was a principal, who seemed to always be on my case “like white on rice,” but it was this director who gave me the highest evaluations that I had
Parental Interaction With The School System

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ever received! We must learn that the parent - school relationship may have those same challenges!

Building trust between the school and the parent is essential for the emotional stability and success of the student. Children can immediately detect if there is a strained relationship between parents and the school, and it can cause the child to also develop an adversarial attitude toward the learning environment. A willingness to communicate is essential for both parents and school personnel. Parents need continual input about their child’s learning and progress, and the teacher needs feedback from the parent about the child’s response to the efforts of the school.

It would be very lacking in wisdom to address the conflicts between schools and parents without looking at the spiritual matters which of necessity must be present in the words and actions of those who are Christians. We must understand that ugliness in speech or deceitfulness should never be present when we interact with others. “For, He that would love life, And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips that they speak no guile: And let him turn away from evil, and do good; Let him seek peace, and pursue it” (1 Pet. 3:10-11). We must be kind and considerate in both our speech and actions, and such will greatly expedite success in our interactions with others.

Please talk with your child about school every day! Please be involved personally in educational pursuits with your child at home! It would be very lacking in wisdom to address the conflicts between schools and parents without looking at the spiritual matters which of necessity must be present in the words and actions of those who are Christians. We must understand that ugliness in speech or deceitfulness should never be present when we interact with others. “For, He that would love life, And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips that they speak no guile: And let him turn away from evil, and do good; Let him seek peace, and pursue it” (1 Pet. 3:10-11). We must be kind and considerate in both our speech and actions, and such will greatly expedite success in our interactions with others.

Please talk with your child about school every day! Please be involved personally in educational pursuits with your child at home! As your child comes to know that you consider school as being very important, then he or she will determine to take it more seriously. The minutes or hours which you fail to spend with your child and in interaction with the school can never be reclaimed! Each day affects a lifetime as it swiftly passes. The more satisfied you and your child are about what is happening in the educational process, the better the parent-school system relationship is going to be.

Every parent should have conversations with the teachers regularly. Don’t be a nuisance, but spend as much time as possible with the teacher or in helping the teacher. Your efforts will greatly contribute to a wonderful school experience for your child – and for you! I taught second grade for six and one-half years and I often meet these students or their parents on the street or in stores, and after thirty-five or more years, we all happily reminisce about the joys and experiences of those school days. I sincerely hope that your experiences as a parent or a student will have the same joy for you through the years. School is a wonderful and rewarding experience.

pawpawreed@verizon.net

RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS INVOLVING CONCERT REPERTOIRE

Howard Whittlesey

During the first week of school:

1. Compose a letter to your Music Director. Tell what type of songs you cannot sing in good conscience. Make it respectfully clear that you oppose the use of instrumental accompaniment for songs with sacred text. Also, explain respectfully your unwillingness to promote the teaching that Christ was born on Christmas Day. Explain the reasoning for your position. Suggest that you will do whatever is assigned as a substitute for the performance of such music. Show full interest by seeking this assignment from the director and serving it with dignity, honoring all concerned.

2. Submit a copy of this letter to your principal. Also keep a copy for yourself.

3. The better you explain yourself the first time, the fewer questions you will have to answer later. State only facts, not opinions.

4. Remember: You’re trying to honor God as well as your director and your music organization.

Howard Whittlesey is a retired Choral Music Director having taught 39 years in grades 7-12. He also taught Band for 6 years. His last 32 years were spent at North Miami High School in Denver, Indiana.
School’s Purpose

JONATHAN CHAFFIN

Children are more than just the result of a sexual union between mother and father. Each child has a soul created in God’s image (Gen. 1:26-27). Parents are charged with the responsibility of properly raising their children, reflecting that image. Part of that obligation is to ensure that they mature to a point that they can take their place in society as one who is productive mentally, socially, physically, and spiritually, which includes a good education of their children. After all, does God not show us knowledge and wisdom (skills)? Certainly. The difference between us and Him is the amount of knowledge and wisdom (Isa. 55:8-9) and the fact that we have to acquire ours while God does not. Do not make the mistake that parents sometimes make in thinking it is the elder’s, preacher’s, Bible class teacher’s, or the school system’s duty to raise our children, instead of just being a contributing factor in the development of a child.

Putting aside the argument of homeschooling versus traditional schooling, there are essential elements and skills that a child needs which can be learned through the school years, such as employment skills, social interaction, organizational skills, and prioritization, all of which can be useful in one’s spiritual life as well.

Above all, when beginning another school year (as it is anytime) it is imperative to keep God first. “Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth...” (Eccl. 12:1). Also, keep in mind, “But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness...” (Matt. 6:33). The Bible begins with the words “In the beginning,” and this is something that needs to be kept in mind. God needs to be in the forefront of our minds throughout our life. If that can be done, then many of life’s problems can be avoided.

From the earliest school years, children begin to learn necessary skills that will be beneficial during their chosen careers. Subjects taught in school, math, grammar, and English, for instance, teach children crucial information to implement in the work force and throughout life in general. The knowledge gained, such as problem solving, proper use of words and punctuation, sentence structure, and appropriate writing techniques are valuable in answering questions on a job application, writing reports, and compiling one’s resume. Mathematics is particularly worthwhile in learning problem solving. In every facet of employment, proficiency in math is essential. However, it is one that can be utilized at all stages of life. These skills, if developed properly and early, will go a long way in helping not only in obtaining employment but retaining it as well.

The writer of Proverbs states, “Train up a child in the way he should go, And even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). While this passage is usually reserved for spiritual matters, could it not also apply to what is secular. Is not education of our child part of that training? Consider these thoughts: “she seeketh wool and flax”; she “worketh willingly with her hands”; “she riseth also while it is yet night” (shall we call that ambition [a strong desire to achieve] that the children learn from this worthy woman); she “considereth a field and buyeth it” (which we can call wisdom); “Her children rise up and call her blessed.” One reason why they call her “blessed” is what they learn from her – how to become “proficient” in providing for others, which in part would be passing on to them the skills she learned – “home schooling,” remembering that they did not have formal education as we do today? The school years provide a child the chance to acquire more of these skills, but they first see them practiced in their homes.

One of the arguments people make against home schooling is that children do not have the social interaction with their peers. Social interaction can be acquired in many ways, not just in a school environment. A child needs to develop social skills and the school years allow them to cultivate interpersonal skills they will need throughout the rest of their lives. Attention needs to be given on the part of the parent to what kind of interaction their kids are involved. Parents need to warn their children, “Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33). They can be easily influenced by those with whom they interact. Instill in them, while young, that they need to influence
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others, not to be influenced by them. Children learn from their peers and often look to those same peers for advice. A good example to recall is that of Rehoboam when he rejected the counsel of the older, wiser men and adhered to the counsel of his friends, he “forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and spake to them after the counsel of the young men” (1 Kings 12:13-14). Those with whom we socialize can have a negative impact on our lives. Parents, do not let your children associate with those who will turn them away from God. By the same token, do not shield them from contact with other children and risk turning them away from God yourself. There is a balance, so wise judgment must be used on the part of the child and the parent (Jas. 1:5).

During the years a child attends school, various tests are taken and homework is given to better equip the student with the knowledge of the subjects being studied. Where my kids attend school, all students are given planners to help them better organize their time and their priorities. A good amount of attention needs to be given to organization and prioritization. Some subjects may need a little more devotion to better understand them. This is where the student needs and learns how to structure his time and work that will give him the best opportunity to succeed, not only to succeed in the classroom but in his career as well.

Lastly, the respect for authority needs to be learned in these vulnerable years. However, that respect seems to be lacking in many ways. Teachers are the authority in the classroom and students need to heed that authority. Of course, authority needs to be taught in the home and by extension in the classroom. We have got to remember that the school system falls underneath governmental authority. Each city or county has its own education department but is under the authority of the state education department. Paul states that as citizens in this land we are subject to the rulers of this land, “Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment” (Rom. 13:1-2). Ultimately we are subject to God and if, we cannot respect those to whom He has given authority, how can we respect God?

There are many ways that schools can have a positive impact on one’s life. Abilities that can be learned and applied throughout life’s challenges can begin to be learned at the earliest years. The purpose for school is to prepare one for the tasks that will be encountered. Take advantage of the time given to you to learn all these skills (and many more) to better train yourself for future usefulness in society and in the Lord’s church.
Attacks against the Bible have been made for years by liberal scholars and recently these attacks have become more popularized. Today, liberal scholars such as Bart Ehrman (Professor of NT Studies at the University of North Carolina) are trying to postulate a diverse and pluralistic brand of Christianity by reviving the teaching of the German theologian, Walter Bauer (author of the well-known Greek Lexicon). In a 1934 monograph, Bauer set forth the theory that early Christianity was made up of many diverse and heretical teachings. There was no unified orthodoxy body of teaching according to Bauer. The gospel preached in the first century was a “gospel” of diversity. Thus, it is believed today by Ehrman and others that the contemporary diversity found in modern Christianity is much like that of the first century and no one is required to conform to a single body of orthodox teaching. So, how is this liberal idea answered? Two conservative scholars, Kostenberger and Kruger, have answered this theory in a new book titled The Heresy of Orthodoxy. They demonstrate from the New Testament documents themselves and early history that a unified and orthodox body of teaching did in fact exist in the first century. New Testament authors did not promote diversity and pluralism as Bauer and Ehrman suppose. Part one of The Heresy of Orthodoxy examines and refutes the theory of Bauer in detail. Part 2 of the book surveys the formation of the New Testament canon of Scripture and related matters. Part 3 addresses the matter of Scripture transmission and whether or not we have accurate copies of the New Testament scriptures. Both authors demonstrate clearly that liberal scholars like Bauer and Ehrman are wrong and that their liberal theories are invalid. The Heresy of Orthodoxy will encourage the reader to have confidence in the orthodox teaching of the New Testament as well as confidence in the proper selection and transmission of New Testament scriptures. This book is highly recommended.

Synopsis of the Pauline Letters in Greek and English.
James P. Ware, Editor.
ISBN: 978-0-8010-3889-1

A new Bible reference tool from Baker Academic will prove very helpful to the Bible student who is studying the life and epistles of Paul. The Synopsis of the Pauline Letters in Greek and English by James P. Ware covers the life of Paul (in the book of Acts) and his thirteen epistles in a parallel and topical format. All the material in the New Testament covering the life of Paul is categorized into 177 groups of related passages, from his salutations to his co-workers and everything else in between. The Greek passages (Nestle-Aland 27th Edition) are listed on the left hand side of the page and the English passages (NRSV) on the right hand side of the page. A critical apparatus is printed at the bottom of the page which covers textual variants. The Synopsis of Pauline Letters is a wonderful tool for comparative study. The student can see at a glance the close relationship of material in Acts and Paul’s epistles as well as material within different epistles of Paul. A table of parallels and an index of subjects are also included which make finding a topic easy. The student, preacher or teacher of Paul’s life will want to get this Synopsis and keep it handy.

The World of the Bible.
ISBN: 978-0-8254-7913-7

Many people living today are far removed from the historical setting of the Bible both by space and time. What was the Bible world like? How can I understand the setting of the Bible story? In The World of the Bible, John Drane (author of several books on Bible history) provides a comprehensive survey of the peoples and places of the Bible (Mesopotamia, Sumeria, Akkad, Egypt, Canaan, Israel, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome) so that the Bible student can better understand the Bible story. Numerous political, military, social, domestic, religious, economic, and cultural customs and practices are covered in this book. Drane writes so that the reader can gain fresh insight, understanding, and appreciation of the Bible world. The World of the Bible is beautifully illustrated and will be a good addition to any study of Bible backgrounds.
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not \( a^2 + b^2 = c^2 \)? This is a teaching moment! Don’t squander it!

**TEMPTATIONS AT SCHOOL**

Whether the school one is going to is elementary, middle school, high school, college, or graduate school, there are plenty of temptations facing the student. Are there wonderful opportunities? YES! But there are also temptations. Parents who want their children to succeed can best prepare them for that by talking to them about the temptations, showing them the dangers involved and the Biblical reasons they are wrong, and showing them how to escape the temptation (and different temptations are to be confronted in different ways).

Sin is not franchised by the adults. Children reach an age of accountability when they become responsible for their own sins. And, with the breakdown of the family, some young people have been taught at home at a very early age how to sin: filthy language, sexual promiscuity, lying, stealing, etc. Consequently, Christian parents need to be alerting their children to the temptations and dangers at school.

Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on. For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, And drink the wine of violence. But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble (Prov. 4:14-19).

**CONCLUSION**

As the new school year begins, seize the opportunity to give your children the best education possible. However, remember that true education begins with the fear of the Lord: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). Instill into your children respect for and obedience to the Lord as the foundation for all other kinds of knowledge.

As you press your children to achieve, remember that life’s primary goal is this: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil” (Eccl. 12:13-14). If we rear children to become successful medical doctors, lawyers, Wall Street brokers, teachers, plumbers, etc., but they die outside of Christ and go to hell, they will have failed and perhaps the parents might be responsible for pointing them down the wrong path in life. Teach them what success means. Jesus said, “It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire” (Matt. 18:8). Life’s true purpose is to escape hell and to enter heaven. Keep your priorities in order.

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www.truthbooks.net Subscribe TODAY!!!
Last month, we acknowledged the fiftieth wedding anniversary of Frank and Joyce Jamerson, but as they were celebrating in northwest Alabama, Frank was very ill with what has now been diagnosed as liver cancer. Frank preaches for the Midway congregation in Greenhill, Alabama, and, at this writing, is undergoing treatment. Joyce is keeping a very inspiring journal of their experiences online at <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/frankjamerson>. I have had opportunity to hear Frank preach many times (and even fill in for him once in a while) while visiting my wife’s family in the Florence area and I am sure you will join me in lifting up prayers for his recovery.

Preacher and writer Billy Norris passed from this life at the age of 97 on July 12 in Russellville, Alabama. Brother Norris preached faithfully and touched the lives of people throughout the world through his workbooks, tracts and bulletin articles, including Gospel Guide. A gifted high school athlete and member of the Franklin County Sports Hall of Fame, he went on to earn his Master’s degree in English and preach for churches in Tennessee, Alabama, and Arkansas for nearly six decades. He is survived by his wife of 74 years, Leila. Robert Harkrider, who co-officiated his funeral, wrote, “His works were never published in modern media, but he will be among the ‘blessed’ who have died in the Lord, who ‘rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’”

Hardin “Osby” Weaver passed away on July 6 in Houston, Texas at the age of 95. He is survived by his wife of 72 years, Mary Helen Green-Weaver. Address condolences to Mary Helen Weaver, Paramount Rehab & Healthcare, 3434 Watters Rd. Room 313, Pasadena, TX 77504.

Longtime preacher Jimmy Tuten died on June 24 at the age of 82 after suffering a stroke. Brother Tuten was a veteran of the U.S. Army and a gospel preacher for forty years, as well as an accomplished writer. He was known for his many self-produced visual graphics that accompanied his sermon outlines. He was preceded in death by his wife, Betty Jean Tuten. When I first tried to preach back in the late 1980s, I was presented a book of brother Tuten’s sermons, which served me well for those first couple of years of finding my way around the pulpit. Eventually, I was able to pass that book along to another young man who wanted to try his hand at preaching.
The following congregations have paid for advertising in *Truth* Magazine. Inclusion of churches in this list is not an attempt by *Truth Magazine* to certify their faithfulness to God. We do believe the vast majority are striving to uphold the Word in faith and practice.
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